

A Servant's Prayer

Psalm 119:17-24 (λ)

Did you know?

- Psalm 119 describes the devoted life of a believer to the law of God.
- It is an acrostic poem.
- Each sentence of each section begins with the corresponding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the letter *gimel* (λ).
- Its design encourages memorization and recitation, providing free flowing reflections on what matters most in life.



A bold prayer (vv17-18)

- *He prays for the mercy of God* (v17). He is asking that as he lives, God may grant him the grace needed to devote himself entirely to God's word. He is not praying for a bountiful life filled with comfort, good health or material possessions. He knows that *living bountifully* and *keeping God's word* go together. The Psalmist knows that his utter existence depends upon the law of God. It would be entirely hypocritical of him to think that his preparation to keep God's law depended upon his own free will. It is the absolute mercy of God alone that we not only pray but we also pray to do anything good.
- *He prays for the unthinkable* (v18a). Every man and woman is blind until God opens his or her eyes. He desperately needs the Lord and knows only that God can give him what he needs to see properly.
- *He prays for wondrous things* (v18b). It is not a prayer for God to do a soft miracle. He is not pleading for new utterances or insights. He prays that God would make him marvel at the wonders out of the law (namely, the Torah). In his need, that which he is unable to think about, what he is unable to grasp without the help of God are attributes and doctrines of God witnessed from what is written down.
- The word "wonder" is most often tied to those wonders God did in Egypt. Those wonders in God's law are not only the acts themselves but also the doctrines and testimonies we learn through them. Consider God's sovereign election (Ex 10:1-2; Deut 7:7-8; cf. Acts 7; Rm 9:17).

A prayer of supplication (vv19-20)

- Christians are sojourners. Our true country is awaiting us. True sojourners are aliens, passing a land not their own. We are migrants, a people without rights whose laws are seldom welcome. We may leave our footprints here on the earth in the good works we do, but we still have to leave our

footprints behind. Our true citizenship belongs in the new heavens and new earth that are yet to come.

- Do not fall in love with this country or any other place in this world, since this world is ultimately heading toward judgment. Yet pray that God would consume you with thoughts about his rules all the time.
- Unless God quickens you by the Scriptures and Holy Spirit, you will remain hid from God's truth. Without God's law, you will not find God's path. And if you are not on his path, any other path you take will lead to ruin.
- Be on guard through prayer so that you may traverse this earthly city into the next with God's rules as your standards and your eyes fixed on them.

A prayer for perseverance (vv21-24)

- Rebellion is the offspring of pride. We will see others enjoy life with great comfort, wealth, and power, and at the same time reject God's law. Do not believe that such insolence will go unpunished. God is the judge. He may permit such aggressions against him for a time, but in the end, their judgment will come. God never utters vain judgments (cf. Jn 3:18; Heb 12:28-29; Js 4:12)
- Sadly, those who reject God's law will not find rest until they shame and condemn those who keep God's law. As Christians, we will not escape many slanders, accusations, and evils (1 Pet 4:4).
- We can always flee to the God who gives refuge through his word (Ps 119:23-24).
- We can be tempted to return evil for evil. Instead, we are to seek refuge in what the Divine lawgiver has written down in his statutes and testimonies. They reminded Israel of *their* rebellious ways and *their* stubborn hearts, and that God showed mercy to them. He did this so that they would repent and draw upon the abounding forgiveness of God.
- Let us in these days of scorn and contempt, delight ourselves in the forgiveness of Christ. It is through him we have received the Wonderful Counselor, the Spirit of Christ. In him were are to take counsel and be assured that he will deliver us from all evil.