

PSALM 119.17-24

psalm
God's Word 119

T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Psalm 119.17-24
Copyright 2022 T. M. and Susie Moore
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, all Scripture are taken from the *New King James Version*. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All quotations from the early Church Fathers are from *Psalms 51-150: Ancient Christian Commentary Series, Old Testament VIII*, Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, ed., General Editor Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2007). All quotes from John Calvin are from *Commentaries on Psalms*, Rev. John Pringle, tr. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translational Society). All quotations from Matthew Henry are from *Matthew Henry Concise Commentary*, E-text version Copyright 1996, 2002 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All quotes from Earl Radmacher are from *The NKJV Study Bible*, copyright ©1997, 2007 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All psalms for singing are from *The Ailbe Psalter* (Williston: Waxed Tablet Publications, 2006), available by [clicking here](#).

Cover art: Yahoo images

Introduction to Psalm 119.17-24

The mood of stanza 3 begins to darken somewhat as the psalmist experiences both alienation from God and opposition from those who wield the power of worldly rule. He continues to declare his confidence in the Law of God and calls on the Lord to deal bountifully with him.

He expresses his deep desire to know more of God's Word and so commits himself to more meditation on and contemplation of the Law of God. His example continues to inspire and instruct us in the attitudes and disciplines we need to cultivate as students of the Law of God and all His Word.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

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 Grace and Law

Pray Psalm 119.17, 18.

Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.

Sing Psalm 119.17, 18.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Open my eyes, Lord, let me see wonderful truths to transform me.
I am a stranger here in the earth; hide not from me Your glorious worth.
Deal with your servant graciously that I may live obediently.
Open my eyes, Lord, let me see glory divine!

Read Psalm 119.17-24; meditate on verse 17.

Preparation

1. What does the psalmist ask of God?
2. Why does he ask this?

Meditation

Stanza 3, the \aleph (*gimel*) stanza, continues certain themes broached in stanzas 1 and 2, but it also introduces new themes. In particular, a sense of urgency about the Law comes into view, brought about by a feeling of alienation and by the psalmist's being among those who do not keep the Law. If stanzas one and two can be regarded as having been composed in a major chord, stanza 3 has the ring of a minor chord and only returns to the major chord tone in verse 24, where the theme of verse 16 is recovered.

Verse 17 sets that urgent tone with an imperative, הָאָל (*gub-MOLE*), “deal bountifully”. This is a plea for grace, and it is the first of four imperatives we will encounter in this stanza. The psalmist thus acknowledges his complete dependence on God to stand fast in His Word and continue in His ways. Verse 17 parallels verse 12 of stanza 2, where the psalmist calls on the Lord to teach him His statutes, and thus pulls that theme into stanza 3 (we'll see it also in verses 18 and 19, and an echo of verse 15 in verse 23).

The psalmist wants God to deal bountifully with him, as he explains, so that he “may live and keep” the Word of the Lord. There is no opposition or contradiction of grace and Law. Why should God grant us His grace? That we might have life in His Word, His Law. Why do we keep the Law of God? That we might more bountifully dwell within His grace. Why may we expect God to grant this request? Because we are committed to Him as his servants, and we live to do His gracious will, as revealed in His Word (cf. vv. 23, 24).

Verse 17 is the topical sentence of stanza 3. Without God's grace, and the obedience it produces, the psalmist would not be able to endure the sense of alienation and the opposition he encountered in the world.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Deal bountifully with Your servant...” (Ps. 119.17).

Isn't it a show of God's grace that He allows us, His servants, to request anything? Are we, as His servants, allowed to ask that He treat us bountifully? Really?

Isn't that a bit like asking for a raise? When maybe we don't deserve it? Or maybe we have a truly gracious boss? Perhaps maybe a tad of nepotism is afoot?

We do indeed have the most gracious Boss. And nepotism is a given! "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4.7). And Jesus added this dynamic: "No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (Jn. 15.15, 14).

He tells us what He wants us to do. And His expectations for us are that we can do it because He is right alongside, helping and guiding us step by step. "I am with you always..." (Matt. 28.20). And "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (Acts 1.8).

