

## Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 11.3.2024

## PSALM 119:1-8 - THE BLESSEDNESS OF LIVING BY GOD'S WORD

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### **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  
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!

- Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Psalter.
- It is an acrostic psalm consisting of twenty-two stanzas of eight verses each. Each stanza moves through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew

alphabet in order, from aleph to tav, and the lines of each stanza begin with the same letter.

- The psalm's theme is the Torah, the law of God, the Word of God and the psalmist's love for God's law.
- The psalm has no author attribution. Some attribute it to David if written pre-exile or Ezra or one of Ezra's disciples if written post exile.
- Whoever the writer was, the beauty of this psalm resounds from the relationship of the psalmist and his God.
- Multiple genres in this psalm: wisdom with elements of lament, thanksgiving, praise, and petition.
- Purpose of writing in an acrostic style was likely to convey the idea of exhaustive completeness.
- There seems to be a lot of repetition in the psalm that have led some to say this psalm is needlessly long and boring; the sections seem redundant and don't have a connection or link between them.
- If the sections, "*are not links on the same chain, in continuous and unbroken dependence; they may at least be considered as pearls upon one string, of equal, though independent, value.*" (Charles Bridges, Exposition of Psalm 119)
  
- This psalm is not only notable for its poetic magnificence.
- It's a psalm that should be read, studied, memorized, meditated upon because it is the Word of God.
- It's a psalm that celebrates and exalts the surpassing worth of the all-sufficient Word of God for every believer in every age and magnifies the all-sufficient God of the Word.
- Some mistake this psalm and attribute to the poet a sort of "bibliolatry."
- But it is clear in this psalm, that the author has a deep relation to the Author of Scripture, the God of the Word.
- The implicit associations of the characteristics of the Word of God mirror those of its ultimate Divine Source.
- The author emphasizes not only the attributes of the Word of God but also the attributes of its Divine Author.
- And, his prayers magnify his utter dependence upon God and his mercy and grace.
- The overwhelming majority of the verses of this psalm are addressed to God.
- He is not worshipping the Word of God but the God of the Word.

## II. LIVING BY GOD'S WORD

- The psalm opens with a beatitude, "blessed are..."
- "Blessed" means "happy"—the Psalm opens with an invitation to blessedness, to true happiness.
- Everyone wants to be happy. Everyone generally lives their lives in the pursuit of what will make them ultimately happy.
- What does the psalmist attribute as the reason whereby one could be referred to as blessed?
- A love for God's Word. A conformity to God's Word—that results in a blessed life!
- "Blessed are those whose way is blameless..." Blameless does not mean sinless perfection, none but Christ have achieved that.
- To be blameless means to be morally upright, or morally pure, undefiled.
- The first part of v3 includes a similar idea, "who also do no wrong!"
- We can paraphrase verse 1 as, "Blessed are those whose manner of life is pure."
- And the way that will be evident for all to see is in their walk.
- V2 "who walk in the law of the Lord!"

- If your way is blameless it will be evident in your walk, in your manner of living, in your conduct, and how you live your life before others.
- And if we are to have true happiness, joy, pleasantness, and peace, then that walk must be informed or conformed to “the law of the Lord.”
- The psalmist brackets that thought in the second part of v3, “but walk in his ways!”
- I want you to notice that it is walking in God’s ways that leads to ultimate blessedness. Not our own ways or the ways of the world.

