

Pastor Alistair McKenna – Osaka International Church - 21st November 2021.

Psalm 119: v. 49-72.

Introduction

This is the third message from Psalm 119, and it will be my last message on this Psalm for 2021.

Next month in December, I will be preaching a Christmas message on Sunday the 19th December. However it would be nice to finish Psalm 119 next year in 2022, but I leave that up to the Church Council to decide. I have certainly been challenged and blessed through this Psalm.

After last month's challenge, I did send my book to the Queen. The week it arrived, the Queen was informed by her doctors that she needed to rest. So if the book actually got through to the Queen then at least she would have had time to read it. I will update you next month.

I also witnessed to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, but as yet I haven't had a reply.

⁴⁹ Remember the word to Your servant,
Upon which You have caused me to hope.

⁵⁰ This *is* my comfort in my affliction,
For Your word has given me life.

⁵¹ The proud have me in great derision,
Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.

⁵² I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD,
And have comforted myself.

⁵³ Indignation has taken hold of me
Because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.

⁵⁴ Your statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.

⁵⁵ I remember Your name in the night, O LORD,
And I keep Your law.

⁵⁶ This has become mine,
Because I kept Your precepts.

n HETH

⁵⁷ *You are* my portion, O LORD;
I have said that I would keep Your words.

⁵⁸ I entreated Your favor with *my* whole heart;
Be merciful to me according to Your word.

⁵⁹ I thought about my ways,
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.

⁶⁰ I made haste, and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.

⁶¹ The cords of the wicked have bound me,
But I have not forgotten Your law.

⁶² At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You,
Because of Your righteous judgments.

⁶³ I *am* a companion of all who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.

⁶⁴ The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy;
Teach me Your statutes.

ד TETH

⁶⁵ You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your word.

⁶⁶ Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
For I believe Your commandments.

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.

⁶⁸ You *are* good, and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.

⁶⁹ The proud have forged^[k] a lie against me,
But I will keep Your precepts with *my* whole heart.

⁷⁰ Their heart is^[l] as fat as grease,
But I delight in Your law.

⁷¹ *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.

⁷² The law of Your mouth *is* better to me
Than thousands of *coins of* gold and silver.

Today we will focus on **Psalm 119: v. 49-72**. This section has three headings, and again those headings are letters of the **Hebrew Alphabet**.

The first section is all about the **ministry of memory** and is headed up by the Hebrew letter **Zayin**.

1. The Ministry of Memory – Hebrew letter Zayin – v. 49-56.

If the person who wrote this Psalm was a Priest or a Levite, then he was required to be an expert on the book of Deuteronomy.

The word Deuteronomy means **“Second Law”**. It wasn’t another Law, it was a **repeating of the same Law**.

In the book of Deuteronomy chapter 32, we have a record of the farewell speech given by Moses. This farewell speech was given to prepare a new generation of Israelites for the conquest of Canaan, which was God’s promised land for His chosen people.

After 40 years of wanderings in the desert, the nation of Israel would settle in a new land.

However, Moses knew that people are prone to forget the lessons of the past.

Moses was also concerned that people would forget God’s Law.

Also the people would forget God’s promises and God’s warning of punishment if they disobeyed His Law. Moses had a heart for the people of God, and he wanted God’s chosen people not to forget the lessons of the past, and the instructions contained in God’s Law.

The famous Philosopher, George Santayana said this **“He who does not remember the past is condemned to repeat it.”**

In other words, if we do not learn from our mistakes in the past, then we are likely to repeat them in the future. It is with this thought in mind that we enter v. **49-56 of Psalm 119**.

In v. 49-51 the theme is that God remembers His people.

When the word **“remember”** is applied to God in the Bible, it has a different meaning.

It means to **“pay attention to”** or to **“work on behalf of.”**

It is important to remember that God is **“omniscient”**, which means that He is all knowing, and cannot forget anything. But God can decide **“not to remember”** things that concern us. God says in **Isaiah Chapter 43: v.25**, these words.

