

Psalm 119 : v. 1-24. (New King James Bible)

Blessed *are* the ^[a]undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!
² Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!
³ They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.
⁴ You have commanded *us*
To keep Your precepts diligently.
⁵ Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!
⁶ Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.
⁷ I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
⁸ I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!
⁹ How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.
¹² Blessed *are* You, O LORD!
Teach me Your statutes.
¹³ With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.
¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As *much as* in all riches.
¹⁵ I will meditate on Your precepts,
And ^[b]contemplate Your ways.
¹⁶ I will delight myself in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.
¹⁷ Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.
¹⁹ I *am* a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from me.
²⁰ My soul ^[c]breaks with longing
For Your judgments at all times.
²¹ You rebuke the proud—the cursed,
Who stray from Your commandments.
²² Remove from me reproach and contempt,
For I have kept Your testimonies.

²³ Princes also sit *and* speak against me,
But Your servant meditates on Your statutes.
²⁴ Your testimonies also *are* my delight
And my counselors.

Introduction

I have been asked to preach for Osaka International Church, once a month for the next four months. Thank you very much for this privilege.

However I have felt drawn by the Holy Spirit to preach on Psalm 119 for this series.

Therefore I may not be able to cover the whole Psalm in this 4 month period, but if I am asked to preach next year I will certainly continue with this Psalm.

Why should I preach on the longest Psalm in the Bible and what is its relevance for the people of O.I.C. and for me today?

The first reason for studying this Psalm is that it focuses 100% on the word of God .

The Psalm is designed to reach the inner spiritual life of God's children.

The Psalm describes how God's word, the Bible, **enables us to grow in Holiness** and to handle the persecutions and pressures that always accompany an obedient walk of faith.

In **2 Timothy Chapter 3: v. 12** it says that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Therefore knowing how to handle this persecution is an important part of the teaching of Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 is different from all other Psalms, not just because of its length but because it is divided up into small sections that are connected to every letter of the **Hebrew Alphabet**.

There are 8 verses per section and 22 sections. The Psalm begins with the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet which is "**Aleph**" and it ends with the last letter of the Hebrew Alphabet which is "**Tau**".

It is probably constructed in this way for ease of memorization. As a Jewish young person, if you were able to memorize Psalm 119, as you learnt the Alphabet it would provide a wonderful spiritual foundation for your life.

Nearly every verse contains a direct mention of God's word in some shape or form.

Although we are not told who wrote the Psalm, the scholars tell us that the writing style is **similar to that of David.**

Other students of the Bible are convinced that it was **Jeremiah** because the writer spoke to Kings (v.46) and also the writer mentions the opposition of rulers in **v. 23 and v.161.**

Also there is no reference to a sanctuary, or sacrifices, or to a priestly ministry.

This would connect to the time of Jeremiah.

Also Jeremiah was the weeping prophet who sought to declare God's word in a difficult time in the history of God's chosen people.

However it is not important who wrote this Psalm, but it is important that it is God's word to us at this time in our lives. (2 Timothy 3: v. 16)

The theme of the whole Psalm is the practical use of the word of God in the life of a believer.

The writer didn't have access to the whole Bible like we have today, and yet he considered that it was his spiritual food (v. 103) and his greatest wealth.(v.14, 72, 127, 162.)

The Bible itself, as we read it with an open heart ,performs many ministries in the life of a committed believer.

It keeps us clean, (v. 9) It gives us Joy, (v. 14, 111, 162) it guides us, (v. 24, 33-35, 105)

it establishes our values, (v. 11, 37, 72, 103, 127, 148, 162) it helps us to pray effectively,

(v. 58) it gives us hope, (v. 49) it gives us peace, (v. 165) it gives us freedom, (v. 45, 133)

it helps us to find and fulfil God's purposes in our lives, (v. 73) it strengthens us to be good witnesses, (v.

41-43) and finally when we think that we are down and out, God's word will revive us and get us back on our feet again.(v. 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 148, 154, 156, 159.)

What an incentive we have to read and study God's word!!!!

Let us begin to study Psalm 119 under the three headings of the first three letters of the Hebrew Alphabet.

1. Aleph – v. 1-8 – “Being Blessed and Blameless “

The opening word of this Psalm in v. 1 is the word **“blessed”**.

It is repeated in v. 2, but after this the word **“blessed”** is not found anywhere else in the Psalm.

It might be that the writer is saying that this is his first challenge.

