

PSALM 119.9-16

psalm
God's Word 119

T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Psalm 119.9-16

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Introduction to Psalm 119.9-16

Stanza 2 of Psalm 119 reaches back to stanza 1 to pull forward the primary themes of the psalm. It also deepens those themes by intentionality and a firmer engagement of the mind in learning God's Law.

Here we find a pattern that will continue throughout this glorious psalm. Themes are stated and restated, deepened, expanded, personalized, and made to work for the psalmist's happiness. Psalm 119 shows us how important it is to invest ourselves wholly in learning the Law of God and all His Word, and that encouragement to deeper study and learning begins in verses 9-16.

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We hope you find this study of Psalm 119 instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 A Most Important Question

Pray Psalm 119.9-11.

How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.

Sing Psalm 119.9-11.

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)
How can a young man cleanse his way, and thus be free of sin?
By keeping God's Word every day, and storing it within.
With all my heart I seek You, Lord, O let me never stray,
nor let me wander from Your Word, nor stumble in Your way.

Read Psalm 119.9-16; meditate on verse 9.

Preparation

1. What question does the psalmist raise?
2. How does he answer his question?

Meditation

The \beth (beth) stanza begins with a question which, along with other devices, connects stanza 2 to stanza 1. These stanzas overlap like a person clasping the hand of a fellow climber to lift him to the next height. In the light of stanza 1, and all it requires and promises, the question naturally arises, "How?" The "young man" asking the question is doubtless the psalmist, but he raises his concern for all of us, and that for two reasons.

First, he knows that his "way" has not been "undefiled" (v. 1) or without shame (v. 6). How can he go back and undo the wrong he has done? How can we?

And second, he knows himself well enough to suspect that he is likely to do "iniquity" (v. 3) again, and that sometimes when he looks into the Law he will "be ashamed" (v. 6). How can he – and we – be cleansed of past and future sins, as well as those we commit in the present?

The mention of "his way" ties back to the first stanza. In verse 9, however, a different word is used for "way" than in verse 1. Verse 1's "way" refers to a pattern or way of life yielding a particular condition (in this case, "happy"). The happy man is "undefiled in the way." He has embraced a way of life to which the psalmist and we aspire – a goal, a promise, a condition of cleansed happiness.

The word for "way" in verse 9 has a more temporal nuance. It derives from a verb that means to wander or to undertake a journey. Verse 1 declares a condition; verse 9 looks to the journey that leads to the condition of happiness. And that "way" is going to need cleansing from time to time. How will that be possible?

A most important question, indeed.

The answer: Keep the Word of God ("taking heed", the same verb as in vv. 4, 5, 8). Pay close attention to it. Guard (again, "keep" in vv. 4, 5) it diligently.

OK, but how?

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162
“How can a young man cleanse his way?” (Ps. 119.9)

According to science by the age of five 90 percent of our brains are developed. It's that last 10 percent that's the kicker!

So if taking heed to God's Word can keep a young man cleansed, it can work for anybody.

What if we all took David's words to heart?

“I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness” (Ps. 101. 3, 4).
That seems a convincing antidote to unclean living, thinking, and behaving.

Then we have Paul's words to the young pastor Timothy: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4.12). Do it. Be it.

Job declared his stance on some of these issues: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman? For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps? (Job 31.1-4). Be careful little eyes where you go.

And then we have Paul's words to the young pastor Titus: “...exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you” (Tit. 2.6-8). It is possible. We should seek and strive for it.

We have now read many examples of how young men should take heed to God's Word. And frankly, what is good for the gander is good for the goose. Young and old.

So to answer this most important question? All of humankind can, should, and will keep our way cleansed, by taking heed to God's Word. All of it. Cleansed. Pure and simple.

For reflection

1. What can we do to “cleanse” our way each day?
2. Why is it important that we keep our walk with the Lord cleansed?
3. How can Christians encourage one another to maintain cleansed ways in life?

To original corruption all have added actual sin. The ruin of the young is either living by no rule at all, or choosing false rules: let them walk by Scripture rules. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.9

Pray Psalm 119.12-16.

Pray for an opportunity to speak God's truth in love to someone in your Personal Mission Field. Rejoice in the Lord at the prospect of declaring His Word.

Sing Psalm 119.12-16.

