



*Sweeter
than
Honey*

D E V O T I O N A L 6



CHRIST
CHURCH

Psalm 119:129–160

PE

¹²⁹ Your testimonies are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
¹³¹ I open my mouth and pant,
because I long for your commandments.
¹³² Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your way with those
who love your name.
¹³³ Keep steady my steps according
to your promise,
and let no iniquity get dominion over me.
¹³⁴ Redeem me from man's oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
¹³⁵ Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.
¹³⁶ My eyes shed streams of tears,
because people do not keep your law.

TSADHE

¹³⁷ Righteous are you, O Lord,
and right are your rules.
¹³⁸ You have appointed your testimonies
in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
¹³⁹ My zeal consumes me,
because my foes forget your words.
¹⁴⁰ Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
¹⁴¹ I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
¹⁴² Your righteousness is righteous forever,
and your law is true.
¹⁴³ Trouble and anguish have found me out,
but your commandments are my delight.
¹⁴⁴ Your testimonies are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

QOPH

¹⁴⁵ With my whole heart I cry;
answer me, O Lord!
I will keep your statutes.
¹⁴⁶ I call to you; save me,
that I may observe your testimonies.
¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I hope in your words.
¹⁴⁸ My eyes are awake before
the watches of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
¹⁴⁹ Hear my voice according to
your steadfast love;
O Lord, according to your justice give me life.
¹⁵⁰ They draw near who persecute me
with evil purpose;
they are far from your law.
¹⁵¹ But you are near, O Lord,
and all your commandments are true.
¹⁵² Long have I known from your testimonies
that you have founded them forever.

RESH

¹⁵³ Look on my affliction and deliver me,
for I do not forget your law.
¹⁵⁴ Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise!
¹⁵⁵ Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
¹⁵⁶ Great is your mercy, O Lord;
give me life according to your rules.
¹⁵⁷ Many are my persecutors and
my adversaries,
but I do not swerve from your testimonies.
¹⁵⁸ I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.
¹⁵⁹ Consider how I love your precepts!
Give me life according to your steadfast love.
¹⁶⁰ The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your righteous rules
endures forever.

Day 1

PSALM 119:129-136

PE

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and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶ My eyes shed streams of tears,
because people do not keep your law.

When I was a child, there was a time when I wished that I could play video games all day everyday for the rest of my life. I was enamored by the intricacies of the world contained in the little game cartridge. Though I still sometimes get nostalgic for that good ole' Game Boy, the innocent "awe factor" is long gone. At some point along the way I figured out the system and left the phase of child-like curiosity.

Perhaps you have had a similar experience where at one time or another, something inspired great wonder and awe in you. So deep and organic was your amazement that you thought it would never be quenched. But what happened to that as time went on?

There are other things, however, which inspire an enduring appreciation for their magnificence: the blooming flowers and singing birds of spring, the cooing of a baby, the complex flavors of a meticulously made meal, the comfort of home after a long day, the generosity of a friend who always seems to know exactly what you need. What makes the difference?

The theme of this stanza is the wonder of God's law (read-God's Word). Much in line with the thrust of this passage, Charles Spurgeon once said that, "Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years." Not only are God's testimonies *inherently wonderful*, but the unfolding of His words *gives light* (verse 129). As one gains understanding through God's word, one experiences that light from one degree of radiance to another.

There are at least three ways in which this occurs. First, as your knowledge of the Bible increases, you simultaneously realize how intricate and complex the scriptures are. It is often said that the more you know about something, the more you realize how much more there is to know. So too with God's word. Neither the most faithful Bible reader nor the world's smartest theologian can fully exhaust the truth of God's Word—and that is a wonderful, awe-inspiring reality. Next, as you spend year-after-year in humble dependence on God's Word, your successive life experiences weave a storm-weathering lifeline that never fails to surprise you by its strength. Even though different seasons challenge us in different ways, the promises of God are ever true and ever faithful. Each experience adds another thread of confirmation for the reliability, unity, diversity and beauty of God's word. Finally, enduring personal reliance on God's word deepens your compassion for our wayward world. The psalmist's "eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep [God's] law" (verse 136). His personal appreciation for the scriptures gave him a love for people that impassioned him towards a mission that longs for lost sheep to come home.

