



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

## Psalm 119 (Part 2)

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# Introduction

- This is part 2 of Psalm 119 which includes verses 17-32
- Or, the Hebrew letters Gimel and Daleth
- In part one of this Psalm (verses 1-16), one can see how the Psalmist has become intimate with the Law of God
- Here is yet another example of his yearning for the Law of God; for the Word of God
- He is asking God to mature him in His word, so that he can live a life that will honor His law
- And that his life would be a witness for His word and law; that his example would point others to God



# Introduction

- The psalmist here is praying a prayer... reaching out to God for help and assistance in living for Him

## General Outline

- Gimel- Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24
- Daleth- Strengthening by His Word 119:25-32

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- This is a wonderful request: boldly asking for blessing *deal bountifully*, while at the same time coming humbly before God, *Your servant*
- The servant properly depends upon the master for his bounty
- In saying, *Deal bountifully*, the psalmist was asking for a lot, not just a little
- The idea of the word *bountifully* is the thought of fullness or maximized benefit
- He does not want God to hold back on anything necessary to keep him in God's will

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- He pleads not his services by way of merit; but prays that God would deal bountifully with him, in a way of grace and mercy
- *That I may live and keep Your word.* This is why the psalmist asked for God's blessing
- It was not for personal indulgence or even comfort, but so that God's *word* might be *lived* and *kept*
- The continuance of life was dependent on the favor of God
- He asked that life might be continued, in order that he might honor the word of God by obeying it
- Perceiving that his life is a reward or a gift from God, the psalmist feels a commitment to dedicate this life to the account of God, to His service, and for the growth of His kingdom

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- As the rest of this section will demonstrate, the psalmist prayed this because of great problems and pressures that had affected him
- This section of the Psalm shows us that the author was a man who had suffered deeply
- He had known persecution verses 22-23, deprivation and fear for his life, seasons when he seemed to get nothing from God's word, verse 18, and loneliness, rejection, and a sense of abandonment, verses 19-20
- In the midst of these trials, he wanted to *live* – not only surviving, but also a better *quality* of life and to honor God

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- St. Augustine says, “It is this reward that he asks, who says, ‘Reward Your servant.’ For there are four modes of reward: either evil for evil, as God will reward everlasting fire to the unrighteous; or good for good, as He will reward an everlasting kingdom to the righteous; or good for evil, as Christ by grace justifies the ungodly; or evil for good, as Judas and the Jews through their wickedness persecuted Christ. Of these four modes of reward, the first two belong to justice, whereby evil is rewarded for evil, good for good; the third to mercy, whereby good is rewarded for evil; the fourth God knows not, for to none does He reward evil for good. But that which I have placed third in order, is in the first instance necessary: for unless God rewarded good for evil, there would be none to whom He could reward good for good.”

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- The psalmist recognized that without God's enlightenment, he could not *see* what he could and should from God's word
- The verb *open* in verse 18 is used in the Balaam story where the Lord opened Balaam's eyes so he could see the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn
- It is not the word of God that needs changing, as if it were obscure; we are the ones who are veiled and cannot understand the word of God apart from the work of the Spirit
- There is a veil of darkness and ignorance on the hearts of all men, with respect to divine and spiritual things



# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- St. Paul's eyes were unveiled (Acts 9:18); it was as if scales had dropped from his eyes
- The psalmist did not need new revelation; he needed to see the revelation that was already given
- He did not need new eyes; he needed to see more clearly with the eyes he already had
- The prophets were called "Seers" (1 Samuel 9:9); for they saw what others could not see; *"Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad"* (John 8:56)

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- There are *wondrous things* in Scripture; but they can only be seen when the eyes are opened by God
- Things which are secret or hidden from the common view; the deep, spiritual meaning of the word of God
- He believed that there were such things in the law of God; he desired to see them
- Jesus rejoiced that God revealed His wisdom this way, “*At that time Jesus answered and said: ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’*” (Matthew 11:25)

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- Although the law was found in the hands of the Jews, yet they did not enjoy its wondrous things, namely, the Lord Christ, whose name was called “wonderful’ (Isaiah 9:6)
- For, according to the Apostle Paul: *“But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ... But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 3:14,18)

