

Psalm 119:97–104

#0371

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—June 11, 1976

Who can tell me what the longest chapter in the Bible is? Shall we turn to it, Psalms 119. Recently, through a providence, my mind was led to a certain section of this Psalm. You know, this Psalm is made up of a number of sections. Each section has eight verses. And in the Hebrew, the first section begins with what we would call the letter A. Every verse begins with A. And in the second section, every verse begins with B. And so forth.

And the particular section that we're going to look at for a little while tonight begins with the 97th verse, eight verses of precious instruction. I'm going to read it in the King James, and then we're going to study it as we compare various translations.

“O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy word. I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou hast taught me. How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way”
Psalm 119:97–104.

Notice first of all, the intensity of emotion and its expression in these verses. The first verb in the section is love. The last one is hate. And you will agree with me that those two words express some very deep emotions, the deepest in the human heart. In fact, my dear friends, it is impossible to love without hating and to hate without loving if one is a Christian. And these verses, of course, express the feelings, the emotions, the meditations, the decisions of a Christian.

We're living in an age where much is said about love. Lip service is paid to it. But the truth of the matter is that love and hate are two sides of the same coin. We cannot love righteousness without hating iniquity. We cannot really enjoy the things of God without despising the ways of sin.

In *Great Controversy*, page 571, we're told concerning the popular churches of our land:

“False charity has blinded their eyes. They do not see but that it is right to believe good of all evil, and as the inevitable

result, they will finally believe evil of all good” *Great Controversy*, page 571.

That’s a tremendous statement, one that’s been ringing in my ears, burning in my heart for several days. May I repeat it?

“False charity has blinded their eyes” *Ibid.*

These are the popular churches. They call themselves Protestants, but they’ve ceased to protest.

“False charity has blinded their eyes. They do not see but that it is right to believe good of all evil, and as the inevitable result, they will finally believe evil of all good” *Ibid.*

This ecumenical spirit which gathers in all creatures and calls the unclean clean, will finally be manifested in a death decree concerning those who honor all the commandments of God. And it is no accident that the two experiences follow one the other. One is the inevitable result of the other.

Whenever we begin to pamper evil, to throw the cloak of charity and love over iniquity, we are preparing, whether we realize it or not, we are preparing ourselves to reach the point where we will hate righteousness and be ready to repeat the crucifixion of Jesus. This is why, you know, Christ’s own people rejected Him. He didn’t do anything harmful to them. He came as the messenger of love. But His very life rebuked sin, and so finally, they crucified Him.

They’re going to do it again today. The religious leaders of this world, the popular churches, are going to lead all the world to crucify Christ again in the person of His saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12).

Now, in this time, you and I, therefore, must develop a love for the law which will lead us to hang onto it and hold to it and stick to it no matter what the opposition. And our text tells us how to do it. Note that 97th verse:

“O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day”
Psalm 119:97.

We’ll look at some of the other translations:

“O, how I love Thy law! It is my study all day long”
Psalm 119:97 (*New English Bible*).

Another one:

“Meditating all day on Your law, how I have come to love it” Psalm 119:97 (Unknown version).

You know, some people can't even tolerate the law. They rebel against it. They don't want it around. In fact, some people don't like to tolerate *any* law, any interference with their wishes.

As a young man said to me once, "My motto is 'Obey that impulse.'"

And he did. Oh, thank God for a law, God's law which is a shield against sin, a barrier against iniquity.

I've thought about it as we go along these freeways. Every now and then, where there are ditches on the side, or canyons, I see some guard rails up. Sometimes they're on both sides. What a shame. Wouldn't it be better if we could just go anywhere? Some people set off in orbit, but they soon get stopped by some tree or rock. Thank God for guard rails that help to keep us. What do you say? And that's what the law of God is.

"Oh, how I love Thy law. It is my study..." Psalm 119:97
(*New English Bible*).

My meditation.

"...all day long" Psalm 119:97 (*New English Bible*).

Thank God.

Just hold your place there and turn over to the first Psalm, where a similar thought is expressed in beautiful language. And by the way, that word "blessed" is also translated as "happy."

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the
ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in
the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the
LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night"
Psalm 1:1-2.

