

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

Broadcast Date: 6 May 2018

No.: T1040

Speaker: Mr. Brian Donaldson

Psalm 119 - The importance of God's Word: Daleth - Psalm 119:25-32

Good morning and welcome to the next talk in our sequence on Psalm 119. This Psalm is all about the importance of God's Word, so it is right and proper that we commence by reading Psalm 119:25-32: *"My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your word. I have declared my ways, and You answered me; teach me your statutes. Make me understand the way of Your precepts; so shall I meditate on Your wonderful works. My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word. Remove from me the way of lying and grant me Your law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me. I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame! I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart."*

As a reminder, this is the longest Psalm and indeed the longest of any chapter in the Bible with 176 verses. The Psalm is divided into 22 sections, or stanzas, and each has eight verses. Each of these verses commences with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the sections come in the same order as the letters appear in that alphabet. So each verse in the first section starts with the letter Aleph, in the second section each verse starts with the letter Beth and so on. It is worth keeping in mind, however, just for clarity, that the English translation does not start with the same word as the Hebrew so as we read the verses we should not expect to see the same letter starting each verse in English.

A further remarkable use of eight in this Psalm is that there are eight terms referring to the Scriptures:

1. Law;
2. Testimonies;
3. Precepts;
4. Statutes;
5. Commandments;
6. Judgements;
7. Word; and
8. Ordinances.

Finally, some group the stanzas into eight divisions as well and very helpful titles can be put over each group. This morning our subject is the fourth section with the title "Daleth". Together with the next two sections, "He" and "Waw", this makes up the second of these eight divisions which all have the theme of "Strength for the weary". This section of "Daleth" is often given the title of "God's word revives and restores".

So, as we come to Psalm 119:25-32, we enter the section headed "Daleth". This is generally taken to mean "door" but also has a sense of weak or needy and the Hebrew symbol of it seems to be like a needy person who is bent over. These two aspects therefore remind me of a tent door, pinned up at one side to allow entry. For many of my friends and myself this will take our minds to Fenham in Northumberland where we attended a camp at which we stayed in canvas bell tents. When young, it was very easy to stoop down and go in through the pinned up low tent door but as we get older it becomes more and more of a thought! Nevertheless, it is essential to go through the door either to go in for shelter or out into the daylight and so it is like this section: we move from the previous three sections through this "door" to allow us to enjoy all that is to come later. However, just like the tent door at Fenham, the psalmist here is having to get down low and experience that which is perhaps difficult to face and admit to himself.

In Psalm 119:25 then the psalmist brings us back to earth after the heady spiritual contents of the previous section, *"My soul clings to the dust."* How easy it is for any us to be unduly concerned and occupied with the things of earth. The old chorus reminds us to

*"Turn our eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim..."*

Helen H Lemmel (1863-1961)

© 1922 Singspiration Music/Brentwood Benson Music Publishing administered by Bucks Music Group Ltd.

That can so easily not be the case and perhaps this is a challenge to us. We will never fully enjoy the things of God if we are earthbound. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul teaches us about the unique place that believers in Christ are brought into as now being no longer simply following the things of the earth as descendants of Adam but now, being a new creature in Christ Jesus, having a spiritual life that can lift us beyond the things of earth. 1 Corinthians 15:47 contains the wonderful expression that Adam was *"of the earth, earthy."* There was nothing else that he could possibly be, but as believers we have a new life that can respond to things of heaven and it is only in occupation with God's Word that we can cultivate this. I feel this is what the psalmist has come to in the second part of Psalm 119:25 when he desires to be revived according to God's Word. Oh, that we may always be desiring during every aspect of life, whether good or bad, to be revived in that same way!

In Psalm 119:26 the psalmist opens up to God about all his ways. Not just the good days, or the "Sundays" when we go to meet with other believers for a very short period in comparison to the rest of our week. Not just the days when everything is going our way and life seems good. This is everything! Imagine if all my thoughts, words, actions and deeds for just one week were made public. Perhaps the public library was to put on a display or it was all published in the local paper. What a terrible thought that would be and yet the God who sees and knows everything is already overseeing our "ways" for every day of our life. My mind goes to the story of Hagar in Genesis 16. After the LORD told her that she would bare a son, Genesis 16:13 tells us, *"Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, 'Have I also here seen Him who sees me?'"* She too had a great appreciation that God was watching. So why confess our ways if God sees and knows everything anyway? The Apostle John answers this question very clearly. In 1 John 1:9 he said, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* What a tremendous verse for us as believers and we should never lose sight of this important teaching that seemed to be very much in the mind of the psalmist. My "ways" perhaps covers not just my faults but also the very root of sinfulness that we all have. As mentioned in Psalm 119:25, as descendants of Adam we inherit that sinful nature and it is this that we also must lay open before God. To hide from or ignore our inmost nature and the sins that flow from it means we will never be right with the holy and righteous God and enjoy His blessing in our lives. Therefore, the second part of Psalm 119:26 is a natural follow on, that having made all our ways plain, God has answered, and the psalmist is now, as it were, free and clear to learn from God and enjoy His promises.

