

Psalms 19-04-04b

We resume our study here in Psalm 119. We're looking at the second set of eight verses, verses 9 through 16, and seeing their comparison to the first eight verses. All of the first eight start with Aleph, all of the second start with Bath.

And we've compared the first three verses on the left to the first three verses on the right. To do no iniquity, thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. Verse four, thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently, diligently keep.

This is a command. This is a charge from God's lips, God's mouth. God has commanded us, presented us with this mandate.

If you look across to verse 12, blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes. You say, well, those first three verses so clearly corresponded. This seems a little bit further afield in verse four, but you'll notice that God is directly addressed in both, thou in verse four and thou, O Lord, in verse 12.

And the appreciation that is expressed in verse 12, blessed art thou, O Lord. What is he thankful for? Why is he blessing the Lord? Because God has delivered these precepts to us. What does this say? Many times when there was a dictator or a high and mighty potentate, a monarch, a ruler, giving the law of the land, it was oppressive.

It was a burden. It was a yoke on the people. When God gives his precepts precepts and demands steadfast obedience, diligent observance, the response is not, Oh Lord, this is greater than I can bear.

Remember when Cain was talking back to the Lord and he said, what you've laid on me is greater than I can bear. Well, God's initial guidance to Cain wasn't greater than he could bear. He said, if you do well, you'll be accepted.

And if not, your choice is to be overtaken by sin. It's crouching at the door. It's got a desire for you.

You can overcome it. Just make a choice here. Dedicate yourself to the word.

You've strayed from it. You've gone your own way. You've decided you've got a better idea for sacrifice.

And he was a man that had not kept God's precept diligently the way his brother Abel did. Well, instead of responding, he reacted and he rose up and slew his brother. And so God drove him out and put a mark on him that he wouldn't be slain.

He said, well, somebody's going to find me and kill me. And it wasn't yet that there weren't enough people on the earth to be able to afford to do capital punishment among other things.

And so God put a mark on him.

But Cain said, well, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Well, the idea is, if you delight yourself and rejoice in God's way, it is the way of blessing. And you appreciate God for providing that way and leading us in it.

So in verse 12, he says in verse four, you have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently. Well, there's two ways to respond to that. Well, I don't want to keep his precepts.

I don't like his precepts. And he wants me to keep them diligently. He's holding me to a very high standard.

I don't like that. I want to take my own head. I want to go my own way.

I'm captain of my ship and master my faith. And who's God to be putting these precepts on me? That's a reaction. What is the response? What is a beneficial and proper response? Thank you, Lord.

Blessed art thou, O Lord. Teach me these statutes. You've told me to adhere to them diligently.

You've commanded me to keep them diligently. So I appreciate that. This is one of two possible responses in verse 12.

And we saw in Psalm 111 and 112, the way of the wicked, those that reject. And in some of the earlier psalms, we've looked at those who choose the alternative path and the way of the wicked will perish. The righteous man will be preserved.

He will enter into God's blessings. But the way of the wicked will perish. The way of the wicked, that whole lifestyle, that whole pattern, that opportunity is going to vanish in the future.

But the psalmist's response here to God's command for diligent obedience is, I bless you, O Lord. I appreciate this. Teach me your statutes.

If you'll teach them to me, I can do a better job of keeping them and keeping them diligently. So there is an issue and there is a response in verse 4 and in verse 12. You see it? Then you go to verse 5. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.

Oh, that my ways were directed, that I had the ability to nail them down and make sure that they were consistent. And then the corresponding verse in the Bait section is verse 13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

This is a little mini chiasm. Notice that this is the center of the Alpha and Bait section here. Verses 4 and 5 are the center of the Alpha section.

Verses 12 and 13 are the center of the Bait section. And they read like a chiasm. Read across.

I'm going to read 4, 12, 5, 13. Thou has commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. Blessed

art thou, O Lord.

Teach me thy statutes. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Notice the word statutes is repeated there in the very center of the chiasm.

And then with my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. There's a sense in which 13 mirrors verse 4. You have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently. With my lips I declare the judgments of your mouth.

I don't rebel against them. I don't argue with them. I don't tell people I think this is a bad deal.

I declare them. Remember earlier, with my lips I've declared the judgments of your mouth. What are the judgments of his mouth? They are the commands that God has issued, the precepts that we are to keep diligently.

So there's a crisscross effect there between 4 and 13 and between 12 and 5. And notice statutes is repeated in verse 12 and in verse 5. Teach me thy statutes. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep your statutes. That's right in the middle of this linked section.

God has said it. Oh, that I can do it. I am going to dedicate myself to that, direct my ways to keep your statutes, and with my lips I will declare the judgments of your mouth.

Then you look down at verse 6. Then I shall not be ashamed when I have respect unto all your commandments. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches. So I will not be ashamed in verse 6. Instead, I will rejoice.

Verse 14. I have respect in verse 6. I treat them like riches in verse 14. What does it mean to respect God's word? To say, well, it's certainly been around a long time.

