

How To Be Blessed and Blameless Before the Lord

Psalm 119:1-8

Introduction: 1) In his treatise “On Christian Freedom,” (1520) the reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote concerning the Bible, “One thing and one only is necessary for Christian life, righteousness and liberty. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Christ. . .let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever. But if it has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of Life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate. This is why the prophet in the entire cxix Psalm, and in many other places of Scripture with so many sighs yearns after the Word of God. . .” (*Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 2, 314).

2) The words of Luther do indeed beautifully describes Psalm 119, one of the most important, valuable and precious text in all of Scripture. It is the “Word of God” psalm with so many unique features. Just consider the following:

- 1) It is the longest chapter in the Bible with 176 verses. It is longer than 17 books in the New Testament. It is longer than each of the Minor Prophets with the exceptions of Daniel, Hosea and Zechariah.
- 2) It is an acrostic psalm (see also Lamentations 3) built on the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse in each stanza begins with the same letter. For example, each of the first 8 verses begins with the letter *aleph*. If this were English, verses 1-8 each would begin with the letter A.
- 3) Almost every verse makes reference to the Word of God. Franz Delitzsch well said of Psalm 119 that it is, “The Christians golden A B C of the praise, love, power and use of the word of God; for here we have set forth in inexhaustible fullness what the word of God is to a man, and how a man is to behave himself in relation to it” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5, 243).
- 4) There are at least 8 different terms or synonyms used in reference to the Word of God: “law” (*torah*), 25 times; “word” (*dabar*), 24 times; “rules” or ordinances” (*mispatim*) 23 times; “testimonies” (*hedot*), 23 times; “commandments” (*miswoth*), 22 times; “decrees” or “statutes” (*huqqim*), 21 times; “precepts” or “charges” (*paqqudim*), 21 times; “sayings,” “promise,” or “word,” (*imra*), 19 times” (Boice, *Psalms*, 107-150, 971).

3) From stanza one, stanza *aleph*, I want to draw out 8 truths that lead to a blessed and blameless life before the Lord.

I. Walk according to the Lord's instructions 119:1

- Psalm 119 is composed of various genres (law, lament, praise, innocence, confidence and celebration). However, it is “best to call it a wisdom psalm” (Ross, *Psalms*, vol. 3, 461; Van Gemeren, *Psalms*, EBC vol. 5, 858). Verse one certainly recalls Psalm 1. It is composed of a two-fold blessing on those who walk in the word. Happy, fortunate, blessed are those persons 1) “whose way is blameless” and 2) “who walk in the law of the Lord.” It is easy to see how the two ideas support one another.
- The blameless person is a person of integrity (cf. Psalm 101: 1Tim. 3:1). Their manner of life is above reproach. They conduct themselves wisely because they walk in the word, they live their lives in harmony with and obedience to the law of the Lord. Like the man of Psalm 1, such a person “delights in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:2). This man is blessed because he is blameless. His life knows nothing of duplicity or hypocrisy. There is no pretense in this man. He rejoices in the reality that happiness and holiness are wonderful companions.

II. Seek the Lord with all your heart 119:2

Verse 2 contains a second blessing and it may be the key that unlocks the entire psalm. Why? Because the heart of the matter is always the heart. The blessed person seeks the Lord “with their whole heart.” This person is in passionate pursuit of a person! He wants to know his Lord above all else. And, he well understands that knowledge of God is discovered in His word, here in verse two, “his testimonies.” “Testimonies” has covenantal connotations. Spurgeon says, “Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it” (*The Treasury of David*, vol. 3, 141). Jeremiah 29:13 reminds us, “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” Keep his testimonies. Seek him with your whole heart. Be blessed!

III. Walk in the Lord’s ways 119:3

This verse echoes the wisdom of verse one and naturally flows from verse 2. Seeking the Lord with our “whole heart,” we will not practice or be characterized by wrong-doing. *The Message* says such a person will not, “go off on their own.” Staying close to the Lord, we will “walk in his ways.” God’s word is my compass. His word guides my course of conduct, my daily walk. God’s word maps out my life. It forms my habits and directs my pursuits. My

friend Lig Duncan says, “the way of the Lord is about walk, not talk” (Sermon, “Not by Bread Alone Blessed are Those Who Walk in the Word,” 1-6-13). He is right. This person doesn’t just say the right things, he does the right things. Out of what I call “gospel gratitude,” he or she lives out the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ that has transformed them and made them a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

IV. Diligently keep the Lord’s precepts 119:4

God’s word does not contain suggestions for our consideration. They are commands from a king that require and demand our obedience. God’s “precepts,” His instructions, come to us with the force of a command, a mandate, a divine order. They are not options to be considered. They are commands to be obeyed. They are God’s (“your”) precepts. Derek Kidner says, “the word points to the particular instructions of the Lord, as one who cares about detail” (*Psalms 73-150*; TOTC, p. 418). And, because these are the sovereign Lord’s particular instructions, they are “to be kept diligently.” The idea is God’s word is to be fully and completely obeyed. Partial obedience is complete disobedience, just like partial faithfulness is complete unfaithfulness or partial honesty is complete dishonesty. We have a delightful fixation on keeping the instructions of our Lord! They are not a burden. They are our joy!

