

Light Brings Salt

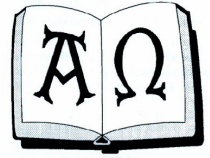
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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



Real Living is Related to the Word of God

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In the 'gimel' stanza of Psalm 119 the Psalmist introduces a very important theme or thread that will run throughout the stanza. That theme is this: **There is no living until you properly adjust to the Word of God! Only existing!**

To the Psalmist, living is not merely existence, to the Psalmist everyone who fails to adjust to God's word is but a living corpse. Therefore in this stanza he emphasizes that the Word of God is the only source of genuine living.

Let's examine the thought flow or thrust of the Psalmist in this stanza? He begins in verse 17 with a general statement which he then subdivides into three elements: A petition, a purpose, and a promise. A petition, *Deal bountifully with thy servant.* Purpose, *that I may live.* Promise, *that I may keep thy word.*

He also recognizes his need of insight into the Word so the next 2 verses are petitions for insight (verses 18-19). It's open my eyes and uncover your word, don't hide it from me. Then in verse 20 he becomes emotional as he states his desire. In verse 21 he observes what's going on around him, the external, what's occurring to others. Look at the horrible fate of those who have disregarded the Word!

Next in verse 22 he pictures himself as living under an enormous load and he

petitions the Lord to please lift this enormous load off of my back. The reason that he has this enormous load was that he had the audacity in his day to assert the principles of the Word of God and to live them. With verses 23-24 he closes with a personal observation, what's happening to him.

The theme of the stanza is developed in the first verse of the stanza, verse 17. He first petitions God to deal bountifully with him. The word translated bountifully, *gamal*, is rooted in the simple idea that there can't be any life at all with out God making a move towards us. We should note also here that in verse 17 we have the only title that the Psalmist gives himself in the whole Psalm and that is 'servant'. This should stimulate a question, why servant? And also why this title exclusively? The answer comes from observing what is the chief characteristic of the servant. Obedience and submission!

What is the overall theme of Psalm 119? The importance of the Word of God! What is our chief responsibility or duty that we have to the Word of God? Obedience and submission!

The only way that he figured that he could properly relate himself to the Word in this Psalm then is by the title servant. This is very appropriate since the servant doesn't call out the commands, God does and the servant must be obedient.

Since he asks God to deal bountifully with him, what is his reason, his purpose for this request? That's what we see next; *"that I may live.."* His conclusion then is that apart

from God's provision there is no life! There is only biology!

The word here for life, *chajah*, is used in many passages in the O.T. and can refer to physical life or spiritual life. Since **no where** do we see in this psalm where he is in danger physically and knowing that God is the sustainer of life, and as a result he is praying for deliverance since he was about to die, that he is asking for a special extension of life. Not what's here.

Therefore I would take it that what he is talking about here is spiritual life, and for the Psalmist that would revolve around his relationship to God, to YHWH, through His Word. This brings us back to his theme, if you don't adjust to that, your not living.

In the last part of verse 17 the Psalmist makes a promise. One that later will get him into some trouble, (vs:23-24). He made a promise that he would keep his word. Since he lived in the kosmos, under Satan's rule, this promise to keep thy word is going to set him apart. The idea of the word keep here is obedience, protection, or guardianship of something. So he is saying then, I am going to obey your word, protect your word. What is living then? Obeying, guarding and protecting your word.

Having said this he now turns to his petition for insight, in verses 18-19. I'm your servant Lord, I'm here to obey, to carry out your orders, and that's living for me! I'm going to guard your word! Obviously a thought ran through his mind. How can we obey what we do not understand? How can we, as man, understand divine truth? He recognizes that you can't obey what you don't understand. Therefore the petition of verse 18. "*Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from thy law.*"

The idea of the word "open" is to uncover something that is normally concealed. It's intensive and therefore the implication is to open fully my eyes, my spiritual eyes, so that I have spiritual insight into the Word. His petition is based on reality, that man

has a natural blindness to the Word of God! We need a grace provision, a supernatural provision if we're to understand the Word. That's where the illumination of the Holy Spirit comes in. So his request is very intense and recognizes the importance of the Word. Literally the petition is, "*Open fully my eyes that I may be caused to behold, to see with discernment, wonderful things out of thy law.*"

Wonderful things" (*pala'*) means to be surpassing, to be extraordinary and it refers to things that surpass all other things. The "law" refers to the teaching or instruction that is in God's Word.