Psalm 119, "I meditate in it all day long." Psalm 1, "Day and night." Wouldn't that get boring? No, no, no, because the law is the expression of the wisdom of God, and there's no limit to that, dear friends. As the student of nature enjoys getting acquainted with a new flower, a new tree, a new bird, or getting better acquainted with one he's known for 40 years, so the student of God's Word rejoices in finding new beauty in this holy book, and especially in the law which is the foundation of it all.

"O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day"
Psalm 119:97.

What shall the man do that doesn't love the law? Well friend, I can tell you the secret of it. It is getting acquainted with it.

Let me see if I can illustrate it for you. Is there anybody here tonight that greatly enjoys a certain food that can remember a time when you didn't like it at all? May I see your hands? Why, look at that, practically everybody here.

What's a food you were thinking about? Sweet potatoes. Imagine a person ever being around that didn't like sweet potatoes. How'd you learn to like it, Steve? That's right.

Somebody else tell me something you like that you didn't use to: asparagus, avocados, okra, ripe tomatoes. And some of you are wondering how anybody could be around that didn't like tomatoes or avocados. Well, how do you learn to like them? Just eating them. That's right. We can cultivate a taste for them.

One thing that encourages us to try something that we didn't like or thought we didn't like is to see other people enjoying that food, right? We just hate to be cheated.

And so, God wants us all to be good salesmen for the law, good witnesses for the joy of His Word. He wants each one of us to be able to say with David:

"O taste and see that the LORD is good..." Psalm 34:8.

Now, not only is there joy in the law and in the Word which is the magnification of the law, but there is also wisdom. Notice our 98th verse:

"Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me" Psalms 119:98.

I wasn't sure some time back whether those that are ever with us were the enemies or the commandments. But in comparing some of the other translations, I found that what David is saying is that "Thy commandments are ever with me, and therefore I'm wiser than my enemies. I meditate in the law all day long. It's with me all the time, and so I'm wiser than my enemies."

"I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation" Psalm 119:99.

Let's stop on that a minute. Do you think David had good teachers or bad teachers? Why, he had good teachers. But my dear friends, the goal of a good teacher is to lead his students to go farther than *he* ever went. It's your privilege. How, though? If you merely confine yourself to listening to what your teacher says, you'll never be any wiser than he is. But if as the result of listening to your teacher you yourself dig in the gold mine of God's law, you yourself cultivate the field of God's Word, then *you* can gather more and more nuggets, you can find more and more treasures. And you can be wiser even than your enemies, and then your teachers.

Now, let me see some of the other translations on *this* one:

“Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditations” Psalm 119:99 (Unknown version).

“Insight” is the word that’s used here, or understanding, the ability to see into things, to discern the right from wrong, and to discern what to do.

“...More insight than all my teachers, for Thy instruction is my study” Psalm 119:99 (Unknown version).

Verse 101:

“I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy Word” Psalm 119:101.

Do you remember an expression in the Lord’s Prayer that this verse might remind us of?

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”
Matthew 6:13.

God wants us to ever be on the alert to avoid not only sin, but the paths that lead to sin. We are told that if David, King David had been engaged in some useful employment, he would never have been led to the sin that spoiled his record and left him an adulterer and a murderer.

Joseph, on the other hand, sought to avoid temptation. And thus, when it sought him, he could flee away and preserve his purity unsullied.

“I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou hast taught me” Psalms 119:101–102.

The emphasis is on God Himself as our teacher. And so, it’s put here:

“Thou Thyself hast been my teacher” Psalm 119:102
(*New English Bible*).

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(*New English Bible*).

I was talking with a young man not long ago who was counseling with me about certain matters, and the Lord impressed me to share with him this thought. That one of the greatest lacks, one of the greatest needs that God is looking for men to fill is this: men who really know the Bible, men who really know what the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus says.

And how are we going to learn that? Why my dear friends, it is not by taking a lot of courses necessarily that we are going to become proficient. We might take a

great many courses in how to mine gold, but the actual digging of the gold is what gives us the metal of valuable wealth, right? And unless you and I come to the place where for ourselves we learn to dig in the Word, dig in the mine and get the gold, all the classes in the world will not be sufficient.

One of the simplest things we can do, and one of the most important, is to memorize the Word of God. In fact, dear friends, unless you memorize some of it, there's no way to meditate on it day and night. If you are confined to the moments when your eyes are looking at the text, most of us don't have too much time to do that. But we're thinking about something every waking moment. How wonderful it is to fill the memory with the inspired truths. And do you know that this is not only a blessing to us in having the truths in our minds, but it also helps us with other studies.

