

Help me Understand...

Good is Good from, A-Z

7.9.23

Psalm 119:25–32 (CSB)

T Daleth

²⁵ My life is down in the dust;
give me life through your word.

²⁶ I told you about my life,
and you answered me;
teach me your statutes.

²⁷ Help me understand
the meaning of your precepts
so that I can meditate on your wonders.

²⁸ I am weary from grief;
strengthen me through your word.

²⁹ Keep me from the way of deceit
and graciously give me your instruction.

³⁰ I have chosen the way of truth;
I have set your ordinances before me.

³¹ I cling to your decrees;
LORD, do not put me to shame.

³²I pursue the way of your commands,
for you broaden my understanding.

1. Brief introduction of Psalm 119:

A. Psalm 119 consists of 176 verses.

1. Based upon every letter of the Hebrew alphabet,
2. Expresses a full range of human emotions.
3. Is comparable in length to whole books like Ruth, Philippians, and James.
3. Ultimately, Psalm 119 is a beautiful Psalm expressing a broken man's desire to hear from God and know Him through His Word.

B. The Psalmist is trying to understand his situation through the lens of God's Word.

1. He believed that Torah taught that if you obeyed the Law, then no harm would happen to him.
2. However, he was experiencing all kinds of harm, so he asked God, "Where have I gone wrong?"

C. Today's passage explores the intersection of hard and holy.

1. I used this phrase in one of the sermons on Exodus, and it has stuck with me.
2. We often meet God, the holy, at the intersection of hard places.
3. It is at this intersection where the Psalmist finds himself and where God proves to be very present.

2. What controls your meditation?

A. Our minds are constantly thinking about something.

1. Although there are all sorts of numbers listed, better research suggests the average person has around 6,000 thoughts per day.¹

2. That's about 6.5 thoughts per minute when we assume 8 hours of sleeping.

B. Not all of those 6,000 thoughts are focused upon God.

1. We have to think about turning on the blinker.

2. We think about making or buying lunch.

3. Lots of thoughts are necessary to survive.

C. However, a better question might be, "What are you meditating upon when times are really good or really bad?"

1. This Psalm is helpful because it shows a man who, in the midst of pain, is consistently focusing his attention upon God's Word.

2. He is aware of his struggle, and the pain he feels (whether it is physical or spiritual) is very real, yet he uses that pain to drive Him toward God and His Word.

a. Pain always affects us.

b. But we choose if it drives us toward Jesus or away from Jesus.

3. Let's take a moment and talk about pain from a biblical perspective.

3. Pain is not immoral or neutral.

A. God created us with the capacity for pain.

1. When God created man, He created us with flesh, bone, tendons, muscles, ligaments, and emotions.

a. God did not originally intend for us to tear flesh.

¹ <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-many-thoughts-per-day>. Accessed 7/3/23

b. God did not desire for us to break bones, crush limbs, or those such things.

2. Yet, He created our brain and each connection with the potential for both pleasure and pain.

a. Pain and pleasure remind us of the God-ordained limits He placed upon us.

b. It was because of sin and the fallen nature of our world that the prevalence of pain increased.

B. **It was God who activated the "pain" button.**

1. The first-time pain is EVER mentioned was an act of God's word upon both woman and man.

a. Genesis 3:16–17 (CSB)

¹⁶He said to the woman:

I will intensify (notice it is intensified) your labor pains;

you will bear children with painful effort.

Your desire will be for your husband,

yet he will rule over you.

¹⁷And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it':

The ground is cursed because of you.

You will eat from it by **means of painful** labor

all the days of your life.

2. **Because of the effects of sin, pain is normal.**

a. When Jesus returns and finalizes all that He has promised, then there will be no more pain, no more tears, and no more grief.

b. But both Isaiah 25 and Revelation 21:4 tell us that day is still yet to come.

C. Therefore, what we do with pain is an essential part of human existence.

1. We can try to treat it.

a. We can drown it in alcohol.

b. We can numb it with drugs, hobbies, sex, or other compulsions.

2. I can't help but wonder if the mass legalization of marijuana points to a much bigger picture: a picture of people who are struggling with some physical, emotional, or spiritual pain.

D. For the Christian, Who better to go to with our pain than to the one who created us with that capacity?

1. Satan cannot create; he can only pervert.

a. Therefore, he takes what God created for good and perverts it.

b. God created us in such a way that we would experience both pleasure and pain.

c. Satan has perverted both of these feelings.

2. But it is God who knows us intricately and wonderfully.

a. He knows our original design and His original intentions.

b. So who better to take our physical and emotional pain to than to the One who made us?

c. We bring our pain to the one who created us, not the one who perverted us.

3. Yet, too often, we bring our pain to after-market specialists who can only treat the symptom instead of ministering to the source!

4. That's why the Psalmist cries out to GOD!

4. Help me understand...a powerful and gracious prayer.

²⁷ Help me understand

the meaning of your precepts

so that I can meditate on your wonders.

²⁸ I am weary from grief;

strengthen me through your word.

A. Here's the beauty of following Jesus:

1. Life is eternal; death isn't.
2. Those apart from Christ can't say that.
 - a. This is as good as it gets for those who do not confess and believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
 - b. But for believers, this is a momentary state this is being pushed away.
3. **In Christ Jesus, grief and pain are checkpoints, not destinations.**
 - a. They are reminders that we still anticipate a future consummation of the Kingdom.
 - b. They are reminders that

Hebrews 13:14 (NLT)

¹⁴ For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

2 Corinthians 5:1 (NLT)

For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.

