

Psalm 119 Series -Part 7

I cry out with *my* whole heart;
Hear me, O LORD!
I will keep Your statutes.
¹⁴⁶ I cry out to You;
Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies.
¹⁴⁷ I rise before the dawning of the morning,
And cry for help;
I hope in Your word.
¹⁴⁸ My eyes are awake through the *night* watches,
That I may meditate on Your word.
¹⁴⁹ Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness;
O LORD, revive me according to Your justice.
¹⁵⁰ They draw near who follow after wickedness;
They are far from Your law.
¹⁵¹ You *are* near, O LORD,
And all Your commandments *are* truth.
¹⁵² Concerning Your testimonies,
I have known of old that You have founded them forever.
¹⁵³ Consider my affliction and deliver me,
For I do not forget Your law.
¹⁵⁴ Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me according to Your word.
¹⁵⁵ Salvation *is* far from the wicked,
For they do not seek Your statutes.
¹⁵⁶ ^[ac] Great *are* Your tender mercies, O LORD;
Revive me according to Your judgments.
¹⁵⁷ Many *are* my persecutors and my enemies,
Yet I do not turn from Your testimonies.
¹⁵⁸ I see the treacherous, and am disgusted,
Because they do not keep Your word.
¹⁵⁹ Consider how I love Your precepts;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.
¹⁶⁰ The entirety of Your word *is* truth,
And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.
¹⁶¹ Princes persecute me without a cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your word.
¹⁶² I rejoice at Your word
As one who finds great treasure.
¹⁶³ I hate and abhor lying,
But I love Your law.
¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise You,

Because of Your righteous judgments.
¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love Your law,
 And ^[ad]nothing causes them to stumble.
¹⁶⁶ LORD, I hope for Your salvation,
 And I do Your commandments.
¹⁶⁷ My soul keeps Your testimonies,
 And I love them exceedingly.
¹⁶⁸ I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,
 For all my ways *are* before You.
¹⁶⁹ Let my cry come before You, O LORD;
 Give me understanding according to Your word.
¹⁷⁰ Let my ^[ae]supplication come before You;
 Deliver me according to Your word.
¹⁷¹ My lips shall utter praise,
 For You teach me Your statutes.
¹⁷² My tongue shall speak of Your word,
 For all Your commandments *are* righteousness.
¹⁷³ Let Your hand become my help,
 For I have chosen Your precepts.
¹⁷⁴ I long for Your salvation, O LORD,
 And Your law *is* my delight.
¹⁷⁵ Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;
 And let Your judgments help me.
¹⁷⁶ I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
 Seek Your servant,
 For I do not forget Your commandments.

Introduction

This is the last message that I will teaching on Psalm 119.

It has been a great privilege for me to record these messages for the congregation at O.I.C. As I have studied this Psalm it has been a great blessing to my soul.

I hope that you also have been spiritually encouraged and challenged through this Psalm.

I have recently returned from spending three weeks in South Africa, which is the country of my birth. I lived there from birth until I was 7 years old.

One of the greatest blessings was going back to the Church where I attended the Sunday School until 1961.

(Show pictures of the Church here)

My Mother had recently given me a Sunday School certificate signed by a Mr. A. J. Leak who was the head of the Sunday School when I attended as a little boy.

I discovered that Mr. Leak became an Elder and then moved to another African country to become a Pastor.

I am sure that this Mr. Leak prayed for me and I am grateful for his prayers.

One lady in the congregation on that Sunday came to see me after the service and said that Mr.

Leak conducted her wedding service many years ago and it really encouraged her that I was be able to give thanks for this man's prayers.

I say this to encourage us all to be praying people, especially to pray for children and young people.

The next Hebrew letter that heads up our first section is **Qoph**.

This next section is all about prayer.

1. Hebrew letter - Qoph – v. 145-152. Give instructions to help us to pray correctly

Although the writer of Psalm 119 prayed throughout the Psalm, he focuses upon prayer during this section from v. 145-152.

The Psalmist teaches us four important things about prayer.

Firstly, when we pray, we must pray wholeheartedly. – v. 145-146.

