

## THE BEST OFFENSE - PSALM 119:153-176

### Blessings of God's Word #7

The Haifa police were stumped. They had been alerted to a robbery only to arrive just a few minutes late. The thieves had been alerted to the police's coming, and had escaped. In their haste, however, they had left behind a donkey drawn cart that they had planned to use in the heist. It is still common in the Middle East to find the old mingled with the new, a donkey and some sheep crossing the road while a late model car sits and waits for them.

As the police were standing there, thinking of what to do, one of the officers suddenly remembered a verse of the O.T. "The ox knows his master and the donkey his master's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." (Isaiah 1:3). With a smile, the police officer unhitched the donkey and motioned to his colleagues to follow along with him. Sure enough, the donkey started to walk away, and several blocks later, they were lead right to the home of the thief. Headlines in the Haifa paper announced that the Bible had solved a crime for the police department.

It is amazing how much help the Bible can give to us in different areas of our life. I understand that it was a literal interpretation of the Scriptures that originally lead to the discovery of oil in the Middle East. A top level Standard Oil executive when studying the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in his daily devotions began to think that the description of the destruction might have suggested petroleum deposits that God could have used. That was some 50 years ago. But look at all the oil that has come from the

Middle East since that time as oil companies began to search there for these valuable mineral deposits.

And even those areas of life and technology that have been developed recently, that are not directly addressed in the Bible, we still find principles from God that are broad enough to govern all of life, so that the Bible can be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

We have been looking at the many blessings of God's word from one of the unique passages in the Bible during these past Sunday evenings.

\*It is the longest single chapter in the entire Bible. Psalm 119 contains 176 verses- that is longer than 31 other books in the Bible. If Psalm 119 were a book of the Bible instead of merely a chapter in the book of the Psalms, it would stand just about in the middle of the entire Bible in size, having 35 books larger than it and 31 smaller.

\*Psalm 119 is also unique because of its form. It is written in Hebrew Poetry in an acrostic form. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. What the author of Psalm 119 does is take each letter of the Hebrew alphabet and use it as the first letter of a Hebrew word to start 8 verses in a row. So there are 8 verses starting with the letter Aleph, then 8 starting with the letter Beth, and then Gimmel and Daleth, and so on through the entire Hebrew alphabet. Now if you think that this is an easy task, try writing poetry in the English language using this form. A, B, C, D, E, and so on might be easy enough. But wait until you get to Q and X and Z. Writing this Psalm was certainly not an easy task. And here we have yet another example of the combination of the human

element in writing beautiful poetry, and the divine element of the H.S.

superintending the inspiration of the Scriptures.

\*But most importantly for our study is the emphasis in this passage on the Word of God. 171 verses out of the 176 total refer directly to the Word of God using 10 different key words. That is 97% of this chapter. And the synonymous terms which are used are most descriptive in themselves: law, word, saying, commandment, statute, ordinance, precept, testimony, way, path—each a term to describe the Bible for us. The theme of this chapter is clearly the character and blessings of God's word to us. So it is most valuable for us to spend our time in studying it.

\*We have already looked at 18 blessings of God's word from this precious passage of Scripture:

1. God's word as a pathway to blessing - "Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart" vs.2

2. The Scriptures cleansing and purifying our lives - "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. . .I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." vs. 9,11

3. Giving wisdom and counsel to us. "Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors." vs. 24

4. God uses his word to strengthen us emotionally. "My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word." vs. 28

5. The Bible helps to correct unworthy priorities in our life. "Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word."

vs. 37

6. Scriptures give to us assurance of our salvation. "May your unfailing love come to me, O Lord, your salvation according to your promise; then I will answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word." vs. 41,42

7. God comforts us in our suffering with his word. "My comfort in my suffering is this; your promise preserves my life. . . I remember your ancient laws, O Lord, and I find comfort in them." vs. 50,52

8. The bible shows us the importance of obeying God and having the confidence that we are obedient to God. "I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands." vs. 60

9. God's word reveals his goodness to us. "You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees" vs. 68

10. It also reveals God's love to us. "May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant." vs. 76

11. The bible teaches us patience. "My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word." vs. 81

12. It also gives to us a proper perspective on life. "Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" vs. 89

13. God's precepts give to us understanding. "Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts." vs. 98-100.

14. God's revelation to us gives us light for living. "Your word is a lamp

to my feet and a light for my path." vs. 105.

