

The Happy Walk in the Holy Way

Psalm 119:1-8

If you're not in Psalm 119, you want to turn there in your Bibles, and we'll start just by reading the first eight verses. Which is the first stanza. This is the *Aleph* stanza. Which is the letter 'A' in Hebrew. So that means, each line, even if you can't see it in English, each line in the Hebrew starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet which is *Aleph*.

So, Psalm 119 verse 1, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek Him with their whole heart. Who also do no wrong but walk in his ways. You've commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh, that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes. That I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous rules. I will keep your statutes. Do not utterly forsake me."

There's a studied analysis of the Psalm here that finds a cohesive argument throughout Psalm 119 that begins right here in

verses, not just verses 1-8, but verses 1-16. With really those two sections, those two stanzas are like a prologue to the entire Psalm. So, verses 1-8 along with verses 9-16, this is really the entry point into the entire book, making the argument, telling us what the psalmist is trying to solve. And I said that in these opening verses the psalmist is stating a problem that he intends to solve. "There is no one who does not have sin. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." And that's actually a repetition of an Old Testament concept. That there is no one who is faultless, guiltless before God.

But notice it says right after it says, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless," verse 1. "Who walk in," what, "the law of the Lord." If we take that word law, *Torah*, the Mosaic law; and the Mosaic law tells us how to do what, when we sin? How to find atonement, how to bring sacrifices, how to bring offerings and sin offerings and burnt offerings. Why? Because it assumes that we have sinned. It goes back to Genesis 3 and as you see the fall. You see everyone born from Adam and Eve is born in sin and so there is going to be sin. And so, the law gives us a pattern for dealing with our sin.

So, the blameless person is not somebody who's sinless, the blameless person is someone who follows the prescription of

God's word when we do sin. You'll see David in the Psalms, you'll see Job also protesting his innocence, protesting his blamelessness. You'll see David saying the same thing before God. "I am blameless before you, I am righteous before you." Is he saying, I am perfect? No, he is not saying he is perfect. He is saying that, I have followed what your word says with regard to my sin. So it's the same thing for us. When we have sin, what should we be doing with it? Confessing it, repenting of it, right? Putting off and putting on, mortifying those sins of the heart that lead to the fruit of sin.

So, making a distinction between blamelessness and sinlessness is a very important issue for our own encouragement because if we're not careful and don't have the distinction made in our minds, we'll find reasons for discouragement when we really need to be finding encouragement.

So, this is the psalmist's concern, he longs for steadfastness in keeping God's word. He doesn't find it in himself, but he longs for it. I believe we could say that he's identifying the way to happiness because the Psalm starts with blessed, blessed, there in verses 1 and 2. It's a synonym for happy. So, he's identifying here the way to happiness through holiness, but he finds himself vulnerable to straying from that

path. The rest of the Psalm then reveals that it's really through, we're going to find, through affliction and suffering that he is vulnerable to drifting and falling away, to wandering away.

So, he prays continually through the Psalm for God to uphold him. To stay with him, to never let him go, because he longs to pursue holiness. He longs for obedience, why? So, he can boast about his perfection? No. So that he can know the God that he studies, so that he can know the God that he serves, so he can worship him. So, he finds in himself the imperfections, straying and, and especially when affliction comes, especially when trials come.

So, I'm assuming you've experienced this same thing, you long for God's definition of happiness, you long for holiness, you long to please him, you long to obey him and love him and worship him and all the rest but you find yourself vulnerable to what? Distraction, error, to sin, to falling off, to wandering, to falling in a pit. We, we find ourselves dirty and needing cleansing.

The really good news about experiencing trouble and weaknesses and finding vulnerabilities and distractions in ourselves is that Godly saints have experienced all these same

trials and temptations before us. And we have the testimony of one such saint written right here. The record of exalted poetic expression captures our imagination. And really does touch us in our heart of hearts where we all feel this.

We also need to understand that what's written here is not just by a Godly saint, but it's also the Holy Spirit's words. So, this is divinely inspired expression which means it's imminently profitable for "teaching, and reproof and correction and training in righteousness so we can be made complete, perfected and become mature and equipped for every good work."

So, I see the section here breaking down into three main parts. Verses 1-3, 4-6, and then 7 and 8. The first part, verses 1-3, knowing what happiness means. Second part, verses 4-6, wanting what happiness requires, and then finally doing what happiness demands.

So, let's get into that first part. Knowing what happiness means. Verses 1-3 again. "Blessed are those whose way is blameless. Who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart. Who also do no wrong but walk in his ways." So that word blessed, the word 'ešer, if you're familiar with the New Testament word *makarios*, blessed, same idea here. It does mean

happy. Happiness is, the biblical idea of happiness anyway, it's not the world's superficial idea of satisfying an insatiable lust or enslavement to respond to an always complaining fleshly appetite. That is not what happiness is. This happiness is a happiness that goes deep. It's the idea here of an unshakable joy, a profound sense of contentment and rest. It's untouchable spiritual satisfaction.