A lot of people believe in it. Or does it have the esteem and the place in our thinking that great riches would have? What does it mean to respect? Well, he illustrates it. He colors in that outline.

Not only will I not be ashamed, I will rejoice. Not only will I respect, but I will treat it as great riches. Verse 6 and verse 14 together.

Then you look at verse 7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. When I have learned your righteous judgments, I will praise you with an upright heart. Straight across in that verse 15, I will meditate in your precepts and have respect unto your ways.

Now you notice, once again, that you could do a little crisscross. If you look at verse 6, I will not be ashamed when I have respect to your commandments. Verse 15 says, I will meditate in your precepts and have respect unto your ways.

So if you've got respect in verse 6 and you've got respect in verse 15, you have praise in verse 7

and you have rejoicing in verse 14. I rejoice in the way of your testimonies. Verse 14, I praise you with uprightness of heart in verse 7. So there's another pattern of connectedness there that is not just straight across.

Then you go down to the final verse 8 in the Alice section. I will keep thy statutes. Oh, forsake me not utterly.

Remember when I was reading verse 8, I said, isn't that kind of an odd turn? He says, I will keep thy statutes. Don't forsake me utterly. Please don't forsake me.

Right? And you think, well, why that idea after these statements about praising God's judgments and his statutes and his commandments? I will keep thy statutes. Forsake me not utterly. Well, look at verse 16.

Statutes occurs again. I will keep thy statutes. I will delight myself in thy statutes.

Oh Lord, do not forsake me. I will not forsake your word. I will not forget your word.

Don't forsake me means don't forget me. Right? And not forgetting the word means not forsaking the word. So that once again, you have this strong parallel and there is this bond of covenant.

God will not leave us or forsake us. And we commit ourselves to not leave him or forsake him. How do we do that? It's one thing to say it, something else to do it.

Well, it's in this set of 16 verses. So it begins by placing value on God's word. Verse 6, I have respect unto your commandments.

That is the path to no shame. Remember when you get to the New Testament, it says that we be not ashamed at his coming. That is a scary thing.

All the rejoicing and golden streets and pearly gates and harps and clouds and everything that people picture in terms of the return of the Lord for us. And yet it is suggested that there could be shame at his coming to be saved yet so as by fire. Well, how do we avoid that? He says in verse 6, I shall not be ashamed when I have respect unto all your commandments.

This is an argument once again for comprehensive study of the word of God. He doesn't say I'll not be ashamed when I have respect unto the 10 commandments, does he? Or unto a goodly number of the commandments or those commandments that I particularly like and are easy to keep. What portion of God's commandments is he going to respect? All of them.

All of them. This is why we're a Bible church. This is why we spend time in both testaments as a routine thing.

This is why we compare scripture with scripture. This is why we look together at context. We want to know everything God has to say on whatever channel he's broadcasting.

If it's in the content, if it's in the form, if it's in the comparison of scripture with scripture, if it's looking at what is not said as much as what is said, we want to know everything God has to tell us. All your commandments. Then I will not be ashamed.

So what's your priority on not being ashamed? Well, it's high, isn't it? Nobody wants to be ashamed. And to value God's word and value the way that it represents is to treat it like riches. Verse 14.

So what is the means? How do we accomplish this? Well, it starts with seeking in verse two. There is habitual practice in verse three. There is respect in verse six.

There is learning in verse seven. And there is appeal to God's strength in verse eight. Do not forsake me.

Be with me. I will strengthen thee. Yea, I will help thee.

Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. If God is present and we can avail ourselves of his strength, this is doable. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Taking heed.

Once again, you have seeking in verse 10. Once again, you have dedication to God's word. You have no lack of patterned sin in verse 11.

You have learning once again in verse 12. You have not just internalizing God's word, but speaking of it. Conversation.

New Testament talks about speaking the truth to one another in love. It is important to have conversations. This solidifies our memory.

It distills our thoughts. It enhances our memory. The old learning technique, and I forget the percentages, but it's something on the order of you tend to remember about 20% of what you hear.

You remember 40 or 50% of what you hear and express in another form like writing it down or taking notes. But if you hear it, take it down, and repeat it out loud, your learning goes up to 60 or 70%, your recall after two weeks. There's a study somewhere that documents this.

But the more interactivity we have with important material, the closer it is to our minds and our hearts. And so the psalmist here says, I'm going to seek it out. I'm going to listen to it.

I'm going to remember it. I'm going to hide it in my heart, and I am going to repeat it. I'm going to reflect it in my speech, in my conversation.

I'm going to talk about it. It keeps it circulating, keeps it fresh. It's one thing to say, I'm dedicated to God's truth.

It's something else to do it. This is the how-to. It doesn't get any easier.

It doesn't get any clearer. It doesn't get any simpler. Seek it out.

Listen to it. Reflect on it. Meditate on it.

Tuck it away in the heart. See if you can recall it the next day. We're having a Bible class on a Thursday night.