“ I even I , am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. ”

(other verses where God chooses not to remember are Jeremiah 31: v.34, Hebrews 8: v. 12, and Hebrews 10: v.17)

God’s forgiveness chooses not to remember past sins, but on the other hand, God remembers to **do us good and give us His blessing.**

In Genesis chapter 8: v. 1 it says God remembered Noah and the rain stopped and eventually the **“Ark”** settled on top of a mountain and **Noah, his family** and all the animals were saved.

In Genesis 19: v. 29 it tells us that God remembered Abraham.

And because of this God delivered Abraham’s youngest brother Lot from destruction in Sodom.

In Genesis 30: v. 22, it tells us that God remembered Rachel and opened her womb, and she had a child and called him Joseph.

In all of these situations, God’s remembrance involved **doing something for the benefit of His children.**

If you know and love Jesus as your Saviour, God will never forget you and will remember to work for your benefit too.

In v. 49-51 the Psalmist was praying to God about a word given to him which had encouraged him in his affliction.

The Psalmist was waiting for God to act and fulfil His promises.

It was **God’s word that gave Him hope**, in spite of the enemy who was trying to get the Psalmist to turn away from God’s word. The enemy was trying to get the Psalmist to doubt God’s promise. This is one of the ways that the devil operates. The foundation of his tactics can be seen in Genesis chapter 3 where he sowed the seed of doubt into Eve’s mind. When Daniel, who was in captivity in Babylon, found Jeremiah’s prophecy about God’s promise to deliver his people from captivity, he immediately began to pray for God’s promise to be fulfilled. We read that story in Daniel Chapter 9.

True faith not only believes God’s promises, but prays for God to work to realise the promise.

Q. How does this truth apply to us today?

If we are a true believers in Jesus Christ, and reading the Bible every day, then God is going to speak to us in our personal situation in the same way as God spoke to the Psalmist.

The Holy Spirit may impress upon our hearts a personal promise to us as we read the Bible. We still need to pray into that situation.

If it is about a future event, we need to remind God about His promise to us.

In 2004, 17 years ago I was going through a very difficult time.

I had a burn out experience and my body was not able to function normally.

It was a horrible experience. It was one of the worst experiences of my life.

During the beginning of this period I read **Psalm 71**.

I felt God speak to me directly from **verse 20**. In my Bible, the N.K.J. it says these words.

“ You who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again”

I took this verse to be a promise from God to me personally, that I would recover from my burn out experience and I would be revived one day in the future.

Many times during a period of about 1 year I reminded God of His promise to me.

Eventually, God honoured His promise to me, and I was revived.

It took one year to be fully revived, although I went back to work after 3 months rest.

After my recovery, I spent 11 busy years as a Pastor of a Baptist Church in Sidmouth, and then 5 years in Japan as the Pastor of O.I.C.

By God’s grace, I am still available and ready to preach and teach God’s word, wherever God wants to send me. Yes we can trust God to honour His personal promises to us, whatever they might be. How about us today, are we waiting for God to fulfil a promise to us?

Be encouraged today, because God will always honour His promises.

There are also general promises to all Christian believers in the New Testament.

We need to know about them and appropriate and believe them for ourselves.

Sometimes we need to pray them back to God when we are going through difficult times.

It says these words in Hebrews Chapter 13: v. 5-6. Reading from the N.L.T.

“ Don’t love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.

So we can say with confidence, the Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me ?”

This promise is for all Christians.

However when we read God’s promises in the Bible we must see the verses in their context and fully understand the meaning.

For example, let us look up Philippians Chapter 4: v. 19. (Read in N.K.J.)

¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The promise was given in the context of a Church that was sacrificial in their giving.

Therefore, to apply this promise to us personally, we must make sure that our personal tithing and giving to the Church where we worship is also sacrificial.

We can’t just pluck out promises in the Bible and apply them to ourselves without understanding the context in which they were written.

This is why I much prefer to preach through whole books of the Bible, so you can understand the context from the beginning of the book to the end of the book.

May God bless us as we discover general promises in the Bible to us all.

It can be exciting and encouraging to discover what God promises to do for His children.

We move now to v.52-54 where we read that God’s people remember God’s word.

