

Praying Psalm 119 to Love the Lord and His Word More

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on April 19, 2009

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Last week we celebrated the highlight of Christian life, the resurrection of our Living Lord Jesus, a celebration we continue today. 2 weeks ago we finished our verse-by-verse study through Psalm 119 which has been a personal highlight of my Christian life to study that Psalm right in the heart of the Bible, written by a man after God's own heart, a study that should impact our own hearts to more love for God and His Word and a more living faith in our living Lord. That is the right response to Christ's resurrection; and your love for the Lord and His Word evidences that you have experienced *spiritual* resurrection and have a true living faith.

As we've seen many times in our study of Psalm 119, those who delight in the Lord also seek to (or should) delight in the Law of the Lord. As branches that abide in Christ, they abide in His Word. Those who truly love Him love what He has to say. And we can grow in both.

The fruitful believer, the blessed / happy believer finds (as we've seen in Psalm 119) the key to abiding in the Word is delighting in the Word, applying God's Word, loving and living it. In contrast to the self-deceived fruitless professing religious person without this who James 1:26 says "his religion is worthless, James 1:25 says:

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer, but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Ps 119:1 begins on the note that the blessed ones (i.e., the truly and supremely happy ones with the joy of the Lord, in relationship with the Lord) are those who walk in His law, in His Word, and v. 2 says *who practice it*. Psalm 1 begins similarly with the blessedness and spiritual successfulness of the man who doesn't walk with the way of the world (ungodly, sinners, scoffers) but with the Word:

But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

Don't we all want to be fruitful, firmly planted, falling in love with the Lord more, full of true happiness that lights up our face and our days as we delight in and abide in His Word with increasing love?

This should be the natural desire for every true believer, and I hope you will join me in that pursuit this morning in a message I've called *Praying Psalm 119 to Love the Lord and His Word More*. But there's a hurdle we must acknowledge first and not assume everyone desires that or is even a true believer here. J.C. Ryle writes:

'Just as a child born into the world naturally desires the milk provided for its nourishment, so does a soul "born again" desire the sincere milk of the Word. This is a common mark of all the children of God—they "delight in the law of the LORD" (Ps 1:2). Show me a person who despises Bible reading, or thinks little of Bible preaching, and [Ryle says basically in the spirit of James "I think little of his profession to be ...] "born again." He may be zealous about forms and ceremonies.

He may be diligent in attending church and the taking of the Lord's Supper. But if [the Bible is not truly] precious to him ... I cannot believe that he is a converted man. Tell me what the Bible is to a man and I will generally tell you what he is.

This is the pulse to try—this is the barometer to look at—if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man and not giving clear evidence of His presence. And I believe it to be clear evidence of the Spirit's presence when the Word is really precious to a man's soul ...

I am afraid that man cannot be a true servant of Christ, who has not something of his Master's mind and feeling towards the Bible. Love of the Word has been a prominent feature in the history of all the saints, of whom we know anything, since the days of the Apostles. This is the lamp which Athanasius and Chrysostom and Augustine followed. This is the compass which kept the Vallenses and Albigenses from making shipwreck of the faith. This is the well which was reopened by Wycliffe and Luther, after it had been long stopped up. This is the sword with which Latimer, and Jewell, and Knox won their victories. This is the manna which fed Baxter and Owen, and the noble host of the Puritans, and made them strong in battle. This is the armory from which Whitefield and Wesley drew their powerful weapons. This is the mine from which [others] brought forth rich gold.

