

# PSALM 119.57-64

psalm  
God's Word 119

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*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

Psalm 119.57-64  
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## Introduction to Psalm 119.57-64

What does it mean to have God as our “portion”?

And must we do to *keep* that wondrous arrangement intact in our lives?

This is the focus of this stanza of Psalm 119. Keeping God and His Word as our portion is a continuous work that begins in our soul and works out into daily life in a wicked world. We need to understand this important concept, lest we be drawn away from God, thinking that a better “portion” might be discovered elsewhere.

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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.

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## 1 Our Portion

*Pray Psalm 119.57.*

*You are* my portion, O LORD;  
I have said that I would keep Your words.

*Sing Psalm 119.57-59.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

I vow to keep Your Word; You are my portion, Lord.  
Let favor fill my heart; have mercy by Your Word!  
When I think on my way, I turn my feet to You,  
to Your path I shall not delay, Your Word to do.

*Read Psalm 119.57-64; meditate on verse 57.*

*Preparation*

1. How does the psalmist describe the Lord?
2. What does he do in keeping with that description?

*Meditation*

The focus of the  $\Pi$  (*chetb*) stanza is on taking God as our Portion – and keeping Him that way. The Hebrew word, 'כֶּלֶךְ (*chel-KAY*) is rich with connotations. It means “portion, tract, territory” or even “share” or “habitual way of life” (Brown, Driver, and Briggs). Think of all that is implied in this: Portions of food. Tracts of land, as in the promised land. Territory, a place to dwell and develop, a home. Something to enjoy and share. A Way of life (Jn. 14.6).

God is all that. Can you say that God is all that to you? Your Portion, in all those ways?

Well, we'd better keep working to make that so. Because, as this stanza will show us, we're going to encounter things that want to take God's place, and if we give in to them, we'll lose our way in our journey with the Lord.

The fact is, God *is* our portion. He has given Himself to us as part of His covenant: “I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward” (Gen. 15.1). We acknowledge and renew that great gift every time we take the Lord's Supper, and He feeds us spiritually with His body and blood.

Having God as our Portion is one thing. Keeping Him thus is another. And that entails keeping all the words God has spoken to us in His Law and all His Word (well, of course; this is Psalm 119, right?). In this eighth stanza of Psalm 119 we'll learn a bit more about what “keeping” God's Law entails. It's not merely outward grudging obedience, but a rich and ongoing relationship with God, His Word, His people, and His world.

Feed on your Portion today. And get ready to keep Him.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.16.*

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines portion as a part or share of something larger. But in the case of our God, we don't just have a share; we have Him *all*. And who or what could be larger? Each of us has our portion in Him, to cherish and love and serve.

The psalmist Asaph wrote these beautiful words:

“Whom have I in heaven but You?

And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.

My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73.25, 26).

The prophet Isaiah quotes our Portion as saying:

“I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me.”

“That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other” (Is. 45.5, 6).

King David wrote of the LORD, our Portion:

“O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup:

You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places:

yes, I have a good inheritance” (Ps. 16.5, 6).

David comforted himself during the time he spent hiding in a cave from his enemies, by thinking on His Portion. Here is how he wrote about it:

“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path.

In the way in which I walk they have secretly set a snare for me.”

“I cried out to You, O LORD; I said, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living’” (Ps. 142.3, 5).

We have much Good News to share in our Personal Mission Field about God our Portion, Who wants to be their Portion, too. But again, there is a catch. It “entails keeping all the words God has spoken to us in His Law and all His Word.” This is kind of a no-brainer. Who wouldn’t want God to be their Portion? And who wouldn’t want to do the work involved to keep it that way?

*For reflection*

1. What does it mean to you to say that God is your Portion?
2. How can believers encourage one another in realizing God as our Portion?
3. Write a “breathing prayer” using Psalm 119.57. Pray it throughout the day today, and as you lie down to sleep at night.

*You see what are the possessions of the just person: God’s commandments, his words, his precepts. In these he is rich; on these he feeds; with these he is delighted as if by all riches. Ambrose of Milan (333-397), Letter 82*

*Pray Psalm 119.63, 64.*

Pray for the believers you will meet today. How can you encourage them in having God as their portion and in keeping His Word?

