

Panting and Crying for God's Word

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[0 : 00] All right, so we're reading Psalm 119 today. Psalm 119, verses 129 to 136. Starting from verse 129.

Your testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light. It imparts understanding to the simple. I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments.

Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts. Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes. My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.

As we've been reading, Psalm 119 is about God's word, and how it's precious, and how God can lead us in it. So we see a lot of this in this passage too. And it points us to the amazing worth of God's word, and how it takes work to unfold his word.

[1 : 19] But then the immense treasure, the immense treasure that we get when God makes his face to shine upon us. So let's look at this passage and the verses throughout.

So looking at Psalm 129, the first verse in this passage, points us to how God's word is wonderful for us. Sometimes we can see this more obviously, sometimes we don't.

But when we think about it, it answers so many of life's questions. What is right and what is wrong? What's wise and what's foolish? What's eternal and what's temporary? These are lofty questions, but they have very practical implications for our lives.

Even things like, I need money, I'm strapped for cash. Should I be honest on my tax returns, or how honest? And how I interact with my family.

What's the manner that I should speak? What's the content of my words? How should I interact with them? What are the priorities of my life? What are the small decisions going to be? And so, you know, God helps order our life so that we're able to see what's good, what's right.

[2 : 35] And in Psalm, or verses 130 to 131, it talks about how it takes work to unfold and understand God's word.

So, you know, I think about it's relatively easy to read or listen to God's word. I think we try to be in the habit of having quiet time, spending time with God.

But it's also easy to let God's word go in one year and not the other. I know it is for me. But the work is meditating upon God's word, thinking about it, considering its implications for our lives.

It takes work to do that. I think about a cow chewing its cud. If you guys know, like, how cows chew, they have, like, four parts of their stomach, like four chambers, right?

So they'll bite off some food, chew on it for a while, and then swallow it. And then it gets, like, digested a little bit. And then it gets sent back up into their mouth. And then they chew it a little bit more.

[3 : 35] And they moisten it. And then they swallow it again, right? And this allows them to moisten their food, to break down their food more, to digest it, to get as much as they can out of it.

And I think of that with God's word, you know? We chew on it. We chew the cud. Like, I mean, what are different ways that we can chew upon God's word like that, right?

We can read God's word for its breadth. Bible reading plans are helpful for that when we get to read, you know, like the Old Testament narratives, New Testament epistles, poetry like in the Psalms.

We, the Gospels to read about the Lord's life. So it's important to get breadth of God's word. We can also read God's word for depth, right?

We can read, like, a verse a day, just, like, meditate on it. Think about it throughout the day. Because God's word is, has a lot of depth as we think upon it.

[4 : 33] We can memorize scripture and store it up in our hearts. That way we can sort of bring it back up and have, like, a midday spiritual snack and just think about it. Pray about it when we have a free moment of contemplation.

When we memorize scripture, we can also whip it out as an offensive spiritual weapon when we're in the midst of spiritual conflict. We were talking last night at community group about taking our thoughts captive, right?

So when thoughts or attitudes or doubts come to mind, we can bring God's word immediately at hand. We can study scripture topically for a specific topic.

So if you're wondering what scripture says about marriage or about sexuality and gender or about how we spend our money, right? We can study scripture for that.

So lots of different ways that we can go about studying God's word. But it takes work to do that. But it's not all based on our efforts and what we do.

[5 : 35] It says, verse 130, the unfolding of your words gives light. It imparts understanding to the simple. I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments. We're panning to God.

We're asking him to unfold his word to us, right? So we earnestly seek him, but we also rely on him to make our efforts fruitful, to reveal the treasures that he has in his word.

Sometimes we don't long for his commandments. Sometimes we're cold. But I think that's okay.

Sometimes you go through those times. Sometimes it's enough to want to read God's word or to want to want to read God's word, right?

And it's kind of like when we're sick and we don't have much of an appetite. Sometimes the best thing to do is just to eat a little bit. And that will help us regain our appetite.

[6 : 35] Or I think about coming to frostbite. You know, when that happens, the cold will go down into the deeper layers of your skin, to the nerves, and you kind of lose feeling, you know, in your hands, in your feet.

But the best way to counter that is just to get next to the fire, rub your hands together, start getting warm. So, you know, if you're getting cold, don't be discouraged, but keep going, keep eating, keep feeding, and ask God for that appetite to rekindle your hunger.

Verse 132 says, Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. So, we see that the psalmist wants God to turn to him and be gracious to him.

And verse 135 also says, Make your face shine upon your servant. And, you know, this is God's way with those who love his name.

God's name reveals his character and who he is. And God makes a face to shine upon us, shows us who he is. And we get to see that, to enjoy him.

[7 : 39] I think of a couple instances in the Bible where people have seen this and just declare who God is. So, there's, in Genesis 16, Hagar is running away from Sarah, who's oppressing her and abusing her.

And God appears to Hagar and promises her that her descendants will be too numerous to count.

And Hagar calls God, You are the God who sees me. Right? So, God is the one who sees her.

And God sees us and cares for us. Genesis 22, when Abraham is about to kill his son Isaac. And God provides. Abraham names that place the Lord will provide.

And God's the one who sees us and will provide for us. And, you know, God is able to make his face shine upon us because of Christ.

We're able to ask God that he reveals himself to us and bestows his pleasure upon us. Because he hid his face from the Lord. He took away his pleasure from him.

[8 : 40] And, you know, as we read about this past week, as we heard on Sunday, the Lord was mocked. He was beaten for our sake. He suffered in our stead.

And because of Jesus, sin no longer has dominion over us. We can make that prayer for ourselves.

Verse 133, Let no iniquity get dominion over me. There's nothing in our lives, nothing that's been discouraging us that we resign ourselves to.

We can always have hope. And so because of Christ, sin no longer has dominion. And Hebrews chapter 7, 25 says, Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

And so we can come to God tonight through faith in Christ. Have hope. Make lofty prayers. Ask him to make his face shine upon us because of what Christ has done.
All right. All right. With that, Gary, can you lead us into the next song? Thank you.