

**DELIGHTING IN THE WORD**

Psalm 119:9-16

**Intro:** I believe it is apparent that the Holy Spirit, working through the writer of this Psalm (whoever he was), was indicating that each section was to be taken by itself. I say this because of the way the Hebrew alphabet was used in each section. All of the verses from one to eight start with words beginning with the letter *aleph*. All of the verses from nine to sixteen begin with the words which have as their first letter, *beth* – and so on throughout the twenty-two sections. But I also believe that this arrangement indicates that there is a connection with each of the sections, that it, *aleph* leads to *beth*, and *beth* to *gimel*, and so on through the Psalm. What would be the purpose of using the Hebrew alphabet throughout the Psalm if these were not two of the reasons for the way they have been arranged in the Hebrew text.

So this is the reason I feel that it is right to look at each section by itself, and yet, at the same time to seek to tie the various sections together. And this is what I am going to be doing as we go through the entire Psalm. There is order and purpose in the writing of every book of the Bible, and it needs to be our purpose in studying a chapter like this to study each part by itself, and then to see, but only with the help of the Lord in both instances how each section flows into the next section, and how the twenty-two parts make up one message.

A reading of the Psalm is sufficient to reveal to us that this is a Psalm about the Word of God. And the Word is referred to by different words, such as, “the law of the Lord” in verse 1, “His testimonies” in verse 2, and so on.

To draw our attention to this Psalm, we have not only its length, but the two beatitudes with which the Psalm begins. God has promised that those who obey His Word will find true happiness. Part of that happiness, contrary to what people normally think, is that the Word of God and the God of the Word will not only make us more conscious of sin, but will form a protective barrier upon our hearts so that we will not sin. But the great power of temptation and sin causes us to cry out to God for help. Then we realize more than ever that the Word is what we need, and it gave the Psalmist, as it will give us, the confidence to believe that it is the Word which prepares us to worship God, and to continue to keep His Word. But then the first section ends with a second prayer: “O forsake

me not utterly.” There are times in our lives when we seem forsaken, but the truth is that we are never totally forsaken, “utterly forsaken.”

All of this bring us to the second section.

There are people who say that the Bible is primarily for adults who are well along in their lives, but that it is not particularly for young people. The *beth section* of this Psalm settles that question. This verse may mean that it was written by a young man, and that he was asking this question for himself.

The book of Proverbs was written primarily for young men, and this should include young women as well. That it is for young people is clear from Proverbs 1:4 where Solomon was giving a series of lessons as to why he wrote the Proverbs. Proverbs 1:4 tells us that it was “to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.” The word “subtilty” means *prudence*, or *wisdom*. The Bible not only makes us wise unto salvation, but it makes us wise as to how we are to live after we are saved.

Now in *aleph* this young man had found happiness, but it is apparent that he had failed. He had committed some sin, or sins, against the Lord, and he was asking the Lord how to be cleansed from sin after he had sinned. The answer brought him back to the message and the lesson he had learned in *aleph*. He needed to get back to the Word. The Lord Jesus verbalized this truth when He was speaking to His disciples as we learn from John 15:3 where it is recorded that He told His disciples, “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.” And two chapters later we are told that our Lord prayed to His Father for His disciples with these words: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17).

I remember that once when Dr. Bruce Waltke was with us he raised the question, “How could the wisest man in the world die such a fool?” You may remember that at the end of his life he married several foreign women, and he built temples for them to worship their own gods. In answering that question Dr. Waltke cited the words of one of Solomon’s proverbs found in Prov. 19:27. I am reading this from the NKJV:

Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.

It is one of the worst things that we can do, to begin to neglect the reading

of the Word, and applying it to the way we live each day. We never out-grow our need for the Word of God.

So the answer to the young man's question is, "By taking heed to Thy Word." To take heed is to observe it, to obey it, to do what it says. And we have already learned from verse 5 that only God can enable us to do what He wants us to do, and not to do what He forbids. It is almost as though the young man was answering his own question.

