Psalm 119:49-56, 57-64, 65-72 • Zayin, Heth & Teth (#7-9)

Introduction

[Note: Each stanza of Psalm 119 is a study in and of itself. For the purposes of leading a small group study, these three are presented together as a single study.]

It should not surprise anyone that Psalm 119 is the largest of the 929 chapters in our Bible as it is dedicated to not only explaining how Scripture is organized by its consistent use of 8 categories of God’s Word, but repeatedly provides real world examples of how we are to apply every facet of God’s Word to our life. The goal is not to determine what we can expect from God’s Word, but that which we need to do to meet the personal shortfalls of what God’s Word expects from us.

[Read v.49-56] Through It All

Q: What are the listed behaviors of those who reject God and His Word?

- (v.51) “The arrogant utterly deride me…”
- (v.53) “Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.” (v.53)

Point: Because the unbelieving express contempt and ridicule for God’s Word by forsaking it, they naturally render the same to those who cling to it.

Q: Does this Psalm’s author offer that this is something easily dealt with?

A: No, he specifically calls it “my affliction”. This is a Hebrew term which describes a state of hardship and trouble.

Q: What does the author do in order to deal with this hardship?

A: “I…comfort myself” (v.52) by...

- Remembering God’s “ordinances from old” (v.52)—that is, the application of His Word in every situation, whether or not it is specifically articulated in Scripture, since the beginning. What He has done, He will continue to do—a continuous action.

- Making God’s “statutes…my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (v.54)—that is, remaining within the constraints of God’s Word, recognizing we are just here temporarily.

- Remembering “Your name in the night” (v.55)—that is, obedient to God’s Word and ways regardless of the hour or circumstance. The literal darkness of night is often a biblical metaphor for the worst of spiritual conditions.

Application: Note that neither was a miracle sought to rescue the author personally, nor was God’s imprecatory judgment called down to eliminate the source of the affliction. What he seeks is to maintain personal faithfulness to God’s Word regardless.
Teach me Your statutes.

The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes.

59 I considered my ways And turned my feet to Your testimonies.

60 I hastened and did not delay To keep Your commandments.

61 The cords of the wicked have encircled me, But I have not forgotten Your law.

62 At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You Because of Your righteous ordinances.

63 I am a companion of all those who fear You, And of those who keep Your precepts.

64 The earth is full of Your testimonies. And of those who keep Your precepts. But I have not forgotten Your law.

Q: What is “portion” referring to? How does it provide an overall context?

A: This could easily be translated as “inheritance”. It is used in Scripture to describe God’s people...

“For the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. (Dt. 32:9)

...and the land of Israel as a literal inheritance for His people...

“Now therefore, apportion this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh.”(Josh. 13:7)

Likewise the believer’s inheritance is not actually in the things of this world, but in the Lord as well, an indication of that we are children of the Father, not restricted to being physical descendants of life below.

... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:10a–12)

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.(Col. 3:23–24)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.(1 Pe. 1:3–5)

Q: According to v.58, what is the petitioner seeking for THIS life?

A: “...Be gracious to me according to Your word”. In other words, he is not asking for supernatural intervention or God’s judgment on those aligned against him, but to be treated correspondingly to his degree of faithfulness to God’s Word.

Q: What are those things which bode well for the author in this regard where his personal relationship with God is concerned?

- (v.57) “I have promised to keep Your words”
- (v.58) “I sought Your favor”
- (v.59) “…turned my feet to Your testimonies”
- (v.60) “…did not delay to keep Your commandments”
- (v.61) “I have not forgotten Your law”

Q: And where his personal relationships are concerned?

A: “I am a companion of those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts”. (v.63) These are those who not only show the proper respect and reverence for God, but those who have entered into an actual covenant
relationship with Him, since a precept can only be obeyed by a believer AFTER they have come to faith in God.

Q: What is here indicated that the author's endurance is an additional issue?
A: The reference in v.62 to rising and giving thanks at midnight, something often employed as a spiritual metaphor to speak of the intensity of spiritual issues or an overall spiritual environment.

Q: How do these verses end with a priority for believers where THIS life is concerned?
A: “Teach me Your statutes”—that is, the boundaries which God has set for believers designating requirements for them as to how to worship God and pursue biblical relationships, guidelines which allow us to live IN the world but OF the world.

Application: Believers devoted to God’s Word understand that their “portion” or inheritance is not the things of this life, but the next, and always act accordingly in both their heavenly and earthly relationships.

[Read v.65-72] The Right Result from Discipline

Q: What is the present situation where the believer is concerned?
A: This is presented in the context of having experienced the discipline of the Lord, and effected the right response to it.

- (v.65) “You have dealt well with Your servant…”
- (v.67) “Before I was afflicted I went astray…”
- (v.71) “It is good for me that I was afflicted…”

Q: What was the right response to the Lord’s discipline?
A: “…but now I keep Your word”. (v.67) He is no longer just a “hearer” of the Word, but a doer. (Mt. 7:24-27; Ja. 1:23-25)

Q: How is this believer’s right response to God’s Word contrasted to that of the unbeliever?
A: Not only are unbelievers’ identified as “arrogant” and manipulating the truth (v.69)—the opposite of the working of God’s Word, but the phrase, “Their heart is covered in fat” is an idiom used to describe someone who refuses to listen and change.

Q: What are the requested action points now that the backslidden have properly responded to the Lord’s discipline?
A: “Teach me good discernment and knowledge” (v.66) in combination with, “That I may learn”. (v.71) It is far more valuable than anything which can be offered in this life, even a treasure of silver and gold. (v.72)

Application: Faithfulness is the only cure for unfaithfulness, and obedience for disobedience to God’s Word and ways.
Overall Application

Q: How are the first and third lessons ("Zayin" & "Teth") related?
A: The first deals with issues outside our control, the second with issues which result from within ourselves. It's the difference between a trial and discipline.

Q: How might the second teaching regarding our true inheritance relate?
A: Regardless of what takes place in this life, whether from outside or within, we are never working for the temporal benefits of the world but the eternal of the next life.

Application: Personal faithfulness to God's Word guides from this life to the next even through the trials the world brings or those we bring on ourselves.