- Now, the psalmist employs at least eight different words in this psalm for the law of the Lord.
- These words are used by the psalmist synonymously and together they stand for the whole of God’s revelation.
- Law (Torah) this is the main and most frequently used term. Broadly it refers to any instruction coming from God’s revelation as the basis of life and action. Narrowly, it is the law given to Moses. The term reminds us that God’s revelation is to be responded to with obedience.
- Testimonies - the law of God is a witness testifying to God’s righteous requirements. The two tablets are called the two tablets of the Testimony. These were symbols of God’s covenant relationship.
- Precepts - the word points to a particular instruction of the Lord, it is God’s detailed way for his people to live.
- Statutes - this word speaks to the binding force and permanence of Scripture. God is the author of his statutes or decrees, and they are to be observed.
- Commandments - This word emphasizes the authoritativeness of what God says.
- Judgments - these are God’s ordinances, his decisions, the verdicts he has rendered as the Supreme Judge.
- Word - this is the most general term of all for the totality of divine revelation; all the words that proceed from the mouth of the Lord.
- Promise - denotes anything God has promised his covenant people.
- Because the psalmist uses these terms interchangeably we can say that any time he uses these terms, which is almost in every single verse, he is speaking concerning all of the revelation contained in God’s Word.
- The emphasis is that it is God’s Word—all of it!
- These aren’t man’s words that the psalmist is consumed with.
- They are the very inspired, inerrant, infallible words of God that the psalmist is careful to note that it is what he has staked his life upon.
- He wants conformity to God’s Word so that he can walk in God’s ways and that is the pathway of blessedness.
- He has a high view of Scripture because he knows the God of Scripture.
- Do you have a high view of God’s Word? Are you seeking to be conformed to God’s Word and God’s ways?

- Now if you’re a believer, you know that it is a blessing to have your life shaped by God’s word.
- 1689 LBCF, 1:1 “The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.”
- The only truly blessed life is the one that is lived according to God’s ways, walking in obedience to his Word.
- We are blessed as the psalmist says, when we “seek him with our whole heart.”
- Anyone who is set on seeking the Lord wholeheartedly will find him.
- This is God’s goal for all who are called by his grace.
- God’s ethical objective for our lives is integrity of character and conduct, obedience to his Word, a wholehearted devotion to him, and a joyful orientation of the whole of our life governed, motivated, and centered around his revelation to us.
- "Way, walk, keep, seek, do, walk"--These all imply a way of living.

- It's about living out the truth of God's Word, being doers not hearers only, and that is the pathway of blessing.

### III. OBEYING GOD'S WORD

- v4 You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.
- Here, the psalmist shifts to directly addressing the Lord, "You..."
- God's precepts are to be diligently obeyed.
- Why? Because God's Word has all authority, He is Creator and has all authority to command whatever he wants.
- Baptist Catechism, Q44 What is the duty which God requires of man?
- A. The duty which God requires of man is obedience to His revealed will.
- Obedience is what man is obligated to render to God—to keep God's laws, to diligently obey everything God has commanded.
- And man's inability to obey due to his sin nature, does not cancel man's obligation to render to God the obedience he is due.
- The vehicle by which we are to live a blameless life, and seek God with wholehearted devotion, is the Word of God.
- God's Word shows us how to know God. God's Word instructs us on what God requires of us and what is pleasing to him.
- God has commanded that all of us obey his commands diligently, completely, and with immediacy.
- 1 John 2:3-6 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.
- A genuine sign of true Christian conversion is the consistent fruit of obedience.
- God expects us to do what he commands us to do, when he commands us to do it, the way he has commanded us to do it.
- And all of this sounds overwhelming.
- And no doubt the psalmist felt that yet he admits his own shortcoming, he confesses his utter need for God to steer his life in the direction of obedience.
- He cries out in prayer, "Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!"
- He prays for divine enablement to keep God's laws and commandments.
- If you're a believer, you've likely prayed something similar to this.
- H.B. Charles Jr says, "*Christians are satisfied with who they are in Christ. Christians are not satisfied with where they are in Christ.*"
- I think many of us could say that. We're not satisfied in our spiritual walk with Christ.
- We think of the many times we have failed God, failed to obey his Word, failed to keep his commandments.
- We sin, over and over again, and we don't feel like we've entered into the blessedness of what the psalmist is declaring to us.
- And we're grieved because of our sin. The true Christian longs for true holiness in their life.
- If you are in Christ, the desire is there, even as you struggle with sin.
- The psalmist knows that the Christian life is a fight of faith. The Christian life is not one of trying to do better or be better.

