

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXIX. The Vast Value Of God's Word
R. Handling Harmfully Neglectful Parties
(Psalm 119:137-144 [Tsade])

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We need insight into handling harmfully neglectful parties:

(1) Our society faces it with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families: “Seventeen years after Crystal B. had a baby at age 13 by her guardian in Bristol, the Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate has concluded what Crystal is claiming in a lawsuit against the state: The alleged sexual assaults against her by her guardian could have been halted if the state had acted on tips they received.” (Dan Haar, “Report: State failed to protect It child victim,” Republican-American, March 7, 2025, p. 1A)

(2) Citizens in several Connecticut towns face it with detectives in their police departments: At the sentencing of convicted sex offender and past house director of the Thomaston Opera House, Daniel Checoves, “Senior Assistant State’s Attorney Terri Sonnemann told (Judge) Preleski” that the cases of the assault on teenage girls “were initially mishandled by individual detectives in the Southington, Thomaston and New Haven police departments 10 to 12 years ago. The plea agreement, she said, was ‘fiercely negotiated’ and reduced the charges from first- to second-degree sex assault.” (Brigitte Ruthman, “Opera House director sentenced,” Ibid., March 12, 2025, p. 1A)

(3) It has happened with several government entities in a case of cruelty in Waterbury: “City police and the state Department of Children and Families both are believed to have had interactions in 2005 with the family of a Waterbury man who police say was held hostage and nearly starved since he was a child two decades ago. But neither pursued the well-being of the boy after he was pulled out of school by his parents following several contacts with DCF when he was 11 or 12 . . . According to the arrest warrant, the man told police that he was pulled from school in the fourth grade because DCF was called by the school about his behaviors, which included stealing food from others and eating out of the garbage because he was being starved at home . . . (A)dditional reports suggest school staff had raised concerns about the child’s wellbeing multiple times. (Waterbury Police Chief) Spagnolo noted that police records do not indicate direct reports from the school regarding the alleged neglect.” (Lisa Backus, “DCF, police lost contact with boy after he was pulled from school,” Ibid., March 14, 2025, p. 1A)

“Sarah Eagan, executive director for the Center for Children’s Advocacy and the former state Child Advocate” explained, “Most states at least on paper have a statutory framework on how to deal with a child who has been permanently withdrawn from school . . . Connecticut is one of about 10 states that does not. This is a child that people had concerns about that was pulled from school by his caregivers allegedly to avoid scrutiny” (Peter Yankowski, “DCF lost contact with captive,” Ibid., March 17, 2025, p. 1A).

(4) It occurs in evangelical circles: We recently heard of a church that has faced some problems, so it has called on an outside advisory group to evaluate the church’s situation. The advisory group has recommended that the problems be handled as if the church were a business though the church has many believers and has been pastored for many years by a Bible-believing pastor. No one involved seems concerned about viewing God’s Word on the matter!

Need: *So, we ask, “How are we to deal with harmfully neglectful parties?”*

I. In a broad sense, each illustration in this sermon’s introduction involves a neglect of God’s Word:

- A. When God created Adam and Eve, the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, He told them not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil lest they die, Genesis 1:27; 2:7-9, 16-17, 20-24.
- B. However, they neglected to heed that command, and God had to remove them from Eden, Genesis 3:1-24.
- C. Since then, Genesis 4:1 to the present records numerous times that mankind has neglected God’s Word, and the opening illustrations in this sermon all involve the neglect of God’s commands that one love Him with all his heart, soul and mind, and love his neighbor as himself (Matt. 22:37-40, citing Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18).

II. Psalm 119:137-144 addresses this harmful neglect of Scripture in others, teaching us how to handle it:

- A. The psalmist expressed his frustration in facing a harmful neglect of Scripture in his foes, Psalm 119:137-139:
 - 1. On the one hand, the psalmist was committed to knowing and heeding Scripture’s directives, for he valued the uprightness and righteousness of Scripture along with the reliability of God’s Word, v. 137-138.
 - 2. However, his foes “forgot, ceased to care for, left” (*shakah*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. ; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 1013), that is, **neglected** God’s Word, greatly frustrating the psalmist, v. 139.

