

Delighting in God's Word

Scripture Text: Psalm 119:105-112

Introduction

So far in this discipleship series, we have seen that disciples of Jesus Christ are the building blocks of God's Church. They are all built upon the foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ. While Jesus is Lord, He is also God's Suffering Servant, who suffered, died, and rose from the grave according to God's plan in order to save His people. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to give Jesus nothing less than our very lives. Jesus submitted to the will of God, and if we are to be His disciples, we must also submit to the will of God, even if it costs us our lives. Jesus said that each of His disciples must carry the cross. It is all to Jesus, or it is none to Jesus. We must put aside our own selfish desires, and pursue Jesus whole heartedly. We are to love our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is the greatest commandment for the disciple of Jesus. It is the fulfillment of the whole law of God. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means we love God with our whole being. That love will motivate everything we do, which fulfills the second greatest commandment: love others as yourself!

Today, we look at another aspect of being a disciple. The very word "disciple" basically means "learner" or "pupil." In the Bible, it normally refers to someone who followed a particularly teacher, learned his teachings, and passed on what he or she learned to other people. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means we follow Him and His teachings. It means learning *and* doing what Jesus has said. This means we all must be students of the Bible, God's Word to us. There are many passages that speak of the importance of knowing and obeying God's Word. Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, is a passage that demonstrates one's delight in God's Word. This psalm consists of twenty-two sections of eight verses each. What is unusual is that each of these sections features a letter from the Hebrew alphabet. For instance, each of the eight verses in the passage today begins with the same Hebrew letter. Psalm 119 is a creative way to describe the importance of God's Word. Two major themes in this psalm are why we should value the Word of God and how we show that we value the Word of God.

Is God's Word Reliable?

Before we look at this passage from Psalm 119, we should probably address something that comes up frequently. It is an issue that you will face as a follower of Jesus Christ and as a *lover* of God's Word. The issue is whether you can trust the Bible to be true. Many may think that is a crazy question. Many Christians consider the Bible to be God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. We believe that God spoke it, that it does not contain any errors, and that it never leads us astray. At least Christians may say those things. How would you communicate those beliefs to someone else? How would you tell someone that this book is truly the Word of God? How would defend the attacks of the enemy against the Bible that try to convince you that God's Word cannot be trusted? The Bible declares itself to be true. Look at the following passage.

Psalm 119:159–160 ¹⁵⁹ *Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love.* ¹⁶⁰ *The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.*

After declaring his love for God's Word, the psalmist wrote that all of it is true and endures forever. We do not have time to go over all the issues as to why the Bible is reliable, but consider this. The Bible consists of sixty-six books, by forty different scribes, written in three languages, composed of two main sections (testaments) that were all written over 1,500 years. It consists of such topics as the creation, the Law of God, the history of God's people (both Israel and the early Church), wisdom literature, four accounts of the life of Jesus, and about two thousand five hundred prophecies, that most have already come true. Yet, there is one central message: *God's plan to save mankind*. The Bible is unique. It remains the bestselling book. There is no other book like it. You can believe the Bible is the very Word of God. What does this section of Psalm 119 tell us about the Bible? What does it say about how we should view it?

God's Word Guides Us in All Situations

If someone were to ask you what guides you in life, what would you say? Would it be some great teacher? Would it be your own experiences? Would it be your own insight or opinion about something? We all need something to guide us, to tell us what is right and wrong and what path to choose. What guides your thinking or how you handle situations in life? For the disciple of Jesus Christ, there is only one source that should guide us — it is the Bible. Look at the first two verses of this passage.

