

## Psalm 119:1-8 – Following God’s Will

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Psalm 119 is a very impressive psalm.
  - A. It has 176 verses making it the longest Psalm and/or “chapter” in the Bible.
  - B. It is divided into 22 stanzas, each of which is 8 verses long. These stanzas are arranged into an acrostic poem, using every letter of the Hebrew alphabet—1<sup>st</sup> stanza “aleph,” 2<sup>nd</sup> “beth,” etc.
  - C. In addition to that, every line in an entire stanza begins with the same letter, meaning not just one verse, but eight verses start with the letter aleph, the next eight with beth, etc.
  - D. But it is not its literary properties that makes it great, but its message that translates well for the lives of God’s people even today.
2. For, Psalm 119 is a psalm that is all about **following God’s will**.
  - A. Throughout this psalm the writer refers to God’s will with *synonyms* such as law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, ordinances, word, and promise. These appear and reappear throughout to help shape our understanding of what Scripture truly is and our obligations to it.
  - B. Sadly, because *strict obedience* to God’s will/law is *emphasized* and *celebrated*, much of the teaching called “Christian” today is at odds with this psalm, which is unfortunate.
    - i. Commentators point out the “problem” of the psalm being that today we are not justified by the Law, but by faith in Christ and His grace. They do so as if devotion to God expressed in obedience is somehow contradictory to faith and grace.
    - ii. But they miss the point of the psalm even as they miss the truth of the role our obedience to God’s will plays in God’s plan.
  - C. For, ancient readers would have found this psalm to be of great encouragement, as should we, because it tells how to live a happy and pleasing life before God.
3. So, I want to examine the first eight verses of this psalm (not much, I know). To do so this I will:
  - A. Look at the **delight** found in following God’s will.
  - B. The **duty** required in following God’s will.
  - C. How following God’s will is **displayed** in our lives.

### BODY:

#### **I. Delight of following God’s will (Psalm 119:1-3)**

- A. “How **blessed** are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord” (119:1).
  1. Being blessed, happy, or having delight in one’s life comes through blamelessness.
    - a. Charles Bridges, a theologian of the past century, rightly said, “All would secure themselves from the incursions of misery; but all do not consider that **misery is the offspring of sin, from which** therefore **it is necessary to be delivered and preserved**, in order to become **happy** or ‘**blessed**.’”
      - i. If we hope to be blessed/happy, we are going to have to seek to live our lives without blame, without blemish, which requires our separation from sin.
      - ii. Thus, **that they, or we, can be blessed**, or know real delight in this life, is amazing considering that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).
    - b. So, as is true **now**, so it was true **then**, being blessed, or truly happy, is dependent on God’s bestowal of grace in our lives through Christ (Eph. 1:7-8 – “In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the **forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to the riches of His **grace**<sup>8</sup> which He lavished on us...”).
  2. But we must understand our part in this—that the blessed “walk/live in the law of the Lord.”
    - a. We cannot hope for blessedness by grace outside of knowing and obeying God’s will (Psalm 1:1-2 – “How **blessed** is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! <sup>2</sup> But his **delight** is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”).
    - b. So, it is those who **delight in God’s will** that will **receive delight** (blessedness, happiness) **from the Lord**.
    - c. Thus, even in O.T. times, living by God’s law was not a negative or oppressive way of life, but **the path** that leads to blessings and satisfaction, **just as it is today**. For...

- B. “How **blessed** are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart” (119:2).
1. Being happy/blessed comes through obedience of God’s testimonies.
    - a. Observe – to obey, but also means to carefully watch over a particular thing to guard it.
    - b. Testimonies – the statutes and regulations of God’s covenant
    - c. Again, those who are blessed, or happy, are those who truly seek to obey God’s law.
  2. This is because obedience has a goal—“who seek Him with all their heart”—to grow in knowledge of Him and to be closer to Him.
    - a. We see hints of this in how the psalmist speaks of following the **Lord’s** law, **His** testimonies, **His** ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, and **His** word!
    - b. Because they are from God, we must understand that to put great effort into knowing and obeying these will help us **know God**, His character, and nature, and **be like Him!**
    - c. That we can know God and be like Him is a blessing to which nothing else can compare!
- C. They are **blessed** because “they also do no unrighteousness; they walk in His ways” (119:3).
1. There is value in following God’s will with all your heart because it means that what we are spending our life/energy on is righteousness, what is right, what is good for all.
    - a. There is no evil, there is nothing bad, for us or our neighbor, in walking in God’s ways!
    - b. But if we do not follow God’s will, what we spend our life on is unrighteousness—what is wrong, what is bad for everyone! For, no one truly benefits from sin!
  2. And, just as it was true then, so it is true now that obeying God’s commandments is required of God’s people to live righteously (1 Jn. 3:7-8, 10 – “Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the **one who practices righteousness is righteous**, just as He is righteous; <sup>8</sup> the **one who practices sin is of the devil**; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil...<sup>10</sup> By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: **anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God**, nor the **one who does not love his brother!**”).
  3. If you want to glorify God and do what is good for yourself and others, then live righteously by keeping God’s commandments revealed for you through Christ!

