

Love and Fear of God's Word

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[0 : 00] Psalm 119, verses 113 to 120. I hate the double-minded, but I love your law.

You are my hiding place and my shield. I hope in your word. Depart from me, you evildoers, that I might keep the commandments of my God.

Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope. Hold me up that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually.

You spurn all who go aside from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain. All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies.

My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments. So this stanza is about how we should love God's word because God upholds those who keep his word.

[1 : 23] And so it opens in verse 113 with an affirmation of God's love, I mean, our love for God's word, his law. It says, I hate the double-minded, but I love your law.

So you can see the contrast there between hating the double-minded, but loving God's law. This is not, this doesn't contradict Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, for example, when he says, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Because it's possible to hate evil for the evil that they do and the evil that they represent, but at the same time sincerely desire that they repent and are forgiven and are restored, right?

And so what it's talking about here is in order to, if you love God's law truly, and if you desire to see God's law upheld and see it fulfilled in practice, then you, by necessary consequence, hate the people who break God's law and don't abide by God's law.

And evil doors are described in an interesting way here. They're called double-minded, which can also be translated half-hearted or divided. So, and they're also described later in verse 118 as people who go astray from God's statutes and for having cunning, right?

[2 : 52] So these are, these are all words that characterize evil doors because sinners are, by definition, people who are divided. They are accountable to God because they are created by God.

But they have other things that they pledge allegiance to. Their allegiances are divided. They're half-hearted. They're double-minded. They're devious in their ways. And they're cunning.

They practice deception. They're duplicitous. And this is contrasted throughout the stanza with the singular devotion that the psalmist has for God's word.

And he twice says that he hopes in God's word. And it says in 116, let me not be put to shame in my hope.

And it says, again, verse 114, I hope in your word. And that leads us to ask, what is hope, right?

Because the word hope is used nowadays in, you know, in a way that's similar to kind of just wishing for something, right?

[3 : 56] I really hope I, you know, get that job. But I'm not sure. It's like I wish I can get it, right?

I wish I can get that job. It's like we use hope in the same way I like wishful thinking because it's something that's uncertain. We say we hope for something that's not certain.

That's not the way the Bible uses hope. The Christian hope is not something that's uncertain. It's actually something that is certain because God has promised it. God has guaranteed it.

And so it's going to happen. The difference is that it hasn't yet happened, right? So that's what Romans 8, 24 to 25 talks about. It says, for in this hope, he's talking about the redemption of our bodies, the full redemption of ourselves.

This is Romans 8, 24 to 25. For in this hope, we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

[5 : 00] So it refers to kind of patient waiting for something that is definitely going to come. Because we're still waiting for the return of the King and for the consummation of the kingdom of God. Not because our full redemption is uncertain, but because our full redemption isn't here yet.

Right? So that's what hope is. And Christian hope looks like this. We can see it in this stanza. Verse 114. You are my hiding place and my shield.

And it says in verse 117, hold me up that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually. So a lot of words of protection and safety, right?

Hiding place, shield, and safe. To hope in God is to make his word and God's promises the things that we bank on and trust in.

It takes shelter. And it means to make God's word our refuge. So instead of resorting to devious ways like evildoers, instead of resorting to sin, manipulation, to take things into our own hands, instead of trying to preserve ourselves, protect ourselves, it means to turn to God and his word for protection, for safety, for refuge, to wait on God's deliverance and vindication.

[6 : 20] That's what Christian hope looks like. And the psalmist here hopes because even though he knows this will happen, but because it hasn't happened yet. His deliverance hasn't come yet.

His vindication hasn't come yet. And so he waits patiently and he prays to God, uphold me according to your promise that I may live. Hold me up that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually.

He waits on God knowing that God's going to spurn, as it says in verse 118, all who go astray from your statutes. And God's going to, it says in verse 119, discard like dross all the wicked of the earth. This is a metaphor from metallurgy. So dross is like when you're melting precious metal, right? It's the kind of mass of waste material that just floats on the top.

It looks kind of like useless rocks, in contrast to the melted precious metal. So of course, you just discard that.