- How has this season of extended reflection on Psalm 119 deepened your wonder for God's word?
- Are there ways that your heart has grown cold towards God? Towards his word? Towards people? Confess those to the Lord, and ask him to unfold his word to your mind and illuminate your heart.

Prayer

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We praise you for who you are, and for who you are to us. God, you are awesome. God, you are unending. Your Word is matchless. Fill our hearts with a deep and enduring appreciation for your Word that cultivates a life of joy-filled obedience to you. Just as the psalmist's heart is broken for those who are far from you, Lord, would you move our hearts to ever intercede for the lost in our midst. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Day 2

PSALM 119:137-144

TSADHE

¹³⁷ Righteous are you, O Lord,
and right are your rules.

¹³⁸ You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.

¹³⁹ My zeal consumes me,
because my foes forget your words.

¹⁴⁰ Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.

¹⁴¹ I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.

¹⁴² Your righteousness is righteous forever,
and your law is true.

¹⁴³ Trouble and anguish have found me out,
but your commandments are my delight.

¹⁴⁴ Your testimonies are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

As you know, each stanza of this poem (Psalm 119) begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This stanza's letter is *tsadhe*, and it is the sound that reminded the Hebrew reader of the word for righteousness (*tsadik*). Thus, the main theme of this section is righteousness. As Charles Spurgeon says, "Oh, for grace to delight ourselves in righteousness!" (The Golden Alphabet, 222)

Just a couple of observations today. First, notice the progression in the psalmist's celebration of righteousness. This celebration starts with YHWH himself (137 -- incidentally this is one of the only times the covenant name for God is used in Psalm 119). Righteousness is then noted to fill his testimonies in all faithfulness (138), and then two times the psalmist exalts in the unchanging eternity of this righteousness (142,144). From beginning to end, we meet a righteous, covenant keeping God in the pages of his Word. This is an unchangeable truth that you can celebrate through all eternity.

Second, notice how personally transformative this is for the psalmist. In v. 139, the psalmist talks about how zeal consumes him when he sees those outside the covenant community walking apart from the gracious words of God. He is so taken up by the gracious, righteous beauty of who God is and how he has revealed himself that to see that trampled, even by those who do not know God, excites holy fire within him. Notice too that not only is this transformative for what the psalmist sees "out there," but internally his own "trouble and anguish" (v. 143) are caught up in his delight in knowing God through his Word.

Friends, in a world filled with brokenness and rebellion, God's righteousness will either crush us or deliver us. If we resist surrendering to him, we will never meet the righteous requirements of God. But if we surrender to the finished work of Christ, we will find that his righteousness becomes ours. This is what Martin Luther discovered in the first chapter of Romans: "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:17).

Jehovah Tsidkenu (*The Lord our Righteousness*)

*I once was a stranger to grace and to God, I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree, Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.*

*I oft read with pleasure, to sooth or engage, Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page; But
e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree Jehovah Tsidkenu seem'd nothing to me.*

*Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll, I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nail'd to the tree Jehovah Tsidkenu – 'twas nothing to me.*

*When free grace awoke me, by light from on high, Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to
die; No refuge, no safety in self could I see, – Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.*

*My terrors all vanished before the sweet name; My guilty fears banished, with boldness I
came To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free, – Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.*

*Jehovah Tsidkenu! my treasure and boast, Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost; In thee I
shall conquer by flood and by field, My cable, my anchor, my breast-plate and shield!*

*Even treading the valley, the shadow of death, This "watchword" shall rally my faltering
breath; For while from life's fever my God sets me free, Jehovah Tsidkenu, my death song
shall be.*

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

November 18, 1834.

Day 3

PSALM 119:145-152

QOPH

¹⁴⁵ With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O Lord!
I will keep your statutes.

¹⁴⁶ I call to you; save me,
that I may observe your testimonies.

¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I hope in your words.

¹⁴⁸ My eyes are awake before the watches of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.

