

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXIX. The Vast Value Of God’s Word
A. The Path To Happiness In Our Era
(Psalm 119:1-8 [Aleph])

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

One of the major characteristics of today’s needy world is its unhappiness:

(1) It occurs in the political realm: (a) “In 2014 . . . Pew Research Center reported that ‘liberals were the most likely group to block or unfriend someone because they disagreed with their political postings’ on social media, according to a Washington Post summary of the organization’s findings . . . Last year, sociologist Musa all-Gharbi noted that ‘liberals are far more likely’ than conservatives to suffer from depression and anxiety. He posited that ‘politics may also undermine liberals’ social relationships (which are, themselves, important for mental health).” (“Why students stay silent,” Republican-American, September 14, 2024, p. 6A) (b) Similarly, after the recent, second attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, his “second would-be assassin not only absorbed, but repeated verbatim ‘DEMOCRACY is on the ballot and we cannot lose,’” posting it “on X just five months ago . . . repeating a talking point on the Biden-Harris White House.” (“The new normal,” Ibid., September 17, 2024, p. 6A) The editor of the Republican-American editorial added, “(M)illions of Americans have been radicalized – all because Democrats value political power over the mental health and physical safety of their own base.” (Ibid.)

(2) It appears in the educational realm: “Andrew Tita of Morris, chairman” of the Region 20 Board of Education “since early July, announced . . . he would be calling it quits . . . and leaving the board . . . (He added) ‘The recent climate plaguing our community is impacting us all. I have watched my wife stop going to a place she loves because someone felt entitled to scream at her over school-related stuff. I see how anxious and nervous my kids are now becoming because of this.’” (John McKenna, “Region 20 chairman resigns,” Ibid., September 14, 2024, p. 3A)

(3) It abounds in the economic realm: “There were 21 states where a majority of tenant households spent 30% or more of their income on rent and utilities last year, compared with just seven states in 2019.” (Tim Henderson, “Rent is eating up a greater share of tenants’ income in almost every state.” (Ibid., September 16, 2024, p. 7A)

(4) It is great in the journalistic realm: Megan McArdle in her column, “The ‘stealth extremism’ of the Democratic Party,” Ibid., September 18, 2024, p. 8A, expressed concern over “how badly many . . . voters . . . misunderstand their politicians,” illustrating that “on abortion, the de facto Democratic position is becoming ‘no restrictions at all, ever.’ Every time I point this out, I am inundated with emails calling me a liar. Yet there are examples . . . even on elective abortions in the third trimester – including (Vice President Kamala) Harris on the debate stage last week . . . Every time I write about transgender issues, readers remind me of ‘facts’ that aren’t true . . . Think also of controversies over graphic books on sexuality given to middle-schoolers. The backlash from conservative parents seemed hysterical to Slate writer Aymann Ismail until he actually read one of the books.”

(5) It is exposed in the religious realm: “Pope Francis on (September 13th) slammed both U. S. presidential candidates for what he called anti-life policies on abortion and migration, and he advised American Catholics to choose who they think is the ‘lesser evil’ in the upcoming U. S. elections. ‘Both are against life, be it the one who kicks out migrants, or be it the one who kills babies,’ Francis said.” (“Pope slams both Harris and Trump as ‘against life,’ urges Catholics to vote for ‘lesser evil,’” Ibid., September 14, 2024, p. 11B)

Need: *So, we ask, “Is there a path to genuine happiness in our needy era, and, if so, how can we take it?”*

I. Psalm 119:1-3 defines the path to abundant happiness our lives and how we can take it (as follows):

- A. Verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 119 each begin with the Hebrew noun **‘asher**, meaning “happiness, blessedness,” but in the **plural construct** form of **‘ashere**, what translates literally as, “O the happinesses of . . .” (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 80-81; H. C. Leupold, Exposition of the Psalms, 1974, p. 823)
- B. This great happiness for such people results from their doing two things (as follows):
 1. First, they are **wholeheartedly** devoted to following the Lord, Psalm 119:2.
 2. Second, this wholehearted devotion to follow the Lord leads them to **obey God’s Word so fully** that they are **blameless** before the Lord, Psalm 119:1, 3.
 3. Therefore, God richly blesses such blameless people in accord with His promised rewards for obedience!

