



LOVING THE BIBLE

Selections from Psalm 119

Introducing Psalm 119

- Psalms is longest book in Bible
- Psalm 119 is the longest chapter at 176 verses
- Many stories about it > Bishop of Edinburgh
- Thousands of commentary pages written about it
 - *Treasury of David*, Spurgeon > 349 pages
 - Charles Bridges (Church of England) > 481 pages
 - Thomas Manton (Puritan) > 1,677 pages
- Structure > acrostic
 - 22 stanzas, one for each letter of Hebrew alphabet
 - Each verse in a stanza starts with the stanza's alphabetic letter^x

Introducing Psalm 119 (cont'd)

- All 176 verses but ~ 2-4 refer to the Word in some way
 - Law – 25 times
 - Word – 24 times
 - Rulings / ordinances – 23 times
 - Commandments – 22 times
 - Decrees / statutes – 21 times
 - Precepts / charges – 21 times
 - Sayings / promises – 19 times
- Helpful to understand these synonyms refer to a different aspect of the Word depending on intent
 - Word = everything God has said in the Bible
 - Decrees / statutes = binding rules and laws
 - Precepts = rules necessary to resolve issues
 - Testimonies = examples of God's faithfulness, promises of blessings if commands and guidelines are heeded, judgements if not x

Introducing Psalm 119 (cont'd)

- Theme of Psalm 119
 - Overall
 - Praising God for giving us His Word
 - The Bible is the only way to know God & learn how to praise Him
 - Most thorough elaboration of Ps 1.1-2
 - Ps 119.1-2 expands on this with a little more detail
 - Noted commentary writer and pastor John Montgomery Boice ..
"The Bible tells us that the path to a happy life - the Bible's word for it is "blessedness" - is conforming to the law of God" x

Introducing Psalm 119 (cont'd)

- C.S. Lewis had a somewhat startled reaction to this concept of loving the Bible
 - He realized that the law means all of God's written revelation
 - Promises and warnings
 - Blessings and judgements
 - Basically learning to love it because it provides the balance of the believer's guidance, provisions and warnings needed for life x

Introducing Psalm 119 *(cont'd)*

- He further realized that he was looking at "the engaging moral order of the divine mind"

"The Order of the Divine mind, embodied in the Divine Law, is beautiful. [Therefore] what should a man do but try to reproduce it, so far as possible, in his daily life? His "delight" is in those statutes (vs 16); to study them is like finding treasure (vs 14); they affect him like music, are his "songs" (vs 54); they taste like honey (vs 103); they are better than silver and gold (vs 72). As one's eyes are more and more opened, one sees more and more in them, and it excites wonder (vs 18). This is not priggery nor even scrupulosity; it is the language of a man ravished by a moral beauty. If we cannot at all share his experience, we shall be the losers." x

REASONS TO LOVE THE BIBLE

- Focus on PS 119.97-104
 - Vs 97 sets the theme: The psalmist's chief emphasis is on loving God's Law
- He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law
 - **Reason # 1: It gives true wisdom** (vvs 98-100)
 - Three groups that the Word has made him more wiser than
 - Enemies
 - Skillful at manipulating truth & circumstances to their advantage (Lk 16.8)
 - Jesus addressed this selfishness (Matt 16.26)
 - Teachers and elders
 - Teachers have knowledge, elders experience
 - Spiritual wisdom comes from God's Word
 - Goes beyond worldly knowledge and experience
 - Worldly wisdom changes, can't be counted on (1 Cor 13.8)
 - The Word made the psalmist wiser by being aware the real value is in how to save his soul x

REASONS TO LOVE THE BIBLE *(cont'd)*

- He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law *(cont'd)*
 - **Reason # 2: It holds the believer to the path of righteousness**
 - Holds him to the right path and steers him away from the wrong path
 - Ps 119.9
"How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping it according to Your word"
 - Ps 119.101
"I have restrained my feet from every evil way,
That I may keep Your word"
 - Adhering to the Word is the ONLY way to guide both actions
 - To know you are sinning you need to know God's Word
 - To know how to escape judgement and how to avoid sinning you need to know God's Word as empowered by the Spirit ^x