... Love of the Word is one of the first things that appears in the converted heathen, at the various Missionary stations throughout the world. In hot climates and in cold—among savage people and among civilized—in New Zealand, in the South Sea Islands, in Africa ...—it is always the same. They enjoy hearing it read. They long to be able to read it themselves. They wonder why Christians did not send it to them before. How striking is the picture which Moffat draws of Africamer, the fierce South African chieftain, when first brought under the power of the Gospel! "Often have I seen him...under the shadow of a great rock nearly the whole day, eagerly [going through] the pages of the Bible." ... Love of the Bible is one of the grand points of agreement among all converted men and women in our own land. People from many Evangelical denominations all unite in honoring the Bible, as soon as they are real Christians ... This is the fountain around which all the various portions of Christ's flock meet together, and from which no sheep goes away thirsty. Oh, that believers in this country would learn to cleave more closely to the written Word!¹

If you're not a true believer who loves the Lord and His Word, or if your life is not different and your loves are not different since professing Christ, this message will be of no benefit to you till you look to Jesus on the cross and to Him alone, love Him, long for Him, and commit to live for Him instead of yourself. Loathe your sin and let it go, leave it at the cross, let Jesus be Lord.

What if your heart does love and seek your Lord, but it wanders? Take heart. So does mine, and so did even the writer of Ps. 119:

¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander ...

²⁹ Remove the false way from me ...

³⁶ Incline my heart to Your testimonies ...

⁴⁰ Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me ...

He loved and longed for God's Word, and yet in the same breath he has to pray for God to revive him from his dullness, to give him more life and love spiritually, even as he confesses there are false ways he needs removed from him, and he has a heart that needs to be inclined by God to His Word if he'll ever remain true. Like some said to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief."

Believers are not marked by perfection, but there is a *progression* of faith and love seen in their life that we also see in this Psalm. I believe the key is how the writer of Psalm 119 prayed, and my goal for this message is that we would pray the prayers of Ps. 119 more and progress in our growth to love God and His Word more as well

This psalmist was a wandering sheep, as we saw even at the very end of the psalm, and he prays that God would not let his heart wander, which I confess is a great problem of mine, a wandering heart and mind (in general that's a problem of mine, but it's especially convicting and frustrating in prayer where I acutely am aware of my own weaknesses). It is rarely a struggle for me to read God's Word and study it, and even to talk about the things of God with other believers, but I confess to my shame that talking *to God for sustained periods of time* is a frequent failing of mine, an area I pray that God will further convict and change me in this year, and for you as well if you struggle in this area. I not only fail to pray as often as I should, but when I pray my focus fails so quickly. My mind wanders as much or more than anybody in private prayer.

- I may find myself praying for one of you and thank God for your happy attitude, and even think of a time I saw you at Safeway when you greeted me happily
- and then my mind remembers, "oh, yes, that's right, I need to pickup something at Safeway for dinner ..."
- and as I think of dinner I begin to think of meatloaf which is one my favorite dinners, even though we're not having it that night, I find myself reminiscing about the way my mom used to make it, miscellaneous childhood memories...
- What was I thinking about again? Oh yes, back to the store; I think that while I'm there today maybe I'll rent a DVD
- I begin to think of DVDs that we actually would want to watch, and then I begin to think about what nights we have free that week, and what are the different things we have going on and when I'll have time for something Jaime asked me to do, and on and on it goes ... after who knows how long I *may* remember I'm praying and get back to it!

Maybe there's no one else out there like me, but just for the sake of argument in case there is someone like me out there, I want to try and give some help from this passage for those of us who embody the hymn lyric "prone to wander." I still have a long way to go but one thing that has helped me is praying with an open Bible, even the very words of the Bible, especially Psalm 119. This may not be the first chapter you think of to study prayer, but there is no place I know of in Scripture with more concentrated prayers (addressing God directly over 250x) or with more types of prayer, more principles of prayer, more patterns of prayer. This is a deep well that I have spent years drawing from and I certainly won't be able to plumb all its depths here in one morning, but I hope if nothing else this message will cause you like me to return with our empty buckets again and again to draw from Psalm 119's refreshing waters.

One of the first classes every Master's Seminary student has to take, and a class that I am sure all would count as one of the most impactful in their spiritual life, is a class on prayer. Dr. Jim Rosscup, who no longer teaches FT due to his health, is a godly prayer-warrior scholar-mentor example that we will never forget. He poured into us his passion and priority for prayer, and convicted me of the shallowness of my understanding of prayer and my lack of commitment to prayer, not only in class but on some of my papers by his loving rebukes to me in his red ink.

