

# PSALM 119:17-24

Category: *Didactic*

Occasion: *The Christian Life*

Author: *Unknown*

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## Gimel ג

<sup>17</sup> Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

<sup>18</sup> Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

<sup>19</sup> I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

<sup>20</sup> My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

<sup>21</sup> Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

<sup>22</sup> Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

<sup>23</sup> Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

<sup>24</sup> Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.

## The Point:

God's Word is the air that we breathe. It is the oxygen that we need.

## How do we feel in the recitation of this Psalm?

The most emotional verse in this section of the Psalm is verse 20. Should a man be separated from his betrothed, he will commit to crossing land and sea to get back together with the one he loves. His heart feels like it is breaking when he is apart from her for an extended period of time. This is the language used here to describe the Psalmist's attraction to the righteous judgments of God.

## What does this Psalm say?

### *Verses 17-20.*

Every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above. But when sinners use God's gifts and the comforts of life to disobey His law and render service to other gods, they abuse His good graces. In the 17th verse, the Psalmist prays for God's physical and spiritual blessings in order that he might keep God's Word and live according to God's will. For the Christian, therefore, God's bounty should produce more of an abundance of thanksgiving, worship, and service in his life.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (verse 18). You may revisit a verse twenty times and still miss the meaning or the manifold relevant applications of it. However, when your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, you begin to understand the true import of it. All of the lights turn on in your mind, and you know that this is God speaking to you through His Word. It is not for lack of clarity on the part of Scripture that we cannot understand it. The Word is clear; it is just that we cannot see clearly because we are either blind or half asleep.

The believer can feel pretty isolated in a world of ideas that contradict a Christian world and life view. As he sits in a secular college classroom where the irrelevance of God is taken for granted and the Ten Commandments are completely rejected as a way of life, he feels like a social misfit. He is marginalized. With false ideas and deceptions flying around, from time to time he needs to catch his bearings. That's why he needs the commandments of God as the standard for life.

Some will accuse true believers of what they call "bibliolatry" be-

cause they are so attached to the Word of God as a guide for the mind and a rule for the life. The Psalmist gladly accepts this accusation, comparing his attraction to God's Word as a man to his betrothed (verse 20).

*Verses 21-23.*

These verses turn to address those who are not so drawn to the commandments of God but rather oppose them. Proud men are typically autonomous men, as they ignore the commandments of God and become a law to themselves. Thus, according to verse 21, they are cursed in this life as well as in eternity. They will suffer the consequences of their sins, whether by disease, mental illness, the disintegration of relationships, the loss of wealth, or death. All of this amounts to the rebuke of almighty God in their lives. There is no way they can avoid the hand of God pressing in on their lives.

When Christians reject the way of life of unbelieving materialists, when they reject the self-centeredness of the age, when they embrace the blessing of children, when they inconvenience themselves by putting their own time and resources into their children's education, and when they favor family worship and discipleship of their children against the entertainment culture of the day, they distinguish themselves sharply from the world. These families are not "cool." All too commonly, they are mocked and ridiculed by those who live the "convenient" and pleasurable life of the world. If God calls children a "blessing" and condemns the lust and pride of the world, and if God commissions fathers to raising their children in the fear of the Lord, then the Christian family will embrace these truths. Nevertheless, the Psalmist pleads with God that He would save him from the contempt of the world as he roots himself and his family in the testimonies of the Lord.

It is even more stressful and trying for the man of faith when he hears that princes are plotting against him. When government agencies are dedicating their energies to tracking his communications and ministry work in order to find some slight cause by which they might accuse him, then he has even more reason to be concerned. The temptation is to give way to anxiety, constantly mulling over all the possible scenarios and contingencies that might come about. But the Psalmist is more focused on something far more im-

portant than what princes think. He is concerned with what God thinks, and that is why he continues to meditate on the statutes contained in God's Word.

#### *Verse 24.*

Wisdom is obtained from God's Word. People seek advice all over the place from self-help books and self-proclaimed prophets to other assorted gurus. They seek advice to save themselves from harm and maximize the potential of their success in life. So there is nothing unusual about seeking advice and following advice. However, few people go to the right place for counsel, and so they walk in the paths of destruction. The Psalmist here embraces God's Word as the source of His counsel, and he delights to hear its wisdom, because he knows that he needs it for his very life.

### **How do we apply this Psalm to our lives?**

The Word of God is a continual, daily guide for our lives. Sometimes young men and women raised in the Christian home and church will set the Word aside for six months to a year as they set out on their own. Before long, they stop attending church and they drift into a life of fornication and dissipation. They do things they would never have dreamed of doing while they were in their Christian families. If the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ are not in front of them on a daily basis, they will wander away from this life. Their minds will settle into a different world and life view, with a different set of values. If we will live as Christians, we must live and breathe the Word of God every day. And, it is the duty of Christian parents to acclimate our children to this way of life.

### **How does this Psalm teach us to worship God?**

As we approach worship on the Lord's Day, our souls should "hunger and thirst" after the teaching of the Word of God. The Scriptures ought to be more than words on a page, bare propositions that logicians argue in opposition to other propositions. These words constitute the ideas and will of a loving Father to His children, and He is the best and the wisest of fathers. If a father never communicated anything to his children, there would hardly be a relationship.

Thus, communication is fundamental to the relationship, and this is why our hearts should long to hear the judgments of God every Sunday.

### **Questions:**

1. What is the difference between how unbelievers and believers receive God's bounty?
2. What needs to happen in order for God's Word to be understandable and relevant in our lives?
3. How does God rebuke the proud?
4. How are Christians ridiculed and reproached in our day? What does the Psalmist do when he is reproached?