Q. Do you want to be blessed by the God of the Bible?

We need to understand what this Hebrew word means, translated into English by the word **“Blessed”**.

The Hebrew word **“Barak”** with its various forms occurs 415 times in the Old Testament. It had an important place in the thought patterns of God’s chosen people.

The Hebrew word means to empower or to gift somebody with success, prosperity and a very fulfilled and long life.

In short it means that someone who is blessed is given a rich and abundant life.

To God’s chosen people this blessing was conditional upon obeying the terms of God’s covenant towards His people.

Quote Deuteronomy 11: v. 26-28. In N.K.J.

²⁶ “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today;

²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

So the concept of blessing is found in an obedient relationship with God.

So the question we need to ask is how can we receive God’s Blessing ourselves, even though we are not part of an Old Testament covenant relationship with God ?

The Psalmist gives us the answer.

He says that we can be blessed if we are blameless before Him.

If we are obedient to His Law, and if we are wholehearted in our relationship to Him.

This is very challenging because Jesus Christ was the only person who has lived on this earth who was 100% blameless in His relationship with God and His Law.

However when you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches us that we are “Holy and without blame before God.”

Quote Ephesians 1: v. 4. In the N.K.J.

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

Putting your faith and trust in Jesus begins a relationship and this is made possible through God’s Holy Spirit.

Quote Romans 5: v. 5 in the N.K.J.

⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

It is only God’s Holy Spirit that enables us to obey His commandments, without them being a burden in our lives.

Quote 1 John 5: v. 3 in the N.K.J.

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

Therefore for us today to receive God's blessing, involves knowing Jesus Christ personally. When we know God's forgiveness of our sins personally through Jesus Christ, then we can receive His Holy Spirit.

It is as we surrender to the Holy Spirit, in the reading of God's word, that we are challenged **to give our lives wholehearted to God.**

We hear God's voice through His word, the Bible, then we are challenged to change our lives to obey Him.

Six times in Psalm 119, the writer talks about seeking God with a **whole heart.**

(Psalm 119: v. 2, 10, 34, 58, 69, 145.)

When we give God our **whole heart**, we do not allow any other things or people to affect our relationship with Him.

God takes first place in our lives.

God becomes our **JOY** and our **DELIGHT** and we don't want anything, or anybody to spoil that relationship.

In v. 2 of Psalm 119 we are told that when we seek God with our "**whole heart**" then we are blessed by God Himself.

God has His own way of blessing us personally according to His will and purpose for our lives.

We don't always know what is the best thing for us in our lives.

However as we surrender our hearts to God, and delight in Him and His word, then God will give us the desires of our heart.

Psalm 37 : v. 4 says " Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (N.K.J.J.)

Of course there is the negative side of reading God's word.

We discover that there are things in our lives that are not pleasing to Him.

If we do this then we need to confess these things to God and ask for His forgiveness.

We can then ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to overcome any future challenges in this area.

As we walk by faith, God will help us in the future.

Jacob was not a spiritual man when he ran away from home. However God promised not to forsake him. Jacob believed that promise and became a godly man.

(Genesis chapter 28: v. 10-22)

2. Beth (v. 9-16) Take time to be Holy.

The writer closed the first section of the Psalm determined to keep the Law of the Lord. (v. 8) It was a promise that he repeated in verse 145.

The Psalmist began this section in true Jewish teaching style.

He asked a question of the young men that he was teaching.

The question was "how can a young man cleanse his way?" or as the New Living translation puts it "How can a young person stay pure?".

The answer that the writer gives is to be obedient to God's word.

However that is easier said than done.

In v. 10 the writer expands his teaching to include giving our whole heart to God as a way of staying true to God's word.

If we give our whole heart to God, and love Him deeply then we will not want to go against His teaching.

We will delight in the things that God delights in, and we will love the things that God loves, and hate the things that God hates.

We are born with a sinful heart that needs forgiving and cleansing.

This heart needs to be changed. It needs a new nature.

God provides that new nature for us in the form of Himself. It is called the Holy Spirit. It is a part of God Himself.

Although God gives us a new heart, our old heart is still in place.

It is like having two dogs inside you. If you feed the new dog, he will grow, and if you starve the old dog, he will die.

Therefore our hearts need constant attention or otherwise, as the Psalmist says, our hearts will wander from God.

We need to seek God's help every day, through His Holy Spirit, to live the life that only God will enable us to live.

