



*Sweeter
than
Honey*

D E V O T I O N A L 2



CHRIST
CHURCH

Psalm 119:1-32

ALEPH

- ¹ Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the Lord!
- ² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,
³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in his ways!
- ⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.
- ⁵ Oh that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
- ⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame,
having my eyes fixed on all your
commandments.
- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous rules.
- ⁸ I will keep your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me!

BETH

- ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
- ¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your
commandments!
- ¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
- ¹² Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes!
- ¹³ With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.
- ¹⁴ In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.
- ¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
- ¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

GIMEL

- ¹⁷ Deal bountifully with your servant,
that I may live and keep your word.
- ¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.
- ¹⁹ I am a sojourner on the earth;
hide not your commandments from me!
- ²⁰ My soul is consumed with longing
for your rules at all times.
- ²¹ You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments.
- ²² Take away from me scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your testimonies.
- ²³ Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
- ²⁴ Your testimonies are my delight;
they are my counselors.

DALETH

- ²⁵ My soul clings to the dust;
give me life according to your word!
- ²⁶ When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes!
- ²⁷ Make me understand the way of your
precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- ²⁸ My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word!
- ²⁹ Put false ways far from me
and graciously teach me your law!
- ³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your rules before me.
- ³¹ I cling to your testimonies, O Lord;
let me not be put to shame!
- ³² I will run in the way of your commandments
when you enlarge my heart!

Day 1

PSALM 119:1-8

ALEPH

- ¹ Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the Lord!
- ² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,
- ³ who also do no wrong,
but walk in his ways!
- ⁴ You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.
- ⁵ Oh that my ways may be steadfast
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- ⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame,
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commandments.
- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous rules.
- ⁸ I will keep your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me!

As we come to Psalm 119, notice how this psalm, like the book of Psalms itself, starts with a statement of blessing. By way of reminder Psalm 1 begins:

¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

It is a very similar sentiment that this psalmist taps into here: walking in the way of the Lord, being guided by the word of the Lord, brings blessing. A key to understanding this language is the concept of covenant. In Genesis 17:1–2 “*the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”*” This sounds like conditional language: if you walk before me and are blameless, then I will be merciful to you. But what we have to remember is that earlier, in Genesis 15, God had instituted this covenant with Abraham by walking through the cut pieces of the offering himself, thus signifying that he himself would keep the conditions of the covenant he was making, even unto his own death. This, of course, was fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Therefore, the “blameless walk” of the believer is not the condition for the covenant blessing, but rather the response to God’s gracious making and keeping of the covenant.

And so we begin our journey through Psalm 119 remembering the gracious blessing of God, who has come to his people through his own blood of the covenant (Hebrews 13:20). This then sheds light on the urgent prayers of the psalmist that he would be steadfast (v. 5), that God would not forsake him (v. 8). We understand his impulse to praise (v. 7). Every part of the psalmist is responding to the grace he has been given, which is fully expounded in the word of the Lord! May it be so for us.

Prayer

Lord of the covenant, thank you for the grace that sought us out when we were yet in darkness, not even seeking you. Thank you for perfectly keeping the requirements of the law and for satisfying the demands of the covenant when we could not have done so ourselves. Holy Spirit, stir our hearts to gratitude; invigorate our feet to walk before you in blamelessness. May our delight be in your law, because we know it is through that law that we meet you. We pray this all in Jesus's name. Amen.

Day 2

PSALM 119:9-16

BETH

- ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
- ¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your
commandments!
- ¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
- ¹² Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes!
- ¹³ With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.
- ¹⁴ In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.
- ¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
- ¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

The quintessential question is this: What is the good life? Millions of people across millennia have lived their lives as a quest in search of meaning in their attempt to answer this question. You are probably remembering some classic literature or film portraying heroic adventures of people on their quest. Believers answer the same question but begin with a different assumption. We believe the good life is in God. If there is a God, he is the meaning of life, not something peripheral, ancillary, or under our control. And we don't discover God; he reveals himself.

This is why the writers of this psalm were overjoyed with the Word of God, referencing it in most verses of this long psalm. Statutes, laws, commandments, rules, precepts, and testimony were all ways to refer to the Word that teaches us how to experience the blessed life.