The famous Christian, John Bunyan, who wrote "Pilgrims Progress" from his prison cell in England in 1678 said this "**In prayer, it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.**"

What John Bunyan meant was that our hearts before God in the place of prayer must be 100% sincere.

Our hearts must be aligned and in tune to the heart of God.

Our prayers must be ignited by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

This happens when we are in touch with God in a deep and personal way.

One Christian writer put it this way, "The devotion of the heart is what ignites our prayers and enables us to present our requests to God."

In some Bible translations it appears that the Psalmist is trying to persuade God to answer his prayers with a promise of obedience.

However in the original Hebrew translation, which is also reflected in the New King James Bible, the Psalmist is actually dedicating himself to obey God, regardless of how God decides to answer his prayers.

To pray wholeheartedly is to follow the example of Jesus who taught us to pray

" your kingdom come, your will be done..."

(The Lord' Prayer – Matthew Chapter 6: v.10. – N.K.J.)

Before we can pray like this, we need to pray for ourselves. We need to pray for the forgiveness of all of our sins, and for God to give us a clean heart, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

David said in Psalm 51 v. 10 (N.K.J.) "**Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**"

It is not wrong for the Holy Spirit to break us in our hearts before we can even pray.

The next thing that the Psalmists says is that **he prayed without ceasing, according to God's word.** We read that in v. 147-148.

In these verses we are told that the Psalmist prayed in the morning early and he also prayed into the night. He also prayed according to God's word.

To pray without ceasing isn't to pray all day and get no practical things done.

It is to have **an attitude of prayer all day**, and to stop and pray whenever it is right to do so.

Of course it is good to have extended times of prayer early in the morning and at night after our work, but we can stop and prayer at any time during the day.

We must balance prayer with the study of God's word.

Someone once said that if we only study the Bible without prayer it gives us **light but No heat.** However if we only pray, without studying the Bible, we can have **enthusiasm without knowledge** and that can be dangerous.

Samuel emphasized both the word of God and prayer in **1 Samuel Chapter 12: v. 23.**

Jesus also highlighted the need for prayer and the study of God's word in

John Chapter 15: v. 7. (Quote this verse in the N.K.J.)

Also the spiritual leaders in the early church gave themselves to prayer and the word of God.
(Acts 6: v. 4)

When we meditate of God's word, God speaks to us.

When we are praying, we are speaking to God.

We need both instruction and intercession if we are going to be balanced children of God.

The third instruction in this section is to pray as an act of love – v. 149.

This verse combines both love for the Lord and obedience to His commandments.

We should not think of prayer as an emergency situation where we only go to God for help when we are desperate for something.

Prayer is more than asking, prayer is loving too.

If we love the word of God, then we must also love the God of the word.

We need to express our genuine love to God in prayer as a matter of heart expression.

If we only go to God in prayer when we want something, then it is an immature way of looking at prayer. It is very low level prayer.

We must rise above always wanting like a child, and move towards a more mature relationship in prayer. This involves a heart to heart love for God without asking for anything.

After all it says in Matthew Chapter 6 : v. 33, that we should seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, and He will provide for all of our needs.

Finally in this section we are told to pray with our eyes opened. (v. 150-152)

As the Psalmist prayed, he saw his enemies drawing near him. He asked God to help him.

The familiar phrase "**watch and pray**" goes back to when Nehemiah was leading the Jewish people in the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and restoring the gates of the city.

God's enemy did not want the Holy City to be re -built, so they used many methods to try and prevent the re -building.

They used **fear, deceit, distraction, and ridicule** to try and stop the progress of God's work.

What was Nehemiah's defence to this enemy activity.?

He said "**Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them (the enemy) we set a watch against them day and night.**" (Neh. 4: v. 9 N.K.J.)

Throughout the New Testament we are instructed to "**watch and pray**"

Jesus, Mark, Paul and Peter all told us to "watch and pray "

(Matt. 26: v.41, Mark 13: v. 13, Paul in Col. 4: v.2 and Peter in 1 Peter 4: v. 7.)

To watch and pray is to be on your guard and pray with intelligence and alertness.

We must never forget that we are soldiers in a spiritual battle and we must not go to sleep while we are on duty.