[7 : 30] There's no use for that. The whole point of the melting process is used to burn off the dross so you can pour it out. And so it's a really graphic image that that's what God's going to do with the wicked.

There's going to be justice. There's going to be judgment. There's going to be started like dross. And knowing that that vindication is coming, the psalmist says, I love your testimonies. I love your law.

And so again, I mentioned earlier that the psalmist began with love for God's law. Verse 113, I love your law. And now he concludes with his affirmation of love.

Again, verse 119, therefore I love your testimonies. He loves, just as he loves God, he loves God's word. But that's not the final note. He does add one further emotion in his description of God's word. Verse 120, it says, My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments. It's easy to misunderstand this. So it's, the fear that is in view here is not terror before a threat, right?

[8 : 41] So there is fear that you feel, like let's say there's a, you know, psychotic murderer in the school right now that we're meeting at and carrying, you know, these guns. And like, so there's this terror that you feel from a threat, right?

And that's not the kind of fear that's in view here. It's, it's a fear that you might feel, for example, in the presence of someone really authoritative and powerful. Maybe someone like the president, right?

When you're in the presence of such people, you might feel nervous, right? You might shake even, right? Maybe it's this celebrity that you really look up to, or, or it's like you might, it, you, you, you might tremble in your presence.

And, and God's holiness is, is such that you, is that you feel fear.

In that sense, you feel that reverence, that awe before God. And, and that's kind of what this is talking about. And this is not something that, you know, people that can't stomach the idea of fearing God, you know, arbitrarily made up, you know, this distinction between fear and reverence.

[9 : 51] You guys? Hmm. It's actually a distinction that scripture itself makes in Exodus 20, Exodus 20, 20, for example.

It says, do not fear. This is when God appears to the Israelites and, and he speaks to them and, and Moses reassures God's people by saying this in Exodus 20, 20.

And it says, do not fear, for God has come to test you that the fear of him may be before you that you may not sin. Did you guys catch the two instances of fear there? Right.

So he's basically saying, don't be fearful because God has come to make you fearful. So he's using the, the same word fear in two different sense, senses. It says, it's, he means don't be afraid because I'm not going to kill you.

You're not going to die right now in my presence. But remember this experience so that you revere me and stand in awe of me for the rest of your life. And that fear of me keeps you from sinning. So it's two different types of fear.

[10:51] So that, this, that second kind of fear is what's in view here when he says, my flesh trembles for fear of you and I am afraid of your judgments. And the word judgment here is the word that's elsewhere translated in this Psalm as rule, God's rule.

It's one of eight words that the Psalmist, the author of Psalm 119 uses for God's word, for scripture. So here, it's not talking about being afraid of being judged by God.

He's saying that God's word is his judgment. It is his, his rule. It's his decision. And, and so he, in the same way, he reveres God's word and fears God and trembles before his presence.

He does the same with God's word. He says, I fear, I am afraid of your judgment because it's a holy book, a book that is unlike any other book in which God himself speaks.

And so this word that it speaks of here is fulfilled by Jesus because he's the, he's the incarnate word. He's the word, the word of God taken on flesh and blood, flesh and bone of, of humankind.

[12:00] And, and, and scripture is God's recorded, record, it's a record of divine revelation and, and Jesus is God's ultimate revelation.

So everything in scripture points to him and it's fulfilled in him. And so that's how we can apply the psalm to ourselves is that, because in truth, we have all gone astray as this psalm is talking about.

It's, we have all departed from God's way, gone astray from God. We're evildoers. We have spurned, we've been spurned by God. We are wicked that should be discarded like dross.

And that's the amazing thing about the gospel is you melt the metal, right, to pour out the dross. But Father, in his mysterious providence, decides to pour out the precious metal instead to save the dross.

And, and he pours out Jesus on the cross. He dies for us. And in doing that, we are declared precious to him and we are refined like fine gold.

[13:06] And so it is in hoping in Jesus as the same way the psalmist talks about hoping in God's word that we can rest assured of God's promises, rest assured of his ultimate vindication and judgment and, and live with steadfast devotion as the psalmist does.