He sets us up for success. He encourages us. He is with us. He gives us the power to do what He has asked us to do. So even in our subservient position, we are allowed to come to Him with our requests – even though it almost seems outlandish that we are allowed to do so.

And what do we ask of Him?

1. That we may live.
2. That we may obey and keep His Word.

And when we stop to think about it, those two requests make sense: Please give us life, so that we can do what you have called us to do as Your servants/sons/friends.

The crux of the parable that Jesus told about the earthly master and his servants was this: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matt. 25.21) This was said to the obedient servant.

What was said to, and about, the disobedient servant was not so pleasing: "You wicked and lazy servant...cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness..." (Matt. 25.26, 30).

So although God is full of grace, He also has standards of expectation for us. We would do well to keep His righteous balance of Grace and Law in mind as we make our requests of Him; and as we serve Him daily, doing His will as His faithful and bounty-filled servants.

And when we do, He beckons us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4.16).

For reflection

1. How would you explain the relationship between grace and Law?
2. How would you explain the relationship between Law and life?
3. How is the work of Jesus Christ foundational to a right understanding of both grace and Law?

... the prophet here describes the main object of our existence. He declares it to be owing to the peculiar grace of the Holy Spirit, that any person keeps the law of God. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.17

Pray Psalm 119.19-24.

Pray for the activities before you today, that in each of them, God would grant you grace to keep His Law and walk in the way of His Word.

Psalm 119.17-24

Sing Psalm 119.20-24.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

My soul with longing breaks for You; all of Your judgments I would do.

For You rebuke the proud and the cursed, who from Your Law have strayed, and worse.

Take from me all contempt, O Lord, for I have kept Your holy Word.

Lift all reproach from me, O Lord - my soul renew!

Princes oppose me day by day, for I continue in Your way.

I will Your statutes hold in my mind. What great delight in them I find!

Lord, let Your testimonies be light on my path to counsel me.

Lord, what delight You bring to me out of Your Word!

2 Wondrous Things

Pray Psalm 119.17, 18.

Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.

Sing Psalm 119.17-19.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Open my eyes, Lord, let me see wonderful truths to transform me.
I am a stranger here in the earth; hide not from me Your glorious worth.
Deal with your servant graciously that I may live obediently.
Open my eyes, Lord, let me see glory divine!

Read Psalm 119.17-24; meditate on verse 18.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist want God to do?
2. What did he want to see?

Meditation

The word here translated “wondrous things” is worth pondering. We can see that it connects to the idea of God’s Law being beautiful, which we observed in stanza 2. We delight in things beautiful, and all beautiful things lead us to wonder. The psalmist knew that the Law of God contains many “wondrous things” – extraordinary insights, excellent judgments, ways of being that surpass what sinners like us typically aspire to or experience.

The Law of God, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, can do wondrous things in transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18). But we need God to open our eyes and show these wonders to us.

Paul reminds us that the Spirit of God, Who is at work within us, is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we could ever ask or think (Eph. 3.20). Our problem is not lack of ability to understand wonders and do extraordinarily good works; our problem is lack of vision and faith. These come from the Spirit and Word of God, but we must wait on the Lord in prayer for Him to open our eyes and show us wondrous things, abundant and surpassing-beyond things, things we would never think to undertake, but that God shows us and, by His Spirit, encourages and empowers us to know.

This also is a work of God’s grace. By His grace, He has stored up wondrous things in His Law. By His grace He has given His Law to us, and His Spirit to teach it to us. By His grace He welcomes us into His Presence, to request of Him the ability to see wondrous things in His Law. And by His grace He both shows us these exceedingly abundant wondrous things and empowers us to walk in them.

And that’s the most wondrous thing of all!

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The prophet Elisha prayed for his helper that he would be able to see God’s protection for them. He said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kgs. 6.17).
Wondrous.

David added another of our five senses when he said, “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good...” (Ps. 34.8). He also encourages us to, “Come and see the works of God...” (Ps. 66.5). Wondrous good.

The shepherds who visited the baby Jesus said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us” (Lk. 2.15) Wonder of wonders. Jesus.

