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## Psalm 119:1-8

**Introduction** – This Psalm instructs us in the right way to think about the Word of God. The Word of God can come to us as a series of demands, which to the legalist is a list of things to be done in order to gain God's acceptance, while to the rebel it is a burden of putrid ways of living to be ignored. But when the Spirit of God comes upon a man, all the words of the Bible become gospel-good news. The promises are unbelievably glorious and the imperatives, like "follow me," become wonderful opportunities of privilege to go where the promises are.

**The Law is the Way to Happy Blessedness** (v1) – The center of Adam's rebellion in the Garden was his becoming the measure, the standard himself, instead of submitting to God and His ways. He wanted to be "like God," but in the wrong way. There was no blessedness there.

Blessed - Verse 1 and 2 begin with this word "Blessed" and while it means more than simply "happiness" it is pointing to that – to a deep abiding happiness, joy, and peace with oneself and with the life one has; it is what every person seeks.

**The Way** - The "way" is to walk in the law of the Lord. David doesn't mean, by "the law" a list of do's and don'ts. He also is not pointing to the "law" portions as opposed to the "gospel" portions, which is how some people try to divide up the Word of God. The psalmist is pointing to the entire Word of God – not a book of proverbial sayings or traditional values by which I live my life. He is advocating turning to the Word as one's life, a life found in fellowship with the Triune God.

**The Law is a Testimony of His Covenant Love** (v2) – Throughout Psalm 119, each verse (almost without exception) has a word synonymous to the word "law," and this reminds us of the various ways in which the Word of God comes to us.

**Testimonies** - Keeping His testimonies is linked to seeking Him with a whole heart. Testimony particularly speaks of God's laws given in the context of His covenant. The testimony of God was placed in the tabernacle because it was there where God dwelt, where God's people were drawn to come to be with Him in covenantal love, fellowship, and loyalty.

**Whole Hearts** - God's Word never directs us to seek after Him with our lips only, in some sort of hypocritical outward way, but rather with whole hearts to His tabernacle to draw near to Him in Word and sacrament. The gospel is here even in these first two verses.

**No Iniquity** (v3) – Why is it that men abound in evil and iniquity? The answer is simple. We sin because we want to sin. And once we set our way on the path which is not the Lord's, we will run into mischief and destruction, however well and good we think we are doing. If we are not walking in His ways, we will fall into iniquity. This is not a call to perfectionism, because the Word plainly teaches against such notions. At the same time, there is a way that a man's ways can be described as righteous and as one who walks without iniquity (1 John 3:9). And that is to be walking in His ways, in Christ.

**Diligent Law-keeping** (v4) – Why is God so picky? Why does He want us to keep His precepts so meticulously? Why not just leave us alone every now and again? Like a mother who will never allow her children to play on the freeway, God's concern is for us. He is jealous for us. This is why Jesus commanded His disciples to teach the world to observe all the things He commanded (Matt 20:28), and this is why, ultimately, His commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).

**First Cry** (v5) – It is wonderful to see our struggles in the psalms. The man who has received the mercy of the Lord realizes that there is nothing in himself to direct him rightly. He begins to see how he falls and fails and missteps everywhere. This verse directs us how to pray when we realize this about ourselves.

**Practical Wisdom** (v6) – In God's Word is found the treasure of wisdom – and in following it no one will be ashamed in the end. Christianity does not come a la carte; just go down the aisle and pick what you want (James 2:10).

Shame - How many walk around in shame, shame over their sins and often the affect those sins have had on others. It dampens them, locks them up, and makes them unproductive and useless to themselves and others. But when we "look" into all of God's Word we find there is forgiveness for those sins, we hear a command, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," and the shame goes away.

**Proper Praise** (v7) – People imagine that their worship has pleased God because, well, it pleased them. And this shows who their god really is. But God is only interested in worship from those with clean hands and a pure, devoted heart. And God defines and describes what that means and how one arrives at that place.

Righteous Judgments – These are not mean, awful things when we see them in the cross.

**Never Forsake Me!** (v8) – And so, having looked to His Word and seen with eyes opened by His grace that this is the only Way, we vow to keep that way and those statutes. But that same Word instructs us that we are not able, as does our honest assessment of

ourselves. And so what are we to do? Again the Word instructs us – cry out to God. And whenever God suffers us to stumble, He does so only that we might be humbled and never forget our utter dependence upon Him.

**The Way of Godliness** (1 Tim 3:16) – Paul tells Timothy that this is a great mystery. Note that the answer is not our works, our doing, our keeping of the law. The answer to the mystery of godliness is Christ. The Psalmist is pointing us to the very same thing. Psalm 119 is not a boast of one who has it all together. It is not a meditation of one who has attained to a place we would never be.

**Two Men, One Word** – What do you hear when you hear the Word of Jesus, “Follow me”? One man hears a threat and retreats further into his prison cell, grasping onto his only piece of crusty bread, the pleasures of this world. Another man hears words of freedom, walks out of the prison cell into a glorious journey with the Victor Himself, who has conquered sin and death. *drh – August 5, 2007*