## II. **Duty** of following God’s will (119:4-6)

- A. “**You** have ordained **Your** precepts, that we **should keep them diligently**” (119:4)
1. God ordained, appointed, or commanded His precepts for the purpose of obedience to them, which should seem only logical...even though it is not to some.
  2. So, we should not be surprised that this has not changed for the disciple of Christ.
    - a. Lk. 6:46 – “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”
    - b. Jn. 14:15 – “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”
    - c. Jn. 15:14 – “You are My friends if you do what I command you.”
  3. Thus, the blessed, those who know delight in this world, are those who understand that it is their **duty** to *acknowledge God’s authority* and submit to his *precepts!*
- B. The blessed desire to obey (119:5-6 – “Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes! <sup>6</sup> Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Your commandments”).
1. They honestly and sincerely petition God for help that they might be **established**, or prepared, **to keep His statutes**.
    - a. They do so because obedience surrounds our service to God.
    - b. Obedience is a required for:
      - i. **Allegiance to God** (Acts 5:29 – “But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must **obey God** rather than men.”).
      - ii. **Faith** (Heb. 11:8 – “By **faith** Abraham **obeyed** when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”). He would not be the father of the faithful if he had refused!
      - iii. Receiving the **promise of the Holy Spirit?** (Acts 5:32 – “And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given **to those who obey him.**”).

- iv. **Righteousness** (Rom. 6:16 – “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of **obedience resulting in righteousness?**”).
- v. **Fellowship** (2 Thess. 3:13-14 – “As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. <sup>14</sup> If anyone **does not obey what we say in this letter**, take note of that person, and **have nothing to do with him**, that he may be ashamed.”).
- vi. **Salvation:**
  - 1) Heb. 5:8-9 – “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. <sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the **source of eternal salvation to all who obey him**”
  - 2) 2 Thess. 1:7-8 – “...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup> **dealing out retribution** to those who do not know God and **to those who do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus.”
- 2. Sadly, many, including Christians, never know the real joy of serving Christ because:
  - a. They never grow beyond their worldly life of disobedience, sin, and its shame (Rom. 6:20-21, 23 – “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> Therefore **what benefit** were you then deriving from the things of which you are now **ashamed?** For the outcome of those things is **death**...<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”).
  - b. They never grow to appreciate the value of knowing and obeying God’s will (2 Tim. 2:15 – “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman **who does not need to be ashamed**, accurately handling the **word of truth**.”).
- 3. So, like the psalmist, our prayers should be offered with keen awareness of the **value** of God’s will for our lives, expressing our **desire** to obey God’s will, and with the knowledge of our own inadequacies that we might always **seek God’s grace to help** us fulfill our duty in obeying His will!

### III. **Display of following God’s will** (119:7-8)

- A. The blessed of God display their devotion in thankful praise (119:7 – “I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments.”).
  - 1. That he **vows** to do this shows that praise to God is rooted in the will, the determination of heart, not the emotions.
    - a. Many wrongfully assume, to their own detriment, that praise to God is not fully achieved without their feelings, or emotions, being in line with their words and actions.
      - i. Now that is good and generally should be true.
      - ii. Yet, you may not always **feel** like praising God, but you can still determine to do so!
      - iii. Does it not show great devotion, maybe more forcefully, when our mind determines to praise God even though our emotions are fighting against us? Yes!
    - b. Also, true praise to God comes from an upright, or straight, heart—a heart of undivided loyalty and devotion to God.
      - i. Jesus said it this way (Matt. 6:24 – “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and **wealth**.”).
      - ii. We could replace **wealth** with many things that draw us away from singular devotion to God. But whatever it may be, it must be eliminated because it keeps us from proper service and praise of God!
  - 2. The psalmist does not promise his praise when he receives God’s blessings, but **when he learns God’s will, His righteous judgments**.
    - a. The blessed seek to know God’s will not for personal pride, etc., but so that he/she might use that knowledge to glorify God!
    - b. God deserves our praise because he is God, because He has authority over us and has revealed His desired worship in His will, not just because He gives us things!
    - c. And, note that true worship follows **learning God’s righteous judgments!**

- i. Many forget this, or ignore this, offering worship based solely on their desire or wisdom. But, again, this is not the way of the blessed (Psa. 119:171 – “Let my lips utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes.”)
  - ii. Acceptable praise is not found in musical styles, charismatic leaders, emotional manipulation, or worldly entertainment, but upon having a heart that seeks out God and the fulfilling of His will.
  - iii. Therefore, all “worship” divorced from revelation is not worship no matter how sincere it may be. You can only praise God when you learn His righteous rules.
- B. The blessed obey what they have learned (119:8 – “I shall keep Your statutes; do not forsake me utterly!”).
- 1. This is obedience offered unconditionally! And God’s desires it today (Jas. 1:21-22 – “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. <sup>22</sup> But prove yourselves **doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**”).
  - 2. This determination to obey must be coupled with the reality of our need for God’s help to serve Him successfully—“Do not forsake me utterly!”
    - a. Fortunately, we are not on our own. God has promised to stand with us in our fight (1 Cor. 10:13 – “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation **will provide the way of escape** also, so that **you will be able to endure it.**”).
    - b. Take courage and seek God with all your heart and life, knowing its value (1 Cor. 15:58 – “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. So, I hope you have been impressed, as I have, with the message of just a few verses of this psalm, and that you will consider and know the delight of following God’s word, and fulfill your duty of following God’s word, and display to the world the life of praise to God that following God’s will requires of your life.
- 2. Will you come to Christ today in F-R-C-Bp?