The Psalmist in v.52 says “ I remember your judgements of old.....”

The question we need to ask here is - How could the writer of this Psalm remember something that happened about 500 years before. The answer is contained in the Bible. Turn with me to **Deuteronomy Chapter 31: v. 24-29 – quote in N.K.J.**

²⁴ So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, ²⁵ that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: ²⁶ “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; ²⁷ for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. *If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death?* ²⁸ Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. ²⁹ For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.”

However the word of God was not just preserved, it was taught to each successive generation.

Quote Deuteronomy Chapter 6: v. 4-9. In the N.K.J.

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

We are also as a Church of God’s people, commanded to teach the next generation about the things of God, from the whole Bible. The Bible is not just the New Testament. Many Christian only read the New Testament, but the Old Testament teaches us about God also.

Quote 2 Timothy Chapter 2: v. 1-2 in the N.K.J.

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Unless the word of God is honoured, taught and obeyed in a Church, then that Church is only one generation away from extinction. Churches will die, if people are not fed the truth of God’s word and we are **ALL** responsible for passing on God’s word to the next generation.

In v. 53 the Psalmist is having a hard time because he is angry about people who reject God’s word.

However he does not let that anger destroy him or force him to do something negative.

He adds God’s love to that anger and it **produces constructive action**.

His action was to **turn God’s Law into songs**, and use the words to praise the Lord.

Quote Ephesians 5: v. 16-20 in the N.L.T.

¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. ¹⁷ Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸ Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. ²⁰ And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However our Praise must be **based on the truth of the Bible.**

If our praise is not based on the truth of the Bible, then our praise is unacceptable to God. This is very important. You have a wonderful music group at O.I.C. but songs must be based upon Biblical truth.

It matters what we sing and we can do no better than sometimes singing the Psalms in the Bible.

The last true Revival in the U.K. was in 1949. A true Revival is where God Himself visits a community in a very powerful way. He saves souls by the work of His Holy Spirit. Often in these Revivals people are broken into tears, and people repent and do anything to put matters right.

There was a Revival in Northern Ireland many years ago and they filled up two warehouses with returned stolen goods.

The Revival I know most about happened on a small island called Lewis in the north west of Scotland.

There was a young lady who became a Christian during that Revival called Mary Morrison. She served as a young person in a mission called the Faith Mission, and married a young man from South Africa. This young man eventually became the principle of the Faith Mission Bible College. His name was Colin Peckham.

I heard many stories about the Revival on the Island of Lewis, from this lady, whose married name was Mary Peckham.

However the story that I will always remember was that she testified to the fact that God came the **closest to the people** during the **singing of the Psalms** that at any other time during the Revival. It was similar to the experiences that Moses had with God.

This is convincing proof that God likes to hear us sing His word, and if we can't sing the Psalm we can sing back Bible truth to God.

I am going to say something very important now.....

When we sing God's word back to Him, He is pleased to bless us with His presence.

Psalm 16: v.11 teaches us that when we are in God's presence, then we have fullness of **JOY**. So the best experience we can have in this life is **to be in the presence of God**.

(This is just a little note to encourage you. In my "Our Daily Bread" Bible reading on the 29th of October, I was reminded that God sings over us. If you read Zephaniah Chapter 3: v. 17, it says in the N.L.T.the following words;

" For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty saviour. He will take delight in you with gladness. With His love He will calm all your fears.

He will rejoice over you with joyful songs."

We now move on now to verses 55-56 and discover that

God's people remember God's name. (v. 55-56)

The name of God, which is Jehovah Yahweh, is full of meaning and power.

The ancient Jewish people in the Old Testament so revered His name that they refused to use it and substituted His real name for the word "Adonai".

This substitution was because they were afraid that they might sin against God by using His real name.

In the Psalms alone there are more than 100 references to the name of the Lord.

We are to love His name – Psalm 5: v.11.

We are to sing praises to His name – Psalm 7:17, 9:2, 18:49.

We get the victory over our enemies through His name – Psalm 44:5, 54:1, 118:10-12.

We should call on His name for help – Psalm 116:4,13.

The Bible says that to remember God's name is to encourage our hearts to trust and obey Him, and not to be afraid.

