

The Prayer of God's Servant

Psalm 119:17-24

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Introduction: Thus far in our study of Psalm 119 we have considered the “Blessedness of God’s Word” (:1-8), & “Take Time to be Holy” (:9-16). I would like to add to last week’s message the “4 M’s of Bible Study” > Mark (:9), Memorize (:11), Meditate (:15), & Master (:16). Tonight we come to verses 17-24, in Hebrew all beginning with the letter “Gimel.” We might compare & contrast this section with the previous one (:9-16). Verses 9-16 could be considered as the prayer of a youth; tonight’s verses as the prayer of a servant & pilgrim. Note with me tonight 3 sections: the psalmist as “A servant of the Lord (:17-18); a stranger in the world (:19-21), & a subject of reproach (:22-24).

I. The psalmist as a **servant** of the Lord (:17-18)

- A. “*Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live, & keep Thy word*” (:17) >
1. If the writer is David, he identifies himself not as a king, but as a servant (cf. Psalm 40:8).
 2. He asks for the bountiful blessings of God (according to God’s goodness, not the merit of the psalmist),
 3. “Even life is a gift of divine bounty to such undeserving ones as we are” (Spurgeon).
 4. “*Keep*” suggests “to observe” or “to take heed to.”
- B. “*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law*” (:18) >
1. A prayer for spiritual illumination – II Corinthians 2:14 & cf. I John 2:27.
 2. “*Wondrous things*” – “Perfect precepts, precious promises, priceless privileges” (Spurgeon).

II. The psalmist as a **stranger** in the world (:19-21)

- A. The desire of the “*stranger*” (:19) >
1. As one who considers himself a “pilgrim” – just passing through this world.
 2. As one who: “Because we serve a different Master, obey a different set of laws, & have our citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20), we are different from the lost people Jesus called ‘*the children of this world*’ (Luke 16:8)” (Wiersbe).
 3. As one who needs the direction of God’s commandments.
- B. The devotion of the “*stranger*” (:20) >
1. “David had such reverence for the Word, & such a desire to know it, & to be conformed to it, that his longings caused him a sort of heart-break” (Spurgeon).
 2. “*At all times*” – his constant desire for holiness.
 3. What does your heart constantly long for? The things of God? His Word?

- C. The distinction of the “*stranger*” (:21) >
1. Pride lies at the root of all sin: “*Pride of life*” (I John 2:16 & cf. Genesis 3); “*proud look*” (Proverbs 6:17); “*pride goeth before destruction*” (Proverbs 16:18).
 2. “Dominant pride will deceive & ruin any one. It is the high road to transgression & to wrath” (Plumer).
 3. “Only humble hearts are obedient, for they alone will yield to rule & government” (Spurgeon).

III. The psalmist as a **subject** of reproach (:22-24)

- A. “*Reproach & contempt*” (:22) >
1. Speaks of being slandered & despised.
 2. What are we to do if slandered? We are to pray about it, asking God to remove the sting of it & to live as to show it is untrue.
- B. “*Princes also did sit & speak against me...*” (:23) >
1. Their envy & abuse of David (those rulers & principal men).
 2. “The princes sitting to reproach David & David sitting with God & the Bible” (Spurgeon).

Summary in verse 24 – God’s testimonies were the theme of his meditation & the source of his delight (for his guidance & direction – “*counsellors*”). “It is as if he had said: ‘Although the cruel injustice of men, in charging me falsely, grieves & annoys me, yet the pleasurable delight which I take in Thy law is a sufficient recompense for it all’ “ (Plumer).

Conclusion: The psalmist refers to himself over 12 times as “*a servant.*” God always promises to deal bountifully with (Psalm 68:19) & provide adequately for (Philippians 4:19) His servants. As a **student**, the psalmist asks for insight into God’s Word. “*Open Thou mine eyes...*” – “Perhaps this is the supreme prayer that a student of Scripture could speak since it confesses the student’s inadequacy & the Divine Author’s sufficiency” (MacArthur). As a **stranger**, the psalmist acknowledges in the words of the song writer: “This world is not my home...” As a **sufferer**, the psalmist bears the reproach of being a God-follower. Wiersbe suggests, “Instead of listening to the enemy’s slander, he meditated on God’s truth. That is a good way to keep your mind clean & confident (Philippians 4:4-7). And as a **supplicant**, the psalmist seeks counsel from God. “The chief means of biblical counseling is the application of God’s Word by God’s Spirit to the heart of a believer (cf. Psalm 119:98-100)” (MacArthur).

Do you see yourself tonight as a servant, a student, a stranger, a sufferer, a supplicant? By the grace of God, might this prayer of God’s servant be ours!