

Psalm 119:9-16

Introduction – Psalm 119 is set in 22 stanzas, each delivering a song on the Word of God and with each line beginning with the same letter. This song and prayer is therefore carefully thought out and written by the psalm-singer. Just as each letter of this poem/prayer is carefully chosen, each word of the scripture is to be carefully heeded (Matt 5:17-19).

This stanza may help identify the psalm-singer (it may be David) or at least his age. Nah-ar means “*young man*,” possibly a teenage boy, and so with this portion of the psalm we set our sights particularly on our young men (although there is of course ample application for all youthful believers, all young churches, all of us who live in a yet-to-be-established Christian culture). This is important because if the Enemy sees any faithful reformation of doctrine or any successful revival of holiness in the lives of a people, he will seek to ruin the next generation of leaders. They are the “*supply-line*” in the holy war and he will seek to cut that line off so that no further victories may occur. Young men, you need to understand that you are particularly and already in the cross-hairs of the Devil’s guns.

The Young Psalm-singer (vv9-12) – David was a warrior-king. As a shepherd-boy, he killed lions, bears and giants (1 Sam 17:34ff). He was also a harpist, a poet, a singer and dancer. He loved God and wanted his way to be pure. And he knew that his wasn’t (v9); it needed to be cleansed and kept clean. David knew himself. He had moments where he knew he loved YHWH with all his heart, and moments when he would wander (v10). He knew he needed God’s word hidden in his heart like a sword hidden in his cloak in order to fight off his internal desires to sin (v11). He worshipped God as a teenager and yet knew that he did not understand all of YHWH’s ways (v12).

A Sense of War – Unless you have a personal friend in Iraq/Afghanistan today, it is often hard to have a sense of being at war in the everydayness of life. Unless you are cultivating your loyalties with your covenant God it can also seem as though there is no spiritual war going on over you soul. Take heed. Much that follows must be credited to J.C. Ryle, “Thoughts for Young Men” –

Few Young Men Seem to Walk by Faith, Loyal to their God – They are often the most inattentive in worship and under preaching. They want to be on their own, but they will not take on their own personal responsibility to worship YHWH (Psalm 148:12-13).

Young Men Act as though Death will Never Come – Their new found strength and independence gives them a false sense of immortality. But Solomon warns, “*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth*” – Prov 27:1.

Young Men Forget that How They Will Be Depends on What They Are Now – We are given to procrastination or a sense that we will get serious about God or our vocations later. In all probabilities, no you won’t. How you handle temptations, how you handle the commands of God, how you handle your duties now, is probably how you will all your life.

Young Warriors are Particular Targets for the Enemy – The devil is like a lion who is seeking to devour (1 Pet 5:8). He is looking for the proud, for they are trusting in themselves, not in the Lord. He is looking for those caught up in a love of pleasure and leisure that he might enslave them to their lusts early. He is looking for those who are inconsiderate and thoughtless of others, that they may never grow to be servant-leaders and faithful covenant heads. He is looking for those who have a contempt for religion and particularly for orthodox tradition, so that he may isolate them from the faithful fruit of their fathers. He is also looking for those who have a fear of man’s opinion, that such a fear would stay any good inclination to stand for righteousness (Prov 29:25, Matt 10:28).

Beginning Strong, Ending Well (vv13-14) – The psalm-singer recalls what he has done and declares what he will do. He has declared the judgments of God and rejoiced in His testimonies (vv13-14). Ultimately, this means he has declared his faith in and loyalty to the living God (Rom 10:9-10), and he openly joins his brethren in the public proclamation of this faith (Psalm 22:22-23). Look at a young man’s eyes when he sees a shiny, new car or a fistful of cash and then look at his eyes when he goes to worship – and consider v14. It is not to say that he cannot rejoice in those riches. It is to say that he knows where his ultimate and eternal reward is.

Pressing On (vv15-16) – The psalm-singer knows that his journey is not over. He will meditate, he will contemplate; he will delight himself in the Word, and he will not forget it. This is not a commitment to finishing in the flesh or in his own works. All of the Word, its laws and promises, point to one thing: salvation by grace through faith. A young man needs a goal, a challenge, to press him ahead, and Paul addresses these same ideas of the gospel call (Phil 3:12-14).

By Grace, Through Faith – *Sanctification is a work of God’s free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness* (WSC 35). Growing up in the faith and into faithfulness is the work of the Holy Spirit, not of our flesh. The way that we mature is the same way that we came into the new birth – it is the free grace of God (Gal 3:1-3). We refuse to entertain a works-based system of sanctification, but we must not either be afraid of the language of the scriptures. We are to “*work out our salvation*.” We are to “*press toward the goal*.” We are to “*run with endurance the race that is set before us*” All of this must be understood in light of seeking the means of grace God has given to His people to grow in faith and holiness.

This is what the psalm-singer is singing. Sing the psalms. Run the race – all the way to the end.