*Sing Psalm 119.63, 64.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

All those who fear You, Lord, go with me on my way,

all those who keep Your holy Word from day to day.

Around us all the earth declares Your mercy, Lord.

That I might know Your glorious worth, teach me Your Word.

## 2 From the Heart

*Pray Psalm 119.58.*

I entreated Your favor with *my* whole heart;  
Be merciful to me according to Your word.

*Sing Psalm 119.57-59.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

I vow to keep Your Word; You are my portion, Lord.  
Let favor fill my heart; have mercy by Your Word!  
When I think on my way, I turn my feet to You,  
to Your path I shall not delay, Your Word to do.

*Read Psalm 119.57-64; meditate on verse 58.*

*Preparation*

1. What did the psalmist entreat of God?
2. To what end?

*Meditation*

The theme of this stanza of Psalm 119 was set forth in verse 57: “I will keep Your words.” The remaining verses of this stanza will tell us how that’s done.

We too often take for granted important words or ideas from Scripture. “Keep” is one of them. What does this mean? Could you explain it to a new believer?

“Keeping” God’s Word begins in His Presence, with the full devotion of the heart. What the psalmist says here is, literally, “I entreated Your face...” To see the face of God, to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4.6), to be seated at His right hand, looking on His glory, gazing into His eyes and meditating on His beauty – this is what it means to see the face of the Lord. When we see the Lord like this – if only with the eyes of the heart (Eph. 1.15-21) – our heart overflows with love. We understand what David meant when he wrote about seeing the Lord’s beauty and face, “One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek” (Ps. 27.4).

As we see the beauty of Jesus’ face, love for Him grows, and with it the desire to do all things that accord with His Presence and pleasure (Ps. 16.11). And what do we seek from Him? Mercy and grace for all our times of need all day long (Heb. 4.16).

We will need to make this a daily exercise, lodging our heart and all our strongest positive affections in the power and pleasure of our beautiful Savior. When your heart is thus engaged, His mercy will go with you in all you do, so that you keep His Word as the Lord intends.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

It is very helpful that the psalmist is going to teach us how to keep God’s words (Ps. 119.57). The first step is to ask God to be merciful to us. And not just to ask, but to entreat Him with our whole heart (Ps. 119.58). And as we are pleading for mercy, we are asking God to remember His words to us (Ps. 119.58), that He will do this according to His Word.

Another aspect of God’s favor that we seek with all our heart, is forgiveness of sin.

We must have a clean heart to keep His word. We need His mercy to cleanse us. “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7.18, 19).

He delights in mercy.

“For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Rom. 9.15, 16). His delight.

From the heart we long to keep His words.  
From the heart we plead for mercy.  
From His heart He remembers His words to us.

Our Portion. What a Savior.

*A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,  
A wonderful Savior to me,  
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,  
Where rivers of pleasure I see.*

*He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock  
That shadows a dry, thirsty land;  
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,  
And covers me there with His hand,  
And covers me there with His hand.*  
(Fanny Crosby, 1890)

This is Whose Words we want to keep.

*For reflection*

1. Why must keeping God’s Law begin in the heart? What is the heart, and how does it function in the soul?
2. Everybody has in mind some image of Jesus, exalted in glory. Describe yours.
3. What could you do to improve this vision of Christ in glory? Why is it important you do so?

*Let us observe, then, in the first place, we are aroused from our supineness, that we may exercise our faith by prayer. In the second place, the principal thing for which we ought to pray is, that God, out of his free grace, may be favorable to us, look on our affliction, and grant us relief.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 19.58*

*Pray Psalm 119.61, 62.*

What challenges will you face today in living for God and according to His Word? Thank Him in advance, and ask Him for mercy and grace to help in your time of need.

*Sing Psalm 119.61, 62.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

Though wicked ways constrain and bind my hands in sin,  
yet I recall Your Word and turn to You again.  
By night I thank You, Lord; my voice to You I raise;  
for all Your righteous, holy Word I give You praise.

### 3 Mind in Gear

*Pray Psalm 119.59, 60.*

I thought about my ways,  
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.  
I made haste, and did not delay  
To keep Your commandments.

*Sing Psalm 119.57-60.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

I vow to keep Your Word; You are my portion, Lord.  
Let favor fill my heart; have mercy by Your Word!  
When I think on my way, I turn my feet to You,  
to Your path I shall not delay, Your Word to do.