Look at this statement in *Counsels to Teachers*, 483:

“If medical students will study the Word of God diligently, they will be far better prepared to understand their other studies; for enlightenment always comes from an earnest study of the Word of God. Nothing else will so help to give them a retentive memory as the study of the Scriptures”
Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students, page 483.

Do you have a poor memory? You can have a better one. How? Studying the Bible. If you wait until you have a good memory before you study it, you may never have it. Mental exercise produces the ability to retain, just as physical exercise increases our muscular power.

Someone has used the illustration of one of these old wooden tubs or barrels. Picture it. It's been sitting out here in the sun. If you pour water into it, what will happen? It'll all leak out. What's the answer? Keep pouring it in anyway. What happens to those pieces of wood? They begin to swell, and finally the tub or the barrel will hold every drop of water you put into it.

So, if you find it difficult to retain what you read, the answer, dear friends, is not to quit and wait, or merely pray for a good memory. The answer is, make the effort to memorize. And may I give you a few practical suggestions about memorizing? It may help somebody here. If you want to memorize something, begin by praying that God will help you not only to commit it to memory but to understand the truth. Don't learn it like you'd learn some jingle; just repeat some syllables. Get the thought and the words in your mind at the same time.

Then, do this. Read the verse, and if it's a long verse, just a half of the verse or a third of the verse, read it and read it out loud to yourself. This way, you're getting it not merely through the eye but through the ear. And the conscious effort to repeat what you're seeing on the page helps to fix it in the mind. This is important.

So, as you read, read it aloud, read it slowly and meditate on it. And then, after you've read it a couple of times or three times or however many times you think you need, then turn your eyes away from it and try to repeat it. If you can't get

through it, look back and read it again. Read it out loud. And keep that up. And when you find that you can repeat it without looking at the page, don't stop there. While it's that deep in the groove (while the groove is that deep), go over it some more, and then review day by day.

Some people get a blessing out of committing to memory a whole chapter or an entire book. I remember in our young people's work in San Francisco years ago, we decided that we would memorize the book of James. So, we memorized a few verses each week. I think about a verse today. And pretty soon, we had the entire book.

The book of Revelation is a wonderful book to memorize. If you'd like to start with something that's very important as the key to the whole book, memorize the third angel's message, Revelation 14:6–12. Memorize the Laodicean message, Revelation the 3rd chapter beginning with the 14th and 15th verses. That's the special message to the remnant church.

You may be led to memorize other things that have been a special blessing to you—some promise from the Psalms, some practical instruction from the Proverbs. And then especially the words of Jesus as you find them in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Oh, the whole Bible is a revelation of Christ.

You know, there *have* been people that have memorized the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. J. N. Andrews memorized the New Testament in more than one language. He was a real Bible student.

Well, you and I may not get quite that far, but let's begin wherever we are because that's we always have to begin is where we are, isn't it? And go on. Oh, I want you to be Bible students. I want you to *know* the Word of God. In the trying times that we're soon to enter into, we shall need to have this Word stored in our minds, not merely that we may *know* what to do but that the *love* for what we have read and memorized shall be so deep that we would rather die than give up God's truths.

While I have this book *Counsels to Teachers* here, I want to share another very interesting little statement about the Word of God, page 423:

"Man's words, if of any value, echo the words of God. In the education of the youth, they should never take the place of the divine word" *Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students*, page 423.

"Man's words, if of any value..." *Ibid.*

Do what?

"...echo the words of God" *Ibid.*

Do you want your words to be of value? Let *your* words echo the words of God. But what must you do before you can echo? You must hear. Before you can reflect, you must see. Before you can share with others, you yourself must be filled with these precious truths. All right.

Now, I'd like to have you read with me Psalm 119 verses 97–104, this section we're studying:

"O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy word. I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou hast taught me. How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" Psalm 119:97–104.

Now, this experience does not come through listening to what comes over the radio, or in the newspaper, or the popular magazines. It comes through listening to God Himself speak to us through His Word. Notice the enjoyment that the psalmist was getting from God's law. That 103rd verse:

"How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalm 119:103.

Oh, I pray that this may be the experience of everyone.

I was thinking of some of these commandments, how precious indeed they are. Take that very first one:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" Exodus 20:3.

