

Battling Sin

Psalm 119:1-16

The way to understand the heart of the longest chapter in the Bible is to read the closing words of Psalm 119:

“Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight. Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.” Psalm 119:173-176 (ESV)

Alec Motyer calls Psalm 119 "The Wandering Sheep's Charter"

“The vows and commitments with which we begin our lives in the Shepherd’s care; the vows and commitments renewed at the opening of every day; the vows and commitments we repeat at the onset of every temptation to wander.”

Psalm 119 is a battle hymn for Christians seeking to fight the good fight and who long to run the race with perseverance and not slide into catastrophic failure late in their lives like so many who have gone before us.

I. Hunger and Humility: The Mark of a True Christian. Psalm 119:1-8

“Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!” Psalm 119:1-3 (ESV)

Here is the longing expressed in Psalm 119 -

“Oh, that day when freed from sinning,
I shall see thy lovely face.
Full arrayed in blood -washed linen,
How I’ll sing thy sovereign grace.”

- Robert Robinson, Come Thou Fount

Key Truth: Forgiveness of sin through the grace of Christ produces a passionate desire to forsake sin for the glory of Christ.

Herman Bavinck shows us how we tend to use religion to mitigate this longing for holiness which has yet to be realized in our lives. He points to two forms of minimizing the gospel (adding to it, or, denying its power).

“Rome thinks it may infer from this that believers still have themselves to atone for their peccata venialia, and thus falls short of the fullness and grace of forgiveness. Antinomianism, on the other hand, wants to honor the latter and therefore holds that the sins which believers commit are not charged to the new man but only to the old man, and that believers therefore no longer need to pray for forgiveness of sins. The Reformed position maintains both the richness of forgiveness and the seriousness of sanctification. Forgiveness is complete and perfect, while the Christian life nevertheless remains a life of continual repentance, discipline, and renewal before God.” Herman Bavinck

There are two effects of grace in the life of a believer that happen when we have been born again:

- **New Birth Effect: A Healthy Hunger for Holiness**

“Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!” Psalm 119:1-3

- **New Birth Effect: A Humble Cry for Mercy**

“You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous rules. I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!” (Psalm 119:4-8)

What do we cry out to God for?

- A Longing for Consistency:

“You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your precepts (vs.4-5)

- A Longing for God-honoring Dignity:

“Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.” (vs.6)

- A Longing for Joyful Maturity:

“I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.” (v.7)

The pressing question first of all is do you have these longings. Do you hunger for holiness and do you look to God for His grace and help to bring you to be what you were redeemed to become in Christ?

II. Wholeheartedness: The Christian's "All-in" Attitude. Psalm 119:9-16

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; Let me not wander from your commandments!

Psalm 119:9-10 (ESV)

The mark of a new birth is not simply a desire for God to do this work in us but a passionate availability to do what’s necessary to experience God’s transforming power conforming us into the likeness of Christ.

o Teachability: A Whole-hearted Devotion to the Word of God and the God of the Word.

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you;” (Psalm 119:9-10a.)

o Prayer: A Whole-Hearted Dependence on the Help of God. (Psalm 119:10-12)

“With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!”

What are the prayers that the psalmist prays?

● Prayer for Protection from Wandering (Psalm 119:10)

“With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!”

● Prayer for Understanding and Application (Psalm 119:11-12)

“I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes!” (Psalm 119:11-12)

Similar to James, memorization is valuable for the purpose of application:

“Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” James 1:21-22 (ESV)

○ **Treasuring: A Wholehearted Delight in the Word of God (Psalm 119:13-16)**

“With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.”

● **Prioritize Biblical/Gospel Conversations:**

“With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.” (v.13)

● **Take Delight in Biblical Meditation:**

“In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.” (v. 14-15)

● **Delight Ourselves in Biblical Retention:**

“I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.” (vs. 16)

Study Questions from this Passage:

1. Psalm 119:1-3 describes a person who “seeks” God with their whole heart. What does actively seeking God look like in your everyday life right now? What is one way you could pursue Him more intentionally this week?
2. The sermon says that forgiveness produces “a passionate desire to forsake sin for the glory of Christ.” How does remembering that you are already fully forgiven in Christ actually motivate you to fight sin rather than become complacent about it?
3. The psalmist asks God, “Oh that my ways may be steadfast.” (v. 5) Where do you most desire greater consistency in your walk with Christ? What small, practical step could help you move in that direction?
4. Psalm 119:6-8 connects obedience with dignity, joy, praise, and maturity. When have you experienced the joy that comes from obeying God, even when obedience was difficult? What did that teach you?

5. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.” (v. 9) What are some practical ways we can “guard” our lives with Scripture rather than simply reading Scripture? What might that look like in a normal week?
6. The psalmist prays, “Let me not wander from your commandments.” (v. 10) What are some early signs that you are beginning to drift spiritually? How could you respond to those warning signs sooner?
7. Psalm 119:11 says, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” What passage of Scripture would be especially helpful for you to memorize and carry into a particular area of temptation, fear, or struggle? Why?
8. The psalmist doesn’t simply want to know God’s Word; he asks, “Teach me your statutes.” (v. 12) What is one biblical truth you already know but need to become better at *putting into practice*? What would obedience to that truth look like this week?
9. Psalm 119:14-16 describes delighting in God’s Word, meditating on it, fixing our eyes on God’s ways, and not forgetting His Word. Which of these comes most naturally to you, and which one could you intentionally grow in? What would a practical plan look like?
10. If Psalm 119 is “The Wandering Sheep’s Charter”—a set of commitments renewed whenever we are tempted to wander—what is one commitment from this passage you want to carry with you into the coming week? How can the group pray for and encourage you in that commitment?