

The LORD Is My Portion

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[0 : 00] Psalm 119 verses 57 to 64. I'll read it out loud for us.

The Lord is my portion. I promise to keep your words. I entreat your favor with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to your promise.

When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies. I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.

At midnight I rise to praise you because of your righteous rules. I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.

The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love. Teach me your statutes. It begins with the affirmation that the Lord is my portion.

[1 : 09] And portion means a share, right? It's like a share of your food, a share of the land, or a share of the inheritance. So in the Old Testament, it's frequently used to refer to the inheritance of the promised land that God's people were entitled to.

And the priestly class, however, and their tribe, the Levites, didn't get an allotment of land. So they didn't have a share of the land.

And instead, God told them in Numbers 18, verse 20, You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them.

I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel. So the Levites and the priests didn't get a land, but they had the Lord himself as their portion.

He was their inheritance. And this is the background of what the psalmist is saying. He's saying, the Lord is my portion. It's a profound statement, right? It's a, I have no share in anything else in the world.

[2 : 10] I'm not invested in any material possession. The Lord is all my happiness. The Lord is all my possession. The Lord is my inheritance. That's what he's saying. The Lord is my portion.

And this was the call of the Old Testament priests, but also because Christ came as the ultimate high priest so that we now have direct access to God.

We also have the Lord himself as our portion. And that's why 1 Peter 2, verse 9 says that all of God's people are a royal priesthood.

We have direct access to God, and he is our portion. So then I want to ask you guys, what is your share in this world? Do you have a share in this world?

Or can you say, the Lord is my portion? Do you have a share in the wealth of this world? Or share in a sports team? Or share in a TV series, a family career?

[3 : 11] Or can you honestly say, the Lord is my portion? Is he the chief end of your life? Or is God enough for you? Or are you clinging to other portions, other shares?

And this profound idea becomes the basis for the rest of the psalm, the rest of this section of the psalm. And the main point of this section is that those who have the Lord as their portion should keep God's worth through all their life.

And because the Lord is his portion, the psalmist can say, I promise to keep your words. If our portion is something else or someone else, then we can't make God the first priority of our lives because there is a conflict of interests.

And we cannot promise to keep God's words. And so it's only when God is our portion can we promise to keep his words. And because the Lord is his portion, the psalmist promises to keep his word.

And for the same reason, the psalmist calls upon God to keep his promise to him as well in verse 58. I entreat your favor with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to your promise.

[4 : 09] He's saying, I promise to keep your words. And now he's asking God to be gracious to him according to his promise. So he doesn't go about, you know, currying favor with men.

Rather, he goes before the face of God to entreat his favor, his grace. Asks him to be gracious according to his promise. And if we know that the Lord really is, right, the sovereign Lord, if we know that he is our portion, that we are his special possession, if we know that really we belong to him and he belongs to us, then we don't have to, you know, go to curry favor with other things or other people or to, you know, and depend on the whims of wicked, sickle men.

We know that God holds all the keys. He has all the answers. He has all the authority and power. And so we can go to him and pray to him, call upon him, entreat him, ask him to be gracious to us. And this is challenging for me because we're so often entreating other people, right? We're always, you know, entreating other people for favors or recommendations or assistance.

And, of course, there's a place for that in the way the Lord makes us interdependent as the body of Christ, for example. But in terms of our primary allegiance and orientation, do we entreat God?

[5 : 35] Do we go to him? Do we ask for him, his favor, him to be gracious to us? Because that's our prime orientation, should be vertical before it is horizontal.

And so those who have the Lord as their portion should pray to him. And that's what the psalmist does. He continues in verses 59 to 60. When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies. I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. It's a really interesting expression. I had to think for a second to figure out what it means. When I think on my ways, what does that mean?

He's saying he reflects on the ways of his life. He evaluates his priorities. He thinks about his habits. And then after he has done that, he turns his feet to God's testimonies.

He says, we have had really good early fall weather. I mean, it's not technically fall, but today was beautiful. It's like a perfect time to go out for a nice stroll and walk around.

[6 : 37] It's a little breeze, gentle breeze. And the sun's not too oppressive. And I don't know if you've ever done this, but sometimes I just get lost in thought. And then I lose. Like, I don't remember where I'm going.

I just keep walking. I think a couple times after we moved, like, I remember just walking to our old apartment. And just because I wasn't thinking about it.

And then, so, like, that happens to us, right? And it can happen in a figurative sense, too, right? It's that if we don't think on our ways, we can lose our way.

We can default to our old habits, sinful habits. We can get distracted. And so we must stop to think on our ways. So you're thinking about your ways. And then when you think about your ways, then we can turn deliberately our feet to God's testimony so we can walk on that path.

And then once we have the right direction, we have to hasten to obey. The psalmist says, I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. We shouldn't be slack or lazy about obeying God's commandments.

[7 : 42] We should be diligent and quick to obey. And it's because the Christian life is not an afternoon stroll. It's a race we must run.

And I think sometimes we as Christians can treat our life like the cool-down walk, right, after a race. You guys have done that before, right?

You run a hard race and then you have to cool down, you know? Yeah. So, I mean, if you just stop, like, you lie down, you're going to start throwing up, right? So you have to kind of cool your body down. You have to walk it off.

