

FBC POWELL, 5-21-17 AM NOTES
"The Greatest Chapter in the Bible"
Psalm 119
15 in Series, "Psalms: Medicine for the Soul"

"The gates of Hell are torn down. Death is ripped apart. The right Man is at the helm of the cosmos. And you are worried about...what, again?"
—Russell Moore

Genesis 3:1b-5 "And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'? The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

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John 8:32 "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

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Hope is the joyful, confident expectation that what God has promised, He will do.

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Romans 12:21 “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

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C. Treasure the Bible in Your Heart (v. 11)

D. Meditate on the Bible (v. 15)

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Chapter 15: The Greatest Chapter in the Bible

Psalm 119

In my opinion, Psalm 119 is the greatest chapter in the Bible. It is also the longest chapter in the Bible (176 verses). Psalm 119 is a chapter in God's Word about God's word. Psalm 138:2b: says, "For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name." The Bible is not the book of the month or the book of the year; it is the book of the ages. It has out lived, out loved, and out lifted all other books ever written. Christians do not worship the Bible, but we revere the Bible because it is the "breathed out" Word of the One that we do worship. Psalm 119 is an acrostic Psalm (probably to aid in memorization). The Psalm is divided into twenty-two stanzas – one stanza for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza has eight lines and each line begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

We don't know for sure who the human author of the 119th Psalm is, but it has been speculated that it was David. Others say it was Jeremiah, Daniel or Ezra. Whoever the author was, he likely had been through many trials since the Holy Spirit inspired him to make sixty-six references to suffering. The psalmist also writes about how comfort is found in God's Word.

This is a Psalm that focuses on God's Word. One-hundred-seventy-three of the one-hundred-seventy-six verses speak about God's Word, and God Himself is mentioned in every verse – all one hundred seventy-six of them.

My goal for this message is two-fold. First, I am praying that you develop a deep love for the Word of God which will ultimately produce a greater love for the God of the Word. Second, I am praying that you allow this powerful Word to change your life, your perspective, and to give you a sure hope in an uncertain time. When almost all that we hear in the news is gloom and doom, we need to constantly hear what the Word of God says. Dr. Russell Moore said, "The gates of Hell are torn down. Death is ripped apart. The right Man is at the helm of the cosmos. And you are worried about... what, again?"

Your view of and grasp of the great truths of the Bible will color not only how you see everything; it will affect every decision you make (even when at times you are not aware of it). I long for you to understand and to believe that the Bible is the absolute, inerrant, infallible, unadulterated truth! Psalms 119:160a (NKJV): "The entirety of Your word is truth..."

It is essential that every generation of Christians be taught the absolute objective truth of the Scripture. We have an enemy that from the time of his entrance in the Garden of Eden has sought to cast doubt on the truth and reliability of the Scriptures. His main tactic is summarized in Genesis 3:1b-5 "And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'? The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

Satan first questions and then denies the Word of God. That was his tactic with Eve and it is still his tactic. As you hear this message, I am praying that you will develop a deep or deeper love for God's Word. I am also praying that you will allow the Word to do its convincing and convicting work in your heart. I am praying that the Word of God will change your perspective to one that is in line with God's perspective. I am also praying that God's Word will give you a steadfast and sure hope as you travel this fallen earth with all its trials and heartaches. Finally, I am praying that you will develop a lifestyle of sharing this Word with people who have no hope.

Some of the greatest Bible teachers in Christian history have given us a very detailed look at this Psalm. Charles Spurgeon, in his commentary on the Psalms (*The Treasury of David*), gave 395 pages with real small font to Psalm 119. The Puritan, Thomas Manton, wrote three massive volumes on this Psalm. Those volumes had more than 1,600 pages – all on Psalm 119. In this message, we will not be going that in depth (though I could see us going verse by verse, for a very

long period of time, sometime in the future). We will be taking a fairly short topical overview of Psalm 119 that I hope will help you see the big picture of what this Psalm reveals to us.

I. What the Bible Is

In these 176 verses, the Psalmist uses eight words or phrases to describe the Bible. Each of the eight gives us a different aspect of the multifaceted Word of God.

A. The Law of the LORD (v. 1)

This phrase is the Hebrew word, *Torah*. It is the most used phrase or word in Psalm 119 to describe God's Word (used twenty-four times). The Hebrew word means instruction, doctrine, direction, or teaching. Probably the best translation would be "teaching." What is the Bible? It is God's instruction, God's teaching to His people. It is the owner's manual that teaches us His purpose, His plans, and His ways.

B. Precepts (v. 4)

This Hebrew word is used twenty times in Psalm 119. The word translated "precepts" means God's mandates, God's commands, or God's orders. God is not really into suggestions. He gives precepts and they are to be obeyed.

C. Statutes (v. 5)

This Hebrew word is used nineteen times to describe God's Word in Psalm 119. It means regulations, decrees, ordinances, and rules to be obeyed. Some people say, "The Bible not a rule book." The Bible is certainly more than a rule book, but it does contain rules – lots of them. These rules were meant to be followed. The glorious Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ has taken the wrath of God that we deserve for breaking His rules, but the Gospel also changes us so that we desire to keep His rules and that He has given us, His indwelling Spirit, to enable us to keep them with the motive of gratitude and love for God. "Legalism" does not refer to the desire to keep God's rules. Legalism is trying to earn God's acceptance by keeping rules.