Jesus, was the Fulfiller of the psalmist’s prayer: “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures” (Lk. 24.45).

And we now take up the psalmist’s prayer, and the request of the Greeks who came to Philip and requested of him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus” (Jn. 12. 21).

Our main desire, our hope for sight is this: “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Ps. 119.18). First, we see His Law, then we must do it. Then we discern, perceive, glimpse, identify, notice, comprehend, and actually see wondrous things in that Law. We no longer shy away from it, as a negative thing, but we are drawn to it like bees to honey, or bugs to a light. Like a magnet to steel. We cannot get enough of the wonders found in His Law. In His Word. In our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In this Law we see Jesus, the One Who kept the Law perfectly for our salvation. And He wants us to do the same, not to earn our salvation, but in appreciation for it. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (Jn. 15.10).

But the only way we will ever truly see is through the power of God. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...” (Is. 9.2). “So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him” (Matt. 20.34). The wondrous point.

“And by His grace He both shows us these exceedingly abundant wondrous things and empowers us to walk in them.”

For reflection

1. What would you describe as some “wondrous things” you have seen in God’s Word?
2. In what way does the Law of God show us Jesus?
3. How can you become more consistent in seeing “wondrous things” from God’s Law and all His Word?

And what wonder is it the Spirit works life, who enlivens as does the Father and as does the Son? And who can deny that giving new life is the work of the eternal Majesty? For it is written, “Give life to your servant.” He, then, is enlivened who is a servant, that is, a person, who before he did not have life but received the privilege of having it. Ambrose of Milan (333-397), On the Holy Spirit 2.3.29-31

Pray Psalm 119.19-24.

Pray that God will show you many wondrous things from His Law throughout the day. Ask Him to open your eyes to opportunities to show Jesus or to proclaim Him to others.

Sing Psalm 119.20-24.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

My soul with longing breaks for You; all of Your judgments I would do.

For You rebuke the proud and the cursed, who from Your Law have strayed, and worse.

Take from me all contempt, O Lord, for I have kept Your holy Word.

Lift all reproach from me, O Lord - my soul renew!

Psalm 119.17-24

Princes oppose me day by day, for I continue in Your way.
I will Your statutes hold in my mind. What great delight in them I find!
Lord, let Your testimonies be light on my path to counsel me.
Lord, what delight You bring to me out of Your Word!

3 A Stranger in the Earth

Pray Psalm 119.17-19.

Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.
I *am* a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from me.

Sing Psalm 119.17-19.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)
Open my eyes, Lord, let me see wonderful truths to transform me.
I am a stranger here in the earth; hide not from me Your glorious worth.
Deal with your servant graciously that I may live obediently.
Open my eyes, Lord, let me see glory divine!

Read Psalm 119.17-24; meditate on verse 19.

Preparation

1. What does the psalmist say about himself?
2. What does he want God to do?

Meditation

When you are a stranger somewhere, you are not familiar with the ways of that place. They are not your ways, and the practices of that place are not your practices. You're not at home there, and you're wary about straying into unfamiliar paths, or being drawn into uncertain ways.

Like the psalmist, we are strangers and aliens in this world, in the kingdom of darkness. All who serve the Lord Jesus (vv. 17, 23) will be strangers in the earth. Our ways are the higher ways of the Kingdom of God, where the commandments of God and all His Word mark out the path we walk – of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is writing God's Law on our hearts with ever-greater clarity the more we read, meditate in, and contemplate it.

Thus, though we are strangers to this world, we have God's Law, which He does not hide from us but reveals clearly, especially in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may know how to walk in the light as He is in the light.

The more we learn of God's Law and the righteousness it entails, the more we can see Jesus and envision Him living through us in all our daily activities. Though we are strangers to earthly ways, we are becoming increasingly at home in Jesus as we devote ourselves to the Law of God and all His Word. Better to be a stranger in the earth than a stranger in the court of heaven. Seek the Lord often, looking into and through His Word and resting in His Spirit to bring you into His Presence with joy.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

It is supposed to be alien to us to embrace the notion of being a stranger. We are cajoled to fit in. We are encouraged to be a part of it all.

