

June 6

Scriptures: Read Psalm 119:1-56

Key Verse: “Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”
(Psalm 119:11)

Overview

Psalm 119 is not only the longest chapter in the whole Bible, but is also one of the most beautiful chapters, dedicated to expressing the meaning, purpose and value of the Word of God. It is certainly the most elaborate and splendid Hebrew poem. It is a perfect acrostic, having twenty-two stanzas, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza has eight verses; each beginning with the same letter.

Amazingly, every verse, with the exception of 90 and 122, mentions the Law of God, or one of its ten synonyms. The Law, which is the translation of the Hebrew word Torah, is better rendered as “teaching” or “instruction”. It includes the first five books of the Bible wherein is found much more than just the Law and legislation that God gave to Moses. Since the Mosaic legislation, including the Ten Commandments, is so very important, it came to be called the Law. Testimonies refer to the words of the Lord that bear witness to Him. Precepts are the many authoritative principles that the Lord has given for His people to obey and follow. Statutes are translated from the Hebrew word meaning “engrave” or “write”. It also may be translated as “custom” (v.132). Statutes refer to the authoritative written word of God which was engraved upon stone as a lasting ordinance. Commandments refer specifically to the Ten Commandments. Psalm 119 teaches us that they are faithful (v.86), all-encompassing (v.96), truth (v.151), righteousness (v.172), and that they are a delight which makes one wiser (vv. 98, 143). Judgments of God are those divine rulings that bring justice, and are so called because God is the Judge. Since He is just and righteous, they are referred to as righteous, good, and upright which endure forever and bring help (e.g. vv. 7, 39, 62, 137, 160,175). A similar synonym for judgments is Ordinances which are those divine decrees or orders that are binding upon mankind. The Word is the most common synonym for the Law. It refers to whatever God says. God’s Way or Path are yet other synonyms, referring to all His teachings that instruct us in the way we should go.

Psalm 119 seems to be modeled after the psalm of David, 19:7-11, wherein he uses five different synonyms for the Law. King David had a tremendous love for the Word of God (1:2). If Psalm 119 was not written by him, it was authored by another righteous man who was well versed in the writings of David and who also had a deep love for the Holy Scriptures and devotion to God’s instruction. Surely as the psalmist wrote these words, he felt the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God upon him. Little did he know at the time, that his own writings would one day become a part of the Canon of Scripture, the beloved Word of God that he praised so highly.

Within this psalm, we find good food for the soul that can so easily be understood by all. It hardly needs further comment. The lengthy psalm reveals that praise to God for His Holy Word cannot be exhausted. With the exception of verses 1-3 and 115, every word is directed to the Lord in prayer. We learn by this that when we pray, we too should praise God for His Word. By

His word we come to know Him. Through it, He has revealed Himself to us. Learning more of God's "righteous judgments" leads us to not only praise Him more, but to praise Him with a pure and upright heart (v.7).

It is no wonder that the psalmist begins by saying how blessed is the person who walks in the way of the Lord, and who keeps His testimonies. In doing so, that person shows evidence that seeking the Lord with his whole heart, pleases God. The more we have His Word in our hearts (which includes committing it to memory), the more we abide in Him and the greater the defense we have against sin (v. 11; John 14:23; 15:7,8). In hiding God's Word in our hearts, we show that it is a very special treasure put into the most important place to serve the most important purpose; keeping us from sin (cf. Job 23:12).

How do we learn to walk in God's ways? By reading and studying His precious and Holy Word. Although the psalmist loves God's Word and practices it, he still recognizes that he has fallen short in his ability to keep the whole law of Moses (vv. 4-6; James 1:25; 2:10; Rom. 7:9-13). Only our Lord Jesus who was perfect, was able to do this. Through His strength in us, we can still please God as we grow to become more in His image (Matt. 5:48; Phil. 3:12). The psalmist was probably one of the people in his day who knew the Word of God best. Still he humbly expresses that he has more to learn and more to understand concerning God's precepts (v. 27). He prays, "open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your Law" (v. 18). This should be the prayer of everyone who reads the Bible. Through the Holy Spirit we can truly be enlightened in our understanding and knowledge of God.

Prayer

Open our eyes, Lord, that we may indeed see wondrous things from Your Word this day. Incline our hearts to what You are saying and establish Your Word in us, that we "might not sin against You," but rather honour and please you.