

Day Four

For our next section, let's read Psalm 119:57-80.

The first stanza of this section begins and ends with words that start with the same Hebrew letter, and thus serve as something of a "bracket" for what the psalmist is saying. The first word in verse 57 is the Hebrew word for "portion" (the psalmist saying that God is his "portion," what is allotted to him for his good) and the last word in verse 64 is the Hebrew word for "lovingkindness" (or, "steadfast love" or "unchangeable committed love"). How do you see these two ideas reflected in the rest of the stanza (from verses 57-64)?

Verses 65-72 form the next stanza. What idea is reflected repeatedly in this section?

The Hebrew word for "good" starts with the letter used in the first line of each of these verses (65-72) and the word "good" is the first word in five of the eight verses (65, 66, 68, 71, and 72). In what sense does the psalmist understand God's revelation and His words to be "good"?

The next stanza (taking us from 73-80) introduces an idea that has not yet been touched on in this Psalm. How does the psalmist think of God as reflected in his words in verse 73?

What is the connection between how the psalmist sees himself in relationship to God (as touched on in verse 73), and the sentiment expressed in the rest of this stanza (verses 74-80)?

Read back over this whole section, Psalm 119:57-80. What recurring ideas or words or images come to the surface? What is shaping the psalmist's thinking about God and his relationship with God?

Day Five

In the next stanza, we come to a bit of a climax of some of the things that the psalmist has been reflecting on. In previous sections, the psalmist touched on the trouble he has faced from others.

Notice what he says in:

119:42:

119:51:

119:61:

119:69:

119:78:

How could you summarize these thoughts?

Now read Psalm 119:81-88.

The opening verse here uses one word twice; it is translated in some versions as "longs" (as in ESV), but the sense appears to be closer to "faints" (in the sense of being exhausted in desperation for something). How does that idea filter through the rest of this section (81-88)?

What is it that the psalmist is experiencing or feeling?

What kinds of questions is he wrestling with?

How does the psalmist understand the place of God's words in this weariness that he is feeling?

Ultimately, what does the psalmist rest in? Why?

Psalms:**Turning Down the Noise**

July 18, 2010

Day One

Like any good song, most Psalms have a pattern to them. Sometimes the pattern is simple, like a refrain that comes up throughout the Psalm or a repeated idea or theme. Some Psalms are a bit more explicit in pattern. One example of such is Psalm 119 where we find 22 stanzas of eight verses each; each stanza has a letter of the Hebrew alphabet as its heading and each verse in the stanza begins with that Hebrew letter.

What this suggests is that there might not be a "flow" through this particular Psalm as we have seen in some of the others. Each stanza does stand, to some degree, on its own; although the entire Psalm does share a major, overall theme: The Word of God.

Let's start with the first two stanzas; read Psalm 119:1-16.

Compare the opening line of Psalm 119 with the opening line of the Psalm 1. What is the initial idea in each of these Psalms?

A "blessed" person is one who is living an enviable life, a happy life. What do the first 16 verses of Psalm 119 tell you about the "soil" in which such a happy life grows?

It might be hard for us to understand how "happy" or enviable living grows out of the "law." But this Psalm is not a call to live by rules; it does not present an argument for legalism (don't forget Galatians 3:1!). It will help to keep in mind:

- The "Law" for a Jew could refer to the first five books of the

Old Testament--a collection that includes much more than “rules to follow.” Those five books tell the stories of God’s dealings with His people. Thus, the “Law” is God’s self-revelation of His dealings with His people.

- This Psalm uses eight synonyms to speak about God’s revelation; the focus is not solely or primarily on the idea of “rules to keep.”

What does it mean to speak about God’s “word”? What is underscored by the idea that God has words or precepts or promises?

As you reflect on the words of the second stanza (119:9-16), how does the psalmist feel about God’s revelation? Why does that matter?

As you look at the overall demeanor of these first two stanzas (119:1-16), what does the psalmist have in view *beyond his attention to God’s revelation*? How does he explain the reason for such attention to God’s word?

As we begin our exploration of this Psalm, take time to ask the Lord to shape your heart to reflect more and more the attitude and feelings of the heart of this psalmist.

Day Two

We won’t be able to exhaustively work through Psalm 119 in a week; there is much too much to think about! But, we will continue to unpack some of the psalmist’s thoughts. Read 119:17-32.

In some of the Psalms, the psalmist addresses his own soul; in some he speaks to the “congregation” of other believers. Who does the psalmist address in this Psalm?

After the opening three verses (and with the exception of verse 115) all the words in this Psalm are directed to the Lord. The

Psalmist is reveling in, not only the words of God, but more specifically in the God who speaks, who gave His word. What does recognizing that do for your understanding of what is going on in this Psalm?

The third stanza of this Psalm (119:17-24) pictures something of the need the psalmist feels. What is his concern if he can’t see or hear or find God’s word, His revelation?

What value does the psalmist see in God’s revelation?

When we move to the next stanza, unfortunately most English translations (in trying to give us smoother English) obscure one strong feature of the stanza; in Hebrew, the same word is repeated. Each line begins with the same Hebrew letter (as in all the stanzas in this Psalm), but five of the lines all begin with the word “way.” Can you find this emphasis as you read the translation before you?

With this emphasis on the various “ways,” what is the psalmist underscoring?

Pay particular attention to the specific petitions or requests the psalmist makes in verses 27 through 32. How would you summarize what the psalmist is asking God to do?

Adopt some of the language of these stanzas as your own. Enter into the spirit of this psalm and begin to ask God to do in you what the psalmist desired for God to do in his own heart and life.

Day Three

Each stanza of this wonderful Psalm not only draws on imagery and ideas in early stanzas, but offers fresh perspectives on the

psalmist’s relationship to God and to His word. Because of the way the psalmist put this psalm together, we cannot read it as if each line builds upon the previous one, but we need to see the rich woven tapestry of thought that forms the basis of this Psalm. Let’s turn our attention to the next three stanzas. Read Psalm 119:33-56.

As we look into the first of these three stanzas, it’s important to note that the psalmist begins making specific requests of God. What does he ask of God in verse 33-40?

Why do you think he asks such things?

In the next stanza, each verse begins with the Hebrew letter that means “and,” so each verse is, in some sense, tied to the one after and the one following. The psalmist uses this device to help say what he wants to say. What “connectedness” do you see in verses 41-48?

Taken as a whole, what is the psalmist picturing in verses 41-48?

Three lines in the next stanza all begin with the same Hebrew word: “remember” (verses 49, 52, and 55). Read over this section, verses 49-56. What is the psalmist speaking to God about?

What place does remembering have in what the psalmist wants from God? Realizing that the psalmist doesn’t have a “pocket Old Testament” that he carries with him wherever he goes, why would remembering be so important?

As you listen to this portion of the psalmist’s prayer (verses 33-56) what do you see in his attitude and demeanor toward God and His word that:

1. You see in your own life?
2. You long for in your own life?

Discuss with God what you are seeing and what you really long for.