

THE LORD'S SERVANT

Psalm 119:121-128

Intro: I have given this stanza the title, “the Lord’s Servant,” because it is in this stanza that the psalmist referred to himself as the Lord’s servant more than in any other stanza. “Thy servant” appears a total of thirteen times throughout the Psalm: verses 17, 23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 84; then skipping for the moment the stanza we are considering tonight, we go on to verses 135, 140, and 176.

Gimmel, א, #3, has two of these verses, the first two in the list, but our present stanza, Yodh, י, #16, has *three* of them. So this stanza deserves to be called *the stanza of the Lord’s servant*.

The Hebrew word for “servant” in all of these verses is the same, עֶבֶד. It speaks of one who was actually a slave, one whose responsibility it was to do the will of his master, or lord. And this is what this servant called his owner. See verse 126. A servant could be one who was born in the family of his lord, although not a member of the family. Or it could also be one who was purchased to be a servant. But obedience was the primary responsibility of a servant.

It says a great deal about the psalmist that, rather than give us his name, he gives us his position in relation to the Lord. Obviously he delights in this title. It is used in humility and deep gratitude. He clearly feels that it is not a position which he deserves, but that the Lord has honored him in making him His servant.

But this speaks well for the Lord Himself. There were many lords who were cruel, and life with them was a constant trial to his slaves. But this slave obviously loved his Master and delighted to do His will.

But it is apparent from this stanza that the Lord has a responsibility toward His servant, and it was a responsibility which the servant did not hesitate to mention. He sought to do the Lord’s will, but he was very clear in expressions of dependence upon the Lord.

It is interesting to note the other times that the psalmist used the word “thy” in this stanza. Note:

- 1) “Thy salvation” (v. 123).
- 2) “The word of thy righteousness” (v. 123).

- 3) “Thy mercy” (v.124).
- 4) “Thy statutes” (v. 124).
- 5) “Thy testimonies” (v. 125).
- 6) “Thy law” (v. 126).
- 7) “Thy commandments” (v. 127).
- 8) “Thy precepts” (v. 128).

Six of these eight clearly refer to the Word of God, and they are a solemn reminder that God’s Word belongs to Him. He has given it to us, but it still belongs to Him, and we are responsible to Him as to how we use it.

From the terms that are used for the Word we are reminded in verse 123 that it is a word characterized by “righteousness,” *the righteousness of God Himself*. As “statutes” in verse 124 we are reminded of the permanence of the Word. As the Lord gave Moses the ten commandments written in stone, so we are to recognize that the Word of God, all of it, is unchanging and unchangeable! “The law” in verse 126 is what Derek Kidner calls, “the chief term of all, and is heard the most often” (II, 417). It is a term, like the others, which is applied to all of the Scriptures. Its title is another reminder, again quoting Kidner, “that revelation is not simply for interest but for obedience” (II, 418). In “commandments” we see the authority of Scripture. God has the right to tell us what to do, and to expect that we will do it. Finally, when the Scriptures are called “precepts,” we are called to pay attention to the details of Scripture. It would have to do not only with what we do, but how thoroughly we do it, and we might add the spirit in which we do it.

For the psalmist to use these terms throughout this great Psalm would mean that he was committed to every purpose the Lord in giving us His Word. He wanted to be known as *the Lord’s servant* for the way in which he was to live, and the message that he was to carry out into the world.

Now let us look at the stanza in greater detail.

In verse 121 the psalmist tells the Lord that he had faithfully sought to live by the Word, doing what was the will of God, seeking to be righteous in his walk. And this gave him confidence to bring his petition to the Lord: “leave me not to mine oppressors.”

We as the children of God find that the Word of God brings us so much pleasure that we are amazed that every person on earth doesn’t want to live like we seek to live. But we soon find that not only do most people

not want to live like we do; they don't want us to live that way either. It brings conviction to them. And so the resort to oppression. This is just another word for persecution. And the same word occurs in verse 122.

What the psalmist said in verse 122 is an illustration of 1 John 5:14-15, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him ..."

In verse 123 he called his oppressors "proud." And it is personal pride that keeps most people from recognizing the how much they need the Lord. And so the servant appealed to his Lord in this verse to protect him from his enemies.