- This psalm, as all the others, can only be interpreted in light of what Christ has done for us.
  - He is the only one who fulfills all of the requirements of the law of God.
  - He is the only one who is truly blameless.
  - He is the only one who kept all of God's commandments, testimonies and precepts.
  - He is the only one who perfectly obeyed God's law.
  - He is the only one who sought the Lord wholeheartedly.
  - He is the only one who walked perfectly in God's ways.
  - He is the eternal Word made flesh. And through his perfect obedience, through his sacrificial death, through his triumphant resurrection, through his powerful intercession for us, the blessings of this psalm are ours.
  - Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.
  - Because of Christ, the blessedness that comes from living a blameless life is not an unattainable goal. Because we have Christ's righteousness imputed to us, we are being sanctified by the Spirit of grace, we are new creations in Christ Jesus who have a new heart with holy affections and holy desires, and a love for God and his Word.
  - Where we had no desire to obey God's word before, now we have a new heart that delights in God's Word.
  - And our obedience is not the grounds of our salvation, but rather the fruit of regeneration through the work of the indwelling Spirit of God to conform us to Christ.
  - Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
  - This blessed life that comes from obedience and conformity to God's word and God's ways is our birthright in Christ Jesus.
  - We obey as a response to God's goodness and graciousness to us in Christ.
  - We want to obey him because we love him and we know that he is God and his commandments aren't burdensome to us, they are life.
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- And if you're a believer, if you're in Christ, I have no doubt that you desire to walk in obedience to God.
  - But can not overcome your sin on your own.
  - You need divine enablement. You need the empowering grace and strength God's Spirit supplies in order to obey, to resist temptation, to kill sin, and to remain steadfast in keeping his statutes.
  - When you feel helpless in your pursuit of holiness, let that drive you to Christ our Mediator, who ever lives to make intercession for us.
  - Cry out for the Spirit of God to help you put to death the sinful deeds of the flesh, and to empower you to live according to God's Word and God's ways.
  - Pray for what you lack and trust what God has promised you through your all-sufficient Savior.

#### IV. DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD

- In v6, the psalmist expresses that he knows he will experience shame if he's not living by God's Word.
- V6 Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.
- If God answers his petition in v6, if God makes his ways steadfast so that he keeps God's statutes, he knows he will not be put to shame.
- He will be able to keep his eyes fixed on God's Word.

- Why should we keep God's Word before us, why should we fix our eyes on God's Word?
  - So that we're not distracted. So we don't deviate from God's ways.
  - Fix your eyes on God's Word. Set yourself to internalizing God's Word because if your heart is occupied with worldly pleasures, you cannot taste the heavenly joy promised in this psalm.
- V7-8 gives us two defining characteristics of the life devoted to God's Word.
  - The first is praise
  - v7 I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous rules.
  - The psalmist vows to praise the Lord with an upright heart, and he says he will have that upright heart as he learns God Word.
  - A frequent prayer throughout this psalm is "*Lord teach me your statutes.*"
  - Praise is a response to who God is, and we learn who God is through His Word.
  - The more we grow in our knowledge of God, the more reasons we have to praise him.
  - Right theology leads to high doxology.
  - If we want to praise God rightly we must know him rightly through His Word.
- The second is prayer.
  - V8 I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.
  - The first part of the verse is a vow, a resolution to keep God's Word unconditionally.
  - The more we learn from God's Word, the more we desire to keep God's Word.
  - The second part is a desperate request.
  - The request immediately follows the resolution.
  - He is firm in his purpose, but not confident of his strength to see it through. Almost at the same moment he makes his resolution he follows it up with a prayer knowing what he is resolving to do is beyond his power to fulfill.
  - The psalmist is intimately aware of the Christian struggle.
  - This is why we need to pray, to call upon the Lord in our weakness and inability. He will supply us the grace and strength to keep His Word.
- Here is the confidence we have on the other side of Christ's resurrection and completed work—if we are in him, he will not utterly forsake us.
  - He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).
  - So praise the Lord as you are informed by God's Word and pray to the Lord with complete confidence and dependence upon him to help you in your weakness.
  - Because God is faithful, because Christ is our faithful High Priest, we can experience the blessedness that comes from living by God's Word.
  - Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it (1 Thess 5:23-24).

## APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?

- With whom can I share the gospel this week?