So, if you think in terms of happiness, you think joy mixed with contentment mixed with sense of wellbeing and rest and total satisfaction. All that wrapped together is this word here 'ešer. Okay, this is biblical happiness. That said, it's a happiness here, biblical sense of happiness that doesn't depend on situation or circumstance, has nothing to do with physical or temporal needs, the fulfillment of those things. Though we do experience this practically in physical and temporal living, it still doesn't depend on physical temporal things being satisfied.

Notice the reverence in verse 1 to the word, way, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless." And then the end of verse 3, the word, way, again. "Walk in his ways." So, in the first instance we are talking about a human way, right. This is practically lived out experience, a human way. And the second

instance, this is God's ways. So, you've got ways, human in the first instance, God's in the second. True happiness comes when our ways, and the word way *derek*, it refers to a manner of living.

There's also a real picturesque term, it's the word walk. Okay, so you can see it there a couple times. Walking in his ways. Walking, living, it's our lifestyle, it's our manner of life. So, true happiness comes when our manner of living, our lifestyle, our ways are joined to God's ways. When our walk, our way of living conforms to what God has revealed in his law, his *Torah*. His wise instruction for living life. When we listen to his testimonies, his perspective on life, then we are living the blessed life, the, the happy life.

Notice how there are two aspects to this. Put in both negative and positive terms. In negative terms happiness means blamelessness. Okay, so it's the lack of blame. So that is negative, a negative concept, in verse 1 there. And then also in verse 3, "doing no wrong." So, the idea of doing no wrong. That word for, wrong, there talking about an unrighteousness, talking about an injustice. So, that which doesn't conform to God's righteousness. There are some connotations of this, could mean like perversity and wickedness, but really, we're just talking

about things that are contrary to God's law. His revealed justice, his revealed sense of righteousness.

So, mentioned in scripture there are heinous sins like robbing people, murdering, oppression. There are also more subtle forms which I think we can fall into, partiality in judgement, dishonest trade dealings, failure to pay taxes, failure to conform to laws, ordinances of the land all that, and vicious words fall under the rubric of this word for wrong. So, even if you take like the heinous sins like robbing somebody, murdering somebody, oppression, you might think, I'm not knocking over any banks, I'm okay. There's no bodies buried in my backyard, I'm okay. What does Jesus say about all those kinds of sins, right. He talks about it goes to the heart.

So, if we have covetous desire what is that. It's unrealized theft, unrealized stealing. What is it if we have anger in our heart toward our brother or sister? It's murder of the heart. Same thing, maybe not outward adultery, but internally what's going on inside the heart and the mind. Partiality in judgement, dishonesty, the words that we use. How about this, words that we think. "Those who seek him with their whole heart, who do no wrong." None of that, that's the negative way of putting it.



The happy way is very far from sinful dealings with other people. Whether doing injustice or walking in a less than righteous way. And especially when we're talking about the heart attitude. God always looks, he sees the heart. He sees our devious or less than honest forthright manner of dealing with people and we know before him how those things convict our own conscience and rob us of peace and joy when we're devious in our hearts. Positive expression: by positive expression, happiness is found in living out God's instructions, verse 1. Happiness is keeping, a word that means guarding or observing, protecting his testimonies, in verse 2. And then happiness in verse 3 is walking in God's ways.

How does it follow that, doing no wrong is going to result in our happiness? This God is the blessed God, he's revealing the blessed way. He is the most blessed being in the universe. First Timothy 1:11, First Timothy 6:15, he is called the blessed God. Which means that God is the most happy, joyful, contented, satisfied being in the entire universe. There's no one more blessed than God is and blessed than God is. There's no one more joyful. There's a supreme joy in the supreme and absolute sovereign God and he, like a father to his children, wants to share that blessedness with them.

And the blessedness comes by them living the way he lives. Thinking the way he thinks, speaking the way he speaks, doing as he does. If that's the way he acts and he is the most blessed with unmitigated joy, then it follows that if we practice that, we're also going to experience the same joy and satisfaction because we're made after his image. "God is light. In him is no darkness whatsoever," First John 1:5. So there's no sin to trouble, agitate, and slave. God is holy and pure and righteous. He's always doing what conforms to the perfect wisdom of his perfect will. So, happiness is holiness, and the happy walk is the holy walk.

That ought to be enough to compel us to pursue holiness constantly, right. To pursue holiness consistently as the constant preoccupation of every waking moment of our lives, right. Okay, so why don't we do that? Because the sin that so easily entangles. Because we don't want to do what's in front of us. We don't want to do what's there. So, we don't pursue the way of true happiness because we're sinful. We're redeemed sinners. But there's still, while we're in this flesh and in this life, we still have that sin that so easily entangle; that sin principle, that's still living in us.

