

PSALM 119:1-8

WARNING: BIBLE STUDY MAY NOT BRING HAPPINESS!

Introduction:

The study of the Bible potentially brings a good measure of joy to the student. This longest of all the Psalms is an example of this. The young Hebrew who wrote this beautiful psalm had spent much time studying and meditating on the Law of the Lord. He actually uses about ten different words to describe the full revelation that God has given to us in His law.

There are twenty two stanzas in this psalm. Each stanza begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and then each line in the stanza begins with the same letter. What a work of art! The aleph stanza serves as an introduction to the whole psalm. It affirms strongly that human happiness is found in knowing and doing the law of the Lord. This would seem to indicate that Bible Study should lead to a full and happy life. But it does not always work out that way.

The psalmist began his Bible Study at the beginning---with the law of the Lord. We call the first five books of the Bible the law. They record for us the revelation of God to man, and the revelation of His will for man. It will give to you a clear understanding of what the Lord expects from you, but such a

clear understanding does not necessarily produce happiness. It did not automatically bring happiness to this young Hebrew. If you begin your Bible Study with the Law, it will not bring happiness to your heart.

Martin Luther advocated reading the Bible backwards. He meant that you should begin with the fulfillment in Christ, the fullness of the Gospel, before you spend too much time on the law.

The human tendency is to start our Bible Study either at the beginning or the end. A young lady I won to the Lord recently told me the next day that she had begun to read her Bible, but that she had difficulty understanding it.

When I asked her where she had begun reading, she said, “The book of Revelations.” The Psalmist had begun at the beginning, but it was the primary part of the Bible available to him. Reading it did not bring immediate happiness to his life, but rather a deep sense of need.

I. THE BIBLE SETS THE STANDARD HIGH.

1. It promises happiness to those who obey the law. (v. 1)
2. It promises happiness to those who seek the Lord with a whole heart. (v. 2)
3. It promises happiness to those who avoid sin. (v. 3)
4. It promises happiness to those who obey diligently. (v. 4)

II. THE BIBLE EXPOSES OUR HUMAN WEAKNESS.

1. It leaves you with an awareness of your need of outside direction. (v. 5)
2. It leaves you with a sense of shame for shortcomings. (v. 6)

III. THE BIBLE PROVOKES A PRAYER FOR HELP.

1. It provokes a prayer for a deeper understanding. (v. 7)
2. It provokes a prayer for divine patience. (v. 8)

Paul bore witness to this kind of experience in his Bible study in Romans 7-8. The law impacted him just like it impacted the young Hebrew in this Psalm. But fortunately he knew something that the young Hebrew did not know. He knew that God has provided a full atonement for all of our shortcomings, all of our sins. Our debt has been paid. He also knew that God had given to him the Holy Spirit to dwell in him. The Holy Spirit had been given to him to give him meaning of the Bible and then to enable him to live the things set forth in the Bible.

So you need more than Bible Study—you need the atoning work of the Savior and the blessed ministry of the Holy Spirit. Through the Cross and the Spirit you can find fullness of life. O blessed be the name of the Lord for what He has done for us in Christ.