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- Perhaps the psalmist is asking that God reveal *Wondrous things* in Scripture concerning Christ
- Those profound mysteries of Christ and of God's grace
- This means that prayer is an important part of Bible study
- The request of verse 19 is the same request as in verse 18, but made for a different reason
- The psalmist wants to know and keep God's word, and prays for it to be so
- He recognizes that the *earth* is not his home, and he needs communication with his true homeland

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- He is in need of God's commandments, to be his leader, guide, companion, and comfort in his sojourn
- His residence is only temporary, and he would be willing to make the best use of life which may be short
- On earth, the place of our sojourning - of our pilgrimage - the friend of God desires to have constant contact with heaven, his final home
- The main work of the divine commandment is to prepare man for the heavenly citizenship

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- Feeling sojourn, motivates the psalmist to get more attached to the commandment to support him all the days of his sojourn, and to lift him up to the heavenly life
- According to St. Augustine, the psalmist here refer to the soul
- He says, “Here an important question arises respecting the soul. For the words, I am a sojourner, or lodger, or stranger upon earth, cannot seem to have been said in reference to the body, since the body derives its origin from the earth.”
- His *soul* longed for God’s word so much because he was indeed *a stranger in the earth*

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- *My soul breaks with longing For Your judgments at all times,*  
This is given as a reason for the prayer of verse 19
- The desire to know more of the commands of God acted continually on him, exhausting his strength, and overcoming him
- David had prayed that God would open his eyes (verse 18) and open the law (verse 19); now here he pleads the sincerity and depth of his desire for knowledge, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much, (James 5:16)
- *Your judgments,* God's law; His commands
- This was a constant feeling; it was the steady, consistent state of the soul on the subject

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- His *soul* is crushing from longing after God's *judgments*, after a more and more thorough knowledge of them; the declaration of His Will
- He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the needs of his nature were satisfied
- He feels he had not seen and felt enough to excite in him an eager deep desire to be made fully acquainted with all that there is in the law of God



# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- The connection between verse 21 and the previous verse seems to be the word *judgments*
- The proud were everywhere rebuked by God
- The psalmist is meditating on the benefit or advantage of keeping the law of God; of a humble, godly life
- Then he refers to what would be the opposite of this and says that God had in every way, and at all times, manifested His displeasure against *the proud*
- God's *judgments*, includes verbal sentences against sinners delivered in the Law, and also actual sentences upon them in deeds

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- *the proud*, are those who sin willfully and boldly (Psalm 19:13; Deuteronomy 17:12-13)
- St. Augustine says, “For it is one thing not to fulfil the commandments of God through infirmity or ignorance; another to err from them through pride.”
- They are under the wrath and curse of God
- God rebuked Pharaoh, king Saul, Nebuchadnezzar etc.
- “*God resists the proud*” (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5), “*halts the arrogance of the proud*” (Isaiah 13:11); “*scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts*” (Luke 1:51)

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- Such sin brings under a curse those who commit it
- If it be a blessed thing to walk in God's Law, verse 1, it must be a cursed thing to transgress against it, verse 21
- *the proud*, some understand it of the fallen angels, “*who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;*” (Jude 1:6)
- Others of the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time, who were proud and despised others considering them less holy than themselves; and did not submit to Christ, whom He often rebuked

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- God *rebuke the proud*, The psalmist is asking that God *rebuke* them now, and relieve him from the contempt which they pile and load upon him for his obedience of His law
- God's servants almost necessarily suffer the reproach and contempt of the worldly, to whom their conduct seems irrational
- Jesus Christ Himself was "*despised*;" (Isaiah 53:3) and reproached (Matthew 11:19)
- *For I have kept Your testimonies*; which was the reason why he was reproached and despised
- The *reproach* the psalmist seeks that God remove from him, might be also sin which produce true disgrace in the sight of God

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- According to the scholar Origin, sins deserve reproach and contempt
- *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.”* (Daniel 12:2)
- The psalmist recognized that even *princes also sit and speak* against him; yet he would not turn from meditation on God’s word
- *Princes also sit and speak against me*, This would have been applicable to David many times in his life like Saul, his son Absalom, Ahithophel, etc.