Years ago Lucille and I had a neighbor who was involved in a Christian organization working with young people. I saw him one day in a store, and he said I was by your house early the other morning, and your light was already on in a downstairs room. And then he added, "I expect that you were reading your Bible." I told him that I was. Then he said to me: "That is what I ought to be doing." But apparently he didn't. I didn't know it at the time but he and his wife were having trouble. It was only a few weeks later I learned that he had left his wife, and in the weeks afterwards, he got a divorce. His problem was not that he didn't know what he should have been doing, *but his problem was that he just didn't do it!*

Young people, let me say to you tonight, you are at the time in your lives when sinful desires in your heart are the strongest. It is a time when you can make some tragic mistakes. It is a time for playing with fire. Make sure that you really know the Lord, and then get your nose in the book and keep it there!

But with this young man it was different! In verse 10 he is back where he was in verse 2. He had sought the Lord with his whole heart at the beginning, and now he has done it again, and fellowship was restored. So often when we seek the Lord, our whole heart is not involved in it, and we put ourselves back in a tempting situation. And you notice that he is praying again because he is more conscious of his weakness and his need of the Lord's blessing in his life. "The whole heart" is the key here.

One blessing that has come out of his sin, is that he is back praying again: "O let me not wander from Thy commandments."

In verse 11 he states what he has done to prevent future failures. Again the emphasis is on the words "in mine heart." It is in our hearts, not just because we have memorized it (although that is a good step to take), but when from the heart the Word takes control of our lives. God has given

us His Word, but it is our responsibility to do what He says in order to get the true benefits in our lives.

In verse 12 we learn that the restoration of fellowship with the Lord leads to worship: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord.” And it opens our hearts that we might receive greater understanding of the Word. This was his prayer: “Teach me Thy statutes.” I hope you remember that last week from verses 5 and 8 we learned that the Word is called “statutes” because they are “binding and unalterable.” The Word of God always remains the same. What the Bible says is sin, is still sin, and will always be sin, even though the world may try to make us believe that we are free to do whatever we want to do. It is only sin, the world says, if we think it is.

The last four verses tell us what the Psalmist, this young man, has started to do (vv. 13, 14), and what he promises, or vows to the Lord, that he will do.

Verse 13 ought to remind us of what David said to the Lord in Psa. 51:10-13. Listen to his words:

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee (Psa. 51:10-13).

Remember the meaning of “judgments.” It has to do with God’s decisions regarding what is right and what is wrong. We are being told today that truth is relative, that it depends upon the person and the circumstances as to what is right and wrong. But the Word tells us that God is the Judge, and the young man before in this Psalm states that he is in full agreement with God. Truth is not relative; truth is absolute.

We find also in verse 14 that the joy of verses 1 and 2 is back! He looks again upon the Word as *God’s testimonies, the very testimony and only testimony that is thoroughly reliable, and will never lead us astray.* When we begin to ignore what God has said, or begin to argue with it, our joy goes, and we lay ourselves open to real trouble. The value of the Word of God is greater than all of the riches of the world. See what

Solomon wrote in Prov. 3:13-18:

13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her (Prov. 3:13-15).

Then the Psalmist makes two promises, or vows, to the Lord. And we have these in the last two verses of *beth* – verses 15, 16.

Verse 15 has a promise concerning meditation. Cf. Psa. 1:1-3, “Blessed is the man that walketh not . . .” To meditate is to look intently at something, to consider it, to think about it. And it is to do all of this with pleasure and delight (the word used in verse 16).

But the Psalmist promises to meditate on the Lord’s “precepts.” What are “precepts”? We had this word in verse 4. They are similar to commandments and statutes, but they emphasize looking on the Word as given by One Who has authority over us, has the right to tell us what to do, with special attention to details. Combined with meditation it means looking at details of the Word that we might have previously overlooked.

To respect God’s ways is to walk in His steps, to follow His ways. And, as Faucett has pointed out, this is not for his own glory, but for God’s glory, and so that others will follow him as He follows the Lord. It is to stay on the well-trodden road of those who seek to follow the Lord.

All that goes before in verses 13, 14, and 15, added up, is what it means to delight ourselves in God’s Word, His statutes, binding as they are upon us, and unalterable. Nothing gives the Psalmist more pleasure than what he finds in the Word, and in making sure that his life is in full accord with the Word of God. And he promised not to forget it.

**Concl:** Sometimes it takes a fall away from the Word to make us understand how precious the Word is, and how we need to treasure its truth every day. But it is only as we walk in fellowship with the Lord, drawing from Him the strength to live holy lives, that we will be able to do what we promise the Lord we will do. This is not always indicated in Scripture, but we are to understand that our obedience is based on Phil. 2:12 and 13.