

Why I Love The Word of God

Psalm 119:97-104

Introduction: 1) In a devotional entitled “How to Delight in God’s Word,” John Piper says, “Never reduce Christianity to a matter of demands, resolutions and willpower. It is a matter of what we love, what we delight in, what tastes good to us. . . .So someone may ask: How can I come to delight in the Word of God? My answer is twofold:

- 1) pray for new taste buds on the tongue of your heart;
 - 2) meditate on the staggering promises of God to his people.” (5-26-12)
- 2) I think John is on to something, and both of these ideas find biblical warrant in the 13th stanza of Psalm 119, stanza *Mem.* Meditation is mentioned twice in verses 97 and 99. The idea of spiritually alive taste buds is beautifully described in verse 103. What do you mediate on, day dream about? What do you hunger for, long to taste with the tongue of your soul? For the author of Psalm 119 the answer is easy. It is the Bible, the Word of God. In the longest chapter in the Scriptures, he spends 176 verses extolling the beauty and wonder of the Bible. And now, in verses 97-104, he very specifically addresses his love for the Word of God (v. 97). This book is special to him. It is like no other book on planet earth. He has a love relationship with it that is unparalleled and knows no rival. While there are, no doubt, many

reasons why he loves the Bible, he chooses to focus on three in these verses which also provides the natural division of this stanza:

- 1) It gives me wisdom (vs. 97-100)
- 2) It keep me from evil (vs. 101-102)
- 3) It provides me joy and protection (vs. 103-104)

Let's unwrap these 3 important truths in a stanza that amazingly, and unlike almost all the others, does not contain a single petition or request. In a real sense, it is a declaration or confession of faith! Not a declaration of independence, but a declaration of absolute dependence on the inerrant and infallible, holy and righteous, Word of God.

I. The Bible gives me wisdom

119:97-100

1) We talk about what we love. We think about what we love. We dream about what we love. We sing about what we love. Examples are unending! The psalmist is no different. There is an object of his heart and affections and he is not ashamed to tell the world. In verse 97 he literally blurts it out, “Oh how I love your law!” Of course the Lord, who is never directly mentioned in this stanza, is the subject of this declaration. It is the Lord’s law that he loves because he loves the Lord of the Law, the Lord of the Word. And, because he loves the Word of God, he meditates on it “all the day.” The *CSB* says, “It is my

meditation all day long.” Now, why does he love it? Why does he think about, recall it, and ponder it throughout the day? Three reasons are noted in verses 98-100.

1) It makes me wiser than my enemies

119:97-98

- Verse 98 contains another clear and straightforward declaration: “Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies.” The psalmist has repeatedly noted his enemies in previous verses. They are the arrogant (cf. v. 69), cursed ones of verse 21. They are those who insult him and hold him in contempt in verse 22. They are the princes, government leaders, who plot against him in verse 23. They are those who taunt him in verse 42. They are the wicked of verses 53, 61, and the liars of verses 69, 78 & 86. They are the persecutors of verse 84 who set traps for him in verse 85 and nearly end his life in verses 87 and 94. And yet in all their efforts they have failed because God’s Word enabled him to outsmart them again and again. God’s word gave him victory over his enemies.
 - You and I will repeatedly face opposition in this life because of our devotion to Christ and obedience to his Word (2 Tim. 3:12). When we determine to please Christ rather than man we can expect to be attacked, mocked, scored and ridiculed. And, we can also be tempted to fight our battles man’s way rather than God’s. We must not! We must determine to

do God's will God's way believing it is smarter and wiser than the ways of this world. And, we must be sure that God's word is ready at hand, that it is "ever with me." You see, if we don't have it and know it, we can't use it. Love it. Read it. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Keep it close.

2) It gives me more insight than all my teachers 119:99

Verses 99 at first blush can sound arrogant and presumptuous. However, the context is crucial. Afterall one of God's great gifts to his people are gifted teachers (see for example Rom. 12:7). John Goldingay is helpful when he notes the psalmist may "refer to people who do not base their teaching on *the Teaching*," that is teachers who do not base their instruction on the Word of God (*Psalms*, vol. 3, 418). Mere knowledge does not necessarily translate into insight and wisdom. Having a Ph.D. may indicate you have accumulated a lot of knowledge but it does not mean you have a lot of wisdom. "God is the great teacher" (Ross, *Psalms*, vol. 3, 547) and His Bible is the great book! Allan Ross is right, God's Word "is superior to all other sources of wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, knowledge alone is not enough; faith in God's word and the commitment to obey it is what brings spiritual insight and wisdom" (Ibid). Know it and obey it and you will be wiser than your enemies. Ignore it and disobey it and you will be a fool.