V. Commit your ways to the Lord's statutes 119:5

- Verses 5-8 shift to the first person. The psalmist begins to apply in a deeply personal way his desire to obey the teachings of the Bible. Six personal pronouns fill these last four verses.
- The blessed man says to the Lord, “Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes.” This is the 3rd time he has used the word “ways.” (vs. 1, 3). The psalmist prays that his ways will line up with God’s ways! Further, he wants to be “steadfast,” diligent, disciplined, consistent in keeping and obeying the Lord’s statutes. Ross notes, “The word for “statutes” here and in verse 8 emphasizes the binding nature of God’s law. By keeping these statutes one’s conduct will be steadfast” (470). The Psalmist is well aware that our human hearts are prone to wander. He knows our ways, our manner of living, is not naturally directed to keep God’s statutes. He readily acknowledges his need for God to be steadfast in his obedience.

VI. Meditate on the Lord's commandments 119:6

Steadfast obedience has a wonderful and blessed result: “Then I shall not be put to shame.” A Christian cannot lose their salvation. However, we can be put to shame. We can be embarrassed by our disobedience in obeying the will of our heavenly Father. Spurgeon well says, “Sin brings shame, and when sin

in gone, the reason for being ashamed is banished” (144). Adam and Eve had no experience of shame until they listened to Satan and disobeyed the Lord (Gen. 3). The same is true for us. Whose voice will we hear and listen to? The psalmist has the answer: “I will have my eyes fixed on all your commandments.” The word “fixed” means to gaze at with intensity, to carefully pay attention to, to dwell upon, meditate. The psalmist says in order to not be put to shame, I will glue my eyes on all your commandments. I will not take a cafeteria approach to your word picking and choosing the parts I will obey. All of your word for all of me all of the time will be my ambition, my holy pursuit. No part-time Christianity for me!

VII. Learn about the Lord’s righteous judgments 119:7

In verse 2 we are told to seek the Lord with our “whole heart.” Now in verse 7 we declare that we will praise the Lord with an “upright heart.” Praise flows naturally from an upright heart that has fixed its eyes on all the commandments of the Lord (v.6) and has learned his righteous rules, his righteous decisions (v.7). Obedience, we discover, is not a burden. It is not a life of dullness and drudgery. It is a life of delight, praise, joy, blessedness. Learning the Word of God, his ways and wisdom, is a call to discipleship. It is a call to be a diligent student of the Word. To love God, we must know God. Bible study leads to praise. Theology leads to praise! Spurgeon beautifully

says, “We must learn to praise, learn that we may praise, and praise when we have learned” (145). The Bible, by its very nature, is a song book, a music book. Study it and you will soon find yourself singing about it and the Savior it points to!

VIII. Keep the Lord’s statutes 119:8

- This first stanza ends on a note of resolve, of determination. “I will keep your statutes” (cf. v. 5). With resolve springing forth from my “whole heart” (v. 2) and my “upright heart” (v. 7), I have determined in my soul to obey your word, “all your commandments” (cf. v.6). This is not a boastful declaration, for it is followed by a humble and heartfelt request, “do not utterly forsake me [cf. Psalm 22:1].”
- Apparently the psalmist was in some difficulty, some distress. This should not surprise us. After all, 2 Timothy 3:12 reminds us, “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” The psalmist well understands that our striving after obedience is all for nothing without the presence of our Lord. Feelings will certainly ebb and flow, come and go. However, in His Word we have a sure and certain promise, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). With such a promise we can press on. With such a promise we can continually praise the Lord.

Conclusion

Psalm 119 is not only a beautiful portrait of the perfect written Word of God, it is also a beautiful portrait of the perfect living Word of God. He and He alone is the truly blameless man who walks in the word and seeks His Lord with His whole heart. Walking in the ways of His Father, He did no wrong, and diligently kept the precepts, statutes and commands of Holy Scripture. And, when dying on the cross for the sins of the world (John 1:29), though forsaken as the wrath of God was poured out on Him as our penal substitute (Ps. 22:1), he was not utterly and forever forsaken, praying with his final breathe, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Jesus of Nazareth is the Psalm 119 man! In a true and real sense, “every line speaks of Jesus” (Patrick Reardon, *Christ is the Psalms*, 238).