

Craving God's Commands

Psalm 119:41-48

Here are our sermon themes for the next months...

- February – Psalm 119
- February 22 – David Guretzki
- March – Parousia
- April – Easter
- Didaktikon – James

Today is “Feb First” when we launch another annual journey through the Bible...



As we read the Bible, we encounter various literary forms. In the fall we began to study Psalm 119 which is an example of **Hebrew poetry**. Consider this five-line school poetry assignment that provoked a humorous response...



There are many lines in Psalm 119 - 176 verses! Today we resume our look at selected sections in the series “**All In: Living with loyalty to the way of the Lord**”. The **theme** of our study is being “all in” on God’s Word and way. We are considering eight synonyms for the Word of God in Psalm 119. We covered four in the fall. Derek Kidner describes these synonyms as a “*ring of eight bells*” which combine to communicate the full, rich value of God’s Word and His way (**TOTC: Psalms**, IVP, 1973, 416). All “eight bells” ring in our text – **Psalm 119:41-48!**

What is the **tone** of Psalm 119? There is joy and shalom (peace) when we follow God’s way. “*Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.*” (Ps 119:1-2; see also 1:1-2). To be **technical**, Psalm 119 is an **alphabetical acrostic**. Twenty-two sections are featured, headed by successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each “strophe” has eight verses, each one beginning with the same letter. Our text for today is under the title, *Waw* or *Vav*.

Torah	zayin v. 49-56	Law, instruction from revelation of God
Dabar	daleth v. 25-32	Word , matter, thing, speech, command
Mishpat	tsadhe v. 137-144	Judgement, justice, law , ordinance, right
Edut	gimel v. 17-24	Witness, testimony , ordinance
Mitsvah	vav v. 41-48	Commandment
Huqqim	samekh v. 113-120	Statute, decree , law, ordinance
Piqqud	mem v. 97-104	Precept , statute, commandment
Imrah	resh v. 153-160	Word, saying, command, promise

Our **text** highlights the term *mitzvah*, meaning “commandment”. It occurs twice in verse 48. “*This word emphasizes the straight authority of what is said; not merely the power to convince or persuade, but the right to give orders.*” (Kidner, 418) What change does the Word of God bring into our lives? There are four benefits of God’s Word for the believer who craves God’s commandments. Consider four cravings.

[A] Hungry for help – vv. 41-42

This first couplet begins with an ask of God; which is followed by a “so that” statement. The request is for God to bring His Word as a resource to withstand opposition. The terms used are *imrah* (“promise” v.41) and *dabar* (“word” v.42). There will always be those who taunt or ridicule the follower of God. Are we hungry for God’s help in such circumstances? Notice that this is not an intellectual or academic issue. Rather, the psalmist is hungry for the “favor” of the Lord. God’s Word is His grace to us.

When the early church was told to “stand down” from proclaiming the name of Jesus, their prayer was: “*Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.*” (Acts 4:29). God’s grace helps us trust in His Word (v.42b). Do you crave God’s commands? We must seek after them, for they are God’s grace to help us when opposed. The psalmist “panted” for God’s *mitzvah* or “commands” (v.131). He asked God to teach them to him (v.108). In the protection of God’s Word, we can echo the statement of verse 98: “*Your mitzvah make me wiser than enemies!*”

[B] Eager to endure – vv. 43-44

Craving God’s commands also involves moral endurance. It is by the Word of God that one withstands temptation and compromise (v.9). An eagerness to endure is a commitment to not wander from *mitzvah* (v.10). Do we keep God’s law continually? No. But seeking God’s Word is the answer. Believers must strive after the “*path of mitzvah*” (v.35) and “*run in the way of mitzvah*” (v.32). Note the ask in verse 43, that God not to let His *mishpat* (“law” v.43) be removed from His follower. In doing so, God’s graciously enables our continual obedience to His *torah* (“instruction” v.44).

In a sermon on Psalm 119, Pastor Alistair Begg quotes the late Dr. J. I. Packer: “*Here then is the root cause of our moral flabbiness; we have neglected God’s Law.*” (listen to the sermon, [Pathway to Freedom](#))

Kevin DeYoung also quotes from Dr. Packer, “[God] leaves unsolved some of the problems raised by what He tells us, in order to teach us a humble trust in His veracity. The question...that we must ask ourselves when faced with these puzzles is not, is it reasonable to imagine that this is so? but, is it reasonable to accept God’s assurance that this is so.” (***Taking God at His Word***, Crossway, 2014, 82)

[C] Passionate for purpose – vv. 45-46

This couplet expresses a desire for freedom (v.45) and joy (v.45) in representing God. This is our purpose: to “*proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*” (I Peter 2:9) Some may even declare God’s *piqqud* (“precepts” v.45) to kings! Freedom is found by seeking after God’s *edot* (“testimony” v.46). God’s *mitzvah* is measureless

(v.96) and releases us into the Lord's liberty. "*I would not be put to shame when I consider all your mitzvah.*" (v.6)

When Paul wrote to believers in Ephesus, he made a sharp distinction. False freedom casts off all restrictions. True freedom is control and empowering from the Holy Spirit. "*Do not get drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:18-19)

[D] Delighting in direction – vv. 47-48

Do you love the **mitzvah** of God? This expression is in both verses and highlights great delight in the instruction and direction provided by God's **mitzvah** or "commandments". Remember, this term points to God's right to make orders and set the course of His follower's lives. Notice the inclusion of **huqqim** ("decree" v.48) which highlights the permanence of God's Word. We can delight in God's Word because we can depend upon it to give meaning and direction for our lives. In Psalm 119:127, we read that the **mitzvah** of God is "like gold". Such a high value of God's Word leads to **mediation** of it (v.48; see also Psalm 1:2).

In The Celebration of Discipline (Harper & Row, 1988) Richard J. Foster helps us see the how practical and accessible meditation on God's Word can be. "*If we hope to move beyond the superficialities of our culture, including our religious culture, we must be willing to go down into the recreating silences, into the inner world of contemplation....Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God's voice and obey his word.*" (15,17) Pleasure in God's Word leads to prayerful pondering ("lift up my hands", v.48); which fuels belief in His **mitzvah** (v.66). In whose voice are you believing? "*Many of them are listening intently to hear from the most sacred voice they know: their own. And some are desperate to hear from God.*" (DeYoung, 86)

Conclusion

Over a year ago Eyvan Collins experienced a painful breakup so he invited others on Fb Marketplace to share tokens of loss and pain. Eventually, there was enough for an exhibition. Collins is now curator of the "Museum of Personal Failure" which is on display at Kingsgate Mall in Vancouver ([READ MORE](#)).



What kind of exhibition could we have concerning craving God's Word yet missing the mark!? We must remember that craving God's Word is His grace received and fully activated. Psalm 119 does not mock our failure but celebrates the goodness of God's commands. In Psalm 119:176 the psalmist wrestles with this paradox. Yes, we are prone to **stray** from God's **mitzvah** yet we are **sustained** by His **mitzvah**!

Psalm 119 is a deep meditation on the blessing of God's self-revelation. It is not a moral code encouraging human performance. Rather, it is a revelation of God's glory and grace to us who will receive His Word and let our lives be conformed to His commandments – consider one such command, **baptism!** A life set on seeking after God "with all my heart" echoes throughout Psalm 119 in response to God's loving commandments. As Thomas Manton said, "*The law of God is a love letter to the soul.*"