



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Hungering for the Word of God

Psalm 119:103

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We all have passions for various things in our lives. Some have a passion for their job and career into which they pour much of their efforts and energy. Some have a passion for an activity or hobby and spend a great deal of time and money in those pursuits. Some have a passion for a college or professional athletic team which they exhibit by attending games and cheering them on faithfully during the season. We find that the writer of Psalm 119 had a tremendous passion for God's Word, which he demonstrated in penning for us this wonderful passage. This chapter is in fact a wonderful poem or song expressing the writer's passion for God's Word. Consequently he uses some vivid, poetic language to describe the Scriptures. Consider some of the eloquent, meaningful poetic figures he uses:

*How sweet are Your words to my taste!
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (:103)*

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path. (:105)*

*Therefore I love Your commandments
Above gold, yes, above fine gold. (:127)*

We can learn much about the Word of God and the attitude we should have towards it by looking at these wonderful images. In our next studies we will review each of them more closely, beginning with considering the Scriptures as "sweeter than honey". Before we begin this study, let us read the next section of Psalm 119:

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Gimel.

*¹⁷Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.*

*¹⁸Open my eyes, that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your law.*

*¹⁹I am a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from me.*

*²⁰My soul is crushed with longing
After Your ordinances at all times.*

*²¹You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed,
Who wander from Your commandments.*

*²²Take away reproach and contempt from me,
For I observe Your testimonies.*

*²³Even though princes sit and talk against me,
Your servant meditates on Your statutes.*

*²⁴Your testimonies also are my delight;
They are my counselors.*

Psalm 119 reveals the heart of one who has a tremendous love for God's Word. There was a great desire to hear God's Word proclaimed; to read God's Word; to understand the Scriptures; and to faithfully apply them to daily life. As a poet or songwriter, the author uses a wonderful, descriptive illustration to describe this desire in verse 103:

*How sweet are Your words to my taste!
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

These words describe the spiritual hunger and desire for God's Word. Honey is perhaps the sweetest natural substance known. It may well have been the most desired "treat" or "dessert" in that day. Two Old Testament accounts demonstrate the love for this natural sweet. (Samson in Judges 14 and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14) Think of our own favorite dessert which we delight to eat. In a spiritual sense, our delight and enjoyment of God's Word should go beyond this physical enjoyment of a delicious delicacy.

Our poet does not even have words to describe this delight, so he exclaims "How sweet are Your words to my taste!" He then uses a poetic comparison to attempt to communicate his love for the Scriptures: "sweeter than honey to my mouth!" This image is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe a hunger and appreciation for God's Word. The prophet Jeremiah describes his response to God's Word: "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart..." (Jeremiah 15:16) The same imagery is used when God called Ezekiel: "Then He said to me, 'Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.'" "So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll". "He said to me, 'Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.' Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth." (Ezekiel 3:1-3) In both instances the reading, believing, loving, and applying God's Word is figuratively described as "eating" it. The response? God's Word is "a delight to my heart" and "sweet as honey".

In a more general sense, we find other occasions in Scripture where a desire for God's Word is similarly described. David

BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDIES: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON, TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)**
LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAYS 8:00 A.M., SENATE PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE ROOM (M219)**

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declares, **“O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” Psalm 34:8.** In our study of the Sermon on the Mount we recall how Jesus spoke of the spiritual hunger that is found in one who is blessed by God: **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6)** This all describes a spiritual hunger for the Word of God. This hunger is an evidence of one who is a genuine believer who has spiritual life through faith in Christ. Psalm 119:103 tells us something about the Word of God (it is sweet to the taste). It also tells us something about the reader (there is a spiritual hunger for the things of God). This is why one person might read the Bible and find it foolishness while another reads and exclaims “it is sweeter than honey to my mouth.” Let us consider a couple of important issues this descriptive verse brings up for us.

HUNGER FOR GOD’S WORD IS A SIGN OF TRUE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Peter describes the true believer’s hunger and desire for God’s Word:

“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” (1 Peter 2:1-3)

If there is physical life, there will be hunger for physical food. A loss of physical appetite indicates a serious illness. A dead person has no appetite or hunger. In a spiritual sense, one who has spiritual life will hunger for spiritual food, which is provided for us in God’s Word. One who is spiritually dead will have no spiritual hunger. God’s Word gives us the bad news that without Christ we are **“dead in our trespasses and sins”**. (Ephesians 2:1) We go on to find the good news that **“God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised up with Him...”** (Ephesians 2:4-6). Through repentance from our sin and faith in what Christ did for us on the cross, we become spiritually alive. A practical evidence of this in our daily lives will be hunger for the things of God, primarily found in His Word.

From our verse we find this is not simply a reading of God’s Word out of duty or participation in spiritual activities in a perfunctory manner. There is great delight and love for the scriptures, as we see those words used many times throughout Psalm 119.

GAINING A HUNGER FOR GOD’S WORD IS BOTH A WORK OF GOD AND A RESPONSIBILITY ON OUR PART.

Just as it is God that gives us spiritual life through faith in Christ, it is God that changes our hearts so that we might have a desire for spiritual things. This is demonstrated in Psalm 119 by the prayers for God to **“open my eyes”** (vs. 18) and to **“give me understanding”** (vs. 34). Yet we have a responsibility to pursue a love for God’s Word by reading it, studying it, and seeking to apply it to our lives. How can we do our part to develop a hunger and delight for God’s Word? Thomas Manton gave us some good ideas¹:

- 1.) **Soundly Believe God’s Word** – We will not delight in God’s word or find it sweet to our taste if we do not genuinely believe it is indeed the Word of God. “We cannot be affected with what we do not believe”.
- 2.) **Seriously Consider God’s Word** – We should seriously approach the study of God’s Word. “We must dig deeply into the mines of the Word, and work out truths by serious thoughts and search for wisdom”.
- 3.) **Closely Apply God’s Word** – We should carefully seek to apply God’s Word to each and every circumstance we face, whether at the capitol, on our jobs, or in our homes. As we experience the blessing of following God’s Word, then it will indeed become sweet to our taste.

CONCLUSION

Do we hunger for and delight in God’s Word which is demonstrated in a desire to read it, learn it, and apply it to our lives? This is an evidence of true spiritual life.

¹ 190 Sermons on the 119th Psalm. Thomas Manton (1620-1677). Vol. 2. pg 382.