### **Family Discussion Questions:**

1. What kind of reproach have we received for our faith? How did we handle it?
2. Generally, how do we view our time together in the Word? How often do we consider it a beautiful, helpful thing? How often is it boring and unimportant to us?

# PSALM 119:25-32

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## Daleth 7

<sup>25</sup> My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

<sup>26</sup> I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

<sup>27</sup> Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

<sup>28</sup> My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

<sup>29</sup> Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

<sup>30</sup> I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

<sup>31</sup> I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.

<sup>32</sup> I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

## The Point:

It is God who resurrects the dead, makes us to understand His statutes, and enables us to run in the way of His commandments.

## **How do we feel in the recitation of this Psalm?**

We are insensitive to truth and dead to all meaningful reality until God makes us alive. We have no strength in ourselves, and the pressures of life weigh on us heavily. We must come back to God's Word for our daily strength and allow these truths to surge through our veins.

## **What does this Psalm say?**

### *Verse 25.*

This fourth section of Psalm 119 reverts back and forth between two themes: God's sovereign work in our lives and our own response and commitment to Him.

In an honest moment, we must all admit that all hope and purpose is fleeting and insubstantial unless God raises us up. All of us have suicidal tendencies; we are all borderline manic depressive; we all live to keep our stomachs full and our minds empty with entertaining fluff except for the intervening work of God in our hearts and minds. Our spiritual life can only come by God's sovereign resurrection power. We do not raise ourselves from the dead. There is nothing that lies within the dead carcass of the man whose body cleaves to the dust that can invigorate him with life. It is only God who can raise His people from the dead, and He does it by His Word through both preaching and reading.

### *Verse 26.*

Now, the Psalmist follows up with his own response to the quickening work of Almighty God within his own heart and life. He declares God's ways to his family with confidence and conviction in the truth of it. Even still, he relies on God to teach him more of His statutes, in order that he might continue to declare these things to others.

### *Verses 27-29.*

Having spoken of his own commitment and contribution, now these verses return to the sovereign work of God in the Psalmist. It is God who makes us to understand the Word before we can communicate it to others. By nature, man cannot understand the things of

God, “for they are foolishness to him... because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Thus, the initiating force in the regeneration and salvation of the believer must be the Spirit of God enlightening the eyes of those who speak of the commandments of God.

How often have we been overwhelmed with discouragement, guilt, trials, and oppression? Without the assurance of the victory in Christ, without confidence in the resurrection of Christ, we would be devoid of all joy and peace. When we read the Word, we need to be strengthened by it. The truths contained within these pages must lighten our eyes, strengthen our spiritual muscles, and empower us to the work. Of course, this is the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Deception is everywhere in a world where Satan is allowed free rein to deceive the nations. Since the 19th century, the problem of cults is so predominant that some Christians have assembled long encyclopedic compendiums summarizing the various aberrant movements around the world. What is to say that one of us won't be taken by one of the tentacles of this crafty beast? What is to say that we are not being led astray right now by some misguided teacher in the church? Only God can save us from this deception and remove from us the way of lying (verse 29).

### *Verses 30-31.*

In these verses, the Psalmist now speaks of his choice and his contribution that must necessarily make up the life of faith. While God does exercise His sovereign work in the heart, it is for all of us to make the choice to walk in the way of truth. Every day, we make choices not to lie, not to be slothful in our work, not to lust after those things God has forbidden. In fact, our lives are made up of tens of thousands of choices made at just as many crossroads, all of which determine the direction of our lives.

In verse 31, the Psalmist testifies to his commitment to God's testimonies. Though the great scientific minds of the day mock at his steadfast allegiance to the six-day creation account in Genesis, he will not budge. He only prays that God will vindicate him by the evidence, the fossil record, or by the eventual failure of a system of science built up on the wrong presuppositional framework. “O Lord, put me not to shame!”

*Verse 32.*

Finally, God's sovereignty is affirmed again, as the commitment to obey God's commandments is predicated upon God enlarging the heart. When man denies God's sovereign working in the heart in the salvation and sanctification of the sinner, he sets himself up for failure. There is no way a man will run in the way of God's commandments until his heart has been first warmed to love God, and this is the work of God. This commitment is not half-hearted. He is not half-thinking about disobeying his father or lusting after that woman on the cover of the magazine. He runs in the way of God's commandments when God enlarges his heart.

### **How do we apply this Psalm to our lives?**

If we will not, by faith, rely upon the sovereign working of God, salvation and sanctification will not happen in our lives. Those who insist on man's contribution without first accepting the sovereign hand of God reject a basic biblical truth. This is the very basis of our salvation. We pray for it, we rely upon it, and we believe it. Then we walk in God's ways by faith.

### **How does this Psalm teach us to worship God?**

In worship, we first realize God's work, and then we commit to do our work. The role of the teacher is to declare the work of God, in creation and redemption, before instructing us our duties to God. Let us be careful not to put the cart before the horse in the sequence.

### **Questions:**

1. What are the two themes that play off of each other in this section of Psalm 119?
2. How does God quicken us according to verse 25?
3. What is the difference between verse 25 and verse 28?
4. According to verse 32, what must happen before the Psalmist runs in the way of God's commandments?

**Family Discussion Questions:**

1. What do we believe concerning God's sovereignty in salvation? What is our commitment to run in the way of God's commandments? Do we run, walk, or crawl? How much has God enlarged our hearts to do this?