B. In the meantime, The Spirit helps.

1. We are invited to pray like the Psalmist, "Help me understand your precepts."

a. The writer WANTED to know God's Word because by it, there is life.

b. The Holy Spirit wants us to know the Word because, by it, there is life.

2. The Lord helps us understand and strengthens us through the Word.

3. The Psalmist cries out to know the Word of God because in it there is life!

C. This involves far more than reading the Bible.

1. Some of the worst people in history have read the Bible.

2. This goes far beyond reading God's word toward experiencing God's Word.

3. I can't help but connect Psalm 119 to John 1:

D. John 1:1–5 (CSB)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

5. The Written Word points us to the Living Word.

A. The Bible is what we call "special revelation."

1. You can never know about salvation through Christ Jesus apart from Scripture.

2. You cannot find God's salvation plan anywhere else.

3. That's because the Living Word inhabits the written Word.
4. To Love God's Word is to love the One who inspired it.

B. In Jesus, we find what the Psalmist longed for.

1. In Jesus, we have one who is closer than a brother.
2. In Jesus, we have one who will not let us be put to shame Ps 119:31

3. In Jesus, we have a perfect David.

a. Just as David, or whoever the Psalmist is, cries out to the Father, the Son of David did the very same thing in the Garden.

b. Jesus, too, got alone in prayer to be strengthened for the ministry ahead.

C. The Psalmist cried out to know God's Word, and every year on Pentecost, the Jews would read aloud the words of King David "Help me understand...strengthen me through your word."

1. Believers, like you and I, can cry out not only to know the written word but the Word that Became Flesh...The Living Word that dwells in us through the Holy Spirit.

2. The Father, in His Goodness, gives us the Living Word and the Spirit so that we may call upon him in our grief, and to know Him in our pain.

Three Questions for us to Consider:

#1. In the presence of pain, are you growing closer to Jesus?

A. We are not called to deny the existence of trouble but we are not to allow trouble to dominate and control our thoughts!

1. Paul David Tripp asks, "Does God loom so large in your thoughts that you grow strong in faith, even in the middle of what is unexpected and difficult?"²

2. Remember, pain is not neutral, nor is it immoral.

3. But we choose if our pain points us toward Jesus or away from Jesus.

a. The old saying, "no pain, no gain."

b. Pain is necessary for growth.

c. If we avoid all pain, we avoid growth.

d. So we must choose to let the presence of pain point us toward Jesus!

B. Can I grow even when all of our questions are not answered?

1. Will I draw closer to God even when I do not understand?

2. Where is my default setting for times when I'm lost, hurting, grieving, and struggling?

C. If you find your default setting in trouble is to go everywhere but Jesus, don't despair.

1. Those are learned behaviors, and the Spirit can help you change that.

2. Acknowledging where we turn in our grief can help us focus more intensely on Jesus and His Word.

#2. Are you ingesting enough of God's Word to counteract the other voices?

A. We live in a day of the proliferation of information.

² Tripp, Paul David. *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (p. 136). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

1. For example, there is an estimated 800 million videos on YouTube.
2. Never has information been so affordable and accessible than in our day.
3. Therefore, it has never been easier to influence our lives with voices other than God.

B. That is why we must be intentional regarding our devotion to God's Word.

1. **We cannot withdraw what we do not deposit.**
2. We cannot meditate upon God's Word and His goodness if we have never taken time with God's Word and His goodness.

C. This week, I want to encourage and challenge you to meditate upon Scripture.

1. Don't try to read whole books or large sections because you won't remember it.
2. Perhaps, start with a Psalm or a familiar passage like John 3:16 and give yourself to thinking about it throughout the day and week.
3. Pray it, memorize it, and interact with it, and it will get deeper into your life.

#3. What is one area that you are asking God to help you understand according to His Word?

A. We see in Psalm 119 that God hears, listens, and responds to the prayers of His people.

1. He may not respond the way you wanted, but He does respond.
2. He is active in His listening, care, and concern for His people.
3. Jesus emphasized this reality in Matthew 10:29–31 (CSB)

²⁹ Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's consent. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

B. So what are you asking God to help you understand?

1. Asking the question demonstrates trust and faith in God, along with confidence in His goodness.

2. God may not tell you why that trauma happened in your childhood, or why that accident happened, or He might.

3. Sometimes God reveals the particulars like He did at the end of the Book of Daniel, and sometimes God reminds us that He is in control like He does at the end of Job.

4. But in us asking the question, "Help me understand your word," we are engaging with the Almighty God and trusting in His power, goodness, and sovereignty.

Invitation to pray:

A. First, If you are overwhelmed, weary, hurting, and tired, I invite you to bring that pain and emotion to Jesus this morning.

1. Instead of that pushing us AWAY from God, let us use it to drive us TOWARD God.

2. In a moment, I invite all who will to come to Jesus who invites all who are weary and heavy burdened to come and He will give us rest.

B. Second, maybe you don't love God or His Word like you want to.

1. Today is a great time to ask the Holy Spirit to create this desire in you.

2. Then to make a plan and determination to meditate upon God and His Word throughout the week.

C. Lastly, you have for a long-time struggled with a "why?"

1. But maybe you were afraid of praying wrong or offending God with your question.

2. Today, I invite you to bring that question before the Lord and ask Him, "Help me understand according to your precepts and ways."

Prayer after service in the first classroom.