

Marks of the Servant of the Lord

Psalm 119:121-128

Introduction: 1) How we see ourselves in our relationship to God will greatly impact how we think and what we do. If we think God exists to serve us, we will make demands of Him and treat him like a genie in the sky. If, on the other hand, we believe we exist to serve Him, we will be quick to listen to His Word and obey His every command. We will think more of our God than we think of ourselves.

2) Jesus teaches us in Matthew 10:24, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” As our Master, Jesus sets the example and provides the pattern for us as the Lord’s servant.

3) The word “servant” occurs numerous times in Psalm 119 (vs. 17, 23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 84, 91, 122, 124, 125, 135, 140, 176). 14 to be exact. Here in stanza Ayin, it appears 3 times and is at the heart of this meditation. Verse 125 is simple and straightforward, “I am your servant.” These words capture the essence of verses 121-128 and provide a helpful roadmap into the heart, mind and emotions of the man or woman who takes delight in being the Lord’s servant. Jesus was the Lord’s servant *par excellent!* It is easy to hear Him singing this psalm. Many it be true for those of us who call Him our Master and seek to follow in His footsteps.

I. God's servants pursue justice and trust in God's love 119:121-124

The servant of the Lord Jesus has an especially precious and tender relationship with his Master. He is loved and cared for. He has access to enter his Master's presence at any time knowing he will receive a warm reception and a ready ear. Our Master is both like a loving Father and a compassionate elder brother. In fact, that is exactly who our God is in relation to His servants, His children. Our Father? See John 1:12! Our elder brother? See Hebrews 2:11! With this then as the foundation for our Master-Servant relationship, how may we petition our Lord, given our passion for what matters to Him?

1) Ask God to protect you 119:121-122

Stanza Ayin begins with a word of confession and affirmation, "I have done what is just and right." I have done justice and righteousness. *The Message* says, "I stood up for justice and the right." To stand up for justice and righteousness means we stand against injustice and wrong.

With God's Word as our guide, our GPS, we take a stand for those things God loves and values.

Taking a stand for the Lord leads to a prayer for help. First, "do not leave me to my oppressors" (vs. 121). Verse 122 reinforces this plea, "let not the insolent (*NASB* "arrogant") oppress me." Second, "give your servant a pledge of good" (*CSB*, "Guarantee your servant's well-being"). Lord, I

have stood up for you so I need you to stand up for me. My enemies seek to harm me and oppress me. They try to shut me up. They try to seduce me and bully me to compromise. My stand for the just and the right requires both your presence (“do not leave me”) and your promise of protection. Stand with me my Master as I will continue to stand for you.

2) Ask God to deliver you

119:123

Michael Wilcock ties verse 123 to verses 121-122 and summarizes well the psalmist’s thinking, “I have done what the Word rules (121), but I am still looking for what it promises (v. 123)” (*The Message of the Psalms, 73-150, BST, 212*).

The songwriter continues his prayer with a beautiful word picture, “My eyes long for your salvation.” Ross says, “The idea is that of longing for something to the point of weakness” (*Psalms, vol. 3, 563-64*). He is weeping and waiting for the Lord to deliver him from his prideful, arrogant oppressors and opponents. He is hurting and in pain, perhaps even at the point of despair. Yet, he knows he has a promise, what he calls a “righteous promise” or “your righteous oracle” (Ross, 564). God has promised to be there for his people, promising to never leave or forsake them (Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh 1:5). This is a promise we can always count on. Others may fail us, but our Master never will.

3) Ask God to teach you

119:124

The Psalmist has done the right thing (v. 121), called on God to do him good (v. 122), and to keep His word (v. 123). Now he grounds his request in the intimate covenant relationship he has with the Lord, expressed in the Lord's *hesed*, his "steadfast love." The psalmist knows from history, scripture and experience, "that God is not an indifferent, unconcerned deity. He is a loving God; that is why he has given us the Bible" (James Boice, *Living by the Book*, 121). And, because he loves us and has given us His Word, we can boldly and confidently ask him to be our teacher, "to teach me your statutes."

All of us learn from someone. Wisdom would lead us to seek out the instruction and wisdom of those who are wisest and love us the most.

What a blessed privilege it is for the Christian to find the wisest and most loving teacher in the same Master, the Lord Jesus!

II. God's servants ask for spiritual insight and plead with God to act

119:125-126

- 1) A servant who loves his master wants to think like his master. He wants to see life as his master sees life. In other words he wants his master's thoughts to become his thoughts.

2) The disciple of Jesus stands in a position of extreme advantage because our Master has revealed to us His mind in the Bible. We do not have to guess or wonder what He thinks. We simply go to the Holy Scriptures and there we find the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5); shown to us for our mediation, study and obedience. We discover what honors and pleases him. We also discover what dishonors and displeases him.

3) In verse 125 the psalmist makes an additional petition or request. In verse 126 he makes a declaration of fact based on what he knows from the Word of God and what he sees going on all around him.