So, if we need a little more motivation, look at the next part here in this number two about wanting what happiness requires. Look at verse 4. "You've commanded your precepts to be kept diligently." That word commanded, the verb *sāṡā* means, to order, or direct, or appoint something. So, to order, direct, appoint, in other words this is not a suggestion. You've commanded your precepts. It's not you've suggested your precepts be kept diligently. Like, it's a good idea if you'd like to if you feel good about it. No! It's you've commanded, this is an order, it's a direction, it's an appointment.

So, we're to keep God's precepts. There's a word there its translated, diligently. *m'ōd*, it's an adverb, so, you could translate it muchly, greatly. So, *m'ōd* is like, really, really good. So, *m'ōd* is a word that intensifies how we are to keep God's commandments. So, diligently, fully, carefully, perfectly. So, this demand for diligent attentiveness to obedience prompts in verse 5, he gets it, he recognizes, you have commanded your precepts everything you prescribed to be kept with all diligence. Contestant attentiveness, and that's what drives his prayer in verse 5.

"Oh, that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes. Oh, that they would be. Would that my ways would be

steadfast, never veering, never falling away in keeping your statutes and then I shall not be put to shame. If that's the way with me, then I won't be put to shame having my eyes fixed on all your commandments." So, this is a prayerful expression of Godly desire to be steadfast, firm, inflexible, always constant in keeping God's statutes. Is that a futile prayer or can the Godly expect to fulfil that desire.

We're starting with God's initiative to save, to regenerate, to cause to be born again, all of the sudden we're a new creature and now we have what's called Godly initiative, Godly ambition, desires, affections for what's true and good and righteous, right? So, yeah now we put that initiative into practice. There's a sense in which that's the longing of our heart. And so, we're not working contrary to that longing. Even though we find ourselves deceived by old desires, old habits, old ways of thinking, but really what's truly there in a, in a true Christian, a true believer, is a new nature. We long for the things of God. We put that into effect we find no reliance in the flesh, we find all reliance in God. We pray, we act, we walk.

So, that's where there's a cooperation between us and God, God and us. His desire for us is it blamelessness? Is his desire

for us sinless perfection? Yes, it is! What God has saved us for is what? Absolute sinlessness. He's saved us to be totally completely Christlike and that is going to happen, isn't it? It's going to happen; he's going to come and get us and bring us to himself and completely glorify us in a, in a moment of a twinkling eye. That's going to be awesome. Or we'll die and go to heaven and then we'll be with him, and we'll be perfected, glorified.

Let's look back at verse 2, about the blessedness for those who seek him with their whole heart. For those whose intent in studying God's word is to find God, to love and worship God, they will receive their heart's desire. They will have a pure unmixed motive to seek and worship God. Jesus said, Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall," what? "See God." Right? Some refer to that as the beatific vision, the vision of the blessed. Those who long to see God, know him, worship him, and love him they will get their heart's desire. That's what they get, they get what they long for. God is going to grant that to them, he's going to reward them with that.

Another evidence of the psalmist's longing in verse 4 doesn't come across as well in the English translation, but when he writes there, "You have commanded your precepts." When he

says "You've commanded" there's an emphasis there highlighting the fact that God himself is the one who has issued the command. So, literally there it's, You, yourself, have commanded. So, the implication is I'm listening to what you, yourself, have commanded me. So, it's not just here's the command, here's the printed word, here's the instruction and I'm a rule follower. I like to read all the instructions, the manuals, before I put things together. I'm a rule guy. That's not the idea here. It's who wrote the rules. It's the rules are precious to him because of who wrote them.

So, You, yourself, have commanded. So, his ears are attuned, his eyes are focused on the word. He's listening because his heart is rightly oriented there. Another clue there in verse 6 about having our eyes fixed on all God's commandments. The verb is *nābat* and it denotes there a careful and a sustained contemplation. So, his heart is seeking after God to worship him, his ears are attuned, his eyes are focused, his heart is rightly oriented.

But then, there's this idea of meditation of thinking about God's Word, reflecting on it, contemplating its meaning and its wisdom, the right application of it. So, it's Psalm 1 and 2, "Blessed is the man who doesn't walk in worldly counsel" or get

comfortable there or sit down and sit in the seat of scoffers. But, what? "His delight is in the law of the Lord," and in his law, on his law, he's meditating day and night, he's ruminating, he's chewing it over, he's thinking it over all the time.