The Apostle Paul learnt, and we also must learn too, that only the indwelling Holy Spirit enables the child of God to fulfil God's righteousness in our daily lives.

Quote Romans 8: v. 1-11 in the N.L.T.

8 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, the power^[a] of the life-giving Spirit has freed you^[b] from the power of sin that leads to death.

³ The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature.^[c] So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

⁵ Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.

⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. ⁷ For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. ⁸ That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

⁹ But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life^[d] because you have been made right with God.

¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

In v. 11 the Psalmist tells us that we need to hide the word of God in our hearts.

What does this mean?

It means memorizing God's word in our head and transferring it into our hearts.

Memorizing God's word is one of the greatest things we can do if we have the capacity to do it.

Of course when we are young it is much easier to memorize God's word.

However it is not impossible to do it when we get older.

Q. Why not try to memorize verses from the Bible, in English or Japanese or your native language.?

You will find that it will help you now and in the future.

When God's word is hidden in your heart, only you know that it is there.

At the right time, God can bring it out of hiding and use it for His Glory.
When I was at O.I.C. we had a discipleship course with 60 memory verses, and many people completed the course and received their study Bibles as a reward.

Maybe you started the course when I was at O.I.C. but you gave up and didn't complete it.

Well, what not try again and complete the verses.

I would be more than happy to send you or purchase a study Bible in your own language when you complete the course.

Having said all this, it is the applying of the word of God where the blessing comes.

Quote James 1: v. 22-25 in the New Living Translation.

²² But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. ²³ For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror.

²⁴ You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. ²⁵ But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

In the applying of God's word, it is sometimes necessary to speak God's word into a situation.

In v. 13 the Psalmist says "**with my lips I have declared all the judgements of Your mouth.**"

Sometimes we need just to speak or declare God's word into a situation.

People who are not Christians need to hear God's word in any given situation.

About 12 years ago I was taking a funeral service for a family who were not Christians. It wasn't easy to conduct this service.

Just before I committed the person to be cremated, I read from Ecclesiastes chapter 3 : v. 1-8, but added a final verse, and said **it is time to say Goodbye.**

Afterwards a lady said to me that they were wonderful words, where did I get them from? I directed her to the Bible and suggested that there were even more wonderful words in the Bible that she could read.!!!

So speaking God's word, even today, will bring honour and praise to God.

Don't be afraid to speak God's word for Him in any given situation that might be appropriate.!!

3. **Gimel – v. 17-24. - We need God's word.**

The Psalmist tells us that God's word is discerned with "**spiritual eyes**".

The Bible is a spiritual book, and if we want our souls to be fed, then we must read this book regularly.

We can't survive as a Christian without a daily time with God. This involves reading His word, the Bible.

In this section of Psalm 119 it gives us **three reasons us why we need God's word.**

Firstly we need God's word because we are His **servants. (v. 17)**

There are at least **13 references in Psalm 119** that teach us that we are servants of God. (v. 17, 23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 84, 122, 124, 125, 135, 140, 176.)

It is God Himself who gives us directions and instructions for the work that He wants us to do. It is through God's word that we get these instructions.

Therefore if you are not reading and obeying the words of the Bible, then you are not serving God. It is as simple as that.

It is so easy to decide that you are going to do something for God, but it is your work for God, and not the work of God.

The work of God, is what **God wants you to do.**

He will equip you and provide you with what is needed for that task.

David Olford from America preached at O.I.C some years ago.

His father was called Stephen Olford, and he was a famous preacher from England who moved to America.

In 1991, I heard Stephen Olford preach a sermon on **1 Corinthians Chapter 15 : v. 58.**

(Quote this in the N.K.J.)

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 : v. 58

⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

In his sermon he explained the difference **between the work of the Lord**, and **working for the Lord**. Basically he said that if we want to do the work of the Lord, then we must fully surrender our hearts and lives to God, and ask Him **what it is that He wants us to do**.

God will communicate to us through His word, the Bible.

God will give us instructions through the Bible on what He wants us to do.

So unless we become students of the Bible, then we can't become servants of God.

So secondly in this part of the Psalm we are told that we are **not only servants** of God, but we need to be **"students"** of His word. (v. 18)

In v. 18 we are told to open our eyes, so that we might see wondrous things from your law.

When the Psalmist talks about God's Law, he is talking about the first 5 books of the Bible. That is Genesis through to the book of Deuteronomy.