*Read Psalm 119.57-64; meditate on verse 59, 60.*

*Preparation*

1. What was the psalmist thinking about?
2. What did this lead him to do?

*Meditation*

Our heart devoted to keeping the Law, we also need to make sure our mind is in gear. These verses work three ways as a reminder always to have our mind engaged with the Law and all the Word of God.

First, look ahead at the beginning of the day to what you have planned or what you may reasonably anticipate will cross your path for the day ahead. Ask God to show you your work and to give you the wisdom and grace you will need to glorify Him in all your day's work (Ps. 90.12, 16, 17).

Second, as you proceed through the day, work to redeem your time, living as a wise man, following God's Word (v. 60; Eph. 5.15-17). Seek the filling of God's Spirit continuously so that you may have His mind concerning everything you think or do (Eph. 5.18-21; Rom. 8.5-9). And be instant – immediate – in obeying God's Word (v. 60).

Finally, at the end of your day, review the day, giving thanks to God for His grace, confessing sins or failures, waiting on Him to teach you anything you might do to improve your use of His gift of time or to follow-up on the day's work tomorrow, and interceding for those you encountered or served throughout the day.

We must not live mindlessly; rather, let us always yield to the mind of Christ and walk the path of His commandments (1 Jn. 2.1-6). Our heart and mind set on Him and His Word in all our time (Ps. 16.8), we will be more inclined and more likely to keep His commandments and to glorify Him in all our ways.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Jesus told a parable about two men who went to the temple to pray. In the context of our verses for today, one of the men was totally out of touch with the reality of himself, and the other had his *mind in gear* and was in tune with his own sinfulness. He also knew how to respond: "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified..." (Lk. 18.13, 14).

He thought about his ways and turned away from his sin and turned to God and His Word (Ps. 119.59).



The prodigal son, in another parable that Jesus told, experienced this same urgent change of mind. “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son...”’” (Lk. 15.17-19).

He thought about his ways and decided to turn from them and turn to his father (Ps. 119. 59). Mind in gear.

And then we have the story of Zacchaeus. Here is a man who thought about his ways and turned from them, and our gracious Savior, helped him to do it in haste. We enter the story when Jesus finds him up in a tree: “And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully” (Lk. 19.5, 6).

He made haste and did not delay to keep God’s commandments. Mind and heart in gear. Ready for a new life of service to his wonderful Savior (Ps. 119.60).

What about your story? When you think about your ways, and God convicts you of sin, do you remedy the situation with haste? Or do you dawdle and delay?

That is a perilous path that we must not travel on: “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on” (Prov. 4.14, 15). With great haste.

Let’s go back to the story of the prodigal to see how God responds to us when we turn with haste back into His forgiving and loving arms. “But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him...for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Lk. 15.20, 24).

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 Jn. 3.1)

“Let us always yield to the mind of Christ and walk the path of His commandments.” It is the only way to go, not to pieces, but to peace. Our mind in gear.

*For reflection*

1. What does it mean for you to get your “mind in gear” for keeping God’s Law?
2. Can we get our mind in gear if we are not “remembering” the Word of God throughout the day? Explain.
3. What can you do to be more consistent in keeping God’s Law by having your mind in gear?

*...the commencement of a godly life consists in men awaking from their lethargy, examining their ways, and, at last, wisely considering what it is to regulate their conduct properly.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.57-64*

*Pray Psalm 119.63, 64.*

Pray for the Christians you will meet today. Ask God to give you some word to encourage them in their walk with and work for Him. Pay attention to the glory of God speaking to you from the world around, and give Him thanks and praise.

*Sing Psalm 119.63, 64.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

All those who fear You, Lord, go with me on my way,  
all those who keep Your holy Word from day to day.

*Psalm 119.57-64*

Around us all the earth declares Your mercy, Lord.  
That I might know Your glorious worth, teach me Your Word.

## 4 Remember to Not Forget

*Pray Psalm 119.61.*

The cords of the wicked have bound me,  
But I have not forgotten Your law.

*Sing Psalm 119.61, 62.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

Though wicked ways constrain and bind my hands in sin,  
yet I recall Your Word and turn to You again.  
By night I thank You, Lord; my voice to You I raise;  
for all Your righteous, holy Word I give You praise.