Sometimes I feel like as Christians, we treat life like that. We act like we finished the race. Oh, yeah, I'm baptized. Oh, yeah, I believe in the Lord. So I'm done. Like, now it's just a nice stroll.

Walk it off. Cool off. But we're not done, right? The race isn't done, right? The finish line, we haven't crossed the finish line. And we have to persevere to the end in order to be saved.

[8 : 38] And so that's, it's no time to coast, as it says in Hebrews 12, verse 1, Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

There are worldly weights and clingy sins in our lives that slow us down and threaten to derail us and prevent us from finishing our race. So all the more when we have to set, think on our ways, set the direction, our feet toward God's ways, and hasten to obey and not to delay and keep God, keeping God's commandments.

Like a disciplined soldier, right? I mean, I don't know if, I don't know if when you went to boot camp, Zach, they actually used the phrase, like, what did they say? It's a, if I say jumps, ask how high or something, right?

Do they actually do that? No? Yeah. So, yeah, okay. I mean, but that should be, you know, like, people could, you know, give us bad commands, but the Lord's commands are always good, right? That should be our attitude. If he commands it, hasten to obey. Let's do it. But, of course, it's easier said than done, right? It's because there's opposition. There are enemies who are hunting us.

[9 : 50] It says in verse 61, Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. Ensnare, it's a reference to a trap like that a hunter uses. It's the cords.

They try to use a cord to encircle us, to try to grab a hold of our leg or trip us, whatever it may be. There are enemies of God who oppose him, who will set traps for us.

But he says even in that, even when the evil people surround him, to trap him, the psalmist says, I do not forget your law, which reveals his character, right? Because when we're in danger, when people are panicking, they often forget their way, right?

And when we're tempted by Satan, when we're threatened by his schemes, that's when we have to remember God's law most and stand by our principles. Because it's easy to keep God's law when keeping God's law seems to be in our own selfish interests, right?

If keeping God's law leads to social acceptance and respect, then it's easy, right? But when keeping God's law actually means sacrifice, maybe when it means financial loss, when it means social ridicule, it's tempting to compromise, but we must not let the snares of temptations derail us from the path of God.

[11 : 01] The psalmist is able to do that, and he kind of gives us a clue as to why he's able to do that, to remember God's law, even when he's surrounded by the cords of the wicked. And it's because he has disciplined himself to remember God's law always.

We can see that in verse 62. At midnight, I rise to praise you because of your righteous rules. That's something that I can't really relate to because I can't stay up at night.

But maybe he was the type of guy who just kind of wakes up in the middle of the night and then decided to use that time every day to think about God and praise him and whatnot. So it doesn't have to be at midnight, but do you have a regular time and place to praise him, to read his word, to pray.

He rises to praise God at midnight because of God's righteous rules. He's developed a habit. He's trained his mind to remember God's word and to focus on the race before him.

And so that guides him when he's, even when he's surrounded by the schemes of the enemy, he's able to remember God's law. And so those who have the Lord as their portion should keep God's worth through all of life.

[12 : 16] And we can't do that by being slack and running sloppily. We have to discipline ourselves. And this is something we can't do on our own. And it says in verse 63, I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.

And we know this from our experience. We need each other. God's people need each other, right? And we need the mutual encouragement. We need one another's gifts.

We need mutual correction and rebuke. We need one another's example. We have to run side by side so that we can push each other's pace, so that we can exhort one another to keep on running, to endure.

And so that's what it means to keep company with those who fear God and keep his precepts. This is why the local church and membership is important. We can't run the race alone, right?

And Satan's tactic, kind of like the predators that hunt prey in wildlife, is to divide and conquer, right? And an isolated believer is a vulnerable believer.

[13 : 27] And contrary to what some people, some believers even think, sign of maturity is not independence. It's interdependence.

And that's the sign of maturity, when a Christian is truly interdependent with the body of Christ and they're growing in that community, in that context. And so how are you involved?

Do you have such companions who keep God's precepts, who are running with you, who are pushing your pace?

Are you in discipling relationships with people? And that doesn't have to be like a hierarchical thing. You could just meet with someone to pray, to read the Bible, or from the church, or are you involved

in a community group?

You should initiate these things and follow up. And then lastly, it says, not only do we remind each other of God's precepts, precepts, even the world that God has created can remind us of his steadfast love.

[14 : 30] It says in verse 64, the earth, the Lord, is full of your steadfast love. It shows how God sustains. It reveals the God who sustains the world, who provides for his creatures.

He's the one that makes the world go round. And all of this attests to God's unchanging, steadfast love for us. And that makes us cry all the more to God, teach me your statutes. And we as Christians, especially have stronger evidence than even what the psalmist is talking about, about God's steadfast love, and even sure a sign that the Lord is our portion.

And that's the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ. And through faith in him, the gift of his Spirit, who indwells us, who is described right in Ephesians 1, 13 to 14, it says, in Christ you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

So Jesus dies for our sins, rises to life again, saves us, and through faith in him, we are indwelled by the Spirit of God. And that Spirit is the guarantee that we have God as our possession, that we are possessed by the Spirit of God, that we have the Lord as our portion.

And so all the more, as people who have the Lord as our portion, we should seek to keep God's word through all of life.