D. Judgments (v. 7)

This Hebrew word is used twenty-two times in Psalm 119 to describe the Word of God. It means a verdict that is pronounced, a formal decree, or God's government of His people. The Bible contains God's decrees, His governing principles, and we don't get to vote on them. God doesn't operate under a democracy; His governing is a dictatorship.

E. Word (*debar*) (v. 9)

This is the first of two Hebrew words that are both translated "word" in English. This Hebrew word is used twenty times in Psalm 119. This word translated "word" has a wide range of meanings. It is translated in the Old Testament using thirty-eight different English words. It carries the meaning of promises, commandments, declarations, accounts of history, and prophetic revelations. All of these, and more, are included in the concept of the Bible being God's Word.

F. Commandments (v. 10)

This Hebrew word is used twenty-two times in Psalm 119. It means basically the same thing that the word "commandments" means in English. It speaks of clear cut authoritative directions.

G. Testimonies (v. 14)

This Hebrew word is used nineteen times in Psalm 119. It means witness, something that testifies. The Word of God testifies to the perfections and the ways of God. It testifies as to what pleases and displeases God, and most importantly, it testifies how we can be reconciled with and know God.

H. Word (*emrah*) (v. 41)

This Hebrew word is used twenty times in Psalm 119. It means an utterance and in all the Psalms it is used only as an utterance from God. The word in the New Testament translated “inspired” (2 Timothy 3:16) means “God breathed.” God breaths out utterances. This book is the very utterance of God.

What is the Bible? It is the instruction of God, the teaching of God, the mandates of God, the commands of God, the orders of God, the decrees of God, the rules of God, the verdicts of God, the promises of God, the declarations of God, the testimonies of God; in short, the Bible is the very utterance of God.

II. What the Bible Does

I am going to give you eleven things the Bible does. There are considerably more than eleven things that this Psalm tells us that the Bible does, but these eleven are good for an overview of what the Word of God does.

A. The Bible Keeps Our Way Pure (v. 9)

When we read and heed God’s Word, we are cleansed or purified. It is in the Word of God that we see how to be cleansed from guilt and receive forgiveness. I heard about a new believer that was lamenting to his more mature friend. He said, “I often read the Word of God but it doesn’t stick. Putting God’s word into my mind is like pouring water through a sieve.” His friend said, “At least you always have a clean sieve.”

B. The Bible Keeps Us from Sin (v. 11)

When the Word of God is hidden and treasured in our heart – memorized and meditated upon – we become sensitive to sin and we know from the Word how to deal with the sin. The point is that when there is a regular intake of God’s Word and it is hidden, stored up, and treasured in our heart, we have the resources we need to walk in victory. Dwight L. Moody wrote in the front of his Bible, “This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book.”

C. The Bible Delights and Counsels Us (v. 24)

God’s Word is not *just* a huge list of do’s and don’ts. God’s Word is not burdensome. When you begin to hide it in your heart and apply it to your life, it becomes a source of joy to you. Oh, how much easier it makes our daily decisions. We begin to discover that there are principles in God’s Word concerning every area of life and every decision of life. Once you have made that all-encompassing commitment to obey the Word of God enabled by the Spirit of God, then when it comes decision time, you just search the Word of God. It serves as your counselor and guide. That is delightful!

D. The Bible Strengthens Us (v. 28)

When you are overwhelmed with a sense of your own weakness, you will find strength in His Word. It is not magic; the Word simply tells us about the enabling grace of God administered by the

indwelling Spirit of God that enables us to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10).

E. The Bible Revives Us (vv. 40, 107)

The word “revive” means to live anew, to refresh, or to rebuild. When you sense your spiritual life becoming stale, lethargic, or even dead, go to the Word of God. If it seems like your life is falling apart, rebuild it through hiding His Word in your heart. A caution here: if there is any supposed “revival” in a church and it is built around emotion only, and not around the Word of God. It is not genuine revival.

F. The Bible Gives Us Answers for Those Who Reproach Us (v. 42)

The Hebrew word that is translated “reproaches” can also be translated “taunts.” It means, “to come against,” or “to defy.” When you know the Word of God, you have an answer not only to those who ask a reason of the hope that dwells in you (1 Peter 3:15); you have an answer for every argument against God and every taunt the ungodly might hurl at you.

G. The Bible Gives Us Liberty or Freedom (v. 45)

Jesus said in John 8:32: “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” Jesus later said in a prayer to His Father in John 17:17b: “Your word is truth.” From His Word, we learn how to be set free from everything that puts us in bondage. Psalms 119:45 (NIV): “I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.”

H. The Bible Gives Us Hope (v. 49)

Hope is the joyful confident expectation that what God has promised, He will do. As we learn God’s promises in His Word, our hope soars because hope is centered on the promises of God that are found in the Word of God. Have you lost hope? Run to the Word of God, because hope comes through the Word of God. When you are *not* in the Word, your attitude and your approach to life will be controlled by the world and your circumstances. Hope is grounded in the promises of God’s Word!