(Passion Choral: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Be blessed, O God our Savior; teach us Your holy Word!
Our lips proclaim with favor the statutes of the Lord.

Psalm 119:9-16

How great our joy, dear Jesus, to follow in Your ways;
What more than this could please us, or brighten all our days?

We contemplate Your precepts and cherish all Your ways,
Delighting in Your statutes, rememb'ring all our days.
With wondrous bounty bless us, Your humble servants, Lord,
that we may live with Jesus and keep His holy Word.

2 Another, Equally Important, Question

Pray Psalm 119.9-11.

How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.

Sing Psalm 119.9-11.

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

How can a young man cleanse his way, and thus be free of sin?
By keeping God's Word every day, and storing it within.
With all my heart I seek You, Lord, O let me never stray,
nor let me wander from Your Word, nor stumble in Your way.

Read Psalm 119.9-16; meditate on verses 10, 11.

Preparation

1. How do these verses connect with verses 1-8?
2. Why did the psalmist want God's Word in his heart?

Meditation

The psalmist answered his own question, "How...?", albeit only at a preliminary level: Taking heed to God's Word is indeed the way to cleanse our path (v. 9). But this answer begs the further question, "How do I take heed to God's Word?" Verses 10 and 11 give us the answer: Seek the Lord with your whole heart and hide His Word there.

The result of this discipline is a two-sided coin: We will not wander from God's commandments (v. 10) or sin against Him (v. 11). We can readily see how these two verses link to the first stanza (cf. vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 8).

The key is getting the Word of God, which is living and powerful (Heb. 4.12), to dwell in our heart, that part of the soul from which flow all the issues of life. There it can do the sanctifying work for which God gives it (Jn. 17.17). Reading, studying, memorizing, and reviewing the Word of God are essential to this. But we need to have the Lord Jesus, the living Word of God, dwelling within us by His Spirit, working to create in us a new heart, on which the Law of God is being rewritten (Ezek. 36.26, 27), if we're going to know the power of God's Word to make all things new in our lives.

To hide the Word in your heart, seek the Lord *in* His Word (v. 10). Don't just read for ideas or insights. Read, study, and meditate to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4.6). Draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you (Jms. 4.8). Jesus is in every word of Scripture (Jn. 5.39), and His Word will dwell in us richly as we seek, meet, and partake of Him there (2 Pet. 1.4).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth" (Ex. 9.16).

"Power belongs to God" (Ps. 62.11).

"For Yours in the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" (Matt. 6.13).

"So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'" (Matt. 8.27)

Psalm 119.9-16

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28.18).

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”(Heb. 10.31).

“For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12.29).

In view of all these verses about the awesome power of God, dare we even petition and pray, along with the psalmist, this request? “Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments” (Ps. 119.10).

We should make this request with great fear and trepidation. This same God Who is Master over all creation, has the power to answer this request. But do we really want Him to do it His way? He is not shy about guiding us. “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb. 12.5, 6). And on the sweeter side we hear these words from Him: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye” (Ps. 32.8).

He is more than willing to keep us from wandering. Are we serious about asking Him to do it?

We will only have the courage to ask when we are secure in His love. And this security comes as we dwell with Jesus in His Word and in His work. This Word that “became flesh and dwelt among us”; and through this dwelling together we behold “His glory” (Jn. 1.14).

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps. 91.1). Snuggled and secure. “...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3.17-19).

Loved and secure enough to ask Him to keep us from ever wandering away from His commandments! And please, Lord, put all Your power into it. That Your Name be declared in all the earth (Ex. 9.16).

For reflection

1. How can you know when the power of God is at work within you?
2. What do you expect the power of God to do in and through you today?
3. Whom will you encourage today to seek the indwelling power of God?

Here we are informed that we are well fortified against the stratagems of Satan when God's law is deeply seated in our hearts. For unless it have a fast and firm hold there, we will readily fall into sin. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.11

Pray Psalm 119.12-16.

Pray that God will hide more of His Word in your heart. Commit your day to Him. Try to anticipate any temptations you might face, and call on Him to give you strength to resist.

Sing Psalm 119.12-16.

(Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded)

Be blessed, O God our Savior; teach us Your holy Word!

Our lips proclaim with favor the statutes of the Lord.

