

What a Wonderful God We Serve

Psalm 119:57-64

Introduction: 1) The great Greek philosopher Socrates (c. 470-399 B.C.), when put on trial for corrupting the young and disrespecting the Republic, wisely and with wit declared, “The unexamined life is not worth living” (*Plato’s Apology*, 38a). In stanza Heth (vs. 57- 64) of Psalm 119, the psalmist appears to be in substantial agreement as he notes the importance of thinking on his ways (v.59), of carefully examining his life.

2) As the Psalmist reflects on his own life, he is driven to consider the God he loves and serves. He cannot think of himself apart from His God. He can only conclude that he serves a wonderful Lord (vs. 57, 64) who is his portion (v. 57) and whose “faithful love” (CSB) fills the earth (v. 64). And, because he serves a wonderful God, he will respond in four specific and precise ways.

I. Recognize all you have is from the Lord 119:57

- Psalm 24:1 informs us, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.”

Well, in essence the Psalmist in this verse declares, “The Lord is mine and the fullness thereof.” In other words to have the Lord is to have everything! Everything I will ever need I have in my Lord (Yahweh, vs. 57, 64).

- Michael Wilcock points out, “Two great Old Testament words beginning with *heth* must have jostled for attention when the psalmist reached this stanza. He began its first verse with the word for “portion’, *hēleg*, and its last with the word for ‘love’, *hesed*, and thus its theme was practically chosen for him: the believer’s deep personal relationship with the Lord and his word.” (*Psalms* 73-150, 201). Let’s examine the first in v. 57.

1) He is my portion (reality)

The declaration “The Lord is my portion” is personal and powerful. It comes from the language and world of the Levites, though we find it elsewhere in the Psalms (Psalm 16:5; 73:26; 142:6). When Israel entered the promised land of Canaan, each of the twelve tribes was given a portion of land but one: the priestly tribe of Levi. However, in Numbers 18:20 the Lord tells them “I am your portion and inheritance” (cf. Deut. 10:9). The psalmist applies this to himself and by extension to all of God’s people. To have the Lord of all creation as your portion or inheritance is to have everything! What an inheritance. What a privilege. What a blessing. All I have I have in my God, a God whose faithful love fills the earth (v. 64).

2) Here is my pledge (obedience)

To have the Lord as my portion or inheritance calls for an immediate response of commitment and devotion, “I promise to keep your words.” Overwhelmed by the reality of his relationship with the sovereign God of the universe, he makes a promise, a pledge, to obey his Lord’s words. This is done not out of obligation but out of love. Jesus puts it perfectly in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” God’s gift to us is God Himself! My gift to Him is an easy one, “I promise to keep your words.” Why? It is simple. I love Him.

II. Seek the Lord with your whole heart

119:58-60

When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus said in Mark 12:30, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.” In other words God wants you to love all of him with all of you all of the time. I think it is very similar to how a wife wants to be loved by her husband. Completely and totally! So, how do we get there? Verses 58-60 provides three helpful steps.

1) Pray

119:58

- Following closely on the heels of his promise to keep God's Word, the psalmist petitions the Lord, "I have sought your favor with my whole heart." The idea is look on me with your favor. Turn your face toward me in kindness. I have made a promise to obey you (v.57), now I ask for you to be gracious to me as you have promised.
- Such an appeal naturally flows from one whose whole heart is focused on the Lord (vs. 2, 7, 10, 11, 32, 34, 36). What access the child of God has to His heavenly Father, his sovereign Lord. I can go to Him and talk with Him anytime and anyplace. Only through Jesus is this possible. (1 Tim. 2:5).

2) Think

119:59

The psalmist is introspective and self-reflective in the first part of verse 59. He will examine his own heart and ways, carefully considering them. This is a good thing for us to do on a regular basis. Think about your life, your plans and priorities. Do they line up with God's? Satan will work hard against this. With a 1,000

diversions, he will try and prevent us from rightly thinking about ourselves and our God.