*Read Psalm 119.57-64; meditate on verse 61.*

*Preparation*

1. What was binding the psalmist?
2. How did he respond?

*Meditation*

Remember what we learned about remembering? That, in the Hebrew mind, it means continuous attention to detail with a view to pleasing God in all things. The opposite of remembering is forgetting. And the times in which we live want nothing more than to forget that God ever had anything to do with the world.

Here is how Christians must respond to the increasing lawlessness of our day. We feel bound and fettered by the cords of the wicked. We find many of their laws foolish and even repugnant, their entertainments insipid and disgusting, and their preoccupation with self and stuff, sad and degrading. Further, we feel the tightening of restraints against our freedoms of speech, faith, and action, simply because our way of life flies in the face of the wicked ways of our society.

We can probably expect this to continue, if not to increase, until it pleases the Lord to bring revival, renewal, and awakening to the world. In the meantime, we must not give in to wickedness, be it ever so widely practiced and firmly entrenched in law, or so ubiquitous in our culture. We must diligently attend to the Law of God as our foundation and guide in all matters, working hard, as individuals and a community, to be Jesus to the world. Wickedness and degradation may increase, but as Solzhenitsyn once said, "Let that come, if it must come, only not by me!"

As we keep God's Word, the wisdom of God will stand out in our midst, and the world will not fail to notice (Deut. 4.5-9). We must remember the Law of God and practice love for God and neighbor according to its precepts, looking always to Jesus as the full embodiment of the Law, and the Guide for our steps within it. Devote your heart to the Lord and His Word. Fill your mind with it. Then work diligently not to forget it as you go about your day. Attending continuously to the Word of God is where keeping that Word is realized.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Regardless. Regardless of anything and everything, we must remember to keep God's Law (Ps. 119.61).

Joseph was bound by the cords of the wicked multiple times throughout his life. Yet he remembered, and was able to say in the end, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50.20).

Daniel was bound and taken from his home as a youth. But he remembered God and His Law. "But Daniel

purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..." (Dan. 1.8). And because of his years of faithful obedience to God, King Nebuchadnezzar finally declared, "Now I...praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down" (Dan. 4.37). Then another king tried to end Daniel's life, but he still stood firm, bound once again by the wicked, but remembering God and His Law. When thrown into a den of lions, he did not forget, and he lived to say, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you" (Dan. 6.22).

Paul was warned many times that he would be bound. Yet he remembered God. He did not forget Him or His Law. Nor did he forget the work that was set before him to do. "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20.22-24).

Myriad of our forebears have been bound for the sake of Christ. They remembered and did not forget Him. "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking 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. 12.1-3).

So much courage by so many who remembered and did not forget.

*For reflection*

1. What do you need to remember from the Law of God especially for what's before you today?
2. How can you prepare each day to make sure that, the bonds of wickedness notwithstanding, you do not forget the Word of God?
3. What can you do to encourage your fellow believers to remember God and His Word and not forget?

*... the prophet assures us, that to continue to love the law, and to practice righteousness, when we are exposed as a prey to the ungodly, and perceive no help from God, is an evidence of genuine piety. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.61*

*Pray Psalm 119.57-60.*

Devote your heart to the Lord. Get your mind in gear around His Word. Prepare to go forth into a sinful world with the light of God's Word shining through you. How will you especially need the grace of God for this day?

*Sing Psalm 119.57-60.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

I vow to keep Your Word; You are my portion, Lord.  
Let favor fill my heart; have mercy by Your Word!  
When I think on my way, I turn my feet to You,  
to Your path I shall not delay, Your Word to do.

## 5 Mid-Night Thanks

*Pray Psalm 119.62.*

At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You,  
Because of Your righteous judgments.

*Sing Psalm 119.61, 62.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

Though wicked ways constrain and bind my hands in sin,  
yet I recall Your Word and turn to You again.  
By night I thank You, Lord; my voice to You I raise;  
for all Your righteous, holy Word I give You praise.

*Read Psalm 119.57-64; meditate on verse 62.*

*Preparation*

1. Why does the psalmist rise at midnight?
2. What makes him want to do this?

*Meditation*

The psalmist says he would rise at midnight to give thanks to God. How did he do that? He couldn't set an alarm like we can. How did he manage to wake up to pray?