How great our joy, dear Jesus, to follow in Your ways;

What more than this could please us, or brighten all our days?

We contemplate Your precepts and cherish all Your ways,

Psalm 119:9-16

Delighting in Your statutes, rememb'ring all our days.
With wondrous bounty bless us, Your humble servants, Lord,
that we may live with Jesus and keep His holy Word.

3 The Way to Blessedness

Pray Psalm 119.9-11.

How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.

Sing Psalm 119.9-11.

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

How can a young man cleanse his way, and thus be free of sin?
By keeping God's Word every day, and storing it within.
With all my heart I seek You, Lord, O let me never stray,
nor let me wander from Your Word, nor stumble in Your way.

Read Psalm 119.9-16; meditate on verse 12.

Preparation

1. How does the psalmist address God?
2. What does he want God to do?

Meditation

Here is the third mention of the word, “blessed” (vv. 1, 2) – or so it seems. In fact, this is an entirely different word from what we find in verses 1 and 2. בָּרוּךְ (*baRUCH*) points to a higher, more complete, and more enduring form of happiness than אֲשֵׁרִי (*ashRAY*). This blessedness is associated with God. In another form it can mean to “be on one’s knees” or “to kneel. By acknowledging God as “blessed”, as here in verse 12, we are ascribing praise to Him for His uniqueness and all the perfections of happiness He enjoys in Himself. At the same time, we place ourselves before Him – on our knees, as it were – seeking to engage and share in that blessing.

And how do we do that? By asking God to teach us His statutes. Here the psalmist connects with the first stanza and develops it a bit (cf. vv. 5, 8). The statutes of God’s Law are those explications of the commandments that teach us how to think “blessedly” about our everyday lives. When God, Who is blessed, teaches us His statutes, we learn how to bring His blessedness into our world, so that the blessedness of God leads to happiness. This is why the psalmist longed to keep the statutes of God, that they might direct his steps in every way (vv. 5, 8), and why they were delightful to him (v. 16).

Because Jesus has fulfilled all the Law of God and has sent His Spirit to teach that Law to us (Ezek. 36.26, 27), we expect the blessedness of God to be expressed in us by our being made more like Jesus (2 Cor. 3.12-18). We do not learn the Law as God intends unless our reading and meditating in it shapes us increasingly into the blessed likeness of Jesus Christ.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Oh, how I would love to be able to praise and bless our Lord God in a proper and pleasing fashion! To be able to “acknowledge God as blessed”, or to “be on my knees” properly before Him physically and mentally and spiritually. He is God! I long to bless Him as He deserves to be blessed.

It seems that He longs for us to be in that very spot, too. That sweet spot of blessing. So, He tells us to ask

Psalm 119.9-16

Him to teach us His statutes. And in learning these statutes and His Law our lives are made complete:
“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; (converted)
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; (wise)
the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; (blessed and blessing)
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; (teachable)
the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; (cleansed)
the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (righteous)
More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; (satisfied)
sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (sated)
Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and (warned)
in keeping them there is great reward” (Ps. 19.7-11). (complete)

We have His promise, and “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it...” (Phil. 16). He will teach us Jesus. “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2.9, 10).

But we must prime our hearts by keeping His Law, to be ready to bless Him and to learn from Him. No one in their right mind imagines that they can ease on up out of their recliner and run a marathon having not prepared to do so. It just won’t happen. In the very same way, we must prepare daily to be ready to be taught by Him.

This is the only way to blessedness. By Him, of Him, and for Him.

For reflection

1. What’s the difference between “blessed” in the first stanza and “blessed” in the second stanza? What is “the sweet spot of blessing”?
2. Why must we pray to ask the Lord to teach us His statutes? Can we learn them without Him? Explain.
3. What does the Law do in us as the Spirit massages it into our soul?

The psalmists consistently describe the Law of God as a great blessing, for it was God’s gracious revelation to His people for their own good (Deut. 6:1–3). In the Law, God mercifully pointed out the right path to follow. Only mistaken legalistic interpretations of the Law prompted the negative statements concerning it in the NT. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Notes on Psalm 119.9-16

Pray Psalm 119.12-16.

Give thanks for the Law of God and all His Word. Be specific as you pray. Thank Him for portions of Scripture that have been especially meaningful to you. Ask Him to teach you more of His Word, and to bring it to mind throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 119.12-16.

(Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded)

Be blessed, O God our Savior; teach us Your holy Word!
Our lips proclaim with favor the statutes of the Lord.
How great our joy, dear Jesus, to follow in Your ways;
What more than this could please us, or brighten all our days?

We contemplate Your precepts and cherish all Your ways,
Delighting in Your statutes, rememb’ring all our days.
With wondrous bounty bless us, Your humble servants, Lord,
that we may live with Jesus and keep His holy Word.

4 A Word to Declare

Pray Psalm 119.12-14.

Blessed *are* You, O LORD!

Teach me Your statutes.

With my lips I have declared

All the judgments of Your mouth.

I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,

As much as in all riches.

Sing Psalm 119.12-14.

(Passion Chorale: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Be blessed, O God our Savior; teach us Your holy Word!

Our lips proclaim with favor the statutes of the Lord.

How great our joy, dear Jesus, to follow in Your ways;

What more than this could please us, or brighten all our days?

Read Psalm 119.9-16; meditate on verse 13.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist do with God's Word?

2. How much of that Word?

Meditation

The psalmist introduces a new idea to his hymn: The Law which we learn, through which we seek God, and which brings happiness and blessedness as we obey it, is a Law to be declared.

The word "declared" is something closer to "recounted" or "related". The Law of God is something to talk about. And not just in a piecemeal way, but *all* the Law of God – all His precepts, statutes, testimonies, rules, and judgments. Since all God's Law gives life and leads to happiness and blessedness, all of it holds insights to wisdom, justice, and love for God and neighbor that are worth sharing and discussing with others. The Law of God – and all His Word – speaks to every aspect of life; therefore, we should speak into the issues of our day, using the Law of God as the source and foundation for our understandings and views.

The Holy Spirit is writing the Law of God on the tablet of our heart (Ezek. 36.26, 27). As we hear, learn, and obey it, we must hasten to share it with others (Hab. 2.2), that they may know the blessing of God as well.

We who study and delight in God's Law are like the Samaritan lepers (2 Kgs. 7.3-10). We need all the riches on which we daily feed, but we must not keep it to ourselves. Everyone needs to hear the whole counsel of God from His Word (Acts 20.27), and we are just the folks to declare it to them out of our bounty.

Learn God's Law. Worship and rejoice in Him. Live His Word in faithful and humble obedience. Teach it to others. This is the way to greatness in the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5.17-19).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Our son-in-law Dave is an engineer (not of a train, although that is cool, too). Two things about Dave being an engineer: 1. He speaks fluently, cogently, intelligently, and almost understandably about his work. 2. We will never be able to understand what he knows, but we know that he knows it, and that he likes it.

In the same way, we all, as believers, should be able to speak fluently, cogently, and intelligently about all the Law of God and His Word. So that believers can understand what we are conversing about together; and

unbelievers will hear, unable to understand, but will see our love and enthusiasm for our Savior and Lord.

Paul tells us that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2.14). Sort of like us hearing about how to create a computer chip. It is just not registering. However, this does not mean that we don’t speak to them of God; we merely need to understand that we are speaking a foreign language to them. So, we speak as clearly as possible, with love and enthusiasm.

But just like Dave, we need to be thoroughly schooled in what we are speaking about. This takes study, contemplation, meditation, memorization, and prayer. A complete immersion in the subject at hand. We must be familiar with the whole counsel of God to recount and relate the beautiful Words of God.

When we are ready to relate and recount, we can then imagine ourselves sitting in a rocking chair with our children (whomever God has put in our Personal Mission Field) before us as we say:

“Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?
Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.
Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (Ps. 34.11-14).

A thoughtful Word to declare, and joyful to declare it!

For reflection

1. Why is it important that we be able to declare all the counsel of God?
2. What do you do each day to prepare for opportunities to declare the Word of God?
3. How can declaring the Word of God help your fellow believers? How about the unbelievers you know?

Let this be our plea with Him to teach us his statutes, that, being partakers of his holiness, we may also partake of his blessedness. And those whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.9-16*

Pray Psalm 119.15, 16.

As you pray, meditate on, contemplate, and delight in some aspect or teaching from God’s Word that you will share with someone today.