3) Run

119:59-60

Thinking truthfully about ourselves will bring us to the place of repentance. Consider the Prodigal Son who, “when he came to himself” (Luke 15:17), quickly made his way back to his father. Thinking on where he is with his Master, the psalmist declares, “I turn my feet to your testimonies.” Was he walking in the wrong direction? If so, not anymore. Further, “I hurried, not hesitating to keep your commandments.” There will be no delay in keeping your Word. I have determined to run hard after my Lord and his Word. There is resolve and steel in these words. A song from my childhood quickly pops into my mind, “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.”

III. Praise the Lord in the midst of your trials

119:61-62

Alan Ross is exactly right, “There is something hollow about people pleading for God to fulfill the promises in his word when they pay little attention to keeping his word” (*Psalms*, vol. 3, 518.). The psalmist has declared his intention to keep the commands of the Lord. Furthermore, when trials and

difficulties come and the wicked try to trap him, he will not waver. He knows who he will serve no matter what!

1) Don't let the wicked stop you 119:61

Evil people are out to take the psalmist down. It appears they might succeed. The cords or ropes of the wicked “ensnare me.” The *Message* says, “the wicked hemmed me in – there was no way out.” Evil hunters have tracked him down and snared him. Exactly how we don't know. But, we do know this. The psalmist will not forget the law of God. He will continue to honor, trust and obey God no matter what happens to him. The mistreatments and unjust actions of the wicked will only drive him to his God and his Word. God is his portion (v. 57) and his counsel (v. 61; also v. 24). His presence and His Word will keep him running in the right direction.

2) Don't let the hour stop you 119:62

The psalmist declares, “At midnight I rise to praise you,” to thank you. Hassell Bullock points out, “This may represent a daily pattern of piety, like Daniel's custom of praying three times a day (Dan. 6:10)...” (*Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 222). It certainly reminds us of the late night prayer habits of the Lord Jesus (Luke 6:12). “The psalmist

did not get out of bed to check on nighttime robbers” (Spurgeon, 256). He got up to walk or kneel in prayer. The posture of the heart is the key, not the body. He gets up late at night to pray, and he tells us what motivates him, “your righteous rules”, “your righteous judgments” (CSB). A righteous God who has given us a righteous word is worthy of our praise anytime. This includes the midnight hour.

IV. Join with others in obeying the Word 119:63-64

Two ideas drive the final verses of stanza Heth. First, I am not in this alone. I have friends or companions as I run hard after God. I am not a Lone Ranger. Evil people may try to ruin me and “drag me into sin” (v. 61, NLT), but I have a band of brothers to keep me on the right path. Second, our God is a God of *hesed*, of loyal, steadfast, faithful covenant love. No God loves His people like this God.

1) Loyal partners are with you 119:63

We are known by our choice of friends. The psalmist wants to run with those who run with God. This is his spiritual posse! He is a friend (and brother) to all who fear and have respect for the Lord. He is a friend to all who keep God’s precepts, who obey God’s Word. God’s Word is a

“tie that binds” together those whose hearts long to see the face of God turned toward them with pleasure. Friends play an important role in our lives. Choose wisely.

2) Loyal love is with you

119:64

The devoted follower of Jesus Christ knows the steadfast love, the faithful love, of God personally and intimately. However, God’s love is bigger and greater than that. Indeed the earth is full of God’s loving care. Whether they know it or not, whether they acknowledge it or not, the whole world lives in this fullness of his love. It is present like the air we breathe. Were this not the case, we would not survive for even a millisecond.

Because we are loved in this way, we want to know and enjoy our God even more. Thus the stanza ends, “teach me your statutes.” “Teach me” is a reoccurring theme in Psalm 119 (vs. 12, 26, 29, 33, 64, 66, 68, 99, 108, 124, 135, 171). It reminds us again of the importance of loving our Lord well with our minds. Knowing who He is and what He is like moves me to want to know him more. Where is such knowledge found? The answer is simple: in His Word.

Conclusion

The Lord himself is my portion, or as the *Good News Translation* says, “You are all I want, O Lord.” And, This Lord’s “faithful love” (*CSB*), His “unfailing love” (*NLT*), fills the earth. Those who have met this sovereign Lord through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, can indeed shout and sing, “the Lord Himself is all I want and his unfailing love not only fills the earth, it fills me!” This is the blessing and joy of the Lord’s salvation. This is the blessing and joy that God promises to all who seek Him with their whole heart.