

## **Psalm 119 v 145-152 - Qoph** **The importance of God's Word**

One of my favourite things to do with my children is read with them at bedtime. Sometimes we read storybooks. Sometimes we read fact books about dangerous animals or dinosaurs or cars. But my favourite books to read with them are stories that have been written as poems. I'm not really sure what it is about them that I like. I think it's something to do with the clever use of words and the way the rhymes can be used to make ordinary sentences sound funny. I find poems and song lyrics strange things. I studied mathematics at University and now work in statistics so it's safe to say that my brain works in a certain way. I like structure and logic and precise argument. But poems and song lyrics don't always have that. They make sense as a whole, at least usually, but you can't analyse each line the way you can with some mathematical equation. And yet, even to my mathematical brain, poems and song lyrics resonate with me. I think this is probably true of most people, whatever their natural gifting. There's just something about songs and poems that make them a good way to make a point, even when the argument isn't as tight and precise as you might find in other parts of life.

The Psalms in the Bible are a good example of this. Many parts of the Psalms are so memorable. A lot of Christians might know some of Psalm 23 for example. "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want". Even if we can't recall all the words of particular psalms I think many Christians have found the psalms to be a great source of comfort, encouragement and joy over many years, throughout Christian history. But if you've read any of the psalms, you'll know that they are not meant to be read the same way you might read some of Paul's writings for example. The book of Psalms is certainly different to the book of Romans. But God saw fit to include both in the Bible, because both have important messages for us to learn.

Today, we continue our studies in Psalm 119. You'll probably remember that this is the longest chapter in the Bible. We're near the end of the psalm now, and if you've heard any of the previous talks in this series you'll probably remember that the psalm is arranged in 22 sections of 8 verses, with each set of 8 verses having each verse beginning with one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Incidentally, if this is the first of this series of talks you've heard, why not check out the Truth for Today website to listen to some of the other talks in the series. The psalm is all about the importance of God's word. For the Psalmist this would have probably been just the first five books of the Bible, and possibly a few other Old Testament books. But we could certainly apply all the lessons of the psalm to the whole of the Bible that we have today. Each section of the psalm delights in some aspect of God's word.

Perhaps surprisingly, today's section, verses 145-152 focus our attention on the link between the word of God and prayer. So although the title for this series is "The importance of God's Word," we're going to focus particularly on prayer today, and see how our prayers are to be linked to the Scriptures. I've found it difficult to divide the verses into sections. Instead I've noticed themes or ideas that crop up in different ways in the 8 verses. It's just like what we were saying before about poems being difficult to analyse the way we would analyse Paul's letter to the Romans. What I'd like to do today is just go through the 8 verses a few times and each time highlight a few ideas and see how they develop.

Verse 145 starts with the words “I cry out” and I think we could say that the whole section details the Psalmist’s “crying out” to God. I want to just run through the verses three times and point out

1. What we cry out.
2. How we cry out.
3. Who we cry to.

With that brief introduction, let’s read the verses. We’re considering Psalm 119 verses 145-152. Listen to what they say:

“I cry out with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD! I will keep Your statutes.  
I cry out to You; Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies.  
I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word.  
My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word.  
Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O LORD, revive me according to Your justice.  
They draw near who follow after wickedness; they are far from Your law.  
You are near, O LORD, and all Your commandments are truth.  
Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.”

I’m sure you can see now why I said that the verses are about prayer and the psalmist’s “crying out” to God. I said that I wanted to draw your attention first of all to what the psalmist cries out. This is important because it might give us a pointer as to the kind of things we should be praying for. Did you notice the first thing the psalmist cries out. In verse 145, he says “Hear me, O Lord.” The psalmist wanted to be heard. He wasn’t simply fulfilling a religious routine. This wasn’t just a few words to recite diligently at the start or end of each day with little or no thought going into it. No, the psalmist prayed; in fact he cried out, with his whole heart because he wanted the Lord to hear him. I wonder if I always pray like that? When I pray, how often am I consciously aware of the fact that I want the Lord to hear me.

