



I WILL WALK IN
FREEDOM, FOR I
HAVE DEVOTED
MYSELF TO YOUR
COMMANDMENTS.

P S A L M 1 1 9 : 4 5 (N L T)

PURPOSE

OF FREEDOM

DATE

July 4-5

WEEK

5 of 10

OVERVIEW

Psalm 119:1-56

KEY VERSE

Psalm 119:45

SETTING THE STAGE

Psalm 119 is unique in its length and specific authorship as we do not know who wrote this particular psalm. Yet, it takes the reader on a journey of adoration and reverence for the Word of God that is very personal. This psalm is the longest chapter in the Bible with 176 verses. Ironically, it is a psalm about the Bible as it emphasizes the Word of God in terms of the law, precepts, statutes, commandments, and ways. This psalm contains the longest acrostic in the Bible consisting of 22 stanzas, corresponding to the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza is comprised of eight verses, each beginning with the same letter. ¹ C. S. Lewis compared this psalm to a piece of embroidery, done stitch by stitch in the quiet hours for the love of the subject and the delight in leisurely, disciplined craftsmanship. ²

We have looked at the Story of Purpose in a variety of ways, and this week we appropriately consider the Purpose of Freedom. Psalm 119 is all about freedom, though we will focus on just a handful of verses for this lesson. When God established the Ten Commandments, He did so to give order and freedom to His people, not confusion and restriction. Nor did God provide commandments so that His people could be “good enough” to earn freedom. Remember that the commandments of God were given “after” the people were set free from slavery and bondage. It was in the context of freedom that God gave His commandments to

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LESSON OUTLINE

1. Freedom Found in Mercy
2. Freedom to Walk
3. Freedom to Speak
4. Freedom of Expression

THINGS TO KNOW

- The Hebrew word ‘Rachab’ is translated as “liberty” or “freedom.”
- The root meaning of the word ‘Rachab’ means “broad” or “wide.”
- The concept is to be “unrestrained.”

PURPOSE

OF FREEDOM

Setting the Stage, continued >

to establish a people, culture and community that would be based on His principles that were for their good and not harm.

So it is for us. As we celebrate our freedom as a country, we celebrate the freedom we have in God through Jesus Christ. In John's Gospel, he eloquently phrased it like this *"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14)*. The Word of God took on human form so that we may behold Him. We are to take notice of the Word of God as it reflects both grace and truth. Jesus even took it a step further when in His own words said, *"So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'" (John 8:31-32)*. Psalm 119 is all about the Word of God, truth and freedom as it ultimately points us deeper into Scripture and closer to Jesus Christ.

Introduction

This week we are celebrating the freedom we have in this country. In September 1620, 102 people were willing to risk their lives and their future for a taste of freedom. They were quite literally "all in" as it pertained to seeking freedom. These 102 passengers boarded a boat called the Mayflower, traveled 66 days to embark on new land with new freedom.

Throughout history, people have sought freedom. In the context of the Bible, God's people have always been on a journey seeking freedom, whether it was Noah and his family seeking freedom from the flood or Moses and the Israelites seeking freedom from slavery in Egypt.

God used Joshua to lead the Israelites into the freedom of the Promised Land. God used Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem once God's people were set free from captivity in Babylon. And 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ died on the cross taking the sins of the world upon Himself so that all people throughout the world could have freedom for all eternity in relationship with Him.

Freedom has always been a blessing to people. Physical freedom. Emotional freedom. Political freedom. Mental freedom. Spiritual freedom. In each instance, freedom should never be taken for granted but be embraced as a blessing. There is a specific purpose for freedom. Those who have been set free, have been set free to live. This week, we will celebrate freedom by looking at the purpose and the blessing of freedom, in perhaps the unlikeliest of places; Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 is all about the Word of God. Though we do not know who wrote this particular psalm, it is evident the author was passionate and respectful of the Word of God. There is a sense of urgency



¹ *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, p. 1029.

² www.soniclight.com/Psalms

in all 176 verses in this chapter, each one directing the reader to the law, precepts, commandments, ways, testament; all referring ultimately to the Word of God.

We will focus on just a few of the 176 verses beginning in Psalm 119:41.

1. FREEDOM FOUND IN MERCY

PSALM 119:41-43 *May Your lovingkindnesses (mercies) also come to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your Word; ⁴²So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your Word. ⁴³And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I wait for Your ordinances.*

Freedom comes when we realize we are in need. There are so many circumstances of life that are beyond our control that restrict us emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. We become stagnant in our fear and trembling. We are a people collectively in need of freedom. Yet, perhaps more significant each of us needs to realize that as an individual “I need freedom.” We need to look at this freedom on a personal level.

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There is not a person in the world who is without fault or guilt today. Each of us has failed. If we were to dwell on that fact it would be depressing, demeaning and defeating. The psalmist realized that without God there was guilt, judgment, defeat, and bondage. But in verse 41, there is a glimmer of hope found in reality beyond circumstances. He is crying out to God with urgency and confidence. “*May Your lovingkindnesses/ mercies also come to me, O LORD.*” Do not miss the plural of “mercies.” C. H. Spurgeon said, “He (the psalmist) needed much mercy and varied mercy, hence the request is in the plural; requesting from God rather than from man.”³ The psalmist is no different than us. We all need much and varied mercy. On any given day we find ourselves stