

Psalm 119: Loving the Law of God

12-07-19 PM

Psalm 119 is probably the most unusual of the Psalms. We do not know who the author is, although David is a very likely suspect, considering how similar this Psalm is to his Psalm 19. Another possibility is Ezra, who attempted to restore Israel to a love of the law. The Psalm is the longest chapter in the bible; it takes about 15 minutes to read through. It is comparable in size to the books of Ruth, James or Philippians.

The Psalm was written as an acrostic. This means that the passages (22 passages with 8 verses each) each begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet; *Aleph* (first 8 verses begin with aleph), *Beth* (next 8 verses begin with beth), *Gimel* (next 8 verses begin with gimel), *Daleth* (next 8 verses begin with daleth), etc. It may be that this design rendered it easier to memorize.

The Psalm is all about the law of God. A variety of words are used that are synonyms with the law of God: WORD, STATUTE, JUDGMENT, LAW, COMMAND(MENT), PRECEPT, TESTIMONY, WAY, ORDINANCE. More specifically, it is about the author's love of the law of God. He uses a number of terms to describe the way the law affects him and the things he is doing because of the law of God: longing / languishing / waiting / keeping / observing / walking / meditating / rejoicing / delighting / speaking. He also describes the various blessings that come from the law, such as deliverance from evil and affliction, strength and revival, and the lovingkindness of God.

GOD'S LOVE IS MANIFESTED IN THE LAW

One of the most important ideas of this Psalm speaks to the nature of the law of God. God's love for us is revealed in His law for us. From the beginning we have been told that His laws are for our good (Psalm 119:165, Deuteronomy 10:13, Joshua 1:8). His laws protect us from the consequences of sin; as an example, Ephesians 6:2-3 tells us that honoring our father and mother was a promise to keep us safe in this life. More importantly, it protects us from the wages of sin (Romans 3:23). His laws make us the best we can be in being husbands/wives/children/employees/Christians. The only hope for true self-respect is found in obedience to the law.

OUR LOVE IS MANIFESTED IN THE LAW

At the same time that the law is a measure of God's love for us, the law becomes a measure of our love for God. Jesus declared that "*if you love Me, keep My commandments*" (John 14:15). But that truth is deeper in the very way we approach love. Consider that there are two minds towards obedience. One declares that it will do the minimal expected to obtain the gift of God. The other looks at the law and sees the desires of God, and pursues that desire to be pleasing. That reflection on the law is where the true love for God is found. Those who merely want God's blessings look at the law as a requirement to accomplish. Those who genuinely love God look at the law as a way to please God.

How can we learn to have this kind of love for the law? First, it requires growing our faith to accept that God's law is in our best interest. Often we want to believe that there are better ways to do things than the ways of God. Yet we can grow our faith in Him to accept that His way is best. Second, we need to work on compelling ourselves to desire obedience. This comes with spiritual maturity; we need to be growing a heart that pursues a lawful condition.