We now come to Psalm 119:27 and this is all about knowing and understanding the ways of God ourselves before we seek to talk about them and teach others. If I was to become an expert on any subject, I may well be able to impart that knowledge to others without it making any difference to my own life. Surely in scriptural things it should be very different, and we should be looking to enjoy, appreciate and put it into practice in our own lives first before we seek to teach others. Being able to teach the Scriptures is less about the knowledge gained but more about the application of that knowledge in our own life. In Acts 17:11 we read about the people from Berea who accepted what they had heard but then went and searched the Scriptures for themselves to see if these things were so. They wanted to understand fully the ways of God, so they could then spend time going over in their mind the wonderful things of God. I work in Pensions and have spent many hours having to study for exams and to maintain a level of professional competence. Never once have I found myself meditating on the wonders of pensions, irrespective of how important they may be in later life! How much time do we all spend occupied with things, however innocent or needful they may be, that will never bring to us a sense of wonder and real soul satisfaction? Do you ever feel that knowledge of certain things leaves us feeling, "so what?" The study of God's Word should never leave us feeling like this. It should make us want to praise and worship God for all that He is and all that He has done for us. Surely the more we understand, the more we should appreciate.

So, if occupation with the things of God and His ways and words brings fullness and satisfaction for the soul, then in Psalm 119:27 we get the very opposite, occupation with self. There is surely nothing worse than being in the company of someone who is self-absorbed, whether occupied with one's successes or failures, one's good health or poor health, moans or boastings. There is no joy or encouragement to come from that to those around. It is also of no good to the person who is so absorbed. The psalmist here uses very graphic language that his soul is melting with heaviness. Psalm 119:25 told us about the perils of being earthbound and now it is inward looking that is causing his problem. What is his remedy for this? Is it to get out more and lift his spirits? Or perhaps get more exercise and eat better? Have more contact with friends or maybe take a holiday? All these things have their place, but they will never lift the soul permanently above the heaviness that our writer feels. He seems very clear that what he needs is to be strengthened, uplifted and kept by nothing other than the word of God. In Romans 7, the Apostle reminds us of what we are at our base level and seems to have the same view as the psalmist when he states that the good he would like to do he cannot and the things that he doesn't want to do are the very things he does. So, he declares in Romans 7:24, *"O wretched man that I am!..."* If we read no further, then we would perhaps feel, like the psalmist, that our soul is "melting" with heaviness but we should always remember to read on into Romans 8 where Romans 8:1 declares the tremendous and victorious statement that every believer should never forget: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."* I believe that to lift our spirits above all the challenges of this life, if

we are to only remember one of God's promises, this is the one I would suggest. So, what lifts you up when you are feeling down?

We now come to Psalm 119:29, and it raises the simple question as to whether we are prepared to accept the truth about our ourselves or whether we will deny it. We may very well be the kind of person who would never willingly lie to someone else about something important, but what about to the all-knowing God about things that perhaps not another person might know about? A very simple example of this might be in seeming to come across as having it all together spiritually yet knowing inside that we are spiritually very dry. God hates lying! He wants us to be truthful in every aspect of our lives, He wants truth in the "inner man". Paul writing to the Ephesians desires that "[we] might be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). How could this possibly work if we are not being truthful with ourselves, with others and with God?