Sing Psalm 119.15, 16.

(Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded)

We contemplate Your precepts and cherish all Your ways,
delighting in Your statutes, rememb’ring all our days.
With wondrous bounty bless us, Your humble servants, Lord,
that we may live with Jesus and keep His holy Word.

5 Discover the Joy

Pray Psalm 119.12-14.

Blessed *are* You, O LORD!
Teach me Your statutes.
With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.
I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.

Sing Psalm 119.12-14.

(Passion Choral: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)
Be blessed, O God our Savior; teach us Your holy Word!
Our lips proclaim with favor the statutes of the Lord.
How great our joy, dear Jesus, to follow in Your ways;
What more than this could please us, or brighten all our days?

Read Psalm 119.9-16; meditate on verse 14.

Preparation

1. How did the psalmist describe the way of God's testimonies?
2. To what did he compare that experience?

Meditation

Here again the psalmist introduces a new concept relative to the way of life marked out by God's Law: rejoicing.

I daresay, that's not the way most of us think about the laws, statutes, judgments, testimonies, and precepts of the Law of God. Sounds constraining. Limiting. Too hard to learn. What about my freedom? What about my happiness? Who wants to be a legalist?

As if anticipating such a view of God's Law, Jesus likened following Him to oxen, hooked together in a yoke. He called this "My yoke", that is, the framework that bound Him to the Father and enabled Him to plow the field of the Kingdom for righteousness, peace, *and joy* in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 11.28-30; Rom. 14.17, 18). The world makes us weary. Jesus gives us rest and sets us free into the joy of salvation and the freedom of the children of God. He calls us to take on His yoke, the framework within which He lived and the path of obedience He walked (1 Jn. 2.1-6), and He promises that it is easy, not onerous.

The psalmist rejoiced in living according to the way of God's testimonies. What did he know that we don't? The joy that comes from living by God's Law is greater than the happiness any amount of riches might bring. If you don't believe that, you'll never know it. If you believe it, you'll live it, and then you'll see that Jesus and the psalmist are right.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Being of Irish descent can sometimes affect my outlook. Perhaps even cause me to see things less than sunny-side-up. William Butler Yeats sums up my meaning nicely. "Being Irish," Yeats opined, "he had an abiding sense of tragedy, which sustained him through temporary periods of joy." Ugh.

But God has better plans for us. He wants us to rejoice always (1 Thess. 5.16). If we stopped and made a mental list of all the things that bring us joy, albeit temporary, and compared them to living in the way of God's testimonies, we would see that His way brings us more joy than all of those things combined.

“The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart...” (Ps. 19.8).

“I meditate on You...in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice” (Ps. 63.7).

“This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118.24).

Jesus said, “Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (Jn. 16.22).

When “Christ is preached”... “in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice” (Phil. 1.18).

And then we have today’s verse: “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches” (Ps. 119.14). All riches. All peaceful relationships. All health. All security. All career success. All. All of everything. Nothing brings us more happiness than knowing and keeping God’s testimonies.

And Peter echoes this truth: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1.6-9).

Being a Christian turns the world upside-down (Acts 17.6). Even we Irish can discover sustaining and abiding joy in living God’s way!

For reflection

1. How does the Law of God bring joy into your lives?
2. Why do so many people think otherwise? Do you think Christians misunderstand the Law of God? Explain.
3. Why does rejoicing in the Law and Word of God go hand-in-hand with declaring it?

In the way of God’s commandments there is the unsearchable riches of Christ. But we do not meditate on God’s precepts to good purpose, unless our good thoughts produce good works. I will not only think of thy statutes, but do them with delight. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 119.14

Pray Psalm 119.9-11.

Pray that God will increase your joy at letting His Word dwell in your richly. Pray for the day ahead, that your way through it will be guided and characterized by the joy of God’s Word.

Sing Psalm 119.9-11.

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

How can a young man cleanse his way, and thus be free of sin?

By keeping God’s Word every day, and storing it within.

With all my heart I seek You, Lord, O let me never stray,

nor let me wander from Your Word, nor stumble in Your way.

6 Beautiful!

Pray Psalm 119.9-11.

How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.

Sing Psalm 119.9-11.