REASONS TO LOVE THE BIBLE (cont'd)

- He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law (cont'd)
 - **Reason # 3: God is the believer's teacher through the Word**
 - Ps 119.103
 - “I have not turned aside from Your ordinances,
For **You Yourself** have taught me”
 - Unusual for the Hebrew to have a preceding pronoun
 - Apparently added for emphasis to show psalmist knew that God was his teacher x

REASONS TO LOVE THE BIBLE (cont'd)

- He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law (cont'd)
 - **Reason # 4: The Word is sweeter than honeycomb**
 - Ps. 119.103
"How sweet are Your words to my taste!
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth"
 - David said it similarly in Ps 19.10
"They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb"
 - Why would somebody say that about God's Word ?
 - Psalmist's choice of Hebrew words indicate he is likely thinking of the promises or sayings of God
 - Ps 23 > The image of The Shepherd ?
 - Ps 8.1a > " O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth" ?
 - Ps 1.1-3
vs 3 "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers. "

REASONS TO LOVE THE BIBLE (cont'd)

- He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law (cont'd)
 - **Reason # 4: The Word is sweeter than honeycomb** (cont'd)
 - Why would somebody say that about God's Word? (cont'd)
 - Other passages that should be sweet to read & meditate on
 - John 3.16
 - Rom 8.28
 - Rev 22.20

"He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. "
 - Finally, note the wide range of life's needs it addresses
 - Advice and warnings on fruitful living to young and old alike
 - For those in trials, encouragement, inspiration, direction
 - For those facing death, a stunning way to live forever ^x

REASONS TO LOVE THE BIBLE (cont'd)

- He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law (cont'd)
 - **Reason # 5: Learning to hate every wrong path**
 - God's Law is perfect, declares what is right and what is wrong
 - Ps 119.104
" From Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way“
 - We live in an ugly, dangerous world
 - We are to learn to love the good, but also to hate evil
 - God's Word provides definition and guidance
 - It gives a clear black and white picture of what pleases and displeases God, what the blessings and negative consequences can be in each case
 - “...attraction to the true and revulsion against the false are acquired tastes,”
Commentary writer Derek Kidner x

REASONS TO LOVE THE BIBLE (cont'd)

- He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law (cont'd)
 - **Reason # 5: Learning to hate every wrong path**
 - God's Word provides definition and guidance (cont'd)
 - It encourages obeying out of love for God, gaining what blessings He promises if we do, rather than obedience out of fear

“When the law realizes itself as love for God and man in men’s hearts, it ceases to bear the aspect of a command. The force of authority and the active resistance or inertia of the subject disappear; the law becomes a principle, a motive, a joyous harmony of man’s will with the will of God; and in becoming internal, it becomes universal and transcends all distinctions of race or class.”

- Rees, T.. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*

- Finally, through all the above, God’s Law gives us security x

HOW CAN WE PRACTICALLY LOVE THE BIBLE ?

- A few key areas to work on
 - 1. **STUDY HOW** Christ taught and talked about the Word
 - What did He express about His topic ?
 - What did He emphasize ?
 - What did He say about it's place in the believer's life ?
 - 2. **MEDITATE** on what you read and study
 - Not monk-like, but like this ...
 - “To haga (meditate) was to devour the word, like a pride of lions circling and eating its prey. The idea is to move the word from outside of us to inside of us.” - Curtis Zachery, Pastor - Church of the City Franklin TN
 - [Meditation is] “an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communication with God. Its purpose is to clear one’s mental and spiritual vision of God and let His truth make its full and proper impact on one’s mind and heart.” - J.I. Packer x

HOW CAN WE PRACTICALLY LOVE THE BIBLE ? (cont'd)