I can think of a couple of explanations. First, let's not force our text to mean 12:00am precisely. The meaning is something more like, "in the middle of the night" (which is a literal translation of the Hebrew). So, in the middle of the night, the psalmist was awake. Don't many of us have that same experience for one reason or another?

It's also possible that this may have been a time for the changing of the palace guard, and the psalmist could have been – or could have arranged to be – awakened by that.

The point is, when he woke up in the middle of the night, what was on his mind? Giving thanks to God! Oh, how I wish I were more like that! When our minds are so focused on God, so filled with gratitude for His blessings, so mindful of His continuously remembering His Word to us, so awash with His righteous judgments, and so flush with the vision of Jesus exalted in glory, then we may also make a point, if only briefly, to thank our God each time we are awakened in the middle of the night. What a great discipline that would be!

This giving thanks to God because of His righteous judgments is yet another important means for helping us keep the Law of God. The more our hearts are devoted to the Law, and our minds immersed in and saturated with it, the more we will remember God's Law and give thanks for it, thus further preparing ourselves to keep and obey it always.

Ask God to remind you, whenever you awake in the middle of the night, to give thanks for Him and for His righteous judgments.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Sometimes the middle of the night can seem lonely and fearful. Monsters loom large in the wee hours of the night. Even there, He is with us.

"If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness

shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You” (Ps. 139.11, 12).

“I rise to give thanks to You” (Ps. 119.62). Giving thanks to God helps to dispel our fears.

Our bravehearted brothers in Christ showed us exactly how to do this. They had been beaten and thrown in prison, fastened at the feet by stocks. Many fears could have overwhelmed them. And yet: “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16.25). Their raucous rejoicing brought heaven into the midst for themselves and others.

When we think about God in the night and give Him thanks for His righteous judgments, we can also rest confidently in the knowledge that He is thinking about us, too.

“How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!  
How great is the sum of them!  
If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;  
when I awake, I am still with You” (Ps. 139.17, 18).

Whatever time of day it is, whatever our situation, giving thanks to God is always the right thing to do.  
“I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and  
I will call upon the name of the LORD” (Ps. 116.17).  
“Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and  
declare His works with rejoicing” (Ps. 107.22).

Let us always remember to give Him thanks. For “His righteousness endures forever” (Ps. 111.3).

*For reflection*

1. What could you do to remind yourself to give thanks in the middle of the night?
2. How does giving thanks to God honor Him? How does it benefit us?
3. What will you remember to give thanks for tonight in the middle of the night?

*There is no situation on earth in which a believer has not cause to be thankful. Let us feel ashamed that others are more willing to keep from sleep to spend the time in sinful pleasures, than we are to praise God. Matthew Henry (1662-1714),  
Commentary on Psalm 119.57-64*

*Pray Psalm 119.57-60.*

Give thanks to God for His Word. As you pray about the day ahead, ask the Lord to shed light from His Word on the work you will do in your Personal Mission Field.

*Sing Psalm 119.57-60.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

I vow to keep Your Word; You are my portion, Lord.  
Let favor fill my heart; have mercy by Your Word!  
When I think on my way, I turn my feet to You,  
to Your path I shall not delay, Your Word to do.

## 6 Good Company, Good Environment

*Pray Psalm 119.63, 64.*

I *am* a companion of all who fear You,  
And of those who keep Your precepts.  
The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy;  
Teach me Your statutes.

*Sing Psalm 119.63, 64.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

All those who fear You, Lord, go with me on my way,  
all those who keep Your holy Word from day to day.  
Around us all the earth declares Your mercy, Lord.  
That I might know Your glorious worth, teach me Your Word.

*Read Psalm 119.57-64; meditate on verses 63, 64.*

*Preparation*

1. Whom did the psalmist choose for friends?
2. Where did he learn about God's mercy?

*Meditation*

We recall that in this stanza of Psalm 119 we're focusing on what is entailed in keeping the Law of God. Heart and mind devotion, for sure. Careful forethought and ongoing monitoring of our ways. Daily "remembering" the Law. Giving thanks to God. These are all disciplines that can help us continue in the Word and blessings of God.

The psalmist mentions two more: Have the right companions and listen to the witness of creation.

