

The Word of God: A Light To Guide Me

Psalm 119:105-112

Introduction 1) The 14th stanza of Psalm 119, stanza nun, begins with a verse many of us memorized in Vacation Bible School as children: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” The verse is memorable because it is powerful.

Whether by day or by night, whether in good times or bad times, God’s Word is God’s gift to show me the way I should walk and the path of life I should follow.

H.C. Leupold says it well, “He that uses [the Word] faithfully learns where to set his foot as he walks along the slippery paths of this life. He need not stumble or fall” (*Exp. Of the Psalms*, 846).

2) This stanza is filled with the various ways the psalmist sees the Word and responds to the Word. When he is afflicted (v. 107) and the wicked seek to trap him (v. 110), it is the Word of God that will give him life (v. 107) and bring joy to his heart (v. 111). Indeed the Word of God is his “heritage forever” (v. 111) and he is determined to “obey [God’s] statutes to the very end” (v. 112). God’s Word has faithfully sustained me in the past and I can trust it to sustain me in the future to my last dying breath. Therefore, I will follow your Word (vs. 105-106), I will trust your Word (vs. 107-110) and I will delight in your Word (vs. 111-112).

I. I will follow your Word to be my guide

119:105-106

The popular T.V. personality Oprah Winfrey has been quoted as saying, “Feelings are really your GPS system for life. When you’re supposed to do something, or not supposed to do something, your emotional guidance system lets you know.” While I am sure Ms. Winfrey’s advice is well intended, I am equally sure she is incorrect. Feelings rise and fall. They come and go. The Force may tell Luke Skywalker to trust your feelings, but feelings are not always an accurate barometer of reality. Sometimes they are flat out wrong! The psalmist knew there is only one reliable and trustworthy GPS system for life: the Word of God. Thus he makes two strong affirmations concerning the Word in verse 105 and 106.

1) I will trust it to lead me

119:105

God's word and only God's word is 1) "a lamp to my feet and 2) a light to my path." The Message paraphrase reads, "By your words I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path." In the ancient world there was, of course, no electricity. Traveling, especially at night, was dangerous and treacherous. Spurgeon points out, "Having no fixed lamps in eastern towns, in old time each passenger carried a lantern with him that he might not fall into the open sewer, or stumble over the heaps of [dung] which defiled the road. This is a true picture of our path through this dark

world! We should not know the way, or how to walk in it, if the Scripture, like a blazing [flame], did not reveal it" (*TOD*, vol. 3, 342).

A lamp by night and a light by day, God's word guides and directs us. It leads us to walk in a way that pleases our Lord Jesus. The god of this age, Satan himself, may "blind the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4), but my God, by His Word, will lead me to the Christ and show me how to walk like Christ. By the Word I can think like Jesus and live like Jesus. This is the power of God's Word!

2) I swear to obey

119:106

The psalmist believes this word and he will trust this word forever, "to the very end" (v. 112). Therefore he says, "I have solemnly sworn to keep your righteous judgments." Oaths in the Bible are a serious matter. In Matthew 5:34 Jesus warns against frivolous oath taking. Here there is nothing frivolous in the psalmist's words. I trust the Word of God and the God of the Word and I will covenant to obey it, "to keep your righteous rules." God's rules or decisions or judgments are described as righteous. They will lead us to make right choices, good choices, godly choices. They, not my conscience or my feelings or the laws of man, will teach me what is right

and what is wrong. James Boice is right, “the Bible is a light for our moral path. The path is dark because the world is dark, but the Bible clarifies the issues and shows us how to walk through the darkness” (*Living by the Book*, 105). I will obey God’s Word. I swear!

II. I will trust Your Word to give me life 119:107-110

- The Bible never says that those who follow Jesus will be immune from the pain and sorrows of this life. In fact 2 Timothy 3:12 is quite clear, “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” And James adds that we should actually, “count it all joy” when we face trials because “the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” or “endurance” (CSB, James 1:13).

- Real life will involve real problems, real difficulties, real “afflictions.” When they come, and they will, who should we respond?

1) I will trust the Word when I am troubled 119:107-108

- The psalmist is going through a tough time. He is not just afflicted, he is “severely afflicted.” His trials are great, even life threatening. This is not the first time he has been here (vs. 67, 71, 75) and it will probably not be the last. Does he turn inward, have a pity party, and sing woe is me? No! He turns to the Lord and prays, “Lord, give me

life according to your word.” The idea is revive me and renew my life that, as I have sworn, I may keep your righteous judgments.”

- However, do not miss what follows this plea for life in verse 107. Yes, the Lord must save me. But I will not sit by idling doing nothing. In an act of worship I will present to the Lord “freewill offerings of praise” (cf. Ps. 50-14; Heb. 13:15). Further, he prays additionally that the Lord will “teach me your judgments” (ESV, “rules”). Once again he calls on the Master teacher to be his instructor (vs. 12, 26, 29, 33, 63, 68, 99). Exaltation and edification! A powerful 1-2 punch the Lord uses to revive our souls and enable us to victoriously face the most severe afflictions. “Life without light, or zeal without knowledge, would be but half a blessing (*TOD*, 343). The psalmist wants all of the Lord, especially when he is hurting.

2) I will trust the Word when my life is in danger 119:109-110

The affliction the psalmist suffers, in this context, is almost certainly the result of persecution. We see this when he says in verse 109, “My life is constantly in danger” (ESV, “I hold my life in my hand continually”) and in verse 110, “The wicked have set a trap for me.” I have lived a life of faithfulness for all to see. The wicked hate the way of the righteous and

have tried to ensnare me. However, they will fail. Note the beautiful

Hebrew parallel of verses 109-110:

- “I do not forget your instruction” (v. 109).
- “I have not wandered from your precepts” (v. 110).

The second idea reinforces the first. Because I think a certain way I will love a certain way, even when my life is in danger. Your word which I love both informs my mind and lights my path. It shows me where to go and I will not stray from its path. After all, it is the path of life. All others are only paths of death. Proverbs 14:12 remains true, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (*ESV*).

III. I will delight in Your Word until the very end 119:111-112

The last two verses of stanza nun have an eschatological ring. They look forward and reflect upon, “some of the blessings that come from living a life committed to obeying the Lord” (Ross, *Psalms*, vol. 3, 553). The value and worth he ascribes to the Word of God is impressive. In a sense, he stakes his entire future on it! The Scriptures are his personal Promised Land. Hassell Bullock puts it nicely, “In that inherited land of the Torah life, joy is the tone of existence” (*Psalms*, vol. 2: Psalm 73-150, 365).

1) The Word of God should be the joy of my heart 119:111

The psalmist boldly declares, “Your testimonies are my heritage forever.”

This is the language of Canaan and the Promised Land. God’s word is eternal and therefore its promises are “more sure than the inheritance of the land of Canaan” (Ross, 553). Such an inheritance brings pure joy to his heart. Obeying the word always does this. It is not a drudgery. It is not a pain. It is not enslaving. It liberates, sets us free and thrills our soul. The idea of ever walking away or walking back on them is not even a consideration. They are my inheritance forever. They are the joy of my heart forever as well. I treasure God’s Word. I love God’s Word.

2) The Word of God should be my never ending reward 119:112

The theme of the heart is continued in verse 112. The *ESV* picks this up clearly. Because the Word of God is the “joy of my heart” (v. 111), “I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end” (v. 112).

James Boice really does a good job of summing it all up when he writes, “In the ending of the nun stanza, we see again that the psalmist was a practical person. The last statement is one of fierce determination: “My heart is set on

keeping your decrees to the very end” (v. 112). The reasons he will keep God’s decrees to the very end are those he has identified in this stanza. He wants to keep God’s decrees because he will be able to live a God-pleasing life, he will understand the nature of true righteousness, he will possess a divine perspective on suffering and will triumph in it, he will be able to worship God rightly, he will not be turned aside from obedience to God’s law by any physical danger, he will not be distracted by the snares of evil men, and he will have a heritage that will last forever.” (p. 110).

Such a treasure of blessings is its own reward and blessing. It is a glorious inheritance that is eternal and can never be taken from us. This is how God’s Word will guide us. This is where God’s Word will take us. What an inheritance. What a reward. This world can offer nothing like this. It never can. It never will. “The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of our God remains forever” (Isa. 40:8).

Conclusion: Proverbs 4:18-19 teaches us, “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday. But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they don’t know what makes them stumble.” I am so thankful that the written word points us to the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Tracing this wonderful theme out, I

can see why the apostle John would write, if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. Ours is a terrible world of darkness. God's Word, however is a wonderful world of light.