Most classes require reading and papers, and this class did, too, but a major part of the requirements for that semester was for each student to pray for an hour each day, and turn in a paper each week reporting on if we had done so for accountability. Praying with concentration for 5 minutes in a row was hard enough for me!

- Helps: praying out loud instead of silently in my mind
- Praying with something in front of me (ex: requests, prayer cards, especially praying with Scripture in front of me)
- More than any other passage, praying the prayers of Psalm 119 helped me get through those prolonged prayer times
- I chose Psalm 119 to be my research paper for the class

Principles of Prayer in Psalm 119

Principle #1. Prayer should permeate our day as well as be planned

Much of our failure to pray (I include myself in this “our”) is because we do not plan to pray, or set aside time to pray. Many find that mornings and/or evenings are the best times

¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words.

¹⁴⁸ My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word.

Others of you may find a lunch break or some other time is works well for prayer. How about while you’re driving your car? For me, when I used to commute and spend many hours a week in my car in SoCal freeways, that was my prime-time for spiritual talking or singing to God, or His talking to me through good sermons or even an audio Bible, memorizing God’s Word. It’s far easier for me to listen to a sermon than to sustain concentration in prayer, so I have to discipline myself to shut off the radio or MP3 player at times to pray (I did that this week while jogging around Cameron Park Lake, thanking God for the beautiful bird I saw, praising Him for His beautiful creation, praying for individuals in the church who came to mind). We should be able to do this naturally through the day, but most of us need to plan and make real effort as well.

¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous ordinances.

Should prayer be spontaneous or scheduled, at set times or at all times? As I read this Psalm, his answer seems to be yes – all of the above! We discussed a few weeks ago that “seven times a day” represents completeness or constancy of such prayer.² “A definite number is put for the indefinite exercise of heart”³ meaning often, repeatedly, frequently, or as Paul would say, “without ceasing.” This “seven-times-a-day” type of praise is clearly not limited to the prayer closet time, but we should be perpetually praising God with a grateful *heart*. This verse may not mean praise out loud 24/7 but a continually thankful heart for everything God does each day.

One practical habit I would encourage, that I did long before I was a pastor, was whenever I would have a conversation with someone about spiritual things, if there was something I felt could use prayer and I’m with a brother or sister in the Lord, I would try to always ask before the end of the conversation, “can we pray about this?” And then I or both of us would pray right then. Another practical application of this “throughout the day” concept is when someone shares a prayer request, I try and pray right then.

Even if I was on break at a secular job, and a co-worker (whether Christian or not) asked me to pray for something, whenever possible if it was a private place and appropriate, I would try to ask them “do you mind if I pray for this right now?” If you receive an email prayer request or hear of something whenever wherever you are, you can take at least a brief moment to pray silently (Neh. 1).

And as you seek to permeate your day with talking to God, also seek to let His Word permeate your day and mind through meditation, like v. 97 “it is my meditation all the day.”

All the day ... is it possible? Can we, with all the multitude of daily pressing duties, take these words in anything like their literal acceptance? Is not the Psalmist here striking above what human nature can possibly carry out? Now here let it be observed that however we may understand the words, they are uttered, as the 119th Psalm amply shews, by one of the most occupied of men ... [a very busy burdened life and even more so than ours] His had been a life of care, anxiety, opposition.⁴

I know for myself, much failure to pray throughout the day occurs when I compartmentalize my day to study, administration, emails, phone calls, work, etc., and other things not done in conscious dependence and communion on God. It scares me to realize at times I am doing “the Lord’s work” in my strength, or at least trying to. If we’re prayer-less, we’re powerless to do anything of real spiritual value, because apart from the Lord, we can do nothing. Unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain in human efforts (Ps 127). If weakness in prayer is convicting to you, just know the conviction is for me doubly magnified as a spiritual leader in the flock of Jesus Christ, because I honestly feel like far more of a wandering sheep than a shepherd (v. 176).