On the anticipation of the Lord's blessing which he expressed in verse 124, look back at verses 81 and 82 in this same Psalm. Perhaps these verses help to explain the length of this psalm. It is an example of importunate prayer. It is an example of longer sessions of prayer where we earnestly seek the blessing of the Lord, especially in times when the Lord seems to be withholding His blessing. We know that the Lord has promised His blessing. These are a part of the engraved Word. But the blessing does not seem to come, and we feel that our eyesight will fail because of how long and how hard we have looked for the answer to our prayers.

And so what does he do? In verse 124 he cast himself on the mercy of God knowing that while he has sought to please God in every detail of his life, he is actually unworthy of any of the Lord's blessing. And so he pleads for mercy. But he does more than that. He realizes that the circumstances that he is in, God has placed him there to teach him truth that he needs to know, or know better, and ways in which the truth needs to be lived out in his life. Regardless of how holy our lives may be, there is always room for improvement, and that improvement comes through a greater understanding of the Word of God.

Verse 125 gives us a key to learning the truth of God. The psalmist declared that he was the Lord's servant, committed to do God's will even before he knew the fulness of what it might mean. So often we pray for help or guidance with the idea that we will examine what the Lord tells us, but we will only do it if we like it. We don't ever say that to the Lord, but He knows our hearts, and can see just where we stand in relation to His will. The Lord Jesus said, "If any man will do His will, he will know ..." (John 7:17).

In verse 126 we see that the psalmist was concerned about the time. This is also an issue with us. But we must not think that the psalmist was just impatient with the Lord, and wanted the Lord to do something. That is not the point. The point was that the psalmist was jealous for the glory of God, and earnestly wanted the Lord to show His power and His wisdom against the enemy, perhaps like He did against the Egyptians. You see in the last part of this verse that the psalmist was concerned about the way the Word of God was being treated.

Shouldn't this be our concern today? We all have our own personal problems, and problems that our loved ones have, but we must never forget that we are engaged in a great battle. Our struggles are a part of that battle. But it is a battle we have with the Devil and his demons against the Lord, and His Word, and against His people. And so the psalmist wanted the Lord to work for His own glory. We are helpless against the forces of evil, but to the Lord belongs the victory. And He has ways of working that are far beyond anything that we might suggest to Him.

Finally, as we come to the last two verses we see two conclusions that the psalmist has reached. Both verses begin with the word, "Therefore."

If you ask most people if they were to choose either a pot of gold or the Bible, they would laugh at you, pick up the pot of gold, and walk away. But there is another thought here. And it is that "gold," even "fine gold," is keeping them from God and His Word. The Lord Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul. And yet it would be impossible for us to say how many people have no time for the Lord because what they want in life is not the Lord, but money. The psalmist looked at things in just the opposite way. He knew that gold could never buy what he had in the Word of God. And gold was not even necessary to obtain the Word. It was a gift from God. On the other hand, the love of money is the root out of which every kind of evil comes forth.

But the second conclusion that the psalmist reached was that God's Word as "precepts," which speak of every detail of Scripture was right, and loving the Word had made him not just to turn away from evil, but to hate it!

So we learn here that loving the Word will not only keep us from sin, as

Psa. 119:11 tells us, but loving the Word will cause us to hate sin.

These two conclusions are greatly needed by us, the Lord's people, in these days in which we live. We know sin is wrong, but we are inclined to excuse it, or, as Dr. Hannah told us this week, to try to redefine it. But sin is sin. It always has been sin, and it always will be sin. It was the terrible nature of our sin that made it necessary for the Son of God to come into this terrible world, to suffer and die on the Cross, that He might take away our sins. The more we read the Word, the more we meditate on the Word, the more we memorize the Word, the more we are going to love it, and the more we are going to love our Lord, *and the more we are going to hate sin.*

So don't take your Bible home and forget about it until you come back the next time. Read before you go to bed tonight. And read when you get up in the morning. And even when you are busy during the day, think about it, and ask the Lord to teach you what you need to know, and to enable you be able to tell the Lord, "Lord, I want to love You more and more, and I want to hate sin in every form. So give me the greatest love for Your Word that I have ever had, and the greatest love for You"