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- What the *princes* did or said against him did not divert his mind, or take off his thoughts from the word of God
- He found comfort in the word of God, so, none of these things moved him
- The best way to deal with insult and hurt is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove its wound and pain
- David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that scorned and *crucified the Lord of glory*, (1 Corinthians 2:8)
- Verse 24 is an explanation of the words from verse 23
- For he says *Your testimonies* were a sweet consolation to him in his troubles, and a faithful counsellor in his doubts

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- Although his enemies take counsel against him, he has *counselors* to direct him in God's Law
- Though David took counsel with men about affairs of state; yet concerning spiritual ones the Scriptures, were his *counselors*
- The psalmist delighted and trusted in God's word much more than anyone or thing
- In this part the psalmist saw many things that hindered his reception of the word of God and his fellowship with God, and he prayed to be protected from them

# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- He saw the danger of death; therefore, he prayed, *Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word*
- He saw the danger of the veil of darkness; therefore, he prayed, *Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law*
- He saw the danger of living as a sojourner; therefore, he prayed, *Do not hide Your commandments from me*
- He saw his own weakness; therefore, he prayed, *My soul breaks with longing*



# Beholding Wonderful Things from His Word 119:17-24



- He saw the danger of pride; therefore, he recognized that the proud are *the cursed, who stray for Your commandments*
- He saw the reproach and contempt that came upon him; therefore, he prayed, *Remove from me reproach and contempt*
- He saw rulers and *princes* plotting against him; therefore, he prayed, *Your testimonies are my delight*
- He rises superior to these sorrowful circumstances by keeping the testimonies, meditating on the law, and so finding delight therein

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- The psalmist used a strong image to say that he felt near death in his current crisis
- *dust* was the place of death, the place of mourning, and the place of humiliation
- The psalmist is in deep distress; so he lies prostrate, crushed and unable to rise (Psalm 44:25,7:5,22:15)
- But he can pray that God will *revive* him, and give him new strength and joy in life according to His promise
- For life is repeatedly promised as the reward of obedience to the law of God, Deuteronomy 8:3,30:6,15,19-20,32:47

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- Some refer this verse to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in the moments of His passion, where He carried our sins, and accepted to die on our behalf, saying: *“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”* (Matthew 26:38)
- Yet others believe that the speaker here, is David, who, when his soul troubled him, he sat on the ground and covered himself with dust, according to the old custom of the people of east, the way the righteous Job did (Job 1:20), as well as his friends, (Job 2:12)
- And such is the person who is dead in trespasses and sins and in need of the work of grace to *revive* him

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- Revival comes from a sense of spiritual need and lowliness
- True revival, in the Biblical sense, is marked by a shamed awareness of sin and an urgency to confess and make things right
- St. Augustine says, “If we look upon the whole world as one great house, we see that the heavens represent its vaulting, the earth therefore will be its pavement. He wishes therefore to be rescued from earthly things, and to say with the Apostle, ‘Our conversation is in heaven.’ To cling therefore to earthly things is the soul’s death; the contrary of which evil, life is prayed for, when he says, *‘Revive me’*”

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- Confession should be done continually throughout the whole of one's life
- Or, it might be also the *ways* he had chose and desired to walk in, and not wander from, and therefore entreated help and assistance guidance and direction in them
- *my ways*, May be his sinful ways and actions, which he acknowledged and confessed and asked forgiveness of
- He confessed fully and freely before God
- He poured out his heart before God, by way of sincere confession
- It is only when one declares all his ways before God, that he can hope God will hear him

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- David's earnest desire of the continuance of that closeness to God, not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the word and Spirit in an ordinary way: *Teach me Your statutes.*, that is, *Make me understand the way of Your precepts*
- Being very desirous of advancing in the way of the Lord, he becomes more urgent again in praying to God for light
- He is asking God to tell him what His commandments mean, how he should walk in His law; *So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works*
- Those who in all their ways acknowledge God may pray in faith that He will direct their steps in the right way

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- St. Augustine says, “These higher commandments, which he desires to understand by edification, he calls the wondrous things of God. There are then some righteousness of God so wondrous, that human weakness may be believed incapable of fulfilling them by those who have not tried.”
- *My soul melts from heaviness*, The problems surrounding the psalmist (verses 17-24) made his soul heavy, as if it would melt
- He felt that he had no strength or stability within
- The psalmist might have passed through a condition of intense despair; and cried out to God to grant him the joyful hope in His divine promises