My goal is not to make you feel horrible, though, I want to give you some practical *help* as a fellow struggler with things that have helped me. Having a prayer partner or accountability partner or discipler or another believer to pray with regularly is a great help.

⁶³ I am a companion of all those who fear You

I have a brother I meet early Thursdays for the purpose of prayer. Friends who fear God are an important part of the NT teaching of Christian growth in mutual sanctification, and the “one another” verses. We are to pray for one another, confess our sins to one another (but be careful not to confess *other people’s sins* to one another, though, that’s gossip – but we should be quick to admit *our own sins* to God and to godly believers where appropriate for the purpose of holding *us* accountable and not for the purpose of a pity party).

Principle #2. Prayer should be multifaceted.

If we only studied isolated biblical prayers, such as patterns in some of Paul’s epistles, we might incorrectly conclude that prayer should only be for others. But this psalm and others show that prayers for yourself for all kinds of needs occur in Scripture and can be a healthy part of a well-rounded prayer life, which I suspect many neglect to their detriment. The Hebrew contains 60 imperatives, petitions for God to do a variety of things for the psalmist in regards to God’s word and ways.

Many are negative, with numerous ones for God *not* to do something to him:

- v. 8 “forsake me utterly”
- v. 10 “let me wander”
- v. 19 “hide your commandments”
- v. 31 “put me to shame”
- v. 43 “take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth”
- v. 121-122 “leave me to my oppressors ... let the arrogant oppress me”
- v. 133 “let any sin have dominion over me”

Like the Lord’s Prayer, others are positive (“lead us not/*deliver*”):

- v. 17 “Deal bountifully with Your servant”
- v. 41 “May your lovingkindness also come to me”
- v. 49 “Remember the word to Your servant”
- v. 76 “comfort me”
- v. 116-117 “Sustain me according to your word, that I may live ... Uphold me that I may be safe”

Petitions / Requests, though are only one type of prayer. Biblical prayer has many types, and Psalm 119 may be Scripture’s best example:

Thanksgiving (v. 7) – “I shall give thanks to You”

Speaking Scripture

To God (v. 13) – “with my lips I have told all the ordinances of Your mouth”

To Our own heart (v. 11) – “Your word have I hidden / treasured in my heart”

Meditation (v. 27) – “Make me understand the way of Your precepts, So I will meditate on Your wonders”

Commitment (v. 32) – “I shall run the way of Your commandments, For You will enlarge my heart”

Intercession – prayer on behalf of others

The godly (v. 74, 79)

The ungodly (v. 136) – “my eyes shed streams of water ...”

Adoration (v. 103) – “How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Awe (v. 161b) – “... my heart stands in awe”

Supplication – plea for grace / favor (v. 170) – “Let my supplication come before You. Deliver me ...”

Praise (v. 171) – “Let my lips utter praise, For You teach me Your statutes.” [This is what we should be doing as we’re reading the Word or hearing the Word taught, even out loud at times. If listening to a sermon on CD, stop it sometimes to praise God or as you read something in your daily reading that prompts you to praise, do it right then)

Singing (v. 172) - it’s prayer if speaking *to God* in song

Confession (v. 176) *I have gone astray like a lost sheep*

Let me encourage you as that class encouraged me, to take these notes and keep them in your Bible (in my old study Bible I even taped a piece of paper on the inside cover with some of these principles to help me in my prayer). As you pray, seek to include and incorporate various types of prayer so you’re not imbalanced.

Principle #3: Prayer should be largely for spiritual needs

The natural tendency of many in prayer or in prayer requests is to focus so much on physical and temporal things, often to the exclusion of the spiritual, but biblical prayers we have recorded are radically different. It's not that physical things are never prayed for (ex: daily bread, get Paul out of prison, etc.) but the spiritual needs dominate biblical prayers almost completely. If our prayers are almost completely dominated the other way (little of spiritual needs) then we need our prayers to be more biblically informed.

