

Reflections on Psalm 119

Psalm 119 describes the attitude of the person who loves God.

Where I live, in the United States of America, the average church-goer loves the things of the world too much to have this attitude. It is too incompatible with the "American dream" of prosperity and happiness. Most would consider the view of Psalm 119 to be an unreasonable expectation - perhaps too "radical" or "fanatical." They may call it an "unattainable ideal," or an attitude reserved for the "super-religious" person. If you tell them that having this attitude (or at least actively striving for it) is, *by definition*, a part of what it means to follow Jesus, they will become offended, angry, and perhaps even vindictive.

In many parts of the world - especially in the so-called "third world" and "fourth world" countries, there are followers of Jesus who do not live this pretension. They believe the Bible - not just by verbal assent to it, but by the way they live. They know that following Jesus is an "all or nothing" venture. They readily acknowledge that a person cannot have two masters, or have his eyes focused on *both* Christ and the world.

It is no surprise that the Spirit of God is more active in "third world" and "fourth world" countries. Churches in the United States may be filled with activities and programs and entertainment - and a grand facade of "spirituality." They may be "strong and mighty" and have so many "resources" that they no longer have a *desperate need* for God, for their survival. Others, in contrast, may be filled with the deadness and stupor of apathy - and nobody cares about it.

In these other countries, however, they know that they will die if they don't have the Lord. They are willing to give up everything - *even life itself* - in order to gain a life they cannot lose. They don't say, "See, I can be a Christian and still pursue the 'American dream,' and have 'fun' and pursue the 'good things of life.'" Instead, they say...

Psalm 119

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[Note that "Yahweh" is the Old Testament Hebrew name for God.]

Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to Yahweh's law.

Blessed are those who keep his statutes, who seek him with their whole heart.

Yes, they do nothing wrong. They walk in his ways.

You have commanded your precepts, that we should fully obey them.

Oh that my ways were steadfast to obey your statutes!

Then I wouldn't be disappointed, when I consider all of your commandments.

I will give thanks to you with uprightness of heart, when I learn your righteous judgments.

I will observe your statutes. Don't utterly forsake me.

*How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.
With my whole heart, I have sought you. Don't let me wander from your commandments.
I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.
Blessed are you, Yahweh. Teach me your statutes.
With my lips, I have declared all the ordinances of your mouth.
I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies, as much as in all riches.
I will meditate on your precepts, and consider your ways.
I will delight myself in your statutes. I will not forget your word.*

*Do good to your servant. I will live and I will obey your word.
Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of your law.
I am a stranger on the earth. Don't hide your commandments from me.
My soul is consumed with longing for your ordinances at all times.
You have rebuked the proud who are cursed, who wander from your commandments.
Take reproach and contempt away from me, for I have kept your statutes.
Though princes sit and slander me, your servant will meditate on your statutes.
Indeed your statutes are my delight, and my counselors.*

*My soul is laid low in the dust. Revive me according to your word!
I declared my ways, and you answered me. Teach me your statutes.
Let me understand the teaching of your precepts! Then I will meditate on your wondrous works.
My soul is weary with sorrow: strengthen me according to your word.
Keep me from the way of deceit. Grant me your law graciously!
I have chosen the way of truth. I have set your ordinances before me.
I cling to your statutes, Yahweh. Don't let me be disappointed.
I run in the path of your commandments, for you have set my heart free.*

*Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes. I will keep them to the end.
Give me understanding, and I will keep your law. Yes, I will obey it with my whole heart.
Direct me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in them.
Turn my heart toward your statutes, not toward selfish gain.
Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things. Revive me in your ways.
Fulfill your promise to your servant, that you may be feared.
Take away my disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good.
Behold, I long for your precepts! Revive me in your righteousness.*

*Let your loving kindness also come to me, Yahweh, your salvation, according to your word.
So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in your word.
Don't snatch the word of truth out of my mouth, for I put my hope in your ordinances.
So I will obey your law continually, forever and ever.
I will walk in liberty, for I have sought your precepts.
I will also speak of your statutes before kings, and will not be disappointed.
I will delight myself in your commandments, because I love them.
I reach out my hands for your commandments, which I love. I will meditate on your statutes.*

*Remember your word to your servant, because you gave me hope.
This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has revived me.
The arrogant mock me excessively, but I don't swerve from your law.
I remember your ordinances of old, Yahweh, and have comforted myself.
Indignation has taken hold on me, because of the wicked who forsake your law.
Your statutes have been my songs, in the house where I live.
I have remembered your name, Yahweh, in the night, and I obey your law.
This is my way, that I keep your precepts.*

*Yahweh is my portion. I promised to obey your words.
I sought your favor with my whole heart. Be merciful to me according to your word.
I considered my ways, and turned my steps to your statutes.
I will hurry, and not delay, to obey your commandments.
The ropes of the wicked bind me, but I won't forget your law.
At midnight I will rise to give thanks to you, because of your righteous ordinances.
I am a friend of all those who fear you, of those who observe your precepts.
The earth is full of your loving kindness, Yahweh. Teach me your statutes.*

*Do good to your servant, according to your word, Yahweh.
Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.
Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I observe your word.
You are good, and do good. Teach me your statutes.
The proud have smeared a lie upon me. With my whole heart, I will keep your precepts.
Their heart is as callous as the fat, but I delight in your law.
It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes.
The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.*

