

## Psalm 119 - Week of July 17

### **Memory Verse Ps 119:11**

"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

Have you ever heard a parent say to a young child, "Did you hear me?" and the child reply, "Yes." What does the parent often ask next? - "Then what did I say?" and the child then realizes he or she has no idea! What we find is that there is a difference between HEARING and LISTENING.

This month we are looking at the subject of Listening to God through His Word, and these next three devotions will be from Psalm 119. This is the longest chapter in the bible with 176 verses, and it is broken up into sections grouped by each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Every section has 8 verses that all begin with that particular Hebrew letter. The interesting thing is that every verse but two in this entire chapter is about the Word of God, and a variety of words are used to signify God's Word.

For instance, in the second section of the Psalm under the heading of the Hebrew letter "Beth" (verses 9-16), we see one word in every verse referring to the Word of God. Words that are used to mean the scriptures are Word, Commandments, Statutes, Rules, Testimonies, and Precepts. Each of these is looking at the whole word of God, not just the 10 commandments, but from different perspectives.

Verse 9 begins with one of the most important questions of all - "How can a young man keep his way pure?" This obviously is not just referring to young men - this would apply to all of us - but what a great picture as a young man is setting out in life! How can his "way" - his life, the way he goes - be kept pure, or pleasing to God? That should be the desire of each one of us! The answer? By GUARDING it according to your word. One way to think of the Bible is like a soldier walking beside us through life. As trials come, we must filter then through the Word of God. The Bible guards our life. As discouragements come, we handle them according to the Word of God, and we deal with them realizing we are children of the King who are eternally loved. Whether it be trials, or temptations, or whatever seeks to get at us, we are protected by the Holy Spirit as we are guarded by the truth of God's Word.

What continues in verse 10 is a prayer from the Psalmist to his Lord - "With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments." This should be OUR desire - to seek God, both in prayer but also by digging into His Word - and how should we do this? With our whole hearts! The new testament gives the principle Whatever you do, do it with all your heart, as work for the Lord and not for men. How much more should this be the way we seek after our God - not "half-heartily" - but with all our hearts! And the prayer is that we not wander from His commandments. Our desire should be to be obedient children knowing that His way is better than ours.

How are we to do this? Verse 11 gives the answer - "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." We are to love God so much that we read and study His word to the point that it is "stored in our hearts." We are to memorize it so that when

temptations come, what our minds immediately think of is a scripture that applies to that temptation. So when we begin to get angry and take it out on someone, the Word of God that is stored in our hearts rises to the surface - "Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger." (James 1:19) When our eyes are tempted to look where they shouldn't, we could have this stored in our hearts - "Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways." (Ps 119:37) Or when we begin to be afraid, what if Psalm 56:3 was stored in our hearts and immediately rose to the surface? - "When I am afraid, I put my trust in You." We should continually be reading the scriptures, and when a verse applies to a struggle we deal with, we should store it deep in our hearts to be ready when the difficulty comes so that we will know how to face the trial. Even Jesus, when He was tempted, quoted scripture!

And the Psalmist then bursts into another prayer in verse 12 blessing God and asking for God to teach him. This is OUR prayer – we want this same attitude saying that we want God to teach us! - that we are LISTENING. As a result of having God's Word in our hearts and being taught to us, do we keep it to ourselves? NO! Verse 13 says "With my lips I DECLARE all the rules of your mouth." As God's word penetrates our lives, it should spill over from our lips. I believe it was said of John Bunyan (who wrote Pilgrim's Progress) that if you cut him, he would bleed Bible! Are you so full of the Word of God that it just pours from your life? The question should be – just how precious should the Word of God be to us? The Psalmist answers this in verse 14 - "In the way of your testimonies I delight as in all riches." We should think more highly of God's Word than even treasure!

The Psalmist ends by declaring what he will do – he will MEDITATE on God's precepts (not just read them, but to ponder, think about, wrestle through them.) He will FIX his eyes on them (not a passing glance, but a purposed, lasting look into God's Precious Word.) He will DELIGHT in it, (like finding treasure) and not forget it. The Word of God is different than any trivial word that we hear and instantly forget.

Obviously we cannot think of God's Word apart from the Gospel. The intent of this passage is not that we can achieve righteousness on our own! We not only need the written Word, but we need the Living Word – Jesus! Once Christ has saved us, we then seek to live for Him, and we do this according to HIS Word.

So let us GUARD our lives with the Word! Let us SEEK after God through His word. Let us STORE it in our hearts. Let us DECLARE it to our family, our friends, our neighbors, and our co-workers. Let us right now promise that we will MEDIATE on it, and DELIGHT in having God's Holy Word... as it teaches us to love Him with all our hearts, and to serve Him with our lives.

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