

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXIX. The Vast Value Of God's Word
V. Handling Harmful Ignorance
(Psalm 119:169-176 [Taw])

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We currently face issues about which we have limited knowledge and where such ignorance can be harmful:

(1) One area of this kind of ignorance can be what we are to think and how to respond to the tariffs: (a) On the one hand, Michael Barone, a senior political analyst for the Washington Examiner, sharply criticized the president, writing, "President Donald Trump . . . is taking positions that a . . . majority of voters consider simple lunacy" on "tariffs. (They) make things cost more," and "(v)oters understand this . . . (and they) don't enjoy price increases." (Michael Barone, "Trump seems bent on political self-harm," Republican-American, April 9, 2025, p. A7) (b) On the other hand, Michael Reagan, President Ronald Reagan's son, supported the president, claiming, "(S)ince World War II, tariffs have been a bipartisan power tool for every president" though "(i)n a perfect world, they would not exist. Trade among nations would be . . . free, untaxed and friendly . . . But politics and nationalism have always trumped free trade . . . (T)ariffs are a weapon used by virtually every free and unfree nation of every size to protect its industries, businesses and farmers from foreign competition." ("2.5 cheers for Trump's tariffs," Ibid.) (c) What further complicates such conflicts of opinion is the fact that even "(e)conomists are often wrong in predicting" various aspects of our economy "because an economy entails millions of people making hundreds of millions of decisions every day." (David Harsanyi, "If everyone is an expert, no one is," Ibid., April 23, 2025, p. A7)

(2) Harmful ignorance can occur with officials at the highest levels of the federal government: When the Supreme Court granted an emergency appeal from the American Civil Liberties Union to block the Trump administration from deporting any Venezuelans held in northern Texas, Justice Samuel Alito, joined by Justice Clarence Thomas, strongly dissented. He wrote, "'(L)iterally in the middle of the night, the Court issued unprecedented and legally questionable relief without giving the lower courts a chance to rule, without hearing from the opposing party, within eight hours of receiving the application, with dubious factual support for its order, and without providing any explanation for its order . . . Both the Executive and the Judiciary have an obligation to follow the law.'" ("Alito: Court rushed to stop Trump order on deportation," Ibid., April 21, 2025, p. A9)

(3) Some people realize they have been abusively misled in a personal relationship: Letter writer "Tips For Escape" wrote to the "Dear Annie" column (Ibid., April 8, 2025, p. B9) to report, "Years ago I was in a relationship where . . . (w)hat began as emotional manipulation escalated into threats" that "were attempts to make me fear for my life . . . I learned the hard way that reasoning with an abuser is like reasoning with a captor. The kindness after cruelty – the so-called 'honeymoon phase' – is just another tool of control. Behind the promises and apologies is someone who knows exactly what he's doing. It's not misunderstanding. It's not confusion. It's a choice."

(4) Some people suffer from a harmful ignorance of reality itself, what psychologists call "psychosis." This condition negatively "affects the way your brain processes information," and psychologists claim it "can be triggered by a mental illness, a physical injury or illness, substance abuse, or extreme stress or trauma." (Jabeen Begum, M. D., "Psychosis: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment," August 9, 2023; webmd.com)

Need: *So, we ask, "How are we to handle ignorance of issues where that ignorance itself can be harmful?"*

I. In Psalm 119:169-176, the psalmist realized that he was very harmfully ignorant, v. 169, 170b, 176a:

- A. The psalmist gave God a frantic "ringing cry" (*rinnah*, B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 943) to "make [him] understand" (*bin*, Hiphil stem, Ibid., p. 106-107; H. A. W., T. W. O. T., 1980, v. I, p. 103) an issue for his immediate personal welfare, Psalm 119:169.
- B. His ignorance of the issue had led to a severe crisis, for in verse 170b, he asked God to "snatch [me] away" (*nasal*, Ibid., Hiphil stem, B. D. B., p. 664-665) in deliverance from an imminent danger.
- C. The psalmist admitted that he had "wandered about" (*ta'ah*, Ibid., p. 1073) like a "lost, strayed" (*'abad*, Ibid., p. 1) sheep that was very vulnerable to destruction by predators! (Psalm 119:176a)

II. The solution to the psalmist's plight was God's leading him to get into Scripture for protective insight:

- A. After the psalmist gave a ringing cry for God to make him understand an issue of crisis (v. 169-170), the Lord instructed him out of His Word on what he needed to understand, Psalm 119:171.
- B. Once the psalmist knew God's helpful Scripture insight, he eagerly applied it in his life, Psalm 119:172-173.