¹⁴⁹ Hear my voice according to your steadfast love;
O Lord, according to your justice give me life.

¹⁵⁰ They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose;
they are far from your law.

¹⁵¹ But you are near, O Lord,
and all your commandments are true.

¹⁵² Long have I known from your testimonies
that you have founded them forever.

In order to get the most out of Psalm 119 on the idea of purity (see v. 9), we have to gnaw for a while on that bone of Scripture. One commentator describes purity as “a desire to set [one’s] mind on, and to govern [one’s] life by Yahweh’s revealed standards.” It could be easy to ignore or avoid the idea because we know we’re not close to being pure, and we can never attain it by ourselves. When we spend the time and effort with the text, however, several positive ideas emerge beyond our immediate reactions to the idea of purity.

Purity gives us a place to stand. When attacked and persecuted, it provides assurance that the path we are on is the correct one. It gives us confidence that the attackers and persecutors will not prevail. Purity implies clarity in a time of confusing and competing values. In a time when the very nature of truth is called into question and devalued by the behavior of politicians and by a self-absorbed society, purity is like the well-defended position on a battlefield hilltop. From it we can repel the enemy.

Within purity comes a discernment that is God-inspired. Within purity we know what God wants and the path we have to take to get there. When we’re in need of guidance, purity is a companion giving us wisdom as we try to figure out what to do. When we are in need of answers, purity defines paths that are lit and accessible. There is a certainty to it that should give us confidence that our motives are in line with God’s will. Purity helps us get through times where we question our motivations and decision making. When we start to second guess ourselves, purity provides the focus that makes the right decision more discernible.

Within purity, there is a connection with God's future. Christ's kingdom, which is here now yet is still coming, is the way things are going to be for eternity. Because we are so sullied by this world, it is often hard to see what is beyond it. Purity points us to God's way of life that we see in Genesis before the fall. What God created was good and pure, and he promises that through Christ, we will get back there.

Becoming pure--becoming more and more like Christ through the transforming work of the Spirit within us--is not easy or comfortable. The process of purification, more often than not, forces us to endure stress or pain in difficult times. It often pushes us beyond what we think we can endure. It stretches us out of our comfort zones. But that's how God makes us into the people He wants us to be.

Prayer

Father, help us to embrace purity and the whole process of getting there. Help us to see how valuable purity is in our lives and how it helps us see the world from your perspective more clearly. Help us to see the lines that purity draws for us as we seek to follow your way. Help us to understand and embrace our futures with you. May the purity and fullness of your glory always be in our view.

Day 4

PSALM 119:153-160

RESH

- ¹⁵³ Look on my affliction and deliver me,
for I do not forget your law.
- ¹⁵⁴ Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise!
- ¹⁵⁵ Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
- ¹⁵⁶ Great is your mercy, O Lord;
give me life according to your rules.
- ¹⁵⁷ Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
but I do not swerve from your testimonies.
- ¹⁵⁸ I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.
- ¹⁵⁹ Consider how I love your precepts!
Give me life according to your steadfast love.
- ¹⁶⁰ The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

Help! The psalmist makes his appeal for deliverance within the context of a personal and loving relationship. *HELP me because you know me!* We are known as we know God. We generally don't ask strangers to help us wrestle with our deepest desires and struggles. We wouldn't even ask a stranger for a favor. We boldly ask for things because we know and are known.

I can see the difference between trusting your Word and not trusting your Word! Even the way the psalmist refers to God's enemies (155, 158) reflects the profound connection he has with his maker through the Word. *The Message* refers to the faithless as "the quitters."

Life in you forever! The psalmist comes to God with boldness because he knows he can—he has nothing to prove and nothing to lose. God has promised life (154) in his law (156) and his love (159) forever (160).

Prayer

O LORD, may our story be the same as that of the psalmist: Know us so we may know you. Show us the poverty of neglecting your Word. Give us life as you promised that dwells in your forever Word and in your love. Amen.

Day 5

PSALM 119:129-160

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.

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Give me life according to your steadfast love.
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and every one of your righteous rules
endures forever.

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.