And yet our heavenly Father is OK with us being strangers here on earth. It is a circumstance to which we should acquiesce and accept with joy. God is not like us; and He doesn't want us to be like the world. Or to feel comfortable in it:

“You thought that I was altogether like you...” (Ps. 50.21).

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways’, says the LORD” (Is. 55.8).

“Come out from among them and be separate’, says the Lord” (2 Cor. 6.17).

As strangers, we have God’s guidebook, so that we will not miss any wondrous sights along the way. His book will keep us from getting lost or straying into unsavory places. He is the supreme tour guide and doesn’t want us to miss a thing during our trip. “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Ps. 139.16). A precisely planned trip for each of God’s dear strangers on earth.

And as we are traveling this ordained excursion, we realize that it is merely a foretaste of glory divine: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland...But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb. 11.13, 14, 16).

Jesus said to us, His beloved strangers, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14.2, 3). He will one day collect all His sojourners.

God will not hide His guidebook from the strangers He came to show the way: “I AM the Way...” for every misguided soul on earth (Jn. 14.6).

For reflection

1. Why should we think of ourselves as “strangers” on the earth? Why is it important that we maintain this status?
2. How does God guide and take care of us as strangers on the earth?
3. How can we keep from being strangers to God and His will?

It is proper to inquire into the reason for his calling himself a sojourner and stranger in the world. The great concern of the unboly and worldly is to spend their life here easily and quietly; but those who know that they have their journey to pursue, and have their inheritance reserved for them in heaven, are not engrossed nor entangled with these perishable things, but aspire after that place to which they are invited. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.19

Pray Psalm 119.19-24.

Pray that God will *keep* you a stranger to this world and make you increasingly at home in His ways, walking on His path. Pray about all your activities today, that God will illuminate your way according to His holy Law.

Sing Psalm 119.20-24.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

My soul with longing breaks for You; all of Your judgments I would do.

For You rebuke the proud and the cursed, who from Your Law have strayed, and worse.

Take from me all contempt, O Lord, for I have kept Your holy Word.

Lift all reproach from me, O Lord - my soul renew!

Princes oppose me day by day, for I continue in Your way.

I will Your statutes hold in my mind. What great delight in them I find!

Psalm 119.17-24

Lord, let Your testimonies be light on my path to counsel me.
Lord, what delight You bring to me out of Your Word!

4 Desperate for the Word

Pray Psalm 119.20-22.

My soul breaks with longing
For Your judgments at all times.
You rebuke the proud—the cursed,
Who stray from Your commandments.
Remove from me reproach and contempt,
For I have kept Your testimonies..

Sing Psalm 119.20-22.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

My soul with longing breaks for You; all of Your judgments I would do.
For You rebuke the proud and the cursed, who from Your Law have strayed, and worse.
Take from me all contempt, O Lord, for I have kept Your holy Word.
Lift all reproach from me, O Lord - my soul renew!

Read Psalm 119.17-24; meditate on verse 20.

Preparation

1. What was happening in the psalmist's soul?
2. When did he need the judgments of God?

Meditation

The sense of alienation broached in verse 19 is heightened here by the idea that the psalmist's "soul breaks with longing". The mood slides from uncertainty ("stranger") to urgency ("longing") as we feel the minor key of these verses coming to more complete expression.

Here, "judgments" stands for all the Law and Word of God – perhaps especially what the psalmist was wont to declare and discuss (v. 13). That the psalmist's soul "breaks with longing" for God's Word suggests a sense of separation or need, perhaps even desperation, which, as a stranger in the earth (v. 19) he would surely have known in various ways day by day, "at all times."

What does it mean for one's soul to long for the judgments of God? The desire of the *heart* intensifies. The *mind* strains to focus on the Word of God, and to block out all distractions. The *conscience* reverts to the Word, to earnestly engage the will in the pursuit of God. This is the "set of the soul" God intends for all of us, that we might long for His Word, to delight in it and to rejoice in Him.