The next letter in the Hebrew Alphabet is "Resh" – v. 153-160.

The title for this section is **Strength for the Journey.**

You may have noticed that the writer became more urgent in his request for help as he came to the end of the Psalm.

The Hebrew Alphabet was about to end, but the trials of the Psalmist would continue.

Therefore he needed continued help from the Lord.

The last three sections of this Psalm all speak of persecution and trials.

However the writer still trusted the Lord in these difficult times.

The Christian life is like Israel. It is a land of "**hills and valleys**" (Deut. 11: v.11)

We can't have mountain top experiences in the Christian life without experiencing the valleys.

The key phrase in this section is **“revive me”**.

To be revived is to **give us life, to lift us up and to keep us going.**

In this section the Psalmist gives us three reasons why God should answer his prayers for his reviving.

Firstly he says “ Revive me, for you are my redeemer “ – v. 153-155.

The word **“redeem”** means to buy back. It is illustrated in the book of Ruth where a kinsman redeemer rescued a family member in need. The story is of Boaz rescuing Ruth.

The instructions for the Jewish people are taught in Leviticus chapter 25: v. 23-34.

Of course the most important redeemer is Jesus Christ. Jesus entered the human race and became our redeemer. He paid the price to redeem us from sin, death, and hell. Jesus represents us before the throne of God. (1 John 2: v. 1-2)

In our trials and tribulations it is comforting to know that the Son of God, prays for us, hears our prayers, and meets our needs.

Secondly the Psalmist says, Revive me, for you are merciful. – v. 156-158.

If we prayed on the basis of our own merit, God could never answer our prayers.

However when we pray, we come to God in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

(John 14: v. 14, 15: v. 16)

We also come to God, with the help of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 2: v.18, Rom. 8: v. 26-27)

God in His grace **gives us** what we do not deserve. In His mercy God does **not give us** what we do deserve.

God’s throne is a throne of **GRACE.** (Hebrews 4: v. 16)

The Psalmist was still disgusted with the way that the unbelievers lived, however their bad example did not change his own convictions.

There is a warning for us here, not to be influenced by the world around us, but to stay committed to God and His word.

The third request is to be revived, because God’s word can be trusted. – v. 159-160.

The Psalmist knew that not only was God’s word truth, but also that God’s word could be trusted.

It is one thing to know truth, but it is another thing to trust truth.

To trust truth is when we step out to practically apply this truth to our every day lives. The Psalmist trusted God to revive him fully because he not only believed in his head that God could do this, he believed in His heart that God would do this, so he never gave up.

The next Hebrew letter is Shin. v. 161-168.

The theme in this section is a **“Blessing for the balanced”**

During our study of Psalm 119 we have noticed that the writer practiced a **balanced life of faith.** This quality is seen clearly in this next section.

To maintain a balance in our Christian life, we must give equal credence to both sides of God’s coin. A coin has two sides to it, but it is the same coin.

We need to maintain a balance in the whole counsel of God to be a balanced Christian. This means to know, understand, and respect the whole of the Bible, especially God’s purposes for His people, and the land of Israel, which is God’s land.

The Psalmist brings out his balanced character in 4 ways.

Firstly he respected God, but also rejoiced in Him. – v. 161-162.

In v. 161-162 we have this balanced approach to God and His word.

The Psalmist was not afraid of his persecutors, he stood in awe of God’s word.

When we have a **healthy fear of God, we need not fear anyone else.**

The Psalmist respected the word of God, but at the same time he rejoiced in the word of God.

The enemy wanted to rob the Psalmist of his joy and respect for God, but he found great wealth in God's word and rejoiced in what God was about to do.

We too need to be balanced in our Christian life like that.

Secondly the Psalmist talks about Love and hate – v. 163.

Throughout this Psalm the writer shows us that he hated evil but he loved God and His word. In particular, lying is mentioned.

Revelation Chapter 21: v. 27 tells us that whoever loves and practices a lie will not enter the heavenly city and will be blocked from God's presence forever.

The third balance is Praise and Prayer – v. 164-165.

The devoted Jewish believer would praise God and pray three times a day.

However the Psalmist here went beyond that and worshipped God 7 times a day.