Because this most fundamental question is answered within the covenant relationship, practical questions that we often ask can emerge. Who can actually please a holy God? How will we ever live pure lives? The psalmist focuses on young men in the vigor of life who are surrounded with strong temptations. He recognizes both God's perfect standard and the value of making wise decisions at the beginning of the one life we are given. Someone once said that we make a choice, and then it turns around and makes us. Haven't we all experienced how much harder it is to choose wisely after wrong patterns have made deep grooves in our minds and bodies? Isn't this why wise Solomon advised us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth? Isn't this why we work hard at Christ Church to plant God's Word in young hearts? The psalmist says this will be like the guardrails along the highway that protect us from the perils of busy traffic or steep ditches. God's Word guards our lives.

The remainder of verses are a response to the question and answer in verse 9. God relates to us as he made us—responsible, that is, response/able. These are ways a believer is able to respond:

HUMBLY: *“teach me your statutes.”* vs.12

Humility is not the crowning virtue of a believer’s journey, but the very first step for entering. The gate is not only narrow, but low, requiring us to take off all the puffy garments of our self-life.

Oh Lord, I often think I can figure things out myself. I think there must be some good in me that you could accept. Forgive my pride, and help me love your commandments.

INTENTIONALLY: *“I have stored up your word in my heart.”* vs.11

“I fix my eyes on your ways.” vs.15

“I will not forget your word.” vs.16

Some things never happen because we never really intend them to happen, though we say we do. Intent implies making choices that bring about the desired results. The psalmist says staying away from sin happens when I actually read, meditate, and memorize God’s Word.

Oh Lord, how easily I deceive myself by renaming my sin. And when I lack the courage of faith, I make a virtue out of my unbelief. Have mercy, Lord! You are my Advocate as I stand in the light of your truth.

WHOLEHEARTEDLY: *“With my whole heart I seek you.”* vs.10

A little time, a little money, a little service is not a substitute for giving myself. Once I give myself, other parts of my life are in their rightful place.

Oh Lord, it is so much easier to sacrifice myself than to dethrone myself. I’m so afraid of what you might ask. Forgive me for thinking you are a hard master, when you have been a Good Shepherd for so long.

DELIGHTFULLY: *“I will delight in your statutes.”* vs.16

It is not hard for us to announce a birth; it is not a chore to give ourselves to what we believe will bring us good. The psalmist delights in God’s testimonies “as much as in all riches” (vs.14).

Blessed are you, O Lord! “With my lips, I declare all the rules of your mouth.” vs.13

Jesus came as the friend of sinners. He is the answer to the question, “Who can live a pure life?” He emptied himself of all his rights and entered our experience as we all do, through a birth canal. Imagine! He learned to walk and talk, and learned the Scriptures as we do, by listening, meditating, memorizing. He gave his whole heart to loving and obeying the words of his Father. He sang the psalms, and prayed them in his deepest suffering. As we walk through Psalm 119 together in the next few weeks, can we walk with Jesus, sing with him, love God’s Word with him? What a friend we have in you, Jesus!

Day 3

PSALM 119:17-24

GIMEL

- ¹⁷ Deal bountifully with your servant,
that I may live and keep your word.
- ¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.
- ¹⁹ I am a sojourner on the earth;
hide not your commandments from me!
- ²⁰ My soul is consumed with longing
for your rules at all times.
- ²¹ You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments.
- ²² Take away from me scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your testimonies.
- ²³ Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
- ²⁴ Your testimonies are my delight;
they are my counselors.

The word of the Lord is yet again central to the psalmist in this stanza. The word is provided that he might live, that his eyes would be open, to give him direction at a time of wandering. It's an anchor to the Lord, the meditation during his days and the counsel of his life. In just eight verses, we see a broad swath of how these very words are applied in the psalmist's life.

How do you use God's Word throughout your day? Are there particular verses or passages that bring you comfort when you are afflicted? That bring you joy when there is sorrow? That humble you when you are prideful? Do you employ the Word in the ways the psalmist models for us?