As you study Psalm 119, try and count how many times he prays for some spiritual need he has and it is really overwhelming. I actually underlined these in one color in my Bible and it's all over the place of every page. This psalmist was unquestionably one of the most spiritual men ever, *I believe, because of how he prayed.*

He prays for spiritual life

²⁵ My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.

Don't get the impression that this godly man's spiritual life was never in the dumps or the dust or despondency or deadness – it was. But as he prayed this prayer, which means for God to give him life, quicken, renew his spiritual life, breath new life to restore his spiritual vitality in desperation, God answers such prayers.⁵ In the midst of physical difficulties, persecution for his life, deepest oppression, sorrow, and struggle, his prayers were not dominated only by earthly or physical desires for his own will to be done. Instead he prayed according to God's will and for his truly great need spiritually: revival, spiritual renewal, more life.⁶

This psalm gives us encouragement that God answers such prayers. Notice in v. 40 he says “*I long for Your precepts; Revive me*” and we see that God answered this prayer by v. 93: “*I will never forget your precepts, For by them You have revived me.*”

Verse 37 hints of an obstacle to this type of revival, where he first prays for his eyes to be turned from vanity. If we have sins that sap our spirituality, prayers should focus both on turning from the wrong desires and replacing them with godly ones.

He prays for practical insight of Scripture

Seven times he asks God “Teach me Your statutes” (v. 12, 26, etc.) This Heb. word *lamad* was used of beating or goading animals for teaching, and of rigorous training of soldiers. The form here means “cause me to learn” (learning by being accustomed to), “train me to not only know the right things but do the right things.”⁷ In v. 33 he prays “teach me the way” using a different word for teach – *yarah* - teaching that “points the way,” directing and guiding by showing and pointing to the proper way of God.⁸

He also asks God to teach Him good discernment and knowledge (66), and His ordinances (108). This is not waiting for some mystical knowledge or subjective impression, but is how he prays while studying Scripture and seeking counsel from it (v. 18, 24, etc.). He prays for this spiritual understanding so he can obey the Word (v. 34), learn God's Word (v. 73), know God's Word (v. 125), and to be able to live (v. 144). This understanding does not come with a closed Bible, but from praying with an open Bible: ¹³⁰ The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding ...

Understanding comes from careful unfolding of and disciplined study the open Word of God with His eye-opening grace.

Spurgeon wrote: ‘The mere hearing of the word with the external ear is of small value by itself, but when the words of God enter into the chambers of the heart then light is scattered on all sides ... Oh, that thy words, like the beams of the sun, may enter through the window of my understanding, and dispel the darkness of my mind!’⁹

He prays *and obeys*

Ps. 119 illustrates as well as anywhere the spiritual need in utter dependence on God and the dedication of man. This psalm is just as committed to obeying as to praying; praying as if everything depends upon God and then working as hard as he possibly can. Though he knows God is sovereign and gets all credit and glory, he also knows he’s responsible. It’s an interesting study to notice the determination and resolve and discipline in the psalms, with the “I will” statements.¹⁰ This was not a defeatist mentality, “I can’t,” but was an understanding that “I *can* do all things *through the Lord who strengthens me.*”

And notice even his love for the Lord and His Word was not mere feelings, but was a deliberate choice (even against his natural fleshly feelings at times). This is very instructive to our culture that sees love as something to be done when one “feels” like it, but some may be surprised to see that biblical love and delight is a choice and conscious effort both elsewhere and here:

¹⁶ **I will** delight myself in Your statutes; **I will** not forget Your word.

⁴⁷ **I will** delight in Your commandments, Which I love.

⁴⁸ And **I will** lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And **I will** meditate on Your statutes.

Biblical love and commitment is not dependent on how others treat us, but perseveres with determination through personal offenses:

⁶⁹ The arrogant have forged a lie against me; With all *my* heart **I will** observe Your precepts.