I. The Bible Gives Us Comfort in Affliction (v. 50)

There are many more verses in this Psalm concerning comfort in affliction. The word “comfort” here means encouragement and consolation. To be comforted is to experience God’s compassion and presence in times of trouble and pain. In 2 Corinthians 1:3 God is called the “God of all comfort.”

J. The Bible Gives Purpose to Our Affliction (v. 71)

When we are hiding His Word in our heart, our afflictions are never wasted. We may not have all of our questions answered about the “why” and the timing of our afflictions, but we will know enough to know that we can trust Him in what we do not understand. It is from His word that we discover the broad purposes for suffering and trouble, primarily to conform us to the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:28).

K. The Bible Makes Us Wiser Than Our Enemies (v. 98)

If you are a true follower of Christ, you will have enemies. Jesus said in Luke 6:26: “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.” The Bible instructs you in how to overcome your enemies with good, and how to forgive them. Romans 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

There are so many more things that this Psalm tells us that the Bible does. I've not even given you half of them. I encourage you to read this whole Psalm and write in your prayer journal all the things that the Word of God does. You will be amazed!

III. What Is My Response?

Just knowing the facts about what the Bible is and what the Bible does doesn't really change anything in our personal lives. We must make the proper response to what the Bible is and what it does. Let's look at some God expected Holy Spirit enabled responses to the Word of God.

A. Walk in the Bible's Truth (vv. 1, 3)

Our walk refers to a habitual way of living – the pattern of our life. Our walk should line up with the Bible and not the world. When people you work with, live with, or have other association with read the Bible's commands concerning our walk in the world, they should have your walk come to mind as an example of what they are reading.

B. Diligently Obey the Bible (v. 4)

Psalms 119:4 (NIV): "You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed." We must take obedience seriously; otherwise we are just playing games. The word "diligently" means completely, speedily, vehemently. Never allow reading the Word to become nothing more than an intellectual exercise. Diligently obey it in your personal life, your family life, your work life, and your leisure time. Look at the Bible as God's love letter to His child, but also His instruction manual and His marching orders.

C. Treasure the Bible in Your Heart (v. 11)

Several other translations say that God's Word is to be "stored up" in our hearts. The Bible, like a rare valuable commodity is to be carefully stored up, treasured, and hidden in our heart. We hide it in our heart so that we know where to find it when we need it. This *hiding* is accomplished primarily through memorizing the Word. Memorization takes on a new urgency when you see it as hiding God's Word in your heart so that when you need it, it is available.

D. Meditate on the Bible (v. 15)

The concept of meditation is all through this lengthy Psalm. The Hebrew word brings to mind how a cow takes in nourishment. A cow goes out in the morning and takes in a huge amount of grass. After a few hours of grazing, the cow goes to lay down under a tree and brings the morning's intake back up to chew some more and get more nourishment out of it. That may sound gross to you, but it is a tremendous picture of meditation. We take in the Bible through memorization and then as we go through the day, we bring it back up and mentally chew on it and get nourishment out of it.

E. Delight in the Bible (v. 16)

The Hebrew word used here for "delight" has similar meaning to the English word. It means to take pleasure in. If reading and studying God's Word is not a delight to you, something is wrong. I know that other things come in and crowd it out, but that is why we need a scheduled time to spend time with His Word. Be careful. If your time in the Word just becomes only a discipline and is never a delight, you've missed one of the greatest joy filled experiences God has provided for His children here on earth.

F. Cling to the Bible (v. 31)

To cling means to be stuck to, to be joined to. We are to cling to the testimonies of His perfections and His promises. They are to permeate our thinking, control our decisions, and interpret our circumstances.

G. Turn Away from Vain Things to the Bible (v. 37)

Psalms 119:37 (NIV): “Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.” What is keeping you from God’s Word? It may be good things that are keeping you from the best things. It may be not so good things that are keeping you from His Word. Resolve that *NOTHING* will keep you from the best thing – His Word.

H. Trust in the Bible (v. 42)

To trust in His Word is to choose to believe it and then act like its true! When the Bible tells me that I am no longer a slave to sin, I believe it, confess it as true, and act like it is true. When the Word of God tells me that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, I believe it and act like it is true. This is not just a mental assessment. We are to base our confession and our behavior on the trustworthiness of God’s Word.

I. Proclaim the Bible (v. 46)

J. Reject Everything That Contradicts the Bible (v. 128)

K. Stand in Awe of the Bible (v. 161)

Conclusion

If I were the Devil, I would focus all my efforts on keeping God’s people away from His Word! I would keep them so busy that they had no quality time for it; I would keep them from LifeGroups where it is studied in depth; I would give them things to do when it is being proclaimed to keep them away; I would entice them to stay up late and not have time to start their day out with the Word. I would entice them to say nice things about it, but never memorize it, meditate on it, or obey it. I’m not the Devil, but that is exactly what he does. This [Book] is the Word of God; what are you going to do with it?