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

How can a young man cleanse his way, and thus be free of sin?
By keeping God's Word every day, and storing it within.
With all my heart I seek You, Lord, O let me never stray,
nor let me wander from Your Word, nor stumble in Your way.

Read Psalm 119.9-16; meditate on verses 15, 16.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist intend to do?
2. How would that make him feel?

Meditation

The poet William Cowper once explained that something is beautiful to which we return repeatedly and over a long period of time. And we do this because we delight in the beauty of that to which we often return. For example, as I write this, I'm listening to Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 27, which I first heard back in 1978, and which I have listened to scores of times since then. Why? Because it's beautiful and I delight in it!

By that definition, the psalmist believed the Law of God is beautiful. He resolved both to meditate on it and to contemplate it, understanding that doing so would bring him great delight. "Meditate" here means something like to hold it up to the light, like you would a gem, to examine its surface. "Contemplate" goes deeper and means "to look upon, to consider" – as if you used a jeweler's eyepiece to look more deeply into the cut and color of the gem. Learning God's Law (v. 12) requires both.

And the psalmist determined he would not forget God's Word (v. 16), which assumes he would not only walk in the precepts and ways of the Lord but return to them again and again (I peeked at Daniel Barenboim playing the Mozart and conducting the orchestra – no music, all in his head, both the playing the conducting).

Verses 15 and 16 return us to verses 9-11, but from a somewhat different angle. Verses 9-11 emphasize the *affective* commitment to God's Word – devotion from the heart. Verses 15 and 16 emphasize the *cognitive* commitment to God's Word – meditation, contemplation, and remembering. Verses 12-16 show what all this leads to: worshiping God (v. 12), proclaiming His Word (v. 13), rejoicing in His truth (v. 14), delighting to read and study God's Word (v. 16), and walking in God's ways (vv. 9, 10, 11, 16).

Yeah. Beautiful.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The psalmist is making his to-do list. He seems to be prioritizing his work correctly.
To do today:

1. I will meditate on God's precepts.
2. I will contemplate God's ways.
3. I will delight in God's statutes.
4. I will NOT forget God's Word.

His day is planned. His work is set. His future is determined. He can pray, "May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD" (Ps. 104.34). He knows his intentions for the work in his Personal Mission Field: "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart" (Ps. 40.8). And most importantly he realizes that without the Word, he has no hope. But with the Word, that he will not forget, he is truly God's own. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (Jn. 1.1, 2).

And to forget this Word? That omission spells total doom. "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed" (1 Cor. 16.22). You can easily see why he wants to fully remember this Word.

We, too, need to plan our day. And our plans need to encompass the same routine. All the meditation, contemplation, and delight in the Lord that we do solidifies our remembrance of the One Who makes all things new. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5.17).

When we are saturated in this Word through meditation, contemplation, and delight – so much so, that our minds are full of Him and we could never forget Him, even if we tried – then that is a beautiful comfort to our soul. And a day's plan worth pursuing.

For reflection

1. Why are both the heart and the mind essential in learning God's Law?
2. What can you do to improve your daily planning, so that you don't forget the Word of the Lord?
3. Whom will you encourage today to learn the Law of God and walk in all His ways?

For our proficiency in the law of God will be small, until we cheerfully and heartily set our minds upon it. And, in fact, the commencement of a good life consists in God's law attracting us to him by its sweetness. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.15, 16*

Pray Psalm 119.12-16.

Commit yourself to more regular, more consistent, and deeper study and reflection on the Law of God. Wait on the Lord in prayer to suggest some ways you might put that commitment into practice.

Sing Psalm 119.12-16.

(Passion Chorale: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Be blessed, O God our Savior; teach us Your holy Word!

Our lips proclaim with favor the statutes of the Lord.

How great our joy, dear Jesus, to follow in Your ways;

What more than this could please us, or brighten all our days?

We contemplate Your precepts and cherish all Your ways,
Delighting in Your statutes, rememb'ring all our days.
With wondrous bounty bless us, Your humble servants, Lord,
that we may live with Jesus and keep His holy Word.

7 Inside and Out

Pray Psalm 119.9-11.

How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.

Sing Psalm 119.9-11.

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

How can a young man cleanse his way, and thus be free of sin?
By keeping God's Word every day, and storing it within.
With all my heart I seek You, Lord, O let me never stray,
nor let me wander from Your Word, nor stumble in Your way.