There is a lovely description of God in Psalm 65 verse 2, where David says, “O You who hear prayer.” That’s a good verse to keep in mind when we pray. If we, like the psalmist in Psalm 119 cry out “hear me,” we can have confidence with David that our prayer will be heard because God is the God who “hears prayer.” There is just a cautionary note to be made here too. Psalm 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” Of course, it’s not that God can’t physically hear my prayers if I pray whilst I’m wilfully sinning and dwelling on sin in my heart. It’s that God sees through my sham prayers whilst I have no intention of stopping the sins I’m enjoying.

When it comes to the crying out of Psalm 119 verse 145, the psalmist cries out with all his heart for the Lord to hear him. That’s not the kind of heart that is dwelling on wrong things. That’s the cry of a person who can be confident that the Lord will hear them. So, when you pray today, and this week, let’s remember that God really does hear our prayers. Let’s be conscious of that, and let it influence our conversation with Him.

In verse 145 then, the psalmist cries “Hear me.” Next we come to verse 146 where the psalmist cries “Save me.” Perhaps the prayer comes in a time of difficulty. The psalmist needed saving from some situation. Whatever trial we may find ourselves in, isn’t it good that we can cry out to God to save us.

In verse 147, the psalmist has risen early in the morning to “cry for help.” We might paraphrase this and say that the psalmist is crying “Help me.” Perhaps there might be circumstances where

the Lord doesn't remove the difficulties we face. The cry "Save me" is only partially answered. But the psalmist still cries "Help me." That was the lesson Paul had to learn in 2 Corinthians 12 verses 7-9. Listen to what Paul says:

"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Paul had some kind of health issue, a "thorn in the flesh." To borrow the language of Psalm 119, he cried out to God, "Save me." He wanted to be delivered from whatever this problem was. But God had a plan for Paul that didn't involve the removal of the problem. Instead, Paul had to learn that God's grace was sufficient for him. To borrow Psalm 119's words again, Paul had to learn to cry "Help me." There is a good lesson for us there. We each need to learn to rely on God's help, or His grace, each day in whatever trials we face. Let's cry out to God "Save me," like the psalmist. It's natural, and surely right to ask God for deliverance from trials and difficulties. But let's also cry out to God "Help me" and learn to trust God to help us, and provide fresh grace to help us in each time of need, whether the trial is removed or not.

The final thing the psalmist cries out is "Revive me" in verse 149. That's another good thing for us to pray. In all the routines of life, the good and the bad, it's easy to lose energy and become tired. The psalmist's cry is a reminder not to try and struggle on in our own strength in such circumstances. We can cry out to God and ask Him to revive us, and give us fresh energy, fresh joy in salvation, and fresh perspective on each of the day's challenges. I wonder if I'm as quick as I should be to ask for this reviving from the Lord? Perhaps I miss out by looking for revival of my spirit in the wrong places! I'm sure you could find all sorts of tips on the internet for recharging your batteries. No doubt we've all tried plenty of them over the years. But surely my first response should be to cry out to God, "Revive me." So, we've picked out some things that we can cry out to God, "Hear me," "Save me," "Help me" and "Revive me," and said that these are good things for us to model our own prayers on. Let's go back over the verses and think now about how the psalmist cries out.

We've already noticed the first description of the psalmist's crying out in verse 145, "I cry out with my whole heart." This was not a half-hearted prayer. He didn't just ask God for help as a sort of last ditch "let's try anything" approach, the way we might pass CVs to anyone and everyone when we want a job. This prayer came out of a "whole hearted" dedication to God. Are our prayers like that?

The psalmist's prayer was a responsive prayer. Did you notice two statements, "I will keep your statutes" in verse 145 and "I will keep your testimonies" in verse 146. I don't think the psalmist is trying to bribe God here. He's not saying something along the lines of "Dear God, please answer my prayer and then I'll do everything you say," the way a child might say "Please daddy let me have this toy. I'll be really good, I promise." God isn't bribed in such ways. Instead I think the psalmist is saying that he is prepared to act on whatever God reveals to him from God's Word (His statutes or testimonies). The psalmist prays, desperate that God would hear him and save him, and ready to put into practice in his life whatever God reveals to him. That's a good attitude to have. As you pray, asking God for guidance or help, are you willing to put into practice whatever challenges God shows you in His Word?

The psalmist's cry was a diligent cry. In verse 147 we read, "I rise before the dawning of the morning and cry for help." Then in verse 148 we read, "My eyes are awake through the night watches that I may meditate on Your word." Surely the point here is that the psalmist has this constant focus on God throughout the day. Both in the early morning and late evening, the

psalmist is thinking about God and praying to Him. Perhaps this re-emphasises the point we made earlier that prayer isn't just an obligation to tick off a list every now and again, but a resource to be used frequently throughout the day. The psalmist kept on communicating with God. Day and night. Do I show a similar diligence in my prayers? Do you?

The psalmist's cry was a hope filled cry. Look again at the end of verse 147, "I hope in Your word." The psalmist had confidence that God would hear his prayer because he read the scriptures and believed what he read. What the psalmist read in God's word gave him confidence in God. Are my prayers filled with similar hope and trust in God's word? The psalmist's cry was a thoughtful cry. Do you remember the purpose of the psalmist being awake through the night watches in verse 148? "That I may meditate on Your word." This is the key link between the thoughts we've had on prayer and the rest of Psalm 119 which is all about God's word. The psalmist's prayers were biblical prayers. He thought about what he read in the Scriptures and he prayed accordingly. You can tell that the psalmist has a high view of God's word by noticing the words he uses to describe it. He calls it "Your statutes" in verse 145, "Your testimonies" in verse 146, "Your word" in verses 147 and 148, "Your law" in verse 150, "Your commandments" in verse 151, and "Your testimonies" again in verse 152. The psalmist views God's word as precious because it is **God's** word. That's the emphasis of the repeating of the word "Your" I think. God's word could be trusted and taken seriously, precisely because it was **God's** word. And so the psalmist could confidently think about what he read and pray about it. He could pray that his life would reflect the moral conduct he read about. He could ask for help confident that God was certainly able to provide it. He could ask for reviving fully assured that God had ample resources to refresh and revitalise him. The psalmist's meditation on the Scriptures informed his prayers. That would be an excellent habit for us to develop too. I hope we each read the Bible as often as we can. As we do so, are we growing in confidence in the God it reveals to us? Are we learning more about how we ought to pray? And do we pray about the things we read about?

We've spent some time now thinking about what the psalmist cries and how he cries. In each case we've tried to learn some lessons to help our own prayer lives. Finally, I'd like to just go through the section one final time and see what it tells us about the God to whom the psalmist prays. Let's notice verse 149 first. "Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness." What an encouragement to the psalmist. He wasn't praying to a powerful despot who needed to be sweet-talked in order to hear the petition. Instead he was praying to a God characterised by "lovingkindness." When I pray, and when you pray over the coming week, remember that you pray to a God who is filled with lovingkindness. I hope that's an encouragement to us to keep on praying.

The last three verses of our section for today are interesting because they describe the relationship of two groups of people to God. To those who are characterised by wickedness, and not following or obeying God's word, God appears far from them. Listen again to verse 150 "They draw near who follow after wickedness; They are far from Your law." These people may be coming near to the psalmist and causing him difficulties, but they are far from God. They don't know God's help and encouragement. They don't know Him as full of lovingkindness. They are far from Him. But contrast that with the words of the psalmist in verse 151 "You are near, O Lord, and all Your commandments are truth." For the psalmist, he had a sense of the nearness of the Lord. Even in difficulties he had the encouragement of the Lord being near to him. It's like David in Psalm 23 who says, "I will fear no evil for You are with me." Will we be those people who know the Lord's nearness over this coming week? Will it sustain us in whatever challenges we face this week? What an encouragement to pray! The psalmist wasn't crying out to someone distant, as if his prayers didn't get higher than the ceiling of whatever room he was in. Instead, he prayed to someone he knew was near to him.

So as we've thought about another section of Psalm 119 this morning, we've seen that there is a crucial link between the word of God and our prayers. Our prayers should be biblical prayers. Let's

pray this week informed by what we read in the Bible. We've thought together about the kind of things we should pray for, and challenged ourselves as to whether we pray in a similar way. We've thought about how we pray, and asked if we show similar diligence in prayer and willingness to put into practice whatever God reveals to us. And we've been reminded about the lovingly kind God to whom we pray, who is near to His people. May the Lord help us to keep on treasuring His word, and letting it influence our prayers.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on "Psalm 119 verses 145-152, the importance of God's Word" talk number T1133.

New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.

---

**Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1.