We know that this world will always be foreign to us, and that our true happiness is in the Law and Word of God. Thus, as our sense of alienation to the world increases, our longing for God's judgments rises to satisfy the desire of our soul. And especially as we see God's judgments fulfilled in Jesus, our longing is more focused, and we rest in Him and His salvation.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

- "I long for Your instructions more than I can tell" (Ps. 119.20 TLB).
- "My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times" (Ps. 119.20 NIV).
- "I am always overwhelmed with a desire for Your regulations" (Ps. 119.20 NLT).
- "My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times" (Ps. 119.20 NASB).
- "What I want most and at all times is to honor Your laws" (Ps. 119.20 CEV).
- "My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times" (Ps. 119.20 NKJV).

Every translation bespeaks an extraordinary desire to know God and to have His Laws within us at all times. It is a foretaste of what we will read later in the psalmist's work: "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119.97).

In the psalmist's feelings of being a stranger in the earth, he needs to assure himself that all is well with his relationship to God. That there is a plan for him and there are things for him to do. Planet-foreigner, or not.

God says to him, and to us, "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation from generation to generation" (Is. 51.7, 8).

The work set before us is to make sure that when our soul longs, is consumed with, is overwhelmed, crushed, filled with want, and breaking, it is for the Lord God and His Law, and not for some earthly desire. "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2.12, 13). Desperate longing for God and His Law and Word is the way to jump start this work, and then we can "rest in Him and His salvation".

*I'm desperate for You, all I know to do
Is only to let go and fall at Your feet
So just as I am, with these empty hands
I give everything, all I have, all of me
I'm desperate for You
For only You, only You, only You, Jesus
My Healer, my Deliverer
My Savior, my Father
Protector...*
(Smith/Espy/Jackson/Miller, 2021)

For reflection

1. What can you do to make sure your soul is longing for the Lord above all things?
2. Is it a good thing to be desperate for the Lord and His Word? Explain.
3. What makes the judgments of the Lord, and all His Word, so very important?

The clause, at all times, is meant to express his perseverance; for it may occasionally happen that a man may apply himself with great ardor to the study of the heavenly doctrine; but it is only temporary-his zeal soon vanishes away. Steadfastness is therefore necessary, lest, through weariness, we become faint in our minds. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.20

Pray Psalm 119.17-19.

Pray that the Lord will open your eyes to His love for You, revealed in His Word, and that you might know the Presence of Jesus throughout your sojourn today.

Sing Psalm 119.17-19.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Open my eyes, Lord, let me see wonderful truths to transform me.

I am a stranger here in the earth; hide not from me Your glorious worth.

Deal with your servant graciously that I may live obediently.

Open my eyes, Lord, let me see glory divine!

5 Swath of the Lord

Pray Psalm 119.20-22.

My soul breaks with longing
For Your judgments at all times.
You rebuke the proud—the cursed,
Who stray from Your commandments.
Remove from me reproach and contempt,
For I have kept Your testimonies..

Sing Psalm 119.20-22.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

My soul with longing breaks for You; all of Your judgments I would do.
For You rebuke the proud and the cursed, who from Your Law have strayed, and worse.
Take from me all contempt, O Lord, for I have kept Your holy Word.
Lift all reproach from me, O Lord - my soul renew!

Read Psalm 119.17-24; meditate on verse 21, 22.

Preparation

1. What does the psalmist want God to do for him?
2. What grounds does he plead to obtain this request?

Meditation

We feel the mood of stanza 3 darkening just a bit more. God is active in the world, and it can be an unsafe place.

Our psalmist knows that God has a zero-tolerance policy where sin is concerned. All around him people were straying (cf. v. 10, “wander”) from God’s commandments – yes, and worse, deliberately rebelling against His Law. Such as these God rebukes, especially those who in pride exalt themselves above Him (cf. Ps. 2).

So God’s Sword of rebuke is always active, humbling the proud, setting aside those who scorn Him, frustrating all who will not follow His way, and causing happiness to elude them (vv. 1-3). Our psalmist wants to make sure he’s not in the swath of the Lord, so he pleads his obedience. He has kept the testimonies of God, so he asks the Lord to remove from him all reproach or contempt.