The psalmist was careful to have as friends people who feared God (v. 63). Fearing God is the beginning of all wisdom and knowledge. People who fear God will serve, obey, and love Him. Good company like this can help us to stay in the path of God's Word, both by their example and their encouragement.

Realizing that the creation bears witness to the mercy of God can also help us in keeping His Word (v. 64). God speaks to us throughout His creation (Ps. 19.1-4), bearing witness to His Presence in goodness, mercy, wisdom, beauty, and delight. We are always in creation, which is always witnessing to some aspect of God and His glory. The more we learn to read the "book" of creation, the more creation will help us in remembering to keep the Law of God.

At all times we must look to the Lord to teach us His Word. Only the Spirit of God can teach us the Law so that we are shaped by His instruction into the very likeness of Him Who kept the Law perfectly, our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

As we seek companions who fear God and keep His precepts, we will in turn become useful friends for others, and will be able to fulfill their needs for companions who love and fear God and keep His precepts.

It is a job description which, if lived out by each believer, all would be growing in their faith and the world would reap the bounty of God's mercy which is everywhere seen and felt.

Barnabas was just such a person. “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11. 23, 24).

Onesiphorus was a person we read about twice, briefly. And yet what a comfort he was to Paul! “The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus” (2 Tim. 1.16-18). “Greet...the household of Onesiphorus” (2 Tim. 4.19).

And John. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter...” (Jn. 21.7). Was it his abiding faith? His love? His encouragement? His kindness? His tender spirit? There was something about him that was a comfort to our Savior while He traversed the earth that we would do well to emulate.

As John Calvin is quoted in today’s reading: “Such concord is undoubtedly required in all the godly, that they may contribute to each other’s advancement in the fear of God.” It is what we are called to search out in others, and it is what we are to be for others as they search us out.

And the mercy of God, seen in Him and in His creation, is the overarching characteristic He desires to see in us. He has shown us what is good, and what He requires of us: “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly” with Him (Mic. 6.8).

“For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth.  
He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD” (Ps. 33.4, 5).

*For reflection*

1. What can you do to make sure you are a friend who fears God?
2. What do we mean by “reading” the “book” of creation? Give an example from your experience.
3. Why are good companions and a good environment essential for keeping God’s Law?

*He does not simply speak of the brotherly love and concord which true believers cultivate among themselves, but intimates that, whenever he met with any individual who feared God, he gave him his hand in token of fellowship, and that he was not only one of the number of God's servants, but also their helper. Such concord is undoubtedly required in all the godly, that they may contribute to each other's advancement in the fear of God. John Calvin (1509-1564). Commentary on Psalm 119.63, 64*

*Pray Psalm 119.61, 62.*

Meditate on the day ahead as you wait before the Lord in prayer. What temptations do you anticipate? Where might you expect to encounter wickedness or opposition to your faith? Commit these situations to the Lord, asking Him for strength to continue in His Word.

*Sing Psalm 119.61, 62.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

Though wicked ways constrain and bind my hands in sin,  
yet I recall Your Word and turn to You again.  
By night I thank You, Lord; my voice to You I raise;  
for all Your righteous, holy Word I give You praise.



## 7 The Keeping Life

*Pray Psalm 119.57-60.*

*You are* my portion, O LORD;  
I have said that I would keep Your words.  
I entreated Your favor with *my* whole heart;  
Be merciful to me according to Your word.  
I thought about my ways,  
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.  
I made haste, and did not delay  
To keep Your commandments.

*Sing Psalm 119.57-60.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

I vow to keep Your Word; You are my portion, Lord.  
Let favor fill my heart; have mercy by Your Word!  
When I think on my way, I turn my feet to You,  
to Your path I shall not delay, Your Word to do.

*Read Psalm 119.57-64; meditate on verse 57.*

*Preparation*

1. Because God was his portion, what did the psalmist resolve?
2. What did that mean for his daily life?

*Meditation*

This excellent stanza of Psalm 119 unpacks the meaning of what the psalmist vowed in verse 1: “I have said that I would keep Your words.” That’s serious business, making a vow like that. But we should all make and renew it day by day, making sure we fully understand what it means for us to live such a “keeping” life.