1) Ask the Lord for understanding of His Word 119:125

- The psalmist asks for “understanding” and “knowledge” of the Word of God, what he calls the Lord’s “testimonies.” His teachable spirit is clearly evident. Alec Motyer notes, “the three verbs (‘teach...[understanding]...know’) form a progression: the divine teacher accompanies his teaching with inspiration, the gift of ‘discernment’ [or ‘understanding’]. The resultant state is ‘knowledge’, truth grasped” (*Psalms By The Day*, 356).
- The resultant knowledge of God’s testimonies is not merely theoretical or cerebral. It is a knowledge of the heart and soul, a knowledge grasped, loved and obeyed. Teach → understanding →

experiential knowledge → living out what I know and believe.

Spurgeon puts all of this together in a beautiful summary,

“The servant of God longs to know in an understanding manner all that the Lord reveals of man and to man; he wishes to be so instructed that he may apprehend and comprehend that which is taught him. A servant should not be ignorant concerning his master, or his master’s business; he should study the mind, will, purpose, and aim of him whom he serves, for so only can he complete his service; and as no man knows these things so well as his master himself, he should often go to him for instructions, lest his very zeal should only serve to make him the greater blunderer.” (*TOD*, vol 3, 369).

2) Ask the Lord to vindicate His reputation 119:126

The servant of Master Jesus cares more for the Lord’s reputation than his own. He grieves when the Lord’s “law has been broken.” He weeps when people do not honor and obey the law of God (v. 136). With amazing boldness and confidence the psalmist says it is time for God to do something in the face of the total disregard evil persons have for the Word of God. “Lord,” he cries out, “it is time to act.” “Your law has been broken.” Your Name is profaned. Your commandments are

mocked and disregarded. Deal justly and rightly (v. 121) with those who hate you and with those who love you. I am oppressed and long for deliverance. You are shamed and I long to see you honored. Bring judgment! Bring revival! Bring both! But Lord, I plead with you, do something and do it now.

III. God's servants love the Lord's Word and hate all that is false

119:127-128

I believe a right knowledge and understanding of God's Word will lead us in one of two directions. It is inevitable. One, we will love it and value it above all else. Two, we will hate it and scorn it, treating it with utter contempt. Those who are servants of Master Jesus will love it and value it because it will be seen truly for what it is, the very Word of God. Those who are servants of the devil, "the father of lies" (John 8:44), will hate it and scorn it because they have been deceived and view the Bible wrongly. They sadly and wrongly believe what it teaches enslaves us. It confines, restricts, suppresses and limits our potential and possibilities. It is a killjoy. What they know in their head never makes it way to their heart. The truth that softens the heart of a repentant sinner only hardens the heart of the stubborn.

1) Affirm the value of God's Word

119:127

Both verses 127 and 128 begin with the word “therefore,” connecting these verses in particular with verses 125-126. Because I understand and know by intimate experience your word, “I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold” (cf v. 72). Psalm 19:10 says the Word of God is “More to be desired...than gold, even much fine gold.’ The psalmist has a passion for the Word, and having gained it as his own through knowledge and understanding, he loves it more than anything this world has to offer. He is not rich who has much silver and gold.” He is rich who has the Word of God!

God's Word is more enriching than gold, more comforting than wealth, more precious than any earthly treasure. Love it even when you fail to obey it. In time, it will bring you to repentance and take you back to where you belong.

2) Affirm the truth of God's Word

119:128

If verse 127 speaks of a “holy obsession,” verse 128 speaks of a “holy opposition.” The final verse of stanza Ayin begins like every other verse in this paragraph. It begins with a declaration. In a real sense verses 127-128 form what could be called “the preacher's confession.” Verse 127, I love your Word. Verse 128 I consider all of your Word to be right (to be

true). Note well the use of the word “all.” I love all of your Word and I believe all of your word to be true. Not some true, not partly true, not even mostly true. All of it, every single word, is right, correct, true, infallible and inerrant. And, because I consider all of your word to be right, “I hate every false way.” I hate anything that denies or contradicts your word.

- Your word says Jesus is the only Savior and I hate the lies of universalism and inclusivism.
- Your word says salvation is by grace through faith and I hate works salvation theologies.
- Your word says God is both holy and loving and I hate the lie that says he is one but not the other.

If we love the Lord and His Word, we will also hate Satan and his lies. It really is that clear and simple.

Conclusion

1) Jesus is the quintessential “Servant of the Lord” (cf Isa 52:13-53:12). He was consumed with a passion to serve His Father and do His will.

- John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

- John 5:30, “I can do nothing on my own...because I seek not my own will but the will of him [the Father] who sent me.”
- John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do any own will but the will of him who sent me.”

2) Jesus repeatedly teaches us, “a servant is not greater than his master” (John 13:16; 15:20). If our Master, the Lord Jesus, was consumed with a passion to serve His Father and do His will, can it be any different with us? Spurgeon said it well, “We who rejoice that we are sons of God are by no means the less delighted to be his servants” (*TOD*, vo. 3, 369).