He means, of course, in the eyes of the Lord. We who are strangers on the earth – who walk the path of God’s Word while others stray from it and boast of their rebellion – are always going to be the objects of reproach and contempt by the people of the world. We can’t change that.

But we can make sure that, as Jesus rides forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 6.2; cf. Ps. 45.3, 4), we’re not the objects of His wrath or rebuke, and we are well out of the swath of His Sword because our feet remain firmly set in the path of His Law (cf. v. 105), and wondrously shod with Him.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Whom does God rebuke? The proud and the cursed. Who are those people? Those who roundly reject the gift of salvation offered to us by God. “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed” (1 Cor. 16.22). Accursed in the Greek is *anathema*. And *anathema* in the English is “something or someone that one vehemently dislikes. Synonyms for which are: abhorrence, hate, censure, condemnation, abomination, pariah, horror, and bête noire. That’s not even the whole list. Clearly God has a great distaste for those who bear that title.

And yet, is it possible, that those of us who bear the name of Christ can also be called proud and cursed? Well, yes, because we also stray from God's commandments.

And who were the commandments written for and given to? The people of God. God did not bless the Israelites and the Egyptians with this Law. He could just as easily have given this to them as they labored in Egypt. But God waited until He had brought them out of the land of bondage, into a new paradigm for their lives, that He gave them these guidelines to follow. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people..." (1 Pet. 2.9). And that includes us.

So, because it is possible for all humankind to fall into the category of proud and cursed, we plead with God to remove from us His reproach and contempt. And what do we use as our grounds for this request? That we have kept His testimonies (Ps. 119.22).

Have we been diligent to keep His testimonies? (Ps. 119.2, 22)
Does our soul break with longing for His judgments? (Ps. 119.20)
Do we beg Him not to hide His commandments from us? (Ps. 119.19)
Do we search out His Word daily to find wondrous things in His Law? (Ps. 119.18)

If the answer to these questions is a resounding "Yes", then we can rest assured that He will hear our prayers for forgiveness and the removal of His reproach and contempt. "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful" (Ps. 116.5). "I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live" (Ps. 116.1, 2).

Through Jesus, "we are well out of the swath of His Sword because our feet remain firmly set in the path of His Law." For by His grace we have been saved, and are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph. 2.8-10). He longs for us to walk in those good works along the path that He has marked out for us by His Word. So, "Let me not wander from Your commandments!" (Ps. 119.10).

For reflection

1. How does God rebuke those who do not know Him?
2. How does the Spirit convict (Jn. 16.8) us when we stray from God's path?
3. Why must we cling to Jesus, even when we stumble in or stray from God's path?

The comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul, when other comforts are made bitter; and those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must be advised by them. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.17-24

Pray Psalm 119.17-19.

Wait in silence on the Lord to search your soul, to reveal any lingering sins for which you must repent. Call on His Spirit to convict you throughout the day as necessary, and to keep you on the Lord's path.

Sing Psalm 119.17-19.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Open my eyes, Lord, let me see wonderful truths to transform me.
I am a stranger here in the earth; hide not from me Your glorious worth.
Deal with your servant graciously that I may live obediently.
Open my eyes, Lord, let me see glory divine!

6 Not High Enough

Pray Psalm 119.23, 24.

Princes also sit *and* speak against me,
But Your servant meditates on Your statutes.
Your testimonies also *are* my delight
And my counselors.

Sing Psalm 119.23, 24.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Princes oppose me day by day, for I continue in Your way.
I will Your statutes hold in my mind. What great delight in them I find!
Lord, let Your testimonies be light on my path to counsel me.
Lord, what delight You bring to me out of Your Word.

Read Psalm 119.17-24; meditate on verses 23, 24.

Preparation

1. Who opposed the psalmist?
2. How did he respond to that opposition?

Meditation

Of course, we give thanks to God for civil government, especially in a country like ours where we have so much freedom. Government's reason for being is to serve the good purposes of God (Rom. 13.1-4). That it *ever* does this – given the temptations of political power – is testimony to the reality of God's common grace and the restraining power of His Spirit (Matt. 5.45; 2 Thess. 2.6, 7).