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- *Melts*, Like wax before the fire, through godly sorrow for sin
- The repentant soul melts in sorrow for sin
- He is expressing a quiet but continuous grief that slowly wears away the soul
- Therefore, he prayed for *strength*, and that this strength would come both from and *according to God's word*
- He is asking that God give him strength to meet this constant wearing away
- *Your word*, Is the bread of life which strengthens man's heart, and in the strength of which, like Elijah, he walks many days, and goes from strength to strength



# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- The psalmist may be talking here about the sin of lying
- But he may also mean the false way; the way of apostasy, or of departure from God
- All conduct that is not led by God's truth, is contrary to the way of faithfulness, of loyalty to Him
- Though he has made the great choice, and set before himself (Psalm 16:8) the declarations of God's Will as the rule of his life, he prays that God will keep him from disloyalty
- The psalmist may have not been used to lying, but that he felt he was, like all people, in danger of acting from false views, from wrong motives, or under the influence of deceit

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- It is a prayer that he might always be sincere and truthful
- He prays that the way of Satan may be far removed from him; and that God would grant him such in-depth knowledge with the way of truth to prevent him from ever wandering into the path of wrong
- So much depends upon the way one chooses
- It is difficult, in a divided and distracted world, to choose correctly
- Yet this choice, so important, so difficult, and therefore, requires wisdom and guidance from God

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- If he is to be kept from sin, it must be by the grace of God exercised through the teaching of His Word
- This is how the psalmist was able to choose *the way of truth*: He was in close relationship with the word of God
- He acknowledged his own wretchedness in verse 29, he now, in these verses, tells what the mercy of God may achieve
- As if he said, ‘previously I have chosen the path of falsehood, but, through God’s mercy, out of His love, now, *I have chosen the way of truth*
- Among all the paths of life he has *chosen the way of truth*

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- Christ, is the way and the truth, the true way to God and to eternal happiness
- To choose Him is to choose the good part, *“But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”* (Luke 10:42)
- In the beginning of the section, he is clinging to the dust (verse 25); by the end he is clinging to God’s word
- In the beginning he is laid low; now he is joyfully running with all his strength in the race God’s word sets before him
- He had obeyed the testimonies of God as if he had been glued to them

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- As if he and the *testimonies* were firmly united together
- He had so adhered to them that he could not be detached from them
- The psalmist understood that if he were to give himself entirely to God – to *cling* to His word, then he could trust that God would not allow him to be *put...to shame*
- *I will run*, The psalmist has moved in a beautiful progression, from confessing to choosing to clinging to running
- He will not only be able to walk in the Divine way, but even to run which is expressive of great readiness, of great swiftness in them, and of great delight and pleasure therein

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- He comes back to his sense of weakness and dependence upon God
- He must have his *heart* enlarged: made bigger, stronger, better, and more steadfast
- *enlarge my heart*, To make it free; he will be set free with the knowledge of God, His word, His ways, and His love
- He is asking that his heart be delivered from difficulties, from weights and pressures, and everything that may hinder him from *run the course of God's commandments*
- To have his *heart* filled with God's fear, with holy and godly purposes

# Strengthening by His Word

## 119:25-32



- St. Augustine says, “I could not run had You not widened my heart... For this running is along the way of the commandments of God. And because he does allege unto the Lord rather His blessings than his own deserving... It is not therefore through his own will...but because ‘You have widened my heart.’ The widening of the heart is the delight we take in righteousness. This is the gift of God, the effect of which is, that we are not straitened in His commandments through the fear of punishment, but widened through love, and the delight we have in righteousness.”

# Discussion



- What are the two themes that play off of each other in this section of Psalm 119?
- How does God revive us according to verse 25?
- How are we revived?
- What is the difference between only teaching and making to understand? Verse 27



# Discussion



- What causes this grief? Verse 28
- What is the difference between verse 25 and verse 28?
- What is the false way that is within me? Verse 29
- According to verse 32, what must happen before the Psalmist runs in the way of God's commandments?