How or in what sense does God's word or teaching transcend the ordinary? That's what the Psalmist is expecting here! If you open my eyes to your book, to your teaching then I'm going to be caused to see something beyond the ordinary, the truths that I'm going to see will surpass ordinary things. The answer is that the things that transcend the ordinary are the things that man could never find for himself, never discover on his own.

Isn't that true of the content of God's Word? Christ's death on our behalf for our sins. Do you think man could just sit down and figure that out for himself? No, it's a transcendent truth that you will only learn from the scriptures. We are one day as believers going to be glorified and made like Him! Body, soul and spirit like Him! Where do you get that truth? These wondrous things, things that surpass the ordinary come out of His teaching, out of His Word. So as our eyes are opened, as we have spiritual insight, discernment, we are going to behold fantastic and extraordinary things out of His word.

In verse 19 we find the second part of his petition. First he makes a statement of fact, then the petition. "*I am a stranger in the earth.*" The concept of a stranger, is that of a newcomer, one who had no inheritance rights or to anyone who was transient. If we are transients, if we are just passing through this life, doesn't it

make a little bit of sense that we ought to try in this transient period, since on the other side of life is eternity, doesn't it make sense that we ought to try and pick up something of eternal value while we are here?

Stop and think for a moment, most people pass through their entire life and do not pick up one single thing. May have worked hard, made a tremendous living, great home, fine career and what can you say about all of these things? All transient, all temporal and when death takes place what of these things can he take? Most people pass through and take nothing of eternal value out of life! That is not entirely true since there is something that those who reject Christ will take out of this life, that is eternal in nature, and that is eternal condemnation, eternal judgment for rejecting Christ!

This is a sobering thought that the Psalmist has here, he realizes that hey, we're just passing through, and mighty quickly at that. Lord I want to pick up something in life that is lasting, that is eternal. Since I'm just passing through, Lord, I've got a petition, "*Don't hide your commandments from me.*" Did you ever pray that prayer? Does this petition imply that God plays hide and seek with his truth? Have some hidden over here, bet you can't find it? And as we get close to it, runs and hides it somewhere else. If God is trying to hide truth then why has he given us His word? Is He playing games with it? The answer is in the word hide, which is in the causative stem, and says, "*do not cause your commandments to be hidden from me.*" The context supplies the idea behind hidden. It is related to the first petition, to open my eyes, give me spiritual understanding therefore don't let your word be hidden to my understanding. The aspect of the word emphasized here with the term commandments is the authoritative declarations of God.

Remember the thought flow of these verses. The "open my eyes" and the "hide

not" are petitions for spiritual insight and I need insight because we're not here very long, and the word of God is eternal and we need something eternal to take with us.

With this thought the psalmist then bursts with emotion. Verse 20 is a strong statement of his desire. There are two aspects to his desire. First is the emotional aspect and then there is a constancy aspect. An emotional part and a part that brings stability.

First let's look at the emotional aspect which is expressed in the phrase "*My soul is crushed with longing,*" For us to be crushed, is to be disappointed. He is not saying that he is disappointed. For the Hebrew of the day it expressed a strong longing. When you have an intense longing there is a strong feeling right in the chest. There is also a strong feeling in the chest area when you experience great disappointment. For them the feeling, the emotion was one of longing or intense desire, not disappointment as we might tend to relate it to today.

"*My soul is crushed with intense longing.*" Notice the object, the direction of his longing, "*after thine ordinances at all times.*" Here's our constancy aspect. He has a never ending longing, a constant desire for the word of God. The word "ordinances," mishpat, has a judicial flavor, and it refers to God's decisions in matters and this is what the psalmist is after.

This intense desire that the Psalmist has for the Word of God comes because he knows that apart from its truths being the basis of his life there is no real living only mere existence. He has come to that settled conclusion that apart from a relationship with the living God and His thinking which He has revealed through His Word life has no real purpose or meaning.

Is your conclusion the same as the Psalmist?