3) It provides me more understanding than possessed by the elders

119:100

The Bible teaches us to honor and listen to our elders. We are to treat them with reverence and respect. And yet it is possible for them to get it wrong, to make mistakes, to allow their priorities and perspective to get all out of whack. Life experiences are helpful but they are not infallible. Listening to God is better than listening even to mom and dad! Thus the psalmist can declare, “I understand more than the elders (*ESV*, “the aged”) because I obey (*ESV*, “keep”) your precepts.” Bottom-line, when push comes to shove, if I have to listen and obey God or listen and obey my parents, grandparents, teachers or elders I will listen to and obey God! I like how the late James Boice puts it in helpful perspective:

“How can this be? How can the writer claim to be wiser than these others, particularly his teachers and the elders? Is this only the boast of some smart young student who thinks he has all the answers when he actually hardly even knows the right questions? Is he a “sophomore” in God’s school, one whose initial learning has made him only a “wise moron,” which is what the word “sophomore” means? In each of these

comparisons the psalmist is thinking of those who appear wise by the world's standards but who lack the deeper wisdom that comes from the [Word] of God" (*Living by the Book*, 92).

To make it personal: I hope and pray my children and grandchildren always choose God's way and wisdom even over mine, every single time. I don't always know what's best, but God does.

II. The Bible keeps me from evil **119:101-102**

Wisdom is knowledge applied. It is the ability to see life from God's perspective and then to act accordingly. Wisdom is put on display in a holy and obedient life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. It is a life characterized by goodness not evil. How specifically does the Word of God help us do this?

1) It helps me walk the right way **119:101**

Because of his love for the Word of God, the Psalmist says, "I hold back my feet from every evil way," from "every evil path" (CSB). He realizes this is essential if he is to keep or follow God's Word. The Word of God puts a check on our conduct. It provides divine guard rails that keep us on the right path, the right road. It is a spiritual GPS that will guide us in the right way to the right place. Proverbs 14:12 is a faithful reminder, "There is

a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way to death.” (also 16:25).

The Word of God helps me walk the right path, a path that leads to life not death.

2) It helps me do the right thing 119:102

To honor Christ there are some places I do not need to go. And, there are some things I don’t need to watch, read or listen to. Yes, I need to walk the right way, but I also need to do the right thing. The psalmist, as he walks the right path to avoid every evil way, determines that he will not turn aside from God’s word (“Your rules,” “Your judgments”). In other words “the decisions he makes in life [will] conform to the decisions of God in [His] word” (Ross, 548). The compass for his life is Scripture and the perennial question that guides every decision is, “What does the Bible say?” Because God has “taught me” His truth, His knowledge, His wisdom, in His Word, I will live a Scripture saturated life. It guides me and it instructs me. I stay on the right road and I choose to do the right thing because I listen to the right Teacher! Spurgeon provides a wonderful word of wisdom in all of this, “If we begin to depart a little we can never tell where we shall end” (*TOD*, vol 3, 332). If there is no beginning toward sin, there will be no end in sin. Let the Word guide you where you go. Let the Word teach you how to think. Let the Word make you more like Jesus.

III. The Bible provides me joy and protection 119:103-104

Following Christ is not a religion it is a relationship. It is not a drudgery of duty. It is a delectable delight! His Word is how He feeds and nourishes us. It is like a vitamin rich smoothie that not only tastes good to you, it is good for you. In Psalm 19:10, King David tells us the Word of God is “sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.” The anonymous author of Psalm 119 agrees!

1) It gives me pleasure 119:103

When we fall in love with Jesus we will love and desire his Word. It will not taste like castor oil, Shredded Wheat or English Peas. No! The Psalmist says, “How sweet your word is to my taste-sweeter than honey in my mouth.” The Message colorfully paraphrases, “Your words are so choice, so tasty; I prefer them to the best home cooking.” God’s Word becomes our desire, our passion. It is sweet and it brings me happiness, joy, satisfaction, and pleasure. It tastes good. As Spurgeon says, “The sweetness of all temporal things fall short of the infinite deliciousness of the eternal word” (332). It is spiritual health food with no fat or unnecessary carbs. It is not loaded with calories but only tasty, nourishing protein.

2) It gives me protection 119:103

God's word is nourishing and sweet to our spiritual palate. It is also healthy and good for the mind. Like spiritual antibodies, it protects us from life threatening germs, bacteria and diseases. The psalmist closes this stanza by again emphasizing the "understanding" (v. 99) the Word of God provides. It is through the Lord's precepts, His teaching, that we gain understanding. God's Word teaches us how things really are, what is really important, what really matters. It shows me what is right, good and just. It shows me what is, as Francis Schaeffer said, "true truth." It helps me make sense of this fallen, broken, confused and evil world. And because I love it and delight in it, "I hate every false way." It both exposes evil and protects my mind with truth so I see things correctly. Thus, I hate sin. I hate Satan and his lies. I hate the demonic and the pain they inflict all around the world and here in our nation. Everything that mocks God and leads people to walk the path of destruction and death, I hate it. I loathe it. I want nothing to do with any of it.

Conclusion

George Barna says, "Most Christians don't act like Jesus because most Christians don't think like Jesus. I am afraid that may be true. But, could it

be the reason we don't think like Jesus is that we don't love like Jesus. Oh, how easy it is for me to be vs. 97 and place it in the mouth of our Lord.

[Read] Oh, how easy it is for me to put vs. 103 in the mouth of our Lord.

[Read] Oh, how easy it is for me to put this whole stanza in the in the mouth of our Lord! This was the path He walked all the way to the cross and out of the tomb! May it be the path we walk wherever our Lord may lead.