The psalmist uses the Word, God's testimonies or accounts of himself to his people, as his counselor. What might that mean? How might that apply to our day and our way? Are there ways you look to the Bible for counsel? Are there areas you don't?

One of the things that is amazing about the Bible is its timelessness. As the living, breathing Word, it will outlast you and me. Reflect on what Martin Luther said about the Bible: "The Bible is alive; it speaks to me. It has feet; it runs after me. It has hands; it lays hold of me." This is why we use the Bible as the central focus of our purpose; it's the very thing we point people to because it gives folks access to God both individually and in community. Americans have changed. Our society has changed. But the Bible has not changed nor will it. That brings me a great deal of comfort. The psalmist, filled with the Holy Spirit, had to know that what was being given to him would last well beyond his years. These words are timeless. God's words are our counselor even today. The Hebrew could be translated as "they are man's counsel or strategy." In other words, they are not just good for this psalmist, but are generally true for all men and women who follow after Jesus.

Prayer

Father in heaven, your Word is good to us. I pray that you would make it the song of our hearts. The joy of our days. The counsel of our lives. Help us to rely upon it because you are present in it and through it. Your Word gives us a relationship with you and carries the testimonies of who you are into our lives. Forgive us for trusting in other sources of comfort and truth, joy and pride, fear and humility. As his humble servants, we look to you through your Word for our King Jesus. In the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Day 4

PSALM 119:25-32

DALETH

- ²⁵ My soul clings to the dust;
give me life according to your word!
- ²⁶ When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes!
- ²⁷ Make me understand the way of your
precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
- ²⁸ My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word!
- ²⁹ Put false ways far from me
and graciously teach me your law!
- ³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your rules before me.
- ³¹ I cling to your testimonies, O Lord;
let me not be put to shame!
- ³² I will run in the way of your commandments
when you enlarge my heart!

The jury agreed with the prosecutor's last statement: "Officer Chauvin's heart wasn't big enough." We will remember this line for a generation and it's a question we can ask of ourselves daily. The biblical idea of the heart is that it is used metaphorically to describe the intangibles that constitute what it means to be human. The heart stands for human personality. It is also the source from which emotions flow. In Psalm 119:32, the psalmist points to the need for an enlarged heart that can take in God's truth. That truth includes understanding God's law and commandments. It means taking into account God's ways—what He expects and wants.

J.B. Phillips' translation of Romans 12:2 says: "*Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed.*" We are surrounded by forces that squeeze us. The world has a different definition of success. Temptations generated by money, sex, and power are always with us. We are bombarded with advertising that tells us what we need and even deserve. We can so easily be deceived and deceive ourselves.

Hence the need to pay the greatest attention to God's Word. It is there to help us sort out all the competing influences on our lives. It is there to enlarge our hearts, making us better people who walk on a path that brings life to ourselves and those with whom we have contact. Each day we are faced with decisions that will have consequences we cannot foresee. Our only hope is to continue to walk with hearts enlarged by God's word.

Prayer

Lord, help us understand those things in our lives that keep our hearts small, that prevent us from seeing the world as you would have us understand it. Give us insight into your Word. Help us meditate on it day and night so that it changes our thinking and our acting. Through your Word may our hearts and minds be shaped. May we be prepared for awkward and difficult circumstances. May we be prepared to say and do the right things. Help us to be peacemakers. Help us to be wise. Help us to be merciful. Help us to be good examples. Help us to follow your path to a life of understanding that is full of your wisdom. Amen.

Day 5

PSALM 119:1-32

Here again are the four sections of Psalm 119 that we looked at this week. Read through and savor again a verse or two or three that really connected, convicted, or encouraged you.

ALEPH

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who walk in the law of the Lord!
² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,
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but walk in his ways!
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to be kept diligently.
⁵ Oh that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame,
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commandments.
⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous rules.
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do not utterly forsake me!

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- ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
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I set your rules before me.
³¹ I cling to your testimonies, O Lord;
let me not be put to shame!
³² I will run in the way of your commandments
when you enlarge my heart!

As you contemplate the graciousness of a God who has initiated a relationship with you and made himself known through his Word, pray your own prayer of response.