If you read through these books with an open heart, you too can see wonderful things hidden within its pages.

One of Paul's prayers in the New Testament , recorded in the book of Ephesians, relates to this subject.

Quote Ephesians 1: v. 15-18. (N.K.J.)

¹⁵Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

¹⁸the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

The reason for this prayer is that Paul had discovered that many Christian believers were doing what they **felt to be right** and **not what God's word told them to do**.

What we feel can often be very different from what God's word teaches.

Therefore we need to pray as we study God's word, that our spiritual eyes, and hearts and minds will be the same as what God's word teaches.

When we become serious students of God's word, we should become serious servants of God.

If our Eyes and hearts focus too much on the world and the things of this world, then we will become like the world.

The Bible teaches us that loving the world makes us an enemy of God.

(James 4: v.4)

However if our eyes focus upon God and His word, then we will become like God in our thinking.

With the help of God's Holy Spirit, our life style and behaviour will become like that of Jesus.

Finally in v. 19-24, the Psalmist reminds us that we are **"strangers"** in this world.

Therefore we need God's help as we travel on our journey towards Heaven.

We need to make sure that we are travelling on the right road.

If you are from the United States of America and you come to live and work in Japan, then it is not too long before you want to be able to drive a car in Japan.

Your first problem is that you discover that in Japan, they drive on the wrong side of the road.

Actually it is not the wrong side of the road, it is just a totally different way of driving.

You can blame the British for this system. They helped Japan greatly after the second world war to build a completely new motor car industry and driving system.

The Bible says that there are lots of people in this life who are travelling on the wrong road.

Quote Matthew Chapter 7: v. 13-14 in the New Living Translation.

¹³ “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell^[1] is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴ But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The most important thing for you to do in life is to make sure that **you** are travelling on the right road in life.

There is no driving test, praise the Lord, but there is an entry requirement.

That entry requirement is to **put your faith and trust in Jesus.**

In order to do that you must first of all **admit your need of Jesus.**

You must realise that the **sin in your heart separates you from the God of the Bible.**

Jesus is the only one who can forgive you for your sin and provide access to the road that leads to eternal life.

Jesus is God’s gift to you. Many reject God’s gift, and continue to travel on the broad road that leads to destruction and eternity in Hell.

This is why Christian believers are strangers in this world.

They are travelling on a different road.

It is a road that is full of challenges, but it is a road that leads to Heaven.

Quote 1 Peter 1: v. 3-7 in N.L.T.

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,

⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. ⁶ So be truly glad. ^[2] There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.

⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

Just as the cloud and the fiery pillar led Israel in their wilderness journey, (Num. 9: v. 15-23) so the Bible leads us in our lives.

If we take time to meditate on God’s word, and seek God with a whole heart, He will show us the path of life.

Conclusion and Application

Q. So what are the important points that we must apply directly to our lives today.

1. **If you want to live a blessed and blameless life, then you must get to know your creator personally.** The only way that you can do this is through Jesus Christ, God’s Son. He is like a bridge between you and the God of the Bible. He came to this earth from Heaven, to show us what God is like, and then to die on a cross, taking the punishment for our own personal sins.

Jesus Christ is our substitute, He died in our place. Our sins deserve God's punishment, but through God's Grace, He provided another way.

That way was to avoid eternal punishment, and to accept God's gift of eternal life through Jesus. If we trust in Jesus Christ, and confess our sins to Him, then we begin to travel on the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

Today you are either travelling on the narrow road to eternal life, or you are travelling on the wide road that leads to eternal punishment and a place call Hell.

I hope that you have already made the right choice to believe in Jesus Christ.?

I hope that you are travelling on the narrow road that leads to Heaven?

If you are not travelling on the narrow road, you can change today, by coming to Jesus. Why not trust Jesus today.?

2. **Once you enter on the road to eternal life, you will need help to guide you and give you peace and joy in your life.**

You will receive this by reading God's word, the Bible, every day. God's Holy Spirit will refresh your soul as you spend time with God and His word.

There are always plenty of things to do, so you need to **make time** to spend with God and His word. We must make sure that it is God's word that is influencing our mind and not the culture and the society in which we live.

3. **As we read the Bible, we need to surrender our hearts to God,** because we are His servants. Servants to what their masters tell them.

We must make sure that we are doing **God's work for Him**, and **not our work for Him**.

God will gift you for the things that He wants you to do.

May God bless you as you obey His word, the Bible.