15. God's word is a source of protection for us. "You are my refuge and my shield. I have put my hope in your word." vs. 114

16. The Scriptures bring redemption into our lives as it reveals God's redemptive program for the human race that He has developed throughout human history. "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me. Redeem me . . . that I may obey your precepts." vs. 133,134

17. God's precepts are also a source of righteousness for us. "Righteous are you, O Lord, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy." vs. 137,138

18. And finally last time, we saw the many remedies that the healing word of God brings into our lives from verses 145-152

Now this evening, we conclude our series by looking at the final 3 blessing which we are going to glean from Psalm 119.

19. Notice with me from verse 156 in the section Resh that God's word reveals His compassion to us. "Your compassion is great, O Lord. Preserve my life according to your laws."

Now God has revealed himself to mankind in 2 major ways:

a. there is the **general revelation** of God, or his revealing himself to us in nature. As we look about us, we can see that there is a God.

\*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Ps. 19:1-4

\*God's revelation in nature is continuous and universal. Every creature has opportunity to see the existence of God if he will only open his eyes and look about him.

\*But the natural revelation of God which we see today is distorted because of sin. Nature is often cruel. Animals prey on one another. There is much suffering and death all around us. This was not the case when God originally created the world. But this is the way it is now. And it would be easy just from natural revelation to get the idea that God is an extremely powerful and intelligent, but ruthless God.

\*That is why the **specific revelation** of God that we have in the Scriptures is so important. For the Bible reveals to us the love and compassion of God in a way that general revelation never could. Oh, general revelation does show God's kindness if we look hard enough. Paul said in Acts 14:17 - Yet he has not left himself without testimony; He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.

\*Yes, we can see the kindness of God in natural revelation if we look at the rain and the crops and the joy that we can have in our hearts. But too often, we have the tendency to look at the tornados and floods and storms instead of the gentle life-giving rains; the pests and blight that destroy crops instead of the harvests; and the sorrow and grief of life instead of the joy - and we again come

to the conclusion that God is great and powerful, but ruthless and uncaring.

\*That is the reason for the importance of the Scriptures to us. The Bible reveals God's compassion for mankind.

\*What would you have done if you had made a perfect universe and the only being who had the ability and opportunity to ruin it had chosen to do so? Would you have chosen to have compassion on that being?

\*What would you have done if every time you reached out an olive branch and tried to reconcile with that rebellious being, he broke off the branch and chose to disobey you more? That is what man has done in history in his relationship with God. Would you have continued to have compassion on that being?

\*What would you have done if you offered to this being that which was most precious to you, your one and only son, and that being rejected him and tortured him and treated him like the worst of criminals? Would you have continued to have compassion on that being?

The natural response that we all would have had if we were in God's shoes is shown clearly in a parable that Jesus gave to the Jewish religious leaders found in Matthew 21:33-41:

MT 21:33 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

MT 21:35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time,

and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

MT 21:38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup> So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

MT 21:40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

MT 21:41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

\*In this parable, Jesus clearly reveals God's love and compassion for the human race as well as the natural response that we would have had if we would have been in God's place.

\*You see, we would never know of God's compassion in this way if it were not for the Bible for we would never have responded in the same manner. For the Bible reveals the story of man's redemption which gives testimony to God's compassion.

20. And an understanding of the compassionate and loving nature of God allows us to have another blessing that the Psalmist brings out in the next section, namely peace in our hearts.

"Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble." vs. 165

\*Now there is a certain peace and security that comes when there is love and compassion in a family situation, isn't there?

\*When a father and mother love their children, fully accepting them for who

they are, that brings a sense of security into their lives that cannot be duplicated in any other way. In fact, there are many people today who are struggling in their inner lives for just this reason. Their fathers have rejected them; they have deserted the family and they feel abandoned; and these people wrestle with feelings of insecurity, low self worth, and inadequacy. This is devastating in a person's life, and it is something that must be addressed if that person is to live with inner peace. Psychologists tell us today that the most valuable and precious gift that parents can give to their children during those early years of life is their love and compassion, for that brings a sense of security and peace to the child.

\*Now God, as the perfect, sinless heavenly father, has divine compassion on his children. "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." Ps. 103:13,14

\*You see, we can't fool God - he made us. Maybe we can fool one another into thinking we are somebody really special. Maybe the professional athlete can fool children into thinking he is great because of some unusual abilities that have been given to him. Maybe the research scholar can fool some students into thinking he is especially brilliant because of an IQ that he has. But none of us can fool God. God made us. He knows what we are. We are dust, and He knows it. But the amazing thing is that He loves us anyway. He accepts us completely. He has compassion upon us. Even more compassion than we have for one another, and we have for ourselves. Because He knows exactly what

we are.