Psalm 119:105–106 ¹⁰⁵ *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* ¹⁰⁶ *I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.*

Imagine a dark place where you need to travel. When we feed our dogs at night, we turn on the corner lights to our house so we can see the way to their kennel. Even with those lights on, we usually have to take a flashlight to see the dark path. We all naturally want to see where we are going. We want to know what lies ahead. If you cannot see the path before you, you will most likely get a flashlight or something else to guide you. The Bible is God's flashlight for a dark world. This world is full of darkness. There are many temptations and influences that can turn us off of the path of righteousness. The disciple of Christ will not trip in this darkness if he follows God's Word. The Bible allows us to see the moral path so that we do not leave it and go astray. The lighted path may not be what we want it to be, but God's righteous commandments and rules are always right. If you are uncertain about what to do or what God expects from you, turn to His Word. If you are using something other than God's Word to guide you, stop! Turn to Him and to His Word. Trust Him to direct your paths. It will never lead you astray.

God's Word Revives Us in Our Affliction

What about when you face trouble in your life? Where do you go when bad times occur? Where do you turn when life takes a turn for the worse? The psalmist of Psalm

119 turned to God during times of trouble. The psalmist asked God to revive him, to give him life according to His Word. Look at the following verses.

Psalm 119:107–108 ¹⁰⁷ *I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word!* ¹⁰⁸ *Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your rules.*

Even when we follow God's Word, our life is still not free from danger. We live in a dangerous world. Life is full of danger and those who wish to do you harm. Obeying God's Word can expose us to the wiles of the enemy. Evil men will take advantage of our obedience to God's Word. The psalmist declared that his life was always at risk. We may not know what that is like. Most of us live fairly safe lives and do not have to worry too much about danger. Our country, at least right now, seems to have a peace that is not experienced in many other places of the world. But, when life becomes precarious, or danger surrounds you, or death comes knocking on your door, what gives you comfort? What revives your soul? What gives you hope in the midst of trouble? It should be God's Word. It contains the words that will give you life and give you hope. God gave His Word for our good. The psalmist wanted God to give him life *according to God's word*. He wanted God to revive him in times of affliction according to God's Word. More than that, though, the Bible contains the words of life. Peter once told Jesus that there was no where to turn except to the words of Christ. Look at the following passage.

John 6:66–68 ⁶⁶ *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.* ⁶⁷ *So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"* ⁶⁸ *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,*

Where can we go but to Jesus? Where can we receive life except from Jesus? Where can we find the words of life, except in the Bible? No where. Because God's Word is so precious and it contains the words of life, we ought to praise God. The psalmist freely offered praise to God and desired God's Word even in the midst of affliction. We, too, ought to praise God even in times of trouble. If you are afflicted, turn to God's Word. Trust it to revive you and to give you hope.

God's Word Gives Joy in Time of Trouble

God's Word not only guides us and revives us, but it also gives us joy — at least it should. Receiving joy from the Bible might be a stretch for some of us. Maybe you are like many people who find the Bible difficult to read. Maybe it is hard for you to read the Bible, especially those genealogies and numerous ancient laws. Maybe reading the Bible is like reading a contract that only a lawyer could understand, or like the terms and conditions to a product or service you purchased. It might be a good idea to read them, but you would never say you enjoy reading them. The Bible should not be that way, though. God wants you to enjoy His Word to you. The Bible is God's guidance to us, His words of comfort to us in times of trouble, as well as His love letter to us. He has loved us so much to tell us all about Him and His plan for us. Look at the following verses.

Psalm 119:109–111 ¹⁰⁹ *I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.* ¹¹⁰ *The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.* ¹¹¹ *Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.*

The psalmist focused on his commitment to God's Word, perhaps even in mortal danger. When life seems to be held in the balance, when life is uncertain, when our very lives are in danger, we can still trust God's Word to give us hope. But more than hope, God's Word gives us joy. God's Word should be the rejoicing of our heart. What if your spouse was living far away? What if you were not able to be together and your spouse sent you a letter to tell you about how things were going? Maybe he or she sent you a letter to remind you of the love he or she had for you. Would you read it? Would you enjoy it? The Bible is so much more than a love letter, but it is that. God loves you and has written this letter for you. More than a letter, God's Word is a treasure to us. Many Christians in some parts of the world would consider it all joy to have just one page from the Bible. To have the whole book would be a treasure of gold. Do you treasure God's Word? Do you delight in it? If not, how can you develop a passion for it? If you do not delight in God's Word, if it does not bring you joy, then pray that God will give you that delight. Pray for joy in God's Word. Pray that it becomes your heart's delight.

