

Chapter 30. Psalm 119 and its teaching

"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." – Psalm 119:97

"Consider how I love Your precepts." – Psalm 119:159

"My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly." – Psalm 119:167

There is one portion in the Bible that is wholly devoted to teaching us the place which God's Word ought to have in our esteem, and how we can secure its blessing. It is the longest chapter in the Bible, and, with hardly any exception, in every one of its 176 verses, the Word is mentioned using different names. Anyone who really wants to know how to study his Bible according to God's will, should make a careful study of this Psalm. In every Christian's life there need to be a set time when he resolves to study the teaching of this Psalm and **to apply it practically**. No wonder our Bible study does not bring more spiritual benefits because we neglect the Divine directions this Psalm offers us. Maybe it is possible that you have never read it as a whole even once. If you don't have time, find time. A free Sunday hour, or why not a free weekly hour? Read it through and try to grasp its main thought, or at least catch its spirit. If you find it difficult to do this by reading it once, repeat it more than once. You will immediately feel the need to give it more careful thought. The following hints may help you to study it:

1. Note all the different **names/attributes used for God's Word**.
2. Note all the different **verbs** expressing how **we ought to feel and respond** to the Word. Let this lead you to carefully consider what place God's Word claims in your own heart and life, and how every part of your being – desire, love, joy, trust, obedience and behaviour – is affected by it.
3. Count and note how many times the writer speaks in the past tense of his **having kept, observed, stuck to, or delighted in** God's testimonies. How many times he expresses how he **rejoices in, loves, and esteems God's law** in the present tense. And then how, in the future tense, he **promises and vows to observe** God's precepts to the end. Put all these together and see how, more than a hundred times, he presents his soul before God as **one who honours and keeps His law**. These expressions are connected with his prayers to God. Study them especially

until you have a clear image of the **righteous man whose fervent, effective prayer avails much.**

4. **Study the prayers themselves** and write down the different requests he makes with regard to the Word, whether for the teaching to understand it and the power to practise it, or for the blessing promised in the Word that can be found by doing it. Note especially prayers like *"Teach me Your Statutes," "Give me understanding."* Also those where the plea is *"according to Your Word."*
5. Count the verses in which there is any reference to **suffering**, whether from his own state or from his enemies, or the sins of the wicked or God delaying *"to help him."* Learn how it is in the **time of trouble** that we especially **need God's Word**, and that this alone can bring **comfort** to us.
6. Then comes one of the most important things. Mark how often the little pronoun You, Yours, Your, occurs, and how often it is understood in every petition, *"Teach You me," "Revive You me,"* (*Old English does this better by using Thou, Thine, Thee*), and you will see how **the whole psalm is a prayer spoken to God.** Everything the psalmist says about the Word of God, whether in regard to his own attachment to it, or his need of God's teaching and quickening, is spoken upwards into the face of God. He believes that it is pleasing to God and good for his own soul, to connect his meditation and thoughts on the Word, as continually and as closely as possible, by prayer, with the living God Himself. Every thought of God's Word, instead of drawing him away from God, leads him to fellowship with God.

The Word of God becomes to him the **rich and inexhaustible material for maintaining communion with the God Whose Word** it is, and **to Whom** is meant to lead him. As we gradually gain an insight into these truths, we shall find new meaning from the single verses. And when, from time to time, we read a whole paragraph with its eight verses, we shall find how they raise us up, with and through the Word, into God's presence, and into that life of obedience and joy which says, *"I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgment." "O, how I love Your law, it is my meditation all the day."*

Let us seek, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to have the kind of devotional life which this Psalm reveals, worked into our Morning Watch. **Let God's Word every day, and before everything else, lead us to God.** Let every blessing contained in it be a matter of prayer of our special need of Divine teaching. Let our **intense attachment to it** be our **childlike plea and confidence that the Father will help us.** Let our prayers be followed by the vow, that as God stirs and blesses us, we shall run in the way of His commandments. Let the Word of God make us more earnest in our desire to carry that Word to others, whether for the awakening or the strengthening of the life of God in our soul.

Prayer: Lord God, how I love Your Word. I think about it all day. Teach me according to Your Word. Revive me according to Your Word. Teach me Your ways. Give me understanding. I want to know You and obey Your Word. Amen.