- C. The psalmist's obedience to God's Word was rewarded by God's delivering him from trouble, v. 173-174.
- D. Consequently, the psalmist obtained relief for his whole emotional, mental and spiritual inner man, his *nepesh* (Kittel, *Bib. Heb.*, p. 1086, Robert B. Girdlestone, *Syns. of the O. T.*, 1973, p. 56-59) so that he praised the Lord with his voice that had initially uttered a frantic ringing cry for help! (v. 175 with 171a, 172a and 169a)

Lesson: *The psalmist faced a dangerous crisis due to his ignorance of an issue, so he cried out to the Lord for understanding, and God gave him insight through His Word. When the psalmist applied that insight to his life, the Lord delivered him from his crisis to the psalmist's great relief and resulting praise to God.*

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) If facing a potentially harmful crisis due to ignorance of an issue, may we cry out to the Lord for help and get into Scripture for God's insight. As we then apply that insight and find God delivering us from trouble, out of relief for that deliverance, may we praise the Lord for His help.*

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

Scripture provides insight into addressing harmful ignorance we might have on the issues in our introduction:

(1) On ignorance of what to think and how to think of the president's tariffs, (a) regardless of the pros or cons of the tariffs themselves, Proverbs 27:23-27 directs that we pay attention to our income streams without relying ultimately on collected wealth or financial nest eggs. Collected wealth can soon recede for many reasons, so we need to pay close attention to securing our income streams, even if they are simple or very lowly ones like our income from goats or hay fields! (b) Ultimately, we must rely on God for His material help (Hebrews 13:5-6; 1 Timothy 6:17)

(2) On harmful ignorance at the highest levels of the government, (a) Scripture reveals that God decides who comes to power and He is sovereign over what each ruler does (Romans 13:1-4). We should thus rest in God's sovereignty over all of our government leaders. (b) In addition, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 4-12, 13-17 teaches that God is keeping the world's governments under His control so that we believers can fulfill His calling for us before the rapture, what should lead us not to fret, but focus on fulfilling our callings with the comfort of the Lord Himself.

(3) On harmful ignorance of being abusively misled in a personal relationship, (a) 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 informs us that if we believers rely on the Holy Spirit, He gives us the insight to discern people around us who are godly as well as those who are living by their sinful natures. Armed with that insight, we can keep our "guard" up in dealing with ungodly people around us. (b) On handling abusively harmful people, in 1 Samuel 16:1-3, the prophet Samuel was afraid to go to Bethlehem to anoint David to be the next king lest king Saul try to kill Samuel for doing so. Thus, God told Samuel to announce that he was going to worship the Lord with a sacrifice in Bethlehem, what he would surely do! Samuel then invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrificial meal so that he might privately anoint Jesse's son David as king without Saul's knowledge! This plan kept Samuel from lying to Saul while also avoiding Saul's wrath by not informing Saul about everything he did! (c) Similarly, when a woman in the first church I pastored decades ago was kidnapped by a gunman who forced her to drive him in her van across state lines, she carefully planned how she would escape with a spare set of keys for the van that she secretly had on her so that when the opportunity came, without warning, she quickly escaped in a way that the gunman could not pursue or harm her.

(4) On harmful ignorance caused by what psychologists call psychosis, (a) the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 1:7 wrote that God has not given us believers the spirit of timidity (*deilia*, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 172), but of power and love and *sophronismos*, "good judgment, self-discipline, good sense." (Ibid., p. 809; *Ryrie Study Bible, KJV*, 1978, ftn. to 2 Timothy 1:7) Thus, if a believer does not have a physical problem, and he relies on the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16), he will think rationally. (b) In addition, "Psychological tests were obtained on a group of Christians to determine . . . the maturity level of the people. The group was initially divided into those who had been Christians for more than three years and those who had been Christians for a shorter time. In general, there was no difference in maturity levels. Next, the group was divided according to those who spent time daily with the Word, those who spent time with the Word a few times per week, and those who hardly ever spent time with the Word. The maturity level was found to be consistently and proportionately related to the time spent with the Word . . . (T)hose who spent time daily with the Word, were found to be more mature, more mentally healthy, and to show no significant pathology." (Frank B. Minirth, M. D., *You Can Measure Your Mental Health*, 1980, p. 14) These test results also suggest that the views we face in today's ungodly world are harmful to our mental health, so for our own welfare, we should daily expose our minds and hearts to God's protective Word! (cf. Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. When woefully, harmfully ignorant, may we call to God for help and read His Word for solutions.