II. However, the psalmist acknowledged his own shortcomings of wholeheartedness and obedience, so he addressed them in Psalm 119:4-8 (as follows):

- A. The psalmist recalled that God had directed the people of Israel to keep His precepts literally “very much” (*me’od*, Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 1080) that is, not formally or superficially, but truthfully and thoroughly. (Psalm 119:4; Ibid. Joseph A. Alexander, *The Psalms Translated and Explained*, 1975, p. 482)
- B. Accordingly, the psalmist wished that his ways were “settled, fixed, confirmed, established” (*kun*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 465; Ibid., Alexander) in self-discipline that he might observe God’s Word, Psalm 119:5. That would cause the psalmist not to be ashamed as he looked into all of God’s commandments that set a high standard of righteous conduct, for then he would be prepared to obey them fully for rich divine blessing, Psalm 119:6.
- C. In thus fully applying God’s Word, the psalmist would praise the Lord in learning of the blessings of complete obedience as he was experiencing God’s blessing while obeying God’s Word, Psalm 119:7.
- D. In closing, the psalmist stated that he would keep God’s Word, hoping that the Lord would not forsake him literally “until very much” (*ad-me’od*, Ibid., Kittel), or utterly, for his failings to do so, v. 8. (Ibid., p. 483)

III. Since the self-discipline needed wholeheartedly to follow and hence to obey God’s Word is a product of the Holy Spirit’s control in today’s believers (Galatians 5:16, 22-23 with Romans 8:3-4), we believers TODAY are ABLE to follow God wholeheartedly and heed His Word fully as we RELY on the HOLY SPIRIT to DO so, and consequently enjoy great happiness as God’s blessing in today’s world!

***Lesson:* Great happiness is the experience of believers who rely on the Holy Spirit of God to be wholeheartedly devoted to following the Lord so that they obey His Word so fully that they are blameless before God! The Lord then pours out His blessings of happiness on the believer regardless of life’s external circumstances.**

***Application:* (1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we then rely on the Holy Spirit for the motivation and power to follow the Lord wholeheartedly so that we fully obey Scripture, and God responds with great blessing.**

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

Scripture provides specific solutions to the issues of unhappiness mentioned in our introduction (as follows):

(1) On the unhappiness being experienced by many progressives, (a) 1 John 1:3-4 teaches that we must fellowship with God that our joy might be full. (b) To do this, we must not order our lives in accord with this spiritually dark world’s ideologies (1 John 1:5-6), but in accord with Scripture (1 John 1:7; Isaiah 8:20). We need to obey Scripture in fellowship with God to be happy.

(2) On the unhappiness of the much-criticized chairman of the Board of Education in Region 20, once one has trusted in Christ and is relying on the Holy Spirit (John 3:16; Galatians 5:16, 22-23), he finds great peace in following God’s will for his life even if it involves walking in territory by lethal foes like Jesus did (John 11:8-10) or even if one’s friends forsake the believer, for the God of all comfort is still with him as He was with Jesus in John 16:32.

(3) On the unhappiness of people living in 21 states whose rent is averaging 30% or more of their income where 5 years ago people in just 7 states faced that problem, (a) Proverbs 10:15 reveals that possessing *some* wealth makes one’s life far more secure and stable than not having it, that people need to plan to make obtaining *some* wealth a priority. Proverbs 10:16 then adds how important it is to gain wealth righteously to avoid trouble. Much financial pain that many people face today is the result of their not seriously having planned to gain *some* wealth and to do so *righteously!* (b) Hebrews 13:5-6 then promises God’s help if we are not greedy, but are content with what we have, for God will never leave nor to forsake us, and we have no need to fear what others can do financially to harm us.

(4) On the rampant unhappiness that columnists like Megan McArdle have in noting the far left stances that Democratic politicians hold versus what many of their much more moderate voters do, (a) Scripture predicted that evil people and impostors would go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13 ESV), (b) and Titus 1:2 declares that God does not lie, a great contrast to claims made in Paul’s day of Roman emperors whom everyone knew lied and yet the people were told to worship as gods! (c) We need to rely on our God Who does not lie and pay attention to His Word to avoid being deceived by this world’s leaders, cf. 2 Timothy 3:13-17!

(5) On Pope Francis’s criticism of Donald Trump for his stance on immigration and on the pope’s criticism of Vice President Kamala Harris for her stance on abortion, (a) 1 Peter 2:13-14 directs believers to obey the laws of the government, what includes the government’s laws on immigration. (b) Also, Exodus 21:22-25 reveals that abortion at any trimester takes a human life so that abortion on demand at any trimester is murder. (c) Accordingly, every Christian should vote in alignment with what God’s Word teaches, not according to what a religious leader says!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. May we rely on the Holy Spirit for the drive and self-control to heed Scripture fully for happiness.