

Loving God's Law Psalm 119:97-104

Psalm 119 is clearly the longest of all the Psalms; 176 verses. Along with Psalm 1 and Psalm 19, it is all about the Bible.

The Psalm is so great, not simply long, that Augustine never preached from this Psalm.

When the OT speaks about God's law it isn't simply the Ten Commandments or legislation.

It is legislation but it is more than that.

The whole Bible is simply an exposition of the law
- John Calvin

The modern thinking is that God's law is outdated or that, once we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the law is unnecessary for us.

ILL – When Teana and I, as children, first moved to Athens, Greece, the police officers at street intersections were being replaced by traffic lights which the people interpreted as suggestions and nonbinding. The result was an increase in traffic accidents.

We live in an anti-nomian (against law) world. People die because they refuse to obey God's law. Why? Because there is a divine 'oughtness' to the law.

GOSPEL: But, let's talk about God's legislative law, for instance, as revealed in the Ten Commandments.

This is how you know there is a God. There is a divine 'oughtness' in your mind that you can't avoid or erase. No matter what you do, you know what you 'ought' to do.

The law serves at least three purposes:

- a) It pictures God's character
- b) It pricks our conscience
- c) It proves our condemnation
- d) It points us to Jesus

Matthew 22:36 - *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

John 16:8-11 - *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning*

righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

What is sin? Not believing in Jesus.

John 3:17-18 - For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

What is righteousness? Living by God's kingdom commands.

What is judgement? Waiting for your heartbeat to stop.

The Spirit of God subdues my natural inclination, demonstrates the way I should go and then enables me to joyfully obey God.

When we come to the law that David is talking about, he's discussing the whole of God's word, It is called

First: The Stability of God's Law. 89

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

Just like the world – 90 - you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

91 - By your appointment they stand this day

Isaiah 40:8 – The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Second: The Source of God's Law

97 – Your law

98 – Your commandments

99 – Your testimonies

100 – Your precepts

101 – Your word

102 – Your rules

103 – Your words

104 – Your precepts

John 14:15 - If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

1 John 5:3 - For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

GOSPEL: This is one of the best ways you know you are a Christian. Is it a burden to read the Bible? Is it a burden to obey God?

But for Christians, the Spirit of God subdues our natural inclination, demonstrates the way we should go and then enables us to joyfully obey God.

The nonChristian doesn't like God's law because she or he wants to be a law to themselves

Meditating on God's word is meditating on God

Third: The Substance of God's Law 98-100

Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. ⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

I don't think this is pride or cockiness. David has learned that there is a difference between God's wisdom and that of the world.

1 Corinthians 1:25 - For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

- a) Wisdom 98
- b) Understanding 99 & 104

Age and wisdom do not always go together. Time doesn't fix everything. Experience isn't infallible. Someone may say, "I have twenty-five years of experience," but this could just be one year of experience repeated twenty-four times.

Portia Nelson, An Autobiography

ONE

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost and helpless.
It takes me forever to find a way out.

TWO

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.

I can't believe I'm in the same place.
Again, it takes me a long time to get out.

THREE

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it, and I still fall in.
It's a habit.
I know where I am, and I climb out immediately.

FOUR

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I tiptoe around it.

FIVE

I walk down another street.

Wisdom is the right application of knowledge.

- c) Rightness 101
- d) Rules 102
- e) Truth 104

What has David become wise about?

- Kaph (81-88) – the Psalmist laments over his situation;
- Lamedh (89-96) – He proclaims God's word as his source of life
- Mem (97-104) is the celebration of God's word over
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The wisdom David has learned is that good times, and bad times, will come and go but God's word remains. As such, it, and not happenings, should be the focus of his life.

Four: Our Attitude Toward the Law. 97

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day

Verse 97 is actually the theme for this section. The psalmist doesn't simply say that he reads the law or knows the law or believes the law or obeys the law but he tells us why he does all of those things – he loves the law (present tense).

Romans 7:22 – I delight in the law of God

103 - *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

Jesus warned us about salt that loses its savor. Morton salt will last about 5 years. But honey never spoils. The oldest jar of honey ever found is believed to be 5500 years old.

But how do I know if I love the Bible?

The word 'meditate,' a word we find in vv. 97 and 99 gives us a clue. It appears in either noun or verb form (שִׁיחָה; שִׁיחַ) eight times in the Psalm. The Hebrew word seems to suggest the rehearsal of a matter in one's mind.

What's on your mind?

Conclusion:

Jesus, the law giver is the law keeper. He has satisfied the demands of the law, fulfilled it on my behalf so that my "have to" has been turned into "want to." He has changed our duty into a delight.

Community Groups:

- 1 – How is your chronological reading of the Bible?
- 2 – What is most difficult about it?
- 3 – What is most rewarding about it?
- 4 – If you've stopped, why?
- 5 – How might you get started again?
- 6 – How does the law picture God's character?
- 7 – How has the Bible ever 'pricked' your conscience?
- 8 – Where/how does the Bible point us to Jesus?
- 9 – Why is it good to know God's law is eternal? How do we apply that thought?
- 10 – Why are God's commands not grievous to a Christian?
- 11 – How does my attitude toward the Bible – burden or delight – speak to my Christianity or lack thereof?
- 12 – Why don't nonChristians like the Bible?

13 – What should our attitude toward the law be?

14 – How does the Holy Spirit enable us to love and keep God’s law

FYI: Notice that our text has the word “Mem” at the top of it. Mem is a letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It is like our M in our alphabet. If you look further down, you will see another strange word: “Nun,” with the Hebrew letter next to it. It is like our N. Psalm 119 is divided up into the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, thus there is 22 sections in this Psalm. Each section has 8 verses (check it out; count the 8 verses under “Mem”). If we were reading this in Hebrew, each verse in each section begins with that letter. For example, in verses 1-8, each verse begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph. In verses 9-18, each verse begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Beth. Thus, in our section, under “Mem,” each verse in Hebrew begins with the letter “Mem.” This scheme is intended to help make the Psalm easier to remember and memorize.

Here is a sense of what has happened so far in Psalm 119 –

1. Aleph: Blessed Are Those Whose Way Is Blameless (1-8)
2. Beth: How Can a Young Man Keep His Way Pure? (9-16)
3. Gimel: Who Am I? A Servant and a Sojourner (17-24)
4. Daleth: To What Do I Cling? The Way of God – “according to your word” (25-32)
5. He: Teach Me, Give Me, Lead Me, Incline My Heart and Turn My Eyes (33-40)
6. Waw: Then I Will Keep, Walk, Speak, Find Delight, and Lift Up My Hands (41-48)
7. Zayin: Remember Me, Lord, as I Remember Your Word (49-56)
8. Heth: I Am Keeping My Promise, Lord, Please Keep Your Promise (57-64)
9. Teth: It is Good that I was Afflicted, because before I was Afflicted I went astray (65-72)
10. Yodh: In Faithfulness You Have Afflicted Me (73-80)
11. Kaph: I Am at the End of My Rope, O LORD, How Long? (81-88)
12. Lamedh: Your Word Endures Forever, and so I Will Never Forget Your Life-giving Precepts (89-96)
13. Mem: Oh How I Love Your Sweet Law! (97-104)