*Your hands have made me and formed me. Give me understanding, that I may learn your
commandments.
Those who fear you will see me and be glad, because I have put my hope in your word.
Yahweh, I know that your judgments are righteous, that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.
Please let your loving kindness be for my comfort, according to your word to your servant.
Let your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.
Let the proud be disappointed, for they have overthrown me wrongfully. I will meditate on your
precepts.
Let those who fear you turn to me. They will know your statutes.
Let my heart be blameless toward your decrees, that I may not be disappointed.*

*My soul faints for your salvation. I hope in your word.
My eyes fail for your word. I say, "When will you comfort me?"
For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke. I don't forget your statutes.
How many are the days of your servant? When will you execute judgment on those who persecute me?
The proud have dug pits for me, contrary to your law.
All of your commandments are faithful. They persecute me wrongfully. Help me!
They had almost wiped me from the earth, but I didn't forsake your precepts.
Preserve my life according to your loving kindness, so I will obey the statutes of your mouth.*

*Yahweh, your word is settled in heaven forever.
Your faithfulness is to all generations. You have established the earth, and it remains.
Your laws remain to this day, for all things serve you.
Unless your law had been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.
I will never forget your precepts, for with them, you have revived me.
I am yours. Save me, for I have sought your precepts.
The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me. I will consider your statutes.
I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commands are boundless.*

*How I love your law! It is my meditation all day.
Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for your commandments are always with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.
I understand more than the aged, because I have kept your precepts.
I have kept my feet from every evil way, that I might observe your word.
I have not turned aside from your ordinances, for you have taught me.
How sweet are your promises to my taste, more than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts, I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

*Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.
I have sworn, and have confirmed it, that I will obey your righteous ordinances.
I am afflicted very much. Revive me, Yahweh, according to your word.
Accept, I beg you, the willing offerings of my mouth. Yahweh, teach me your ordinances.
My soul is continually in my hand, yet I won't forget your law.
The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I haven't gone astray from your precepts.
I have taken your testimonies as a heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.
I have set my heart to perform your statutes forever, even to the end.*

*I hate double-minded men, but I love your law.
You are my hiding place and my shield. I hope in your word.
Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God.
Uphold me according to your word, that I may live. Let me not be ashamed of my hope.
Hold me up, and I will be safe, and will have respect for your statutes continually.
You reject all those who stray from your statutes, for their deceit is in vain.
You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross. Therefore I love your testimonies.
My flesh trembles for fear of you. I am afraid of your judgments.*

*I have done what is just and righteous. Don't leave me to my oppressors.
Ensure your servant's well-being. Don't let the proud oppress me.
My eyes fail looking for your salvation, for your righteous word.
Deal with your servant according to your loving kindness. Teach me your statutes.
I am your servant. Give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies.
It is time to act, Yahweh, for they break your law.
Therefore I love your commandments more than gold, yes, more than pure gold.
Therefore I consider all of your precepts to be right. I hate every false way.*

*Your testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul keeps them.
The entrance of your words gives light. It gives understanding to the simple.
I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for your commandments.
Turn to me, and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name.
Establish my footsteps in your word. Don't let any iniquity have dominion over me.
Redeem me from the oppression of man, so I will observe your precepts.
Make your face shine on your servant. Teach me your statutes.
Streams of tears run down my eyes, because they don't observe your law.*

*You are righteous, Yahweh. Your judgments are upright.
You have commanded your statutes in righteousness. They are fully trustworthy.
My zeal wears me out, because my enemies ignore your words.
Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.
I am small and despised. I don't forget your precepts.
Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. Your law is truth.
Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me. Your commandments are my delight.
Your testimonies are righteous forever. Give me understanding, that I may live.*

*I have called with my whole heart. Answer me, Yahweh! I will keep your statutes.
I have called to you. Save me! I will obey your statutes.
I rise before dawn and cry for help. I put my hope in your words.
My eyes stay open through the night watches, that I might meditate on your word.
Hear my voice according to your loving kindness. Revive me, Yahweh, according to your ordinances.
They draw near who follow after wickedness. They are far from your law.
You are near, Yahweh. All your commandments are truth.
Of old I have known from your testimonies, that you have founded them forever.*

*Consider my affliction, and deliver me, for I don't forget your law.
Plead my cause, and redeem me! Revive me according to your promise.
Salvation is far from the wicked, for they don't seek your statutes.
Great are your tender mercies, Yahweh. Revive me according to your ordinances.
Many are my persecutors and my adversaries. I haven't swerved from your testimonies.
I look at the faithless with loathing, because they don't observe your word.
Consider how I love your precepts. Revive me, Yahweh, according to your loving kindness.
All of your words are truth. Every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.*

*Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words.
I rejoice at your word, as one who finds great spoil.
I hate and abhor falsehood. I love your law.
Seven times a day, I praise you, because of your righteous ordinances.
Those who love your law have great peace. Nothing causes them to stumble.
I have hoped for your salvation, Yahweh. I have done your commandments.
My soul has observed your testimonies. I love them exceedingly.
I have obeyed your precepts and your testimonies, for all my ways are before you.*

*Let my cry come before you, Yahweh. Give me understanding according to your word.
Let my supplication come before you. Deliver me according to your word.
Let my lips utter praise, for you teach me your statutes.
Let my tongue sing of your word, for all your commandments are righteousness.
Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.
I have longed for your salvation, Yahweh. Your law is my delight.
Let my soul live, that I may praise you. Let your ordinances help me.
I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I don't forget your commandments.*

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