- B. This difficult trial was handled by the psalmist's application of Scripture to the trial, Psalm 119:140-144:
1. The psalmist found encouragement in the fact that God's Word was very "smelted, refined" (*sarap*, *Ibid.*, p. 864) to where Scripture was capable of directing him in the right response to his trial, Psalm 119:140.
 2. Next, the psalmist used God's Word to handle the trial he faced with his enemies, Psalm 119:141-142:
 - a. He recalled that Scripture's words fortified him to stay emotionally strong in the face of his foes' belittling attitudes and acts toward him, for Scripture's truth and timelessness was greater than his foes, v. 141-142.
 - b. The psalmist countered the inner emotional turmoil he experienced in reacting to his enemies by focusing on the relevant applications of Scripture to the trial, leaving the psalmist delighting in God's Word, v. 143.
 - c. He heeded Scripture's guidance in how to think and act so he could thrive in life, Psalm 119:144.

Lesson: *When facing formidable foes who neglected Scripture to afflict him greatly, the psalmist relied on God's Word to guide, encourage and equip him to withstand the trial.*

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 handle parties who so neglect God's Word that they afflict us greatly in their wickedness by relying on Scripture to guide, encourage and equip us to endure the trial.*

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

We view Scripture verses that equip us to handle each issue of concern in our introduction (as follows):

(1) Regarding the tragedies of the years of sexual abuse of the young child Crystal B. in Bristol, regarding the sexual abuse of teen girls working at the Thomaston Opera House and regarding the 21-year abuse of a 32-year-old man that began at age 11 and that motivated him to try to burn down the house of his confinement to gain his freedom, all of which tragedies were created by the failure of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, police or detectives to handle such issues, (a) we have often noted that Revelation 3:21 with 7:17 implies that our era of Church History will be marked by a "Mini-Great Tribulation" where leaders in human institutions like marriage, family, school, business and government will oppress their subordinates. This mistreatment will lead afflicted subordinates of all ages to become disillusioned with their overseers so that they turn elsewhere for help. That help will be found in Bible-teaching churches where Scripture is expounded and applied to life as people will find in relating to God and in heeding His Word abundant solutions to their needs. (b) Thus, what we face in today's society is that predicted oppression being played out in the lives of vulnerable people in our communities. (c) Consequently, God wants us believers in Christ to rely on the Holy Spirit to obey Scripture and thereupon to disciple afflicted people within our reach. (d) This activity will require that we daily read and study Scripture so that we become proficient in God's Word to be able to help the afflicted (cf. Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

(2) Regarding the trouble created by the failure of evangelical institutions and churches to check Scripture for God's solutions to problems in Christian groups, (a) the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:15-16 wrote that his 1 Timothy epistle – and by way of application, we can add 2 Timothy and Titus of the Pastoral Epistles to that epistle – provided guidance for church leaders on conducting themselves in local churches. (b) We also know from 2 Timothy 3:15-4:2 that the use of Scripture equips the believer to be permanently, fully equipped for every good work until the rapture so that pastors in local churches should preach and apply that Word from the pulpit! (c) Thus, any time problems occur in the local church or in an evangelical institution, every believer involved should be turning to Scripture for God's guidance in addressing those problems. (d) Failure to turn to Scripture for guidance by God's people is largely caused by the lack of applicable Bible teaching from the pulpit. We illustrate: when asked, "What words of wisdom would you give to a new graduate going into the pastorate?" Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, who was then head of the Department of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary said, "I would remind them of the motto of the Seminary: Preach the Word. The first chapel I sat in as a student (seminary founder) Dr. (Lewis Sperry) Chafer said, 'Our goal is to make you men into independent exegetes of the Word of God.' All of our courses were geared to that end. The great need across evangelicalism is exposition of the Scriptures. I sense there is a departure from that, even among some of our own grads who are entertaining the people, giving the people what they want, whereas we are called to teach the Word. It is the Word that is the power of God to salvation, it is the Word that is the power for Christian living, and I would want them to make the Word the center of their ministry. It may not be popular, it may not build mega-churches, but it will fulfill that to which they are called upon to do in ministry."

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 handle parties who so neglect Scripture that they afflict others by turning to God's Word for the guidance, encouragement and equipping to handle the trial and its affliction.