Psalm 9: v. 10 in the N.K.J. says "And those who know your name will put their trust in you; for you Lord have not forsaken those who seek you."

To remember God's name, is to **ask God to remember us and work on our behalf**.

We can do this at any time, especially when we are having a dark time, and when we are afraid. (v. 55)

We can also remember God's name when we are lonely or discouraged.

(Psalm 42: v. 6)

Proverbs 18: v. 10 says "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run to it and are safe."

We don't have time now but if you study the names of God in the Old Testament, you will find out how strong His name is.

Also if you read and meditate on the **I AM statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John**, you will also discover more about God's name.

Before we leave this section, there is something to remember.

You don't have to wait until you are having a difficult time to honour God's name, you can do it every day.

The discipleship course that I began at OIC many years ago encourages the practice of praying back to God His Hebrew names, and praising and thanking Him in this way.

(I am thinking that my next challenge might be writing a book on discipleship, and putting the O.I.C. discipleship course in the book. Please pray for this because I am not a gifted writer, and will need God's help plus a person to edit the book.

If I did this I would list the 12 most popular Hebrew names for God, so that anybody good use it to pray them back to God. It would be wonderful to have it translated into Japanese, with testimonies of Japanese people who have been helped by the O.I.C. course.)

We now move on to a different Hebrew letter, that is the letter "**HETH**"

This covers verses 57-64, and the title is God is ALL you need.

If you read the whole of the Old Testament you will discover that many times when God's people wanted help, they turned to idols or ran to Egypt for help. At these times it was clear that they didn't really believe that Jehovah God was adequate to meet their needs. In the time of Elijah, Israel tried to solve the problem of their drought by turning to Baal who was the Canaanite storm god. The storm God failed but when Elijah prayed to Jehovah God, He sent the rain in answer to his prayer. When we are tempted to go somewhere else for help, remember that Jehovah God, the God of the Bible is **ALL YOU NEED**.

We are getting close to the New Year period when millions of Japanese people will go to the Temples and shrines to ask for help for the coming year. Some families feel pressure to go, even though they are Christians. If you are a Christians tell your family this year that the God of the Bible will meet all your needs in 2022.

v. 57-58 teaches us that God is our portion

This word "**portion**" in the N.K.J. Bible is important. It is the language of property and land. It refers to the apportioning of the land of Canaan to the tribes of Israel.

(See Psalm 78: v.55, and Joshua chapter 13-21.)

If you study the Joshua chapters you will notice that the **Priests and the Levites** were **not given an inheritance in the land** because the **Lord was their inheritance** and **their portion**.

(You can read about it in Numbers 18: v. 20-24, Deut. 10: v. 8-9,)

Now for us living in New Testament times, we are not promised land or property, but we are promised a rich spiritual inheritance in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our portion is in Jesus Christ, we are **complete in Him**.

Let me read verses from the book of Colossians.

Quote Colossians Chapter 2: v. 9-10. In N.K.J.

⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.^[b] ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

There is also a great promise in **2 Peter Chapter 1: v. 2-4**. (Quote in N.K.J.)

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the ^[c]corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

What God provides for every Christian is a "**Gift**" and not a loan.

We are not required to promise to repay Him. (Romans 11: v. 33-36)

Our challenge is to **ACCEPT** God's inheritance in Christ, to rejoice in it and to trust Him to meet our every need.

God is our Master and our Manager – v. 59-61.

The land that was inherited by the Israelites actually belonged to God. (Lev. 25:23)

God cared for it (Deut. 11: v. 8-17)

If God's people obeyed the terms of the covenant, God would bless the people and their labours in the land.

However if they turned to idols, God would discipline them.

Loving obedience was the condition of God's blessing.

It is the same for us today at O.I.C.

Our mind belongs to God, our feet belong to God, our time belongs to God.

Therefore we need to **consider what we think and process in our minds.**

We need to consider where we go. We need to consider what we do, and how we spend our time. In other words we need to **hear God's voice, remember His voice and obey Him immediately without delay.**

God is our greatest joy – v. 61-64.