You know friends, while nearly all the law is expressed negatively, each commandment is a positive promise. And do you know what that First Commandment says to me? That First Commandment tells me from the lips of Christ, "You will not have any other god before Me. I will keep you. I will keep you from being diverted by the things of this world and the people of this world.

And so, my heart responds:

"I have set the LORD always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" Psalm 16:8.

You know, dear friends, there's more than one way of having somebody get between God and us. When we think so much of somebody that we allow them to dictate what we should do contrary to the will of God, we're making somebody else a god instead of our Lord, aren't we?

But there's another way we can let other people get in the way. If we allow other people to irritate us, to worry us so that we stumble over them, so that instead of keeping our eyes on Jesus, we get bothered about what other people are doing to

us, or what they're failing to do for us, so that we let that hide the face of God, are we not breaking that First Commandment? Are we not missing the blessing of that First Commandment?

Oh, let it speak to our hearts tonight as we meditate on it.

"Thou shall have no other gods before me" Exodus 20:3.

"I will keep you. I will keep you looking at my face, that nothing may come between My love and your heart. God grant it for each one of us.

And then, that Tenth Commandment, will you say that with me:

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's" Exodus 20:17.

You know, covetousness is a restless longing for what doesn't belong to us. It's the greatest cause of unhappiness on this planet. And as I've sometimes said, the Tenth Commandment cuts right across the two great ways to be unhappy. Many people are unhappy because they're longing for something they can't get. The others are unhappy because they got what they longed for, and it didn't belong to them. And the Tenth Commandment prevents all of that.

And so, as I meditate on that Tenth Commandment, it says to me, God says to me, "You won't have those restless longings for the things that belong to other people and don't belong to you, whether it's property, or money, or position, or recognition, or anything. Thou shall not covet any of that. I'll give you a longing for what belongs to you, and I'll help you get it."

"Delight thyself also in the LORD: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" Psalm 37:4.

I say that's sweet. What do you say? Nothing bitter about it, nothing sour about it, and so with the entire law from beginning to end, praise the name of the Lord.

"...in His law doth he meditate day and night" Psalm 1:2.

I'm so glad that the One who wrote this law upon the stone is writing it in our minds and hearts. I'm so glad that to help us be sure what He meant, He laid aside His glory in heaven and came down and tabernacled in our humanity, showing us exactly how to keep this law. The whole life of Jesus was a representation of these Ten Commandments.

And then, to make it possible for us to get back on track, He went to the cross and died to pay the debt for our transgression. And as we behold His life at Nazareth, Capernaum and Jerusalem, and His death on Calvary, our love for Him deepens. Our appreciation of His character increases. And beholding Him, we become changed. May the Lord add His blessing as we meditate on these precious things.

Now, I want to give you an opportunity to express your heart tonight and your appreciation of God's holy law, His will, His promise to make you like Himself. Let those who would like to speak just press right up to the front. We'll have a good season of witness.

[Testimony meeting follows]

[Comments by Elder Frazee during testimony meeting.]

[Elder Frazee] Listen, before you go, read Psalm 119:11. Read it out so they'll all hear it.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" Psalm 119:11.

...You know, that's the truth, isn't it? We memorize the things we use. How many of you have memorized knife, fork, spoon? How did you memorize those? All right.

...Before you go, I want to ask you something, brother. Are there people in the world that eat more than you do? Well, does that discourage you from eating some yourself?

Now, an elephant can really eat more than you, can't he? A hippopotamus? Yes. But that doesn't keep you from eating some every day. Don't let the fact that some people can eat more of this Word than you can keep you from eating some every day. All they eat can't keep you from getting a blessing, and all they eat can't take the place of what you get. Keep it up. Keep it up, brother. Thank you for your words of courage.

...Thank you, sister. In other words, if your memory's like a sieve, keep the water running through it.

Is there anybody here tonight that's making a decision and would like to indicate it by raising your hand? Whatever God has impressed your heart with. May I see your hands? Thank God.

Heavenly Father, seal to our hearts the impressions that have been made from Thy Word by Thy Spirit. Seal to us the decisions that we've made to let Thy Word fill our minds and hearts, crowding out the weeds of selfishness and sin. Send us out now to share the good things with others, for Jesus' sake, amen.

A happy Sabbath to all of you.

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