Read Psalm 119.9-16; meditate on verses 10, 13, 16.

Preparation

1. How did the psalmist seek God in His Law and Word?
2. What was the result of that seeking?

Meditation

Stanza 2 of Psalm 119, the Beth stanza, picks up on the theme of the heart introduced in stanza 1 (vv. 2, 7) and deepens that theme with words of intentionality (“sought”, “hidden”). It takes effort on our part, the psalmist explains, to get to the point where the Law of God – His statutes, precepts, judgments, and all His Word – is so much a part of us that we delight in it, express that delight in rejoicing (v. 14), and live that delight consistently, guarding against sin (v. 11).

To get the Law of God so firmly embedded within our *heart* requires serious and ongoing effort on the part of our *mind* – to read, meditate in, and contemplate the perfections and glories of the precepts, commandments, and ways of God (vv. 15, 16). So the mind discovers the beauty of God's Law, and the heart engages that beauty with delight. The more we devote ourselves to this ongoing process, the more the Law becomes foundational to what we will and how we live. We declare it to the people in our Personal Mission Field (v. 13) and it accompanies and guides us in all our ways, for we do not forget the Word of God, but delight to live it (v. 16).

Only God can teach us like this (v. 12), and He does so out of the majesty of His blessedness, working by His Spirit within us to will and do of His good pleasure, exceedingly and abundantly more than we will ever dare to ask or think (Phil. 2.12, 13; Ezek. 36.26, 27; Eph. 3.20).

This is the beauty, the delight, and the transforming power of the Law of God, which works both within us and through us to declare the greatness and glory of God, and to provide a glimpse of the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

It all comes down to what we seek in life, what we love, and what we value most. God desires to give us of His Spirit to enable us to please Him and to experience His joy and delight in being obedient to Him. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8.32).

Paul instructed us not to trust in uncertain riches “but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1Tim.6.17).

“I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches” (Ps. 119.14).

Solomon wrote that if we seek wisdom “as silver”, and search for it as for “hidden treasure”, then we will “understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2.4, 5). The Word of God is more valuable than all riches, silver, and hidden treasures. More valuable than anything.

And Jesus told us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6.33). Seek His Kingdom first, best, always. Before anything else we are to seek to know the King of this Kingdom – Jesus Christ. No One is more important. No One else even comes close. “Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints!” (Ps. 31.23).

John wrote, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1Jn. 2.15-17).

When we don’t love the world, and we do love the LORD, and we seek Him and value His Word more than anything else – that is when God begins to change our perspective, our heart, our mind, and our life.

“This is the beauty, the delight, and the transforming power of the Law of God, which works both within us and through us to declare the greatness and glory of God, and to provide a glimpse of the perfect righteousness of Jesus.” Inside and out!

For reflection

1. What does it mean for you to hide the Word of God in your heart?
2. How does the Word of God – His Law, statutes, precepts, and so forth – help you in fighting the battle against sin?
3. How can you improve the time you spend meditating on and contemplating the Law and Word of God?

In our natural state, what is more agreeable to us than that which is sinful? This will be the constant tendency of our minds, unless the delight which we feel in the law carry us in the opposite direction. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.9-16*

Pray Psalm 119.12-16.

Pray that God will give you clear understanding of His Word, and that He will plant it deep in your heart, that you may delight in it and walk in its paths throughout this day.

Sing Psalm 119.12-16.

(Passion Chorale: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Be blessed, O God our Savior; teach us Your holy Word!

Our lips proclaim with favor the statutes of the Lord.

How great our joy, dear Jesus, to follow in Your ways;

What more than this could please us, or brighten all our days?

We contemplate Your precepts and cherish all Your ways,

Delighting in Your statutes, rememb’ring all our days.

With wondrous bounty bless us, Your humble servants, Lord,

Psalm 119:9-16

that we may live with Jesus and keep His holy Word.

Psalm 119:9-16

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What does it mean to hide the Word of God in your heart? Why is this so essential?
2. Living within the teaching of the Law of God leads to joy. Why is this so?
3. Only God can teach us His Word. How does He do so?
4. How do the mind and heart work together to help you delight in God's Law?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this part of our study of Psalm 119?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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