God's Word and Our Obedience to It is Forever

The last verse of this passage speaks of how long we should follow God's Word. Some think the Bible is outdated. Some think the Bible was written for a different time, but it does not speak to us today. Some claim the Bible is irrelevant. Even some Christians claim that some parts of the Bible are not relevant to us today. That is not true. God can speak to His people during a specific time and place and situation and it still instruct us today. Remember, God's Word is one long story of His plan to save His people. God's Word was not given for just some time in the past. God wrote His Word for His people for all time. The psalmist in this passage wrote about obeying God's Word, even to the end. This could be related to the enduring nature of God's Word. God's Word is for all time, as the psalmist declared earlier. Look at the following verse.

Psalm 119:89 ⁸⁹ *Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.*

God does not change and His Word does not change. In a world where things change often and people change their minds almost daily, it is comforting to know that we can turn to one thing that never changes, that is firmly fixed. If God's Word endures forever, then it stands that God's disciples are expected to follow His Word always. Our world would be so much better today if we would trust God and would be faithful to His Word. Look at the last verse.

Psalm 119:112 ¹¹² *I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.*

Having declared that God's Word guides us in all situations, God's Word revives us in our affliction, and God's Word gives us joy in times of trouble, the psalmist now declared that he would follow God's Word forever. As God's Word endures forever, so must our

obedience to God's Word endure forever. If the Bible indeed guides us, if it revives and comforts us in time of trouble, and provides joy in all circumstances, then we should be inclined to follow it always. That is easier said than done. Even our best intentions can be derailed by other delights but God gives His disciples strength. Pray for God to show you where you have not been faithful in following His Word. Pray for boldness and strength to follow God's Word. Pray for God to give you a delight for His Word.

How Can This Passage Guide Us Today?

God's Word ought to guide every decision we make. Our system of government affords us a responsibility and power that previous generations and other nations have not had. We truly live in a great land with God's providence and blessing. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to engage in the process of voting. Our citizenship as believers is ultimately in heaven but presently on earth. Jesus did not ask His Father to remove his followers from the world, but to keep them from the evil one (John 17:15). Our view of the world is framed by essential, basic truths: God is the Creator and Sustainer of everyone and everything; He established family life as one man and one woman in a heterosexual, monogamous relationship; He established the sanctity of life; He sets up rulers and brings them down. I often hear about voting for the lesser of two evils. In a sense, that is true. All people are sinners and have fallen short of God's glory. All men are deprave and unless Jesus Christ, the King of kings, is on the ballot, we will always be forced to vote for the lesser of evils. However, a vote for any kind of evil is a just that: *a vote for evil*. As you think of voting, consider character, things like humility, integrity and purity. Think about what the Bible says about the merits of a good leader. Let the Bible guide your thinking and your decisions, in this area and every area of your life.

Conclusion

In closing, God's Word is a faithful expression of God's character. Many live by the saying, "My word is my bond." God is faithful and His Word is true. What God says, it is true. What God promises, He will do. While God's Word is true and we are commanded to obey it, which is for our own good, we fail to do that. As hard as we may try, we will fall short of God's glory. We will stumble, and sometimes, we will intentionally stumble. Thankfully, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to keep His Law for us. God's Law no longer condemns us, setting us free to accept it as our own guide for pleasing the One who died in our place. God's Word shines on the sin in our life and guides us to repentance and restoration with God. God's Word illumines our hearts and directs our path to Jesus. Jesus is the Light. God's Word is also a light that points us to the Light of Christ. Have you confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Are you following Him today? May it be so. Thanks be to God. Amen!