Check yourself early Saturday morning and say, well, let's see. We had our second class on Psalm 119 Thursday night. What do I remember? What do I remember about the olive and the bait section? Let me dig out that piece of paper and see how much I can recall.

Let me reflect on it. Let me pray over it. Weren't there some requests in that section where the Psalmist was saying, Oh Lord, do not forsake me.

Oh Lord, help me. Let me not wander from your commandments. I will declare the judgments of your mouth.

I'll talk about it out loud. I'll say it. It all depends on if you want to do this or not.

You want to live a godly life or do you want to talk about living a godly life? These are the steps and the result will be appreciation for God. Blessed are you, oh Lord. And it loops back around.

Teach me more. Teach me your statutes. I'm declaring these judgments with my mouth.

All of them. I rejoice in the way of your testimony like riches. This is better than a check in the mail.

This is better than a scratch off that gives me 50 bucks and some fries at Burger King. This is better than a return. This is better than a tax refund.

Those of you looking for that haven't already done your taxes. I will meditate. I will reflect.

I will have respect on God's precepts and God's ways. I will remember the mighty works that he has done to be declared and remembered. I will delight myself in your statutes.

I will not forget your word. When's the last time anybody got their GTBC ring? Oh, remembrance out and went through the memory verses. Do you still remember? Psalm 55, 17.

Remember 29, 14 of Jeremiah. Remember Isaiah 59, two. Do you remember Psalm 91, one through four? If you don't, how can you say, I will not forget thy word.

This is the voice with which the Holy Spirit speaks to us. This is how we are successful. This is what Psalm 119 begins with.

Somebody might flake off several further letters into the alphabet, right? But everybody ought

to be able to get through the first two letters. And the most important stuff is right here. So take a look at it.

Think about it. And for next time, let me just say, by way of anticipation and preparation, the next two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, notice I say the next two letters are Gimel and Dalet. The first two letters were Aleph and Bet.

And we ended up putting them side by side. The next two letters are Gimel and Dalet. So if you're curious at all, you can make your own handout like I did for tonight for Gimel and Dalet and see how this process pans out for you.

It's a fruitful study. It's a wonderful insight. I think it's a challenge and can spark your enthusiasm to plumb the depths of God's Word a little bit more.

But I think you would agree with me, just with what we've seen so far, that the people who say that the guy mapped out his acrostic and was just grabbing words so that he could come up with eight verses that began with the same letter, it's kind of shallow and scattered and a chaotic kaleidoscope of thoughts that are just kind of out there, is an underestimation of God's respect for His own Word and the value He places on His Word. You think about all the copious amounts of writing that have been done down through history, everything that's been preserved to read. There are so many books now that it's impossible to even keep track of the titles, much less to read.

It used to be you could have read pretty much all of the classic books. You could keep up with new books. This was true all the way until the early 1800s.

And then books began to proliferate to such an extent that to be well read is kind of a lost description anymore. There's too much to even sample. There can be wonderful books and you've never even heard of them.

Well, there's a rather limited amount of information in the Bible, and God didn't do it in a haphazard or superficial fashion. If it's in the Bible, it's important, and it is inspired, and it has riches and treasure there for the taking for those who seek it, those who treasure it like riches, those who want to live in its light, those who don't want to be ashamed, those who appreciate the Lord and praise Him and bless Him and want to declare His truth to both in the nonverbal way of your example and your life and your attitude and with your lips to declare His judgments and the words of His mouth. This is our opportunity.

If it's not us, who is it? Who's going to bring God's word to life if not us? Show me somebody that's more motivated or more qualified than you and I to fulfill these 16 verses, and I want to go join their church. I want to be a part of that group, and you should too. This is the heart of it.

This is why we're here. God gave us His word. He's given us the Holy Spirit in a measureless fashion, and He's given us the step-by-step.

Tab A into slot B. It's not hard. It's just a matter of making the choice and doing it, right? So what's our priority? What's our goal? What do we want to be proud of ultimately, looking back over your life? What's your accomplishment? Wouldn't it be great to be able to say, I was undefiled in the way. I walked in the law of the Lord.

I kept His testimonies, and I sought Him with my whole heart. You can stand at the judgment with no worries and with a bright beam of reflected glory of the Lord Jesus from your location, just knowing what's in these 16 verses. So it's worth a little bit of reflection, a little bit of review, a little bit of memorization.

See if you can think about it Sunday morning, Saturday morning. Pull it up out of whole cloth. We'll see how we do.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. We'll pick up at verse 17 and following next time, Gimel and Dalet. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the wonderful privilege that we have. You have chosen us. You have called us by your name.

You have made us a special gift to the Lord Jesus in this age. And we have such wonderful opportunities to grow in grace and knowledge, to be worthy of the salvation that was bought at such a precious cost, precious price. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will impress these things on our hearts, challenge us, motivate us, enable and empower us to live the life to which we've been called to represent the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth in the time that remains to us and to be ready for his soon return.

We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.