⁹⁵ The wicked wait for me to destroy me; **I will** diligently consider Your testimonies.

¹⁰⁶ I have sworn and **I will** confirm it, That **I will** keep Your righteous ordinances.

Overall, the psalmist makes these “I will” or “I shall” declarations 26 times in this poem, more than once in each stanza. There also seems to be at least one statement of obedience in every stanza (2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 17, 22, 33, 34, 44, 55-57, 60, 63, 67, 69, 88, 100, 101, 106, 116, 129, 134, 136, 145, 146, 158, 167, 168) which reinforces the theme that application and adherence are absolutely essential. Man’s dedication to obey is as essential as his dependence on God.

³² I shall run the way of Your commandments, For You will enlarge my heart.

He Prays for His Own Heart and Love for God and His Word

Man’s responsibility and man’s reliance on God’s heart-enlarging and heart-enabling grace is as clear in Psalm 119 as anywhere.

³⁶ Incline my heart to Your testimonies And not to *dishonest* gain.

¹¹² I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, *even* to the end.

Prayer is not a passive spectator sport. It's an *active work* of doing what God calls us to do as we ask Him to do what He says He will. Prayer is not telling God what to do, but doing what He tells us to. And one of the things God calls us to in this psalm is to love His Word more, or as 1 Peter 2 commands, "long for the pure Word," something we cannot just do by human effort but must pray for. Consider how this psalmist who prays so passionately for his own heart and love for God's Word, has such passionate feelings for God's Word, which I can only conclude is because of how he prayed, which is one reason why his prayers are recorded – for us!

Psalm 119 has the most amazing statements of ravishing love for scripture in biblical record. God's word is pictured as hidden treasure (11), a trusted counselor (24), a light and lamp for the path (105), superior to finest gold (127), a greater find than great spoil (162), more valuable than all riches (14), better than thousands of pieces of gold and silver (72), and even sweeter than freshest honey (103). Repeatedly the psalmist calls scripture his supreme "delight" (16, 24, 35, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174, etc.), his joy and source of rejoicing (14, 162), his wholehearted focus (10), greatest love (47-48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 132, 159, 163, 165, 167), even "exceeding love" (167), and the object of his breathless panting and intense longing (131, 174, 81-82, etc.).

How can we get there? It starts with desiring that, and praying for it. *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be satisfied.* And when we are most satisfied in God and His Word, God is most glorified. Don't be satisfied with reading the Bible as a mere duty -- plead with God for more delight! I pray for many things, but do not often find myself praying for attitudes and ways to obey, observe, and keep God's law with a right heart.

¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law

I've been pleading with you in this study many times to plead this prayer with God. If you have not and do not pray prayers like this, then you are being a hearer of the Word only and not a doer. And there is so much blessing and joy we often forfeit when we do not take it to the Lord in prayer in this way. D. L. Moody shared what had been shared with him: "Since I began to beg God's blessing on my studies, I have done more in one week than in the whole year before."¹¹ Could it not be the same for us as well, that the greatest spiritual breakthroughs await our greatest begging to God in prayer for our spiritual affections? Perhaps we have not, because we ask not?

Is God's Word just a duty, not a delight to you? Can you honestly share any of the psalmist's passionate love language regarding for God's Word? I began this message by saying those who have never loved the Lord or His Word in any measure have a bigger problem, which is the Lord is not within, and His love is not inside of them, having transformed them by regenerating grace which is a whole new nature with new desires. For those of you (who only the Lord knows infallibly) you may need to start by begging the Lord to change you for the very first time, plead with him for grace, trust in Christ and repent of your sins today.

Many of you have done that, but have lost your first love as Revelation 2 says, and become lukewarm, and that chapter also calls you to repent, come back. These verses in Psalm 119 praising and prizing of Scripture were clearly written by a mature and spiritual believer, which might discourage some with lesser desires, but encouragement can be found in this same psalmists' admissions of his weakness, frailty, and desperation.