But not all believers live in countries where they don't have to fear civil government. We must remember our persecuted brethren, to intercede for them faithfully. The psalmist knew something of that concern, as we see in verse 23. This is the darkest and most uncertain part of the third stanza. What could be worse than to have civil government oppose you? The day could come, even in this country, when we will find ourselves at odds with the purposes of government so that we become the objects of its contempt. Are we ready for that?

Government holds a high place in the social order. We should pray for our government (1 Tim. 2.1-8), even though we might find its policies execrable at times. And we should not fear civil government, even if it turns against us. Keep your eye on the testimonies and statutes and Word of the Lord, and follow their counsel at all times (v. 24). If that means government cracks down, so be it. Civil government is not high enough in authority to jeopardize our true freedom and happiness. We do not look to government for these, but to Jesus Christ, exalted in glory.

Our text returns to a major key in the last verse, as the psalmist declares his delight to be in the Lord and His testimonies. Though rulers oppose him, still he will rejoice in the Lord. And why not? Jesus has never lost even one of those who are His servants and delight in His Word.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Depending upon who wrote Psalm 119, those princes could have been sons. If David penned it, the princes would have been his own flesh and blood. Otherwise, it is referring to those in governmental leadership over the psalmist. Either way, the answer to opposition is to meditate on God's Law and serve Him in humility. Because only in His Word and in His way will we find peace. In fact, His testimonies are our "delight" and "counselors" (Ps. 119.24). They are where we find joy and help in suffering with those who "speak against

us” (Ps. 119.23), be they our own children, or perhaps some governmental authority.

Two thoughtful reactions are suggested for us in Scripture. One from Jesus, the other from Paul. They work regardless of who is speaking against us:

1. “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Lk. 6.27, 28).
2. “Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden” (1 Tim. 5.24, 25).

God sees all. “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths” (Prov. 5.21).

And then a word of comfort and encouragement:

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.
O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant;
You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and
will call upon the name of the LORD” (Ps. 116.15-17).

Much that happens on earth is hard to understand. Many acts of unkindness and hatred are foisted upon the followers of Christ. It can be puzzling, hurtful, confusing, and frightening, yet not unexpected (Jn. 15.20; 1 Pet. 4.12-14). But God is in control of all. Everything and everyone do His bidding. “. . . Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures . . . You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants” (Ps. 119.89-91).

“Jesus has never lost even one of those who are His servants and delight in His Word.”

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one” (Jn. 10.27-30). Puts those who sit and speak against us in their rightful place. Impotent to harm us eternally.

For reflection

1. Why should we pray for those who serve in civil government? How should we pray?
2. Why do we need to bear in mind that God always sees and rules over all things?
3. How can meditating on God’s Word strengthen us to deal with opposition and other trials.

The comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul, when other comforts are made bitter; and those that would have God’s testimonies to be their delight, must be advised by them. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.17-24

Pray Psalm 119.17-22.

Call on the Lord to flood your soul – mind, heart, and conscience – with new light from His Word, new joy because of His Presence, and new zeal to serve Him today.

Sing Psalm 119.17-22.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Open my eyes, Lord, let me see wonderful truths to transform me.

I am a stranger here in the earth; hide not from me Your glorious worth.

Deal with your servant graciously that I may live obediently.

Psalm 119.17-24

Open my eyes, Lord, let me see glory divine!

My soul with longing breaks for You; all of Your judgments I would do.
For You rebuke the proud and the cursed, who from Your Law have strayed, and worse.
Take from me all contempt, O Lord, for I have kept Your holy Word.
Lift all reproach from me, O Lord - my soul renew!

7 Constant Companion

Pray Psalm 119.17-19.

Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.
I *am* a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from me.

Sing Psalm 119.17-19.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)
Open my eyes, Lord, let me see wonderful truths to transform me.
I am a stranger here in the earth; hide not from me Your glorious worth.
Deal with your servant graciously that I may live obediently.
Open my eyes, Lord, let me see glory divine!