Let’s quickly review the different components of such a life:

1. Resolve and renew your commitment day by day (v. 57)
2. Devote your heart to the Lord and seek His face and Presence (“favor”) for mercy and grace (v. 58)
3. Get your mind in gear and keep it there (v. 59)
4. Be always about the business of bringing your life into line with God’s Word (vv. 59, 60)
5. In the face of the world’s wickedness, cling to God’s Word, to not forget it (v. 61)
6. Give God thanks for His Word always, even in the middle of the night (v. 62)
7. Find like-minded companions (v. 63)
8. Listen to the voice of creation and call on the Lord to teach you more (v. 64)

This is “the keeping life” – clinging to the Word of the Lord, hidden in your heart, saturating your mind, and directing all your steps for obedience, blessing, love for God and neighbors, and happiness. As we keep in this calling, the Spirit of God will continue writing God’s Law on our heart (Ezek. 36.26, 27), teaching us all things (Jn. 14.26), pointing us to and shaping us into the image of Jesus (Jn. 15.26; 2 Cor. 3.12-18), bringing forth spiritual fruit and gifts (Gal. 5.22, 23; 1 Cor. 12.7-11), and empowering us as witnesses for Jesus and agents of His grace (Acts 1.8; 2 Cor. 4.15).

And as this happens, and increases, then we will know that we are kept by God, and He is our portion.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

The Keeping Life – keeping God’s Law as our commanding purpose – leads ultimately to giving it all away.

Not our faith, not our determination, but our love for the Lord God, our Portion – our hold on life. It is all God's. It all belongs to Him. And He allows us the privilege of giving this Good News away by first keeping Him close.

Hannah, in her keeping of the Law, gave her very heart away. Her baby son, a gift from God. And as she gave, she prayed and said:

“My heart rejoices in the LORD; my strength is exalted in the LORD.

I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation.

No one is holy like the LORD, for there is none besides You,  
nor is there any rock like our God.

Talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come from your mouth.

For the LORD is the God of knowledge; and by His actions are weighed” (1 Sam. 2.1-3).

She kept God's Law. She kept her promise. She gave her son back to the LORD.

Jesus told His followers much the same thing: “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 10.39). “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16.24, 25). Finding, keeping, losing, giving.

But then Jesus tells us to keep something close. And that is the Law. “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19.17). And, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14.15).

And John wrote, “By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 2.3).

True keeping involves great generosity of spirit. But we can only know how to properly give anything away, as we keep what we must, and that is the Law. And our Lord will help us keep what is dear. “For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1.12). He will help us sort out all the keeping and giving so that those in our Personal Mission Field are the beneficiaries of all our effort.

The Keeping Life is the most generous!

*For reflection*

1. What do we mean by “the keeping life”?
2. Why must the keeping life begin in our soul – our heart and mind?
3. Why do we need like-minded companions to keep the keeping life?

*God being our portion, ought to animate and encourage us to observe his law. We have already noticed in several other passages, that God is denominated the heritage of the faithful, because he alone is sufficient for their full and entire happiness. And seeing he has chosen us for his peculiar possession, it is only reasonable on our part, that we should rest satisfied with him alone; and if we do this, our hearts will also be disposed to keep his law and, renouncing all the lusts of the flesh, our supreme delight, and firm resolution, will be to continue in the same. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.57*

*Pray Psalm 119.61-64.*

Pray through each of the activities or disciplines mentioned in this stanza that make up what we must do in keeping the Law of God. Ask God to strengthen you in each one, then commit the work of this day to Him.

*Psalm 119.57-64*

*Sing Psalm 119.61-64.*

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

Though wicked ways constrain and bind my hands in sin,  
yet I recall Your Word and turn to You again.

By night I thank You, Lord; my voice to You I raise;  
for all Your righteous, holy Word I give You praise.

All those who fear You, Lord, go with me on my way,  
all those who keep Your holy Word from day to day.

Around us all the earth declares Your mercy, Lord.

That I might know Your glorious worth, teach me Your Word.

*Psalm 119.57-64*

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. This stanza has been about keeping the Law of God. Why should we want to keep the Law of God?
2. We need devoted hearts and engaged minds to keep God's Law. Explain.
3. Does the world want to help us in keeping God's Law? Explain.
4. Which of the components of "the keeping life" do you need to work on improving? How will you do that?
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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Thank you.