The Hebrew translation actually means **“often and many times, beyond what is expected.”**

It is good to praise God in our singing and worship but we must also balance that with our prayer life.

Singing and praise in our Christian life is uplifting, but prayer can often be humbling.

We need both if we are to be mature and balanced believers.

The final balance in this section is “walking and waiting “ – v. 166-168.

The Psalmist here was waiting patiently for his Salvation, but at the same time he was walking the faithful life of obeying and trusting God's word.

Quote Romans 8: v. 18-25 in the New Living Translation.

¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.

²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.

²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.

We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children,^[i] including the new bodies he has promised us.

²⁴ We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope^[k] for it.

²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

The last Hebrew letter is Tau, and the theme is “Hear my Prayer “ v. 169-176.

Except for v. 174, each of the verses in this section is a prayer to the Lord.

The focuses of these prayers is on God's wonderful ability to meet our needs as we trust Him.

In this section the Psalmist declares that he has 4 main needs, and then he finally finishes with a very important point to close the Psalm.

I need your word – v. 169 – 172.

We should never outgrow our need for God's word, no matter how long we have been walking with Jesus.

There is always something new to learn, and we can often see new applications from truths that we already know.

However the Psalmist didn't just keep God's word for himself. In v. 172 he said that he was going to speak to others about God's word.

Yes we need God's word for ourselves, but we also need to take it to other people.

When I was in South Africa, the greatest opportunity to share God's word and His grace in my life came when I was feeling sick. I had chronic diarrhoea for 5 days.

Wendy and I were invited to a South African Brie, which is the same as an English B.B.Q. It is an outdoor feast where everything is cooked on an open fire.

Our Air B&B host invited us to a large family Brie, but I couldn't eat anything.

However we all sat round in a large area of open space and there were lots of young people.

The host families daughter said, what is your story, why are you in Howick in South Africa?

I said to them if you want the whole story I will give it briefly now, but I do have a little book that will fill in any gaps.

I spoke for about 10-15 minutes and then two people requested my book.

I really didn't want to go to this family Brie, because I was sick, but I was glad that I went because it gave me a wonderful opportunity to share my testimony.

Its worth the effort to share your story even when you don't feel like.

I need your hand – v. 173.

In v. 173 the Psalmist says "Let your hand become my help".

We all know that God is Spirit. (John 4: v. 24) Therefore He does not have a body with hands and feet.

In order for God to reveal himself to us, he uses things that are familiar to us.

He describes Himself in human terms.

The hand of the Lord is only mentioned once in Psalm 119, it is in this verse.

But the hand of the Lord is mentioned many times in the book of Psalms.

Jesus also mentions God's hand.

Quote John 10 : v. 28-29 in the N.K.J.

²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

²⁹ My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.

Be assured that if you know and love Jesus, God's hand is upon your life, to protect you, to care for you, and provide for your needs and not your wants.

Sometimes we want what we don't need and we need what we don't want.

God decides what is best for us with His loving hand.

I need your salvation – v. 174.

In the Psalmist case, "salvation" meant deliverance from his enemies who were threatening him.

Although our ultimate Salvation is the return of Jesus Christ to deliver all creation from the bondage of sin, we have lots of needs in this world and we journey towards heaven. God will help us with our needs in this journey.

I need your help – v. 175.

In the Hebrew language, asking for God's judgements to help you can refer to God's providence working itself out in this world as it effects our lives.

God always honours His word. Therefore He will always be operating according to His revealed will in the Bible.

One Christian writer said "**There are no accidents in the life of a believer, only appointments.**"

Our Heavenly Father watches over us and He has appointments for us which He will honour. Be encouraged by this.

Finally in v. 176 the Psalmist declares himself as a "Servant"

In v. 176 the Psalmist declares his weakness, but he remembers his place as God's servant. When Mary was pondering the fact that she had the Saviour of the world in her womb, she declared herself as a "Maid-servant". (Luke 1: v. 48)

Whatever we have, wherever we go, whatever we do, we are only servants of Jesus.

Our job is to **serve Jesus, and to obey Him,** and of course God will honour our faith and trust in Him.

Amen.