Read Psalm 119.17-24; meditate on verses 19, 20, 24

Preparation

1. How did the psalmist feel, being a stranger in the earth?
2. Where did he turn for joy?

Meditation

It's amazing to know that we can have happiness in a world where we are strangers walking a path that goes against the world's grain.

But we know that path to be the way to fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore, because it leads *in* the Lord *to* the Lord, day by day (Ps. 16.11). The psalmist is not naïve about the cost of following God's Word. He knows there will be opposition. He knows he's going against the world's grain by devoting himself to the commandments and statutes of God.

But this is where he finds true and lasting delight (v. 24). No amount of difficulty, opposition, or oppression can rob him of the joy he has in knowing the Lord. The Word of God is his constant companion, whatever his circumstances may be, and it speaks continuously to him of bounty, wondrous things, sound counsel, and sure judgment (vv. 17, 18, 24, 20).

The Holy Spirit of God is writing His Law on the hearts of all those who believe in Jesus (Ezek. 36.26, 27; cf. Ps. 119.9-11), thus making God's Word our constant companion as well. But even more, Jesus, *the* Word of God, has promised to be with us always and never to fail nor forsake us (Matt. 28.20; Heb. 13.5). He is our constant Companion, by His Word and Spirit speaking continuously to us throughout the day to counsel and guide us, give us sound judgment, delight us with wondrous things, and fortify us with hope and joy.

Our happiness depends on this alone: Immanuel!

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times" (Ps. 119.20).

This verse strikes a chord in most people's hearts as each of us, no doubt, has at one time or another been the recipient of injustice. It makes our heart break. It fills us with sadness and anger. We long to cry out to God, "It is time for You to act, O LORD, for they have regarded Your law as void."! (Ps. 119.126) "You are my

King, O God; command victories..." (Ps. 44.4) And, "This You have seen, O LORD; do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me. Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, to my cause, my God and My Lord. Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me" (Ps. 35.22-24).

We rejoice to know that God knows all. He sees all. And He will one day right every wrong. But while we wait, it is best for us to look unto Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Heb. 12.2, 3).

And as we look to Jesus, we must listen to God's words to us: "But [you] let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5.24). And we know that He requires from us: "...to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with [our] God" (Mic. 6.8).

Jesus took the injustice. We are to gladly do the same. Paul, who took injustice as a steady diet, wrote: "...I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 12.10).

We don't like injustice. So, we are to be careful never to commit an act of injustice toward anyone else. "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7.12) Our Personal Mission Field swirls with injustice, and opportunities for justice, mercy, and love. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5.12, 16).

This, dear Christian, is His counsel and our delight! (Ps. 119.24) For "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up [our] wounds" (Ps. 147.3). Let His Word be your constant Companion so you'll always know how to respond to injustice.

For reflection

1. Why should we expect to know injustice in the world?
2. How can we prepare for injustice, so that we respond as we should?
3. How can you encourage or otherwise help your fellow Christians to respond justly to injustice?

We ought to spend our lives in his service; we shall find true life in keeping his word. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel, must beg him to give them understanding, by the light of his Spirit. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.17-24*

Pray Psalm 119.20-24.

Give thanks to God for His Word and salvation. Pray that you will know His Word present with you throughout the day, and that you may delight in and obey it.

Sing Psalm 119.20-24.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

My soul with longing breaks for You; all of Your judgments I would do.
For You rebuke the proud and the cursed, who from Your Law have strayed, and worse.
Take from me all contempt, O Lord, for I have kept Your holy Word.
Lift all reproach from me, O Lord – my soul renew!

Psalm 119.17-24

Princes oppose me day by day, for I continue in Your way.
I will Your statutes hold in my mind. What great delight in them I find!
Lord, let Your testimonies be light on my path to counsel me.
Lord, what delight You bring to me out of Your Word.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In what sense is this stanza “darker” than previous ones?
2. Why did the psalmist describe himself as a “stranger”?
3. As strangers and aliens in this world, why do we need to meditate on and delight in God’s Word?
4. How are we able to know lasting happiness in an uncertain and sometimes hostile world?
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

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you.