He pleads “Make me walk¹² in the path of Your commandments” (v. 35), or as one paraphrased it, “If I’m ever to become like the people in the first three verses, Lord, you will have to force me.” Many of the verbs and prayers are in causal form, meaning God must cause them to take place.¹³ In *Praying the Psalms*, the author writes on these prayers in Ps 119, “Is not God’s grace extolled in the request that one’s heart be bent to His will and not to love of gain? If man can, on his own, turn his eyes from what is false, why should he beg God for help to do so?”¹⁴

We all need to earnestly beg to do what we cannot, for eye-opening grace from God to the wonders of His Word. Verse 18 is not a passive petition as the context shows, but includes man’s determined and disciplined effort (vv. 15-16), longing (20), meditation (23) and pursuit of delight (24). The Holy Spirit does not make hard study unnecessary; He makes it effective.¹⁵

Many see verse 18 as a crucial key and spiritual “secret” of this great lover of Scripture. There are wonderful things in the Word, but even the best of saints cannot see these for what they are without supernatural help. If God does not open our eyes by His illuminating grace, we will miss much glory and beauty in this book, and will miss much joy, wonder, love, and praise.

John Piper writes: ‘Never reduce Christianity to a matter of demands and resolutions and willpower. It is a matter of what we love, what we delight in, what tastes good to us. When Jesus came into the world humanity was split according to what they loved. "The Light came into the world and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). The righteous and the wicked are separated by what they delight in - the revelation of God or the way of the world. But someone may ask: How can I come to delight in the Word of God? My answer would be two-fold: 1) pray for new taste buds on the tongue of your heart; 2) meditate on the staggering promises of God to His people.

The same psalmist who said "How sweet are thy words to my taste" (119:103), said earlier, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (119:18). He prayed, because to have holy taste buds the tongue of the heart is a gift of God. No man naturally hungers for and delights in God's wisdom.

But when you have prayed, indeed while you pray, meditate on the benefits God promises to His people and on the joy of having Almighty God as your helper now and eternal hope. Who would not delight to read [such] a book ... All of us want to draw strength from some deep river of reality and become fruitful, useful people. That river of reality is the Word of God and all the great saints have been made great by it.’¹⁶

On the back of your note sheet is some further study I would encourage you to read through and study further (we have extra copies at the info table) on “How to Pray for Next Sunday.” May God help us be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, and may as we hear and read the Word, may we pray more for God to open our eyes so we can see and savor its wonders, beauty, riches, glory, joy, treasure, delight, satisfaction, found in God’s sufficient Word.

¹ J. C. Ryle, *Practical Religion*, Chapter 5, “Bible Reading.”

² Cohen, *TWOT*, 900.

³ Lockyer, *Psalms*, 607.

⁴ William John Butler, *Meditations on the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*. London: Skeffington & Son, 1894, p. 94.

⁵ *The Works of Thomas Manton*, Volume 6, p. 219.

⁶ Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 3:189.

⁷ Roy Zuck, “Hebrew words for ‘teach.’” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121:483 (July 1964): p. 238-239.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 231-32.

⁹ Spurgeon, 3:378.

¹⁰ Power, Philip Bennet. “I will” : being the determinations of the man of God, as found in some of the “I wills” of Psalms. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1881.

¹¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Classic Sermons on Prayer*. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1987: Kregel, p. 25.

¹² Franklin S. Logsdon, *The Song of a Soul Set Free: The Victorious Life – Psalm 119*. Revised ed. Kalamazoo, MI, 1976: Master’s Press, p. 56.

¹³ George Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God*, p. 135.

¹⁴ Stanley L. Jaki, *Praying the Psalms: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich., 2001: Eerdmans Publishing Company, p. 207.

¹⁵ James M. Boice, *Psalms*, 3:987)

¹⁶ John Piper, “Delighting in the Law of God,” preached July 20, 1980 at Bethlehem Baptist Church.

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