

Text: Ps 119.17-24

Today we go back to Psalm 119 for our communion service.

Read Ps 119.17-24

Every verse in this section starts with the Hebrew letter “Gimel,” it represents the “g” sound.

The first word in the section (119.17) is *gāmal*. It is translated here, “deal bountifully.”

“In the [main form] it signifies to render either good or evil to someone. In some passages the two are contrasted (Prov 31:12; I Sam 24:17 [H 18])); in others evil is done (Gen 50:15, 17; Prov 3:30); in still others good is done (Isa 63:7). At times the idea is to deal bountifully with (Ps 13:6; 116:7, etc.), or to deal out reward (II Sam 19:36 [H 37]).”¹

To give the word some colour, in some contexts it refers to weaning a child. (For example, Samuel in 1 Sa 1.23-24.) It also can refer to bearing ripe almonds (Num 17.8) or grapes (Isa 18.5).

The word seems to have the idea of giving the rewards of maturity to the one who has earned it.

1. A weaned child gets the rewards of a full diet.
2. A farmer gets the reward of a ripened harvest.
3. A sinner can get the “reward” of “what’s coming to him.”

Joseph’s brothers were afraid that Joseph would deal with them according to their former works when Jacob died. (Gen 50.15)

“What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and **pays us back in full** for all the wrong which we did to him!”

In our text, the psalmist wants the reward of his commitment to God’s word.

Let’s lay out a kind of paraphrase showing the parallelism of the verses:

17-18

¹ Jack P. Lewis, “גָּמַל 360,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 166.

Deal bountifully — so I can live and keep your word
 Open my eyes — so I can see wondrous words

19-20

I am a stranger on earth — do not hide your word
 My soul is crushed — I long for your word

21-22

You rebuke the arrogant — Those who wander from your law
 Take away reproach from me — I observe your word

23-24

Though the mighty slander — I mediate on your word
 Your words are my delight — they are my counselors

A good summary statement about the section:

“The psalmist identifies himself as Yahweh’s servant (vv. 17, 24) and views Yahweh’s directions as his primary way of navigating the opposition he faces (vv. 19, 24).”²

I’ve called this message:

The Inner Life of the Saint

As we prepare for communion I want to focus on how we maintain a clear and close relationship with our Redeemer.

I. Prayer based on relationship

A. Established

1. Doesn’t pray like a stranger
2. Already knows God

“your servant” (17)

B. Desired

1. The sincere servant wants more

² John D. Barry et al., *FaithLife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2012), Ps 119.17-24.

2. He asks for bounty to live for God (17)
3. He asks for open eyes for better understanding (18)

The OT saint and the NT saint should have the same heart. We are not exactly the same (indwelling Spirit, Israel vs. church) but we serve the same God with the same dependence on God for salvation.

And... our spiritual life is not static, but must constantly grow.

- If you are satisfied with where you are, and don't seek more, you will slide back.

II. Prayer as a sojourner

A. The Psalmist calls himself a sojourner "in the earth" (19)

1. "In the earth" = "eretz" "the land," *i.e.*, Israel
2. A sojourner was a non-native Israelite, but generally considered a proselyte in the OT
3. Yet our psalmist is a native Israelite

He sees himself as out of step with his own people and own land.

B. The Psalmist has enemies

1. "The arrogant, the cursed, who wander" (21)
2. These offer the psalmist reproach and contempt (22)
3. Some of them are "princes" — leaders in the land (23)

It seems the Psalmist's relationship with God reproaches his community, earning him bad treatment and pressure to conform.

III. Prayer focused on God's word

A. In every way, the Psalmist wants more of God's word

1. He wants to keep the word (17)
2. He wants more understanding (18)

3. He begs that the word be not hidden (19)

4. He longs for God's commands (20)

B. The Psalmist ignores the words of opponents

1. He instead observes God's testimonies (22)

2. He meditates on God's statutes (23)

3. He delights in God's testimonies, they are his counselors (24)

"at whatever cost (even the disapproval of influential people), the Lord's word dominates mind, emotions and the practical advice that directs life."³

Conclusion:

I said I wanted our meditation to focus on how we maintain a clear and close relationship with our Redeemer.

Jesus enabled our relationship with our Great God. One of his gracious gifts to us is his Word. We need to fill our hearts and minds with it.

The communion service symbolizes our close relationship with our Saviour. We eat the bread, we drink the cup, our bodies assimilate the nutrients, they become "one" with us.

In the same way, our Lord Jesus grows within us as we consume his Word.

³ J. Alec Motyer, "The Psalms," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 567.