

**"The Amazing Word of God"**  
**(Psalm 119)**  
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**January 29, 2017**

**(Psalm 119:1)**

Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.

What you just heard is the reading of the longest psalm in the psalter, which also happens to be the longest chapter in the entire Bible, a total of 176 verses, around 2500 words.

We(I) did that because the Bible tells the church that we are to devote ourselves to the public reading of Scripture (1Tim 4:13). That verse tells us that when the church gathers for worship, what God has to say to us is infinitely more important than anything else that we do.

Because we are focusing this entire year on the invaluable truths that came out of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the most important being *Sola Scriptura*, we will be spending a lot of time in this chapter. Today will be the introductory sermon on this famous chapter. This is a beautifully written psalm all about the Word of God. It's a word of God on the word of God.

This chapter, Psalm 119 is arranged as an acrostic. In case you forgot what an acrostic is, it's a literary device where the first letter of each line forms a word. We often use the acrostic ACTS for prayer...Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In the case of Psalm 119 the acrostic is based on the entire Hebrew alphabet. That's why the psalm is divided into 22 sections after the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the 22 sections contains 8 verses. So for section one, all eight verses begin with the Hebrew letter *aleph*. Then the second stanza would all begin with the second letter and so on until you get to the last section and the last letter.

Now why might the author have done that? Why would he have arranged this psalm in that way? I could think of at least 3 reasons:

1. As a memory tool in a mostly oral culture.
2. As an expression of the author's creativity. It's amazing that being inspired by God to write Scripture doesn't take away from the writer's personality or creativity.
3. To express the completeness of the content of this psalm. We say things like, top to bottom, head to toe, beginning to the end, from A to Z. The author is saying that there is a completeness, a wholeness to the word of God.

Another thing we'll notice is that throughout this chapter, eight different words are used for God's law, practically in every verse. Some of these words are Law, Word, Statutes, Commands, Decrees, and Precepts. All of these different words carry a unique nuance that we will look at once we get into the rest of the chapter. That tells us that the word of God is important because it is the word of God. It is truthful because it comes from God. It is useful, meaning that it is helpful to us, to know who God is and to know how we are to live in a way that pleases and honors God. Let me read for you the 2<sup>nd</sup> question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Q--What rule has God given to direct us how to glorify and enjoy him?

A--The Word of God, which consists of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy him.

It's really important to notice the two lines of thought in this question and answer. God wants us to glorify him and enjoy him. He wants us to honor him and love him. He wants us to obey him and like it when we're doing it. He wants us to read and know and do and obey the Bible and love Him and love the Bible while doing it. Or to state it the way John Piper did. "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." Kevin DeYoung tells us to notice that the longest poem in the Bible is a love song about the Bible (Taking God at His Word).

So, let's get really practical here. What I'm trying to say is this. The goal of this chapter is not for us to merely read the Bible. The author wants us to love reading the Bible. The author isn't satisfied for us to just know the facts that are found in the Bible. He wants us to know that the Bible works and does what it says it will do, which is another way of saying that he wants us to have great confidence in God, to have unshakable faith in God and the promises and instructions found in his Word

Another thing you'll find in this chapter are different kinds or types of psalms. As you know, all the psalms are not the same. They don't all fit into the same category. They have different purposes. They arose out of different situations. They express different emotions. So in Psalm 119 we'll find wisdom psalms that express blessing or they are worded like a proverb. There are elements of lament that expresses grieving or sadness. We'll also find psalms of thanksgiving, of declaring one's innocence, of giving praise, and expressing confidence. This tells us a few things.

--It tells us that life is complicated and varied in its experiences. There are times we are filled with inexpressible joy when things are going really well. We're healthy, we have a job, our relationships are good. But there are times when we experience deep sadness from personal loss and tragedy, or when we look at injustices in our world, or when we notice how anti-God our society is. There are times when we have great confidence and there are also times when our confidence is shaken. There are times when we are going through some serious opposition for real personal enemies. Life will bring about a variety of situations.

--It also tells us that we are emotional beings. We're not computers. We're not robots. We get angry, we get depressed, we get frustrated, we're bothered by injustice, we go through moments of great happiness. I'm so glad the psalms are there to help us express our emotions about life to God.

--It tells us that God and his Word should be a major source of help. So we are emotional and we respond to different situations with various emotions. But our emotions or our situation should take us to God and his word. We don't just let our emotions get the best of us. We stay rooted in God's truthful and comforting word.

--It also tells us that we should love the Bible. We should be emotional about the Bible. I rejoice in following your statutes (14). I delight in your decrees (16). I reach out for your commands, which I love (48). Your decrees are the theme of my song, wherever I lodge (54). The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold (72). We may read this chapter and think that this guy is nuts. Or we may feel that our personal experience with the Bible is nothing like his. Well, that should be one of our goals—that we too experience God and his word in this way.

Also when we read this chapter we should pay attention to the verbs, the actions that we are to take with the Word of God. Let me give you just a few. Walk according to it, keep it, follow, obey, consider, learn, hidden in my heart, recount, rejoice in, meditate, delight in, see things in it, long for it, set my heart on, turn my heart toward, trust in, put my hope in, seek out, love, tremble at, to test...just to name a few. These verbs give us a complete picture of what we should do with God's word.

Finally, here are some of the benefits that the psalmist expects from the Word: To be sustained. To find salvation. To receive help. To find deliverance. To receive understanding. Experience great peace. To have my life preserved. To have my steps directed. To receive mercy from God. To give wisdom. And so on. God gave us his Word in order that we would benefit from reading and applying it. This again should be our goal. This year we should set out to experience God more deeply by reading his word.

**Conclusion:**

I don't doubt for a moment that loving the word of God is a sign that a person is a Christian. That is the consistent teaching of the Bible. To love the word is to love obeying the word, and you cannot obey that which you do not know. It's the same as saying that to love the word is to love God, which is to love obeying the word of God, which implies that you love reading the word of God. The saints of the Bible all loved God's word -- the patriarchs, the great kings, the prophets, the disciples of Jesus, Paul, all of them. All the great saints of history loved the Word of God.

George Whitefield. The great evangelist of the 1700s.

Before I became a Christian, at the very least I was completely indifferent to the Word of God and at the very worst, I hated it. I was never motivated to read it, know it or obey it. But the months leading up to my conversion, I had this desire to read the Bible. So I had this brown hardback pew Bible and I just started reading and I couldn't stop reading. I began highlighting things that I thought had some special meaning or verses that I felt moved by and then I started highlighting everything. I remember my heart racing and coming alive as I read the Bible. I remember feeling that God was really speaking to me through the words of the Bible. I couldn't stop reading. I read and I read and I read, until I became a Christian in the winter of my first year of university and then I kept on reading. I haven't stopped reading my Bible since then. All this is of God. This is the fruit of God's saving work in my life. This should be the normal experience of all Christians.

As we begin this journey into Psalm 119, into the beautiful word of God, I hope and pray that all of us would come to glorify and enjoy God better through his Word.

Let's pray.