Then having desired that the way of lying might be removed, the writer makes an interesting request: "*Grant me Your law graciously*" (Psalm 119:29). Grace and law don't mix very well. We are told in the first chapter of John's Gospel that "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". (John 1:17). There was nothing wrong with God's law. It was given by Him to make His people realise how holy He was and how far short they had become. In Galatians 3:24 Paul refers to the law as a "*schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*". So, is this a contradiction? Far from it! Perhaps the literal Hebrew translation will help us understand what the psalmist is saying: "*Favour me with Your law.*" The children of Israel were favoured by God to be given His law yet what a burden it became for them, but how different for those who are in Christ that we can seek God's favour and blessing by doing His work and will because of what Christ has done for us. Paul reminds the Ephesian believers that "*it is by grace [they] are saved*" (Ephesians 2:8). So, to serve and worship God should be a privilege and not a chore.

In Psalm 119:30 we see that the psalmist has made a decision. After he has looked inside himself and given himself some tough challenges, his mind is made up and he is determined to follow the way of truth. That is not the end of the story or his journey, however, and when a person accepts Christ they should feel the same. Yes, we are then fit and ready for heaven, but now we must prepare ourselves for what will lie ahead in this life whether long or short. We can only do this by having the Scriptures before us regularly in the same way as the psalmist was determined to do for himself. I have already mentioned earlier the Bereans (Acts 17:11) and in a similar way Paul urged his young friend Timothy in his second letter to him to study the word so that he would be approved and unashamed as a workman for God (see 2 Timothy 2:15). In a day and age when this world seems to admire many things that are not true and are very definitely wrong, we should be marked as rejoicing in that which is honest and true. In one of my favourite verses of Scripture, the Apostle Paul urges the believers in Philippians 4:8 to think on various things which will be good for them; the first three of these things are true, noble and just.

In Psalm 119:30 we see his determination but now this has moved to devotion in Psalm 119:31. He is now using the same word as used in Psalm 119:25 when he was clinging to the dust to show he is now clinging to the Word of God. What a change in his outlook as he moves through "the door" to the blessing of God! I have just mentioned how Paul encouraged Timothy to study, so that he might properly teach God's word. Surely there is nothing worse when those who profess to teach Bible truth and yet put forward views and beliefs that are at complete odds to the very thing they are teaching. How sad, but God will not be mocked and He will put all things right and be vindicated in a day to come. There is also another aspect of Psalm 119:31 similar to that which we have just considered in Psalm 119:30. If the ways of God, the Scriptures, His testimonies are ever laid before us and we choose to walk in them then it will keep us in the way of righteousness and we will avoid the shame that can so easily be brought to those who do not choose this way.

I am sure you, like me, will be often disappointed and feel let down when we see or hear of people whom we once held in respect shamed by one scandal or another. In this day and age of social media when very few things remain secret for very long, it can sometimes just take one moment of being off guard and the shame that the psalmist wants to avoid can be brought upon us. We do need to keep in mind, however, that what the court of public opinion may consider "shame" is not necessary the same as what God considers shameful. Many aspects of life this world now finds acceptable, but God's standards do not alter and we should always be mindful that we hold ourselves to His standards and not those of this world.

Now to our final verse, Psalm 119:32, and we see that the one who began this section burdened, earthbound and rather depressed in his soul, is now metaphorically running with his heart enlarged and beating hard with the wonder of the things of God. I feel this is a slightly different thought to when the Apostle Paul could write in 2 Timothy 4:7 about finishing the race. That is more looking at the life Paul had lived but I feel this is more the thought of running through the course that God has set the psalmist according to His ways. It seems to me that this is like standing at the start of an obstacle course with many different things that we must contend with but knowing that we have the strength to deal with each one as it comes up. So all the challenges that God gives us to encourage us, build us up and bring us into blessing, the psalmist is prepared to take them on with vigour and enthusiasm. As it were, he would let the ways of God run freely throughout his life. He can only do this by the Lord enlarging his heart. The Authorised

translation says, *"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart"*. This could almost seem like he is saying *"I will... when You..."* This is not the thought here and the New King James that we have quoted makes us see that it is more *"I will.... because You have..."* It seems that all the ways of God are coursing through his veins, like the very blood that keeps us alive and makes us move physically. It's the Word of God that gets him up in the morning; it is this that gives him the enthusiasm to live life in all its fullness. The ways of God have become the psalmist's life blood. What is it that makes me feel alive? What is the main motivating factor in my life? What a challenge this surely is for each one of us!

I trust that these few thoughts in consideration of this section of this wonderful Psalm may be a blessing and a help to each one who has listened to them and that you, like me, may have learned something that you can apply to your own life that you had perhaps never thought of before.

Thank you for listening and may God richly bless you today and every day.

Please Note:

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.