\*And our awareness of this allows us to be a complete peace with Him and at complete peace with ourselves. If God accepts us, how can we not accept ourselves? If God accepts us, how can we not accept one another?

\*God is a God of perfect compassion. This brings peace into our lives.

21. Finally, all of this knowledge of the blessings that we have in God's word can only invoke one response from us as we see it properly - and that is praise to God who is the author of it all. So it should not surprise us at all that the Psalmist ends this longest poem on a note of praise.

READ PSALM 119:171-176

PS 119:171 May my lips overflow with praise,  
for you teach me your decrees.

PS 119:172 May my tongue sing of your word,  
for all your commands are righteous.

PS 119:173 May your hand be ready to help me,  
for I have chosen your precepts.

PS 119:174 I long for your salvation, O LORD,  
and your law is my delight.

PS 119:175 Let me live that I may praise you,  
and may your laws sustain me.

PS 119:176 I have strayed like a lost sheep.  
Seek your servant,  
for I have not forgotten your commands.

\*What a great God He is. How worthy God is of our praise. But if you are like me, you often feel inadequate to give to God the praise that he so deserves.

Many of us are not very poetic in our speech. We have difficulty even telling

our wives and family members that we love them - let alone expressing praise to God. How can we praise God as we should and have the confidence that we are giving to him what is His due?

\*The Bible helps us by giving us a pattern, an example of praise to God. The Scriptures are filled with God's revealing himself to us, and many passages depicting man's response in praise back to God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit himself. These passages can become a model for us, showing us how to praise God.

\*And we can even go a step further. We can use the Bible itself to be our own words of Praise to God. We can read and quote God's own word back to him as our own words. God does not mind if we plagiarize. You find no words in the original text that if someone quotes or uses these words he will be liable to divine prosecution. God is not jealous of the rights to his word. He has revealed himself to us, and he desires for us to use and spread the word like seed throughout the world. He does warn us not to add or subtract from his word. He doesn't want man to distort the Bible and manipulate it to his own advantage. But we can be free to use it at will, we can quote it as our own words back to Him, God has given his word to us as so that we might know him more fully and as an aid in our praise of him.

\*listen to the Psalm that precedes this one in the Scriptures:

READ Psalm 118 if there is time.

PS 118:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

PS 118:2 Let Israel say: "His love endures forever."

PS 118:3 Let the house of Aaron say:

"His love endures forever."

PS 118:4 Let those who fear the LORD say:

"His love endures forever."

PS 118:5 In my anguish I cried to the LORD,  
and he answered by setting me free.

PS 118:6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?

PS 118:7 The LORD is with me; he is my helper.  
I will look in triumph on my enemies.

PS 118:8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in man.

PS 118:9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in princes.

PS 118:10 All the nations surrounded me,  
but in the name of the LORD I cut them off.

PS 118:11 They surrounded me on every side,  
but in the name of the LORD I cut them off.

PS 118:12 They swarmed around me like bees,  
but they died out as quickly as burning thorns;  
in the name of the LORD I cut them off.

PS 118:13 I was pushed back and about to fall,  
but the LORD helped me.

PS 118:14 The LORD is my strength and my song;  
he has become my salvation.

PS 118:15 Shouts of joy and victory  
resound in the tents of the righteous:

"The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!

PS 118:16 The LORD's right hand is lifted high;  
the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"

PS 118:17 I will not die but live,

and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

PS 118:18 The LORD has chastened me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death.

PS 118:19 Open for me the gates of righteousness;  
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

PS 118:20 This is the gate of the LORD  
through which the righteous may enter.

PS 118:21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my  
salvation.

PS 118:22 The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone;

PS 118:23 the LORD has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

PS 118:24 This is the day the LORD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

PS 118:25 O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success.

PS 118:26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.  
From the house of the LORD we bless you.

PS 118:27 The LORD is God,  
and he has made his light shine upon us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession  
up to the horns of the altar.

PS 118:28 You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and  
I will exalt you.

PS 118:29 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

\*Are you spending the time in the Word of God that you should? Are you  
studying it every day? A person cannot expect to grow in the Lord without a  
regular diet on God's word anymore than we would expect a child to grow

physically without eating any food.

\*The Apostle Peter walked with the Lord Jesus Christ. He experienced the miracles of the Lord, saw the transfiguration. Yet he wrote that the Scriptures are a more sure testimony of God than even those miraculous experiences (2 Peter 1:16-21).

2PE 1:16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

2PE 1:19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And it Peter himself who wrote, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation". 1 Peter 2:2