- A few key areas to work on (cont'd)
 - 3. **OBEY** what the Word teaches
 - Put it into **PRACTICE**
 - "The Bible, then, seems to say, "God is not a hard master to require belief, without affording grounds for believing; only follow your own sense of right, and you will gain from that very obedience to your Maker, which natural conscience enjoins, a conviction of the truth and power of that Redeemer whom a supernatural message has revealed; do but examine your thoughts and doings; do but attempt what you know to be God's will, and you will most assuredly be led on into all the truth..."
- Exell, J. S. (1909). *The Biblical Illustrator: The Psalms*
- Observe where the promises come true, and grow to appreciate their value as that appreciation grows with experience x

PRACTICALITY: THE SPIRIT USES BIBLE TO TEACH THE SPIRITUAL WALK

- Focus on Ps 119.33-40
- This fifth stanza has nine prayers wherein the psalmist asks God to grow him
 - vs 33: "Teach me..." > He wanted God to teach him
 - vs 34: "Give me understanding..." > he wanted more than knowledge
 - vs 35: " Make me walk in the path..." > he wanted discipline
 - vs 36: "Incline my heart..." > he wanted God to nudge him in the right way
 - vs 37a: "Turn away my eyes..." > he wanted God to keep him from evil
 - vs 37b: "..revive me..." > he wanted to walk in God's ways
 - vs 38: "Establish Your Word..." > he wanted God's Word to be his standard
 - vs 39: "Turn away my reproach ..." > he wanted to avoid wrong actions
 - vs 40: "Revive me..." > he depended on God's righteous answer to these ^x

PRACTICALITY: THE SPIRIT USES BIBLE TO TEACH THE SPIRITUAL WALK *(cont'd)*

- Review the stages in the Spirit's training of the psalmist
 - # 1 ... Ps 119.33-34: Entering the school of the Spirit
 - The psalmist is direct about asking God to teach him God's statutes
 - Note he says he lacks understanding the Word
 - # 2 ... Ps 119.34-37: He asks God for a well-rounded education
 - vs 34: The **mind** > "... give me understanding ..." > Rom 12.1-2
 - Why is the mind important in the believer's walk ?
 - Worship > knowing Who God is = character, attributes, deeds
 - Faith > understanding God's promises & acting on them
 - Spiritual growth > sanctification, knowing what's at work within
 - Spiritual growth > understanding steps the Holy Spirit is teaching in gaining spiritual growth (e.g. fruits of the Spirit)
 - Evangelism > must understand the gospel to explain it, dealing with objections
 - Ministry > identifying gift(s) and putting them to work ^x

PRACTICALITY: THE SPIRIT USES BIBLE TO TEACH THE SPIRITUAL WALK *(cont'd)*

- Review the stages in the Spirit's training of the psalmist *(cont'd)*
 - # 2 ... Ps 119.34-37: He asks God for a well-rounded education *(cont'd)*
 - vs 35: The **feet** > "...make me walk..."
 - Comment by Puritan Thomas Manton ...
"...[the psalmist], in the former verses, had begged for light, now for strength to walk according to this light."
 - In which direction should we walk ?
 - naw·theeb Heb for "path" = the trodden way, not a new direction
 - Commentary writer Herbert Lockyer elaborates on "path" to take ...
"an accustomed trail, plain with the track of all the pious pilgrim's feet of past times."
 - The Lord explicitly defined this in Jer 6.16a
"Thus says the LORD,
'Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths,
Where the good way is, and walk in it;
And you will find rest for your souls. ...' " x

PRACTICALITY: THE SPIRIT USES BIBLE TO TEACH THE SPIRITUAL WALK *(cont'd)*

- Review the stages in the Spirit's training of the psalmist *(cont'd)*
 - # 2 ... Ps 119.34-37: He asks God for a well-rounded education *(cont'd)*
 - vs 36: The **heart** > "Incline my heart..."
 - The psalmist knows his heart will want to head toward selfish gain
 - He is asking God to turn it back to giving His Word the high value it has in keeping him on the path
 - vs 37: The **eyes** > "Turn away my eyes"
 - Note he doesn't speak of what his eyes should be turned to
 - He is instead concerned that he will be looking at worthless things and is asking God to redirect his focus as God wishes ^x