We live in a world that is strongly against the God of the Bible and the teaching of scripture. It can be very depressing to live in this world.

However here the Psalmist teaches us that God is our greatest joy.

The Psalmist here encourages himself at midnight, and also by fellowshipping with God's people. Wicked people had tried to destroy the Psalmists faith, but they failed, because God is his greatest joy.

When God is our home, we have nothing to fear. **(Psalm 90: v. 1 in the N.L.T.)**

We turn now to our final Hebrew letter and that is the letter **"Teth"**

The theme of this section is that God is Good , All the time. – v. 65-72.

The Hebrew word "Tob" is used six times in these 8 verses.

It can be translated as good, pleasant, beneficial, precious, delightful and right.

God does what is good because **God is good** .

God acts according to His word.

God's character and God's word will never change, therefore **God is Good All the time.**

There is a song that we used to sing that was written by **Don Moen in 1995,** and the chorus goes like this.

God is good all the time, He put a song of praise in this heart of mine.

God is good all the time.

Through the darkest night, His light will shine.

God is good, God is good all the time.

(Songs of Fellowship No.1244 – Kingsway Publication)

Perhaps you can learn this song at O.I.C. to remind you that God is good all the time.?

There are three aspects that teach us about God's goodness in this section of Psalm 119.

The first is that God does what is good. – v. 65-66.

The phrase "according to" in the N.K.J. in v. 65 is used frequently in Psalm 119.

It is to relate a request or a fact to God's word.

God acts according to the promises and principles revealed in His word the Bible.

We should always pray and act according to God's word.

To ask for something that is not according to God's will and His word, is to act ignorantly and selfishly. (James 4: v.3)

If we do this and God gives us our request, then we will be sorry and wish we had not prayed this. This happened to Israel when they asked God for meat to eat.

(Psalm 106:15, Numbers 11: v. 31-35)

Therefore the better we know God's word, the better we can pray and obey God's word. If you want to improve your prayer life, then improve your Bible reading first. This will help you to well.

Secondly we see in this section that not only does God do what is good, but God overrules evil things and from these things, God brings GOOD. (v. 67-71)

The Psalmist had disobeyed God's word and wandered away.

However God disciplined him, and he professes to now keeping God's word.

God in His love sent affliction to the Psalmist to discipline him.

(Hebrews 12: v. 1-11 – read these verses later)

Sometimes when we are obedient to God's word we still experience suffering.

But why is this the case?

God uses these times to mature us and bring us closer to Him.

The famous English Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon said this;

" The promises of God shine the brightest in the furnace of affliction."

However there are times when suffering comes from God's enemies. But it is these times that God can still turn around the suffering for our God and for God's Glory.

We only have to look at Jesus to see how God brought wonderful good to us through the suffering of Jesus.

Jesus suffered many things. He suffered mental abuse and physical suffering when He died on the cross for the sins of the whole world.

However there was a point in the suffering of Jesus on the cross when the whole world was in darkness for three hours.

It was at this time that Jesus actually took the punishment for our sins.

In Matthew Chapter 27: v. 46 it tells us that when Jesus was on the cross that He cried out with a loud voice, **"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"**

This was the cruellest punishment of all, being separated from God.

And yet, through His suffering it produced our Salvation.

If God's enemies have caused your suffering, then eventually God will bring GOOD out of that situation.

Joseph's brothers threw him down a pit and sold him as a slave to merchants who were on their way to Egypt. Joseph suffered but God was with Him and eventually he saved the Jewish nation from extinction. (Genesis 50: v. 19-20)

Finally in v. 72 we are taught that God uses His word, the Bible, to show us GOOD.

This is the second time that God has compared God's truth to treasure.

The Hebrew word better can also be translated as precious, and also more valuable.

It teaches us that the Christian believer should not live by the priorities and values of this world. (Hebrews 11: v. 24-27)

We must put the will of God before everything else in our lives.

When we discover the wonderful treasure of God's word, we should abandon all of our worldly desires and seek God and follow Him wholeheartedly.

When we have done this, we can cry out from our hearts;

" God is Good ALL of the time."

Amen