

The Wondrous Word of God

Psalm 119:17-24

Introduction

- “The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder-land...it is itself a world of wonders” (Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. 3, 172). This is the 3rd stanza, stanza Gimel (vs. 17-24), in the “Word of God Psalm,” Psalm 119.
- These verses seem to be “particularly autobiographical” (Boice, 983). They find an echo in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:10-12). With its theme of the “servant,” (v. 17, 23; cf. Isa 53), it is easy to imagine the Lord Jesus praying this Psalm in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I. Ask God to help you keep His Word 119:17-18

- (John 14:15) - Obedience to the commands of our Lord is simply a tangible and visible expression of the love that we have for Him in our hearts
- 1) His word is life for God’s servant 119:17
- “Deal bountifully with your servant.” It is a strong and urgent request. It carries the idea of deliverance (13:6; 116:7; 142:7; Ross, 483).
 - It is well to note that not every follower of God is called the Lord’s servant. Abraham (Gen. 26:24), Moses (Ex. 14:31; Deut. 34:5; Joshua

1:2), David (2 Sam. 7:5, 8), Isaiah (Isa. 20:3). Of course Jesus is the quintessential servant of the Lord (Is. 53).

- Why does the servant call on His God for aid? The answer is given at the end of verse 17, “that I may live and keep your word.” Jesus teaches us this same truth in Matt. 4:4. Obedience to God’s Word is essential to the life of the Lord’s servant.

2) His Word is wonderful to God’s servant 119:18

- Three important truths are clearly evident in this amazing verse. First, there are wonderful or “wondrous things” in God’s Torah. Second, we need God to open our eyes to see these wondrous things. (cf. Luke 24) Third, we must pray, asking God for spiritual and supernatural illumination to help us see what is there.

II. Ask God to help you stay faithful in a world that is not your home

119:19-20

- This world, “this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4) is not my home.
- 1 Peter 1:1 calls us “exiles,” 2:11 says we are “stranger and exiles.” (cf. Hebrews 13:14; Colossians 1:13).
- I live in a different kingdom. I have a different spiritual address and destiny!

1) Know who you are: a person headed to a different kingdom 119:19

- As *The Message* helpfully paraphrases “I’m a stranger in these parts.”

- As a sojourner or resident alien in this world, he needs guidance, “clear directions” (*The Message*). He needs an accurate road map to navigate this world on the way to the heavenly kingdom that is his real home. Therefore he prays, “Hide not your commandments from me.” This is a negative way of expressing the truth of v. 18.
- Phil. 3:20 reminds us” our citizenship is in heaven.”

2) Know what you need: a passion for the Word 119:20

- The plea of v. 19 is stated even more strongly in v. 20. The idea is I am broken, “crushed to pieces.” I am shattered by the internal, intensity of my longing (cf. Psalm 42:1-2).
- The longing and consuming of our souls is “at all times.” Our passion for the Word is not periodic or episodic!

III. Ask God to help you when others oppose you 119:21-24

- Opposition should never surprise the disciple of Jesus Christ. (cf. John 15:18-20; See also 2 Timothy 3:12).

1) Trust that God will deal with the arrogant and disobedient 119:21

- The psalmist has great confidence in the character and ways of God as revealed in His Word. He is confident that God will deal effectively with those he describes as 1) insolent (*CSB*, “arrogant”), 2) accursed ones (*CSB*, “the ones under a curse”) and

3) who wander from your commandments. Allan Ross points out the word “rebuke” refers to “a verbal activity that causes an effective end to the activities” (Ross, 485).

2) Trust God will hear your prayers for relief from persecution 119:22-24

- Verses 22-24 hang together because at the end of each one the psalmists makes a promise about his relationship to God’s Word. He has a two-fold assignment. First, he prays: “Take away from me scorn (*CSB*, “insult”) and contempt.” Second, he must rightly relate to God’s Word in faith and obedience.

a) While you trust Him keep His testimonies 119:22

Lord, remove ridicule, reproach and the taunts of the prideful and arrogant from my life. There is a basis for my request: “I have kept your testimonies.”

b) While you trust Him meditate on His statutes 119:23

Echoes of our Lord’s betrayal can be heard in the distance. In response the servant of the Lord will meditate on the Word (“your statutes”).

c) While you trust Him delight in His counsel 119:24

The psalmist concludes stanza Gimel with a two-fold affirmation:

- 1) “your testimonies are my delight” and 2) “they are my

counselors.” The Word is like a band of brothers who counsel and guide me. As the “men of my counsel” (lit. meaning), I will pay no attention to those who want to see me fail, who want to take me down.

Conclusion

As a faithful follower of Jesus, like our Lord, it is inevitable that you will face opposition, ridicule, criticism and conspiracies of criticism. When that happens, let these verses be your guide. As God’s servant, value what He thinks more than what others think. As His servant delight in His counsel, meditate on his statues, let your soul be consumed with his Word, and trust Him to take care of your enemies. There are wondrous things in His Word. He will show you. He will help you. He will deliver you. He did it for His Son. He will do it for you, too!