PRACTICALITY: THE SPIRIT USES BIBLE TO TEACH THE SPIRITUAL WALK *(cont'd)*

- Review the stages in the Spirit's training of the psalmist *(cont'd)*
 - # 3 ... Ps 119.38: He reminds God he needs encouragement in schooling
 - "Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared" NIV
 - "Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared " ESV
 - The Hebrew word used here indicates the psalmist refers to needing the entirety of God's Word to live by and needs His support in it
 - Jesus emphasized this in Matt 4.4
 - But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.' "
 - # 4 ... Ps 119.39-40: Concern he might drop out of God's schooling
 - He fears reproach
 - He asks God to turn any reproach away because God's Word is good and beneficial to him x

GOD USES TRIALS & AFFLICTIONS TO KEEP BELIEVER FOCUSED ON VALUE OF HIS WORD

- Focus on Ps 119.65-72

- Ps 119.65-68

- The psalmist had somehow departed following God's Word
- God sent him affliction to cause him to realize where he was wrong and pull him back to following and applying His Word
- The psalmist recognized this and praised God for the needed correction
- The psalmist also recognizes that God is good and does good

- Ps 119.71-72

- The psalmist concludes that God's good purpose was to bring him back to dependence on His Word and its many benefits ^x

GIVING THE SPIRIT FULL SWAY TO AVOID DISCIPLINING AFFLICTION

- So how does the believer hold to following God's Word & avoid discipline ?
 - Involves understanding "death of self"
 - Scripture defining it > Matt 16.24, Gal 5.24
 - Andrew Murray elaborates ...
 - “This is the true self-denial to which our Savior calls us, the acknowledgment that self has nothing good in it, except as an empty vessel which God must fill”
 - “The moment God finds the creature abased and empty, His glory and power flow in to exalt and to bless”
 - “The death to self is not your work, it is God's work”
 - This is the point the psalmist reached in Ps 119.67
 - “Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word” x

GIVING THE SPIRIT FULL SWAY TO AVOID DISCIPLINING AFFLICTION *(cont'd)*

- So how does the believer hold to following God's Word & avoid discipline ? *(cont'd)*
 - We can't > Rom 8.7-8
 - But Rom 8.13
 - Bottom line - Any effort to partner with Spirit is still working from the flesh = tainted effort. Success comes only by giving Spirit full control
 - 100 % filling by the Spirit necessary for success
 - Eph 5.18
 - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit"
 - "filled" = Gk pleroo /play-ro-o/ > to be filled to the full > 100 % !
 - Gal 5.16-17
 - "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit... so that you may not do the things that you please"
 - Note that the psalmist has written how fully dependent he is on God's teaching, giving him understanding, and pulling him back into following the Word x

CONCLUSION

- Embrace the joy of letting the Holy Spirit hold you to God's Word
 - Loving the Bible because God directly gave all the tools and guidance necessary to follow and enjoy the fruits of the promises in His Word
 - It is not a dictator's means of control unless you buck against it
 - It is THE guide to what pleases and displeases our Creator and Redeemer, thereby avoid corrective discipline and reap the joys of being effective for Him
- Why love the Bible ?
 - It tells us about God and His character
 - It tells us how we need redemption through Christ's sacrifice
 - It gives us the commands and precepts that guarantee a happy and fruitful relationship with God
 - It tells us God has provided both salvation and the Holy Spirit to assure that we live it out, both here and eternally x x

Resources

- *Psalms, Volume 3: (Psalms 107-150): An Expository Commentary* (main resource)
James Montgomery Boice
- *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*
Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, David Brown
- *The Biblical Illustrator The Psalms Volumes 1-5*
Rev. Joseph S. Excell
- *Opening Up Psalms*
Roger Ellsworth