

Psalm 119:57-64

Introduction – Before we handle another 10 Psalms in this series, we will begin again with one of the stanzas of Psalm 119. Psalm 119, set in 22 stanzas parallel to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, focuses every verse upon some aspect of the Word of God. Every verse of this eighth stanza begins with the eighth letter of the Hebrew alphabet: Heth. Every stanza is organized this way, reminding us that every Word of God is carefully chosen by Him, and instructing us that thoughtful writing, organizing, and meditating over prayer does not dampen the work of the Spirit. This stanza's reflection on the Word centers on the character of one who realizes God is his portion. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly to see that God is your portion - and then see what the Spirit does with that Word in you.

When God is Your Portion (vv57-58) – There is something wonderful that happens to the soul that realizes it has stumbled upon the greatest treasure (Matt 13:44-46). Jesus becomes more valuable than anything else in life (1 Pet 2:6-7). This cry is heard throughout the Scriptures (Psalm 16:5, 73:26, 142:5, Jer 10:16, Lam 3:24), and the response is to “*keep Your words*” (v57b). The Christian life then becomes an ongoing enjoyment and deepening satisfaction in God as our portion through obedience to His Word (Phil 3:7-8, 12-14). The Psalmist is describing the joy of obedience that comes when one experiences it connected to the love of God and the love for God (John 14:15, 15:10).

The Psalm singer, realizing the treasure that is his, seeks the favor (or face) of God with his whole heart (v58). The Lord commands us to seek Him thus (Psalm 27:8). To pray with our whole heart is to have “*..constancy in our prayers, not only today, but tomorrow and the next – and though it seems He has stopped His ears, yet for all that we, trusting in His Word, must go continually unto Him – and pray unto Him a hundred times as much as we did before, knowing it to be no superfluous labor*” (Calvin). The request is for God to be merciful for He owes us nothing (v58b). But His Word declares that He is full of mercies (Deut 4:31, Psalm 145:8-9) and that they are new every morning (Lam 3:22-24). You cannot say that God is your portion except for the mercies of God. To know that He is your portion and to have Him as your portion is nothing but the mercy of God.

The Merciful Gift of Repentance (vv59-60) – “*While studying the Word he was led to study his own life and this caused a mighty revolution*” – Spurgeon. This is what happens to the man who knows the treasure of his portion and then studies the Word. In our flesh, we each decide whether we will serve God and if so, how we will serve Him. We give God our ten commandments, “God, this is how its going to be...” But the man who truly trusts in God refuses to lean on his own understanding (Prov 3:5-6). Considering our ways in the light of God's Word causes us to gladly return to Him and His ways if we have understood that He is our portion (Lam 3:40, Ezek 18:28, Luke 15:17-20). So, consider your ways, think on them accurately, advisedly, seriously, studiously, and curiously. Why are you doing that? Why are you thinking those thoughts, feeding those lusts? Where are you doubting God? Why do you think He doesn't know or care? Ask these questions with your Bible open.

The prodigal son, when he came to his senses, rushed back to his father, and the Psalm singer exclaimed “*I made haste and did not delay to keep Your commandments*” (v60). Lot was guilty of delaying his obedience and so the angels had to grab him and get him out (Gen 19:15f). We taught our children that “delayed obedience is disobedience” and that when told to “jump, you can ask how high on the way up,” but how often are we guilty of the same sinful lingering or questioning God? “*We are too often in haste to sin; O that we may be in a greater hurry to obey. Delay in sin is increase of sin. To be slow to keep the commands is really to break them. There is much evil in a lagging pace when God's command is to be followed*” – Spurgeon.

The natural response to the perceived value of having God as your portion is repentance from anything that would hinder your entrance and joy in it. Repentance often sounds like a sad, joyless activity. But that is not what it is at all (2 Cor 7:10). Faith and repentance go hand in hand, and both are the gift of God (Eph 2:8, Acts 11:18). Imagine a man walking in the dark holding on to his sin in his hands – fistfuls of sharp gravel. All of a sudden there is light and he finds he is walking on a path of diamonds. What does he do? Letting go of sin and turning back to God is a sweet and joyful experience.

The Merciful Gifts of Perseverance and Thankfulness (vv61-62) – David may have specific instances in mind but in the context of this stanza I am taking it figuratively. Wicked men, when bound together, will dare to do in company what they would not have dared to do alone. And what they will do together is oppress the righteous wherever they can. Now the serpent is crafty, and so he may use bribes or bullying as cords to bind us in disobedience. He offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Christ would simply bow down to him. But the Psalm singer, like Jesus, refused to forget God's law (Psalm 1:1-2). He would not do wrong to prevent suffering, nor would he sin to avenge sin (Rom 12:17-19). Even in the throws of the darkest midnight, he rises with thanksgiving to God, for he knows God will avenge (Rom 12:19-21, Psalm 98:8-9). The Christian who knows God is his portion knows that the lines have fallen to him in pleasant places (Psalm 16:5-11) and because of that he learns to count it all joy in various trials (James 1:2-4).

The Mercies of Companionship and Providence (vv63-64) – We experience God as our portion by faith individually. He knows us by name personally and fully. But we also experience God as the portion of the people who fear Him with us. A man is known by the company he keeps and when God is your portion it changes who you want to gather with (Acts 2:46-47). We have the ability to stir one another up to love and good deeds (Heb 10:23-25). And we are told to see the mercies of God all over creation and therefore all over us (Matt 6:25-33).

His response in seeing all of this: *“Teach me Your statutes.”* The man, woman, or child, who knows He is Christ’s and knows that Christ is his, desires to delight in God and to be a delight to Him *“that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Col 1:10).

When God is Your Portion – *“God is all sufficient; get Him for your portion, and you have all; then you have infinite wisdom to direct you, infinite knowledge to teach you, infinite mercy to pity and save you, infinite love to care and comfort you, and infinite power to protect and keep you. If God be yours all His attributes are yours; all His creatures, all His works of Providence, shall do you good as you have need of them. He is an eternal, full, satisfactory portion. He is an ever living, ever loving, ever present friend; and without him you are a cursed creature in every condition, and all things will work against you.”* – John Mason.

Is Christ your portion? Do you know it to be true? Consider your ways and turn to His testimonies.

Dave Hatcher – October 8, 2023