To meditate on God's Word like that, you know, to turn off the television, to, to put away all distractions and say, I actually want to spend time in the Word. What does that require? It requires a love of the Word. And a love of the God of the Word. So, that's what has to happen. That's the attitude in the psalmist. There's a humility, there's a hope and a trust in God. But at the heart of it is a love for him. It's a heart fixed on God. That's why he seeks him with a whole heart is because he loves him.

Now, do we do that perfectly? No. And this is where I'm so comforted by, God is mindful of us, he knows us, he is so gentle and compassionate and gracious with us, even in our weakness, even in our failings. And that's why he sent Christ to perfectly fulfill all the law for us. A law that we could never fulfill, and Christ fulfilled it perfectly for us. That is our salvation, right there. To know that my sin is forgiven on the cross, and my righteousness is completely fulfilled to perfection.

So "You've commanded your precepts be kept diligently."
There's one who's done that for me. There's one who's fulfilled that for me. And now it's my joy to try to put that into practice, to conform more and more to his image, because is there any more blessed, joyful person than Christ? No. That's what I want to be like. How about you?

So, what do you do about it when you find yourself not delighting in God's Word? We got to be honest there are times when we look at the bible, we're like, I don't, I don't feel like it. I don't find it in myself to want to do that. What do we do? We pray. We go on our knees and we go to the one who it's his desire that we desire his word. So, let's ask him to help us. Psalm 86:11 "Unite my heart to fear your name," right? So, if our ears are attuned to God's Word because our hearts are rightly aimed at God's Word, our eyes are focused on his Word, then we're going to be steadfast in keeping his statutes. We will not be put to shame.

Number three leads us to doing what happiness demands. Doing what happiness demands, that's verses 7-8. "I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous rules. I will keep your statutes. Do not utterly forsake me." So, just quickly, several things, several commitments to obedience in

those two verses. And we'll take these, kind of, as marching orders.

First, notice there's a commitment to praise God from the heart. So, what does that commitment to praise God in the heart about? It's a heart of private, where only God can see, worship. Love and worship of him. To praise God with an upright heart. When we think about praise biblically, it starts from the heart and God knows false praise and counts that as not praise. So, true praise is always going to be centered and coming in the heart. But, you know, where it's going to come out of is the lips. It's going to come out of the mouth. And so, we involve others in our praise.

So, in other words we're evangelistic. We don't keep our praise to ourselves. We don't have our own private worship services in our hearts and say, that satisfies God because I'm doing it from the heart. No. If you're truly doing it from the heart, then you can't not tell people about it. So, there is an internal and an external extension of true praise. If you do not have that, you don't have true praise.

So, first a commitment to praise God from the heart. Secondly, a commitment to learn God's word. "I'll praise you with an upright heart when I learn." When I learn, that word is

lāmad it's the Old Testament word for discipleship. So, the discipleship is in learning God's rules, his judgements, his *mišpāt*. It's like studying case law, the history of God's dealings in righteousness. So, we go back like cracking open the law books and saying, okay, let me see how this judge ruled on this case and see what the result was. What were the circumstances of that case? How did that happen? Why did that law apply so well to this case? And what's the precedent that was set? We go into scripture, and we see God's dealings with his people, Israel, we see his dealings with the church, we see his dealings with mankind, we see the case law, we study it, we see the examples, we see how the law was applied, and we say, I'm going to learn that. I'm going to learn that and I'm going to put it into practice. I'm going to be a disciple of his ways. So, he's discipling me from the Word.

So, a commitment to learn God's word, which is a commitment to discipleship. That accelerates your learning because you're taking the legislated rule, the law, you're taking that legislation and you're seeing how it works itself out practically. So, you're taking the principle and you're seeing wisdom, you're seeing it worked out in wisdom. That is what we're talking about here. You can't worship the one you don't know. You can't share the one, or praise the one, you don't

understand or don't know deeply. But just a commitment to this praise, devotion to study, it's not just that, it's also, thirdly, to obedience in verse 8, "I will keep your statutes." Okay, I will keep your statutes; there's a command to obedience and that requires then, as we continue to find ourselves lagging behind in obedience, even not just externally, but in speech and in the heart and in everything else.

This requires then, fourthly, a commitment to prayer for God's abiding presence. When he says, "Do not utterly forsake me" there's a forecasting or a foreshadowing of what's coming in the Psalm. That he does, at times, feel utterly forsaken by all others. He feels afflicted, he feels ignored and persecuted and set aside. We all feel this from time to time. We all feel abandoned, we all feel like a pariah in our own way. And so, he cries out to God when he thinks about keeping God's law and being obedient. He cries out, don't, don't, don't you leave me. Don't you go anywhere.

And so, that's a prayer that will be answered because he belongs to God and God belongs to him. That's a prayer that will be answered because, well, just based on the attribute of omnipresence. God is always there, there is no place, Psalm 139, that we can flee from God's presence. God is always there.