

“The Life of the God-fearer”
Psalm 119:121-128
(Preached at Trinity, March 3, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This stanza opens with the confession of a king:
Psalm 119:121 KJV - "I have done judgment and justice"
 - a. Most of the Eastern rulers were motivated more by a concern for self than a desire for ruling with justice and equity.
 - b. One look at most of Israel’s own kings demonstrates this truth.
 - c. But David’s heart was different.
2. This stanza seems to flow from the heart of the last verse of the previous stanza:
Psalm 119:120 KJV - "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments."
 - a. David’s reign was different because he was motivated by a reverence for God
 - b. He states it in terms of fearing God.
3. This seems strange to the ear of the modern man, perhaps especially the modern Christian. We’ve lost the concept of fearing God even though it is taught clearly in Scripture.
Psalm 111:10 KJV - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments*: his praise endureth for ever."
Proverbs 1:29 KJV - "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:"
Acts 9:31 KJV - "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."
4. The modern view of God as the “Man upstairs” or as a kind benevolent being that is full of love without any measure of wrath or judgment does not describe the God of the Bible. Although He is full of mercy He also hates sin.
Hebrews 10:30-31 KJV - " For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. ³¹ *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"
5. For the Christian fearing God isn’t a life frozen in the fear of God’s judgment. But it also isn’t a life of presumption. We are always mindful that we serve a holy God and that salvation involves a transformed life characterized by holiness. Hell is always set before us as the place prepared for Satan and all others who will not follow God.
6. To fear God is also a holy disposition full of reverence and worship of the God we love. The God-fearing person has his heart fixed upon God. His primary concern in all things is to bring glory to God. His entire life is marked by his reverence of God. He has a fear of dishonoring God.
7. This 16th stanza is designated by the Hebrew letter ׀ – Ayin. There is no corresponding letter in the English alphabet. This letter is all but silent.
Tonight I’ll set before you the life of the God-fearing man.

- I. He is known by his behavior before men – **Verse 121**
- A. He had ruled according to God’s Law
1. The words used refer to justice and righteousness
 2. The ESV translates the word “just and right.”
 3. This was the way of God
Deuteronomy 16:18-20 NAU - "You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. ¹⁹ "You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. ²⁰ "Justice, *and only* justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you."
 4. Sadly, for many of Israel’s kings justice was a matter sold to the highest bidder. This resulted in the judgment of God upon them
Isaiah 1:23-27 NAU - "Your rulers are rebels And companions of thieves; Everyone loves a bribe And chases after rewards. They do not defend the orphan, Nor does the widow's plea come before them. ²⁴ Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts, The Mighty One of Israel, declares, "Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries And avenge Myself on My foes. ²⁵ "I will also turn My hand against you, And will smelt away your dross as with lye And will remove all your alloy. ²⁶ "Then I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counselors as at the beginning; After that you will be called the city of righteousness, A faithful city." ²⁷ Zion will be redeemed with justice And her repentant ones with righteousness."
 5. Many of our own politicians are motivated more from a desire for self-promotion than caring for the people and the nation they are called to serve.
 6. David was a righteous king ruling with justice and righteousness
2 Samuel 8:15 NAU - "So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people."
 7. God’s people always have God before their eyes. They walk before men with that in mind. They treat others with desire to glorify God.
 “As to the Lord”
- B. David’s prayer is that God would treat him with the same mercy he had shown to others.
1. This is often taught as God’s standard.
Matthew 7:12 KJV - "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
Luke 6:37-38 KJV - "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: ³⁸ Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

2. The behavior of a righteous man towards others gives him confidence to plead his case before God when others treat him unjustly.

1 John 3:21 KJV - "if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God."

- a. David links his plea to God to his own treatment of others

Psalm 119:121 KJV - "I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors."

- b. Spurgeon: "A course of upright conduct is one which gives us boldness in appealing to the Great Judge for deliverance from the injustice of others."

II. The God-fearing man looks to God during times of adversity – **Verses 122-124; 126**

- A. **Verse 122** is another one of the few verses that doesn't make some reference to the Word of God. Perhaps, as before, it stresses the severity of the attacks.

1. We can sense his anguish in **Verse 123**

Psalm 119:123 KJV - " Mine eyes fail for thy salvation"

It wasn't eyes weeping in despair though. It was eyes straining, looking for God with expectation.

2. In **Verse 122** the psalmist's attention seems to be momentarily taken off the Word of God—but only for a moment.

He quickly turns his heart back to God's Word.

- B. The God-fearing man has confidence in God's unfailing love – **Verse 124**

"Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy" - **חַסְדֶּךָ**

1. This is our great confidence in adversity – God loves us.

Romans 8:38-39 KJV - "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

2. God has only good for those who belong to Him

- C. The God-fearing man has confidence in God's ultimate vindication – **Verse 126**

Psalm 119:126 NAS - "It is time for the LORD to act"

1. He patiently trusts and waits upon God to defend him

2. Notice, he directs attention more to God's glory and the vindication of His great name than his own condition. It was God's Law that was being assaulted - "*for they have made void thy law.*"

3. For the God-fearing man his enemies are God's enemies. They make void God's Law and will be judged in due time.

(Hobby Lobby – Steve Green – “God is up to something. We're only along for the ride.”)

4. He continues to wait upon God until help comes. This is his comfort.

Psalm 25:5 KJV - "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day."

Psalm 130:5 KJV - "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."

III. The God-fearing man is a “servant” of God

The description “servant” occurs three times – **Verses 122, 124, 125**

- A. This is one of the chief characteristics of a Christian
1. David states his position clearly in **Verse 125** - "I *am* thy servant"
 2. Septuagint - δοῦλός σου εἰμι ἐγώ
 2. This was the chief title used by the New Testament writers:
 - Romans 1:1** – “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ”
 - James 1:1** – “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”
 - 2 Peter 1:1** – “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ”
 - Jude 1:1** – “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ”
- B. An important question for all who claim the name of Christ to ask themselves is am I a servant of Christ?
1. This is a qualification of Christianity – Jesus as Lord
Are you a servant of Christ?
 2. How do you know that you are serving Christ?
 3. The answer is not difficult to discern.
Our service to Christ can be measured in two ways
- C. We serve Christ by obeying Him
1. The servant of God loves obeying his Master
Psalm 119:124 KJV - "Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes."
Psalm 119:125 KJV - "I *am* thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies."
 2. The servant of God obeys Him out of a sincere desire to be useful to Him. We love Him. We want to honor Him.
- D. We serve Christ by serving others.
1. Are you serving others? Do you love one another? Do you truly care for one another? Are you sensitive to the feelings of others? Are you concerned for their wellbeing? Or are you simply so wrapped up with yourself you don't have room for anyone else.
 2. Christianity is being able to put the needs of others before yourself. This is service. Are you a servant?
 3. This was our Lord's constant teaching
Matthew 23:11-12 – “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”
Verse 40 – “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.”
 4. Jesus demonstrated this by His own life
He washed the feet of His disciples – a task normally done by servants.
- E. One of the ways we demonstrate service to both Christ and His people is our service in the context of His Church.
Do you demonstrate the heart of a servant in your church?
I've been blessed with some in my ministry who have been such faithful servants. I've had others who are more willing to be served than to serve.

IV. The God-fearing man treasures the Word of God – **Verses 127-128**

- A. This has been David's great declaration since the beginning of this psalm
1. He loved God's Word and treasured it above all else
Psalm 119:127 KJV - "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."
 2. He spoke of the Word of God in the highest of terms
Not just gold but fine gold—gold completely void of any impurity.
 3. David painted a picture of the perfection of God's Word in **Psalm 19**
Psalm 19:7-8 KJV - "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes."
 4. He declared that the fear of God was a great treasure filled with great reward.
Psalm 19:9-11 KJV - "The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired *are* *they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them *is* thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward."
- B. And again we find the great contrast
1. While the world hates the Word of God we are driven to love it more and more.
Psalm 119:126 KJV - "*for* they have made void thy law."
Psalm 119:127 KJV - "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."
 2. The world sees the Word of God as being open to question. The God-fearing man sees it as absolute truth shining forth in all its glory.
 3. Notice the little word "all" in **Verse 128**
Psalm 119:128 KJV - "Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way."
 - a. The mere religious man picks and chooses which commandments to obey. "I think I'll avoid stealing but I'm not pleased to honor the Sabbath to keep it holy."
 - b. The God fearing man esteems "all" of God's precepts and hates "every" false way.
 - c. Is your heart single-minded towards loving God and His Word?
William Cowper - The best trial of our love to God and his word is the contrary— hatred of sin and impiety: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." He that loves a tree, hates the worm that consumes it; he that loves a garment, hates the moth that eats it; he that loveth life, abhorreth death; and he that loves the Lord hates every thing that offends him. Let men take heed to this, who are in love of their sins: how can the love of God be in them?

Conclusion:

1. Would you identify yourself as God-fearing; a servant of God; a lover of God's Word?
2. These are the people of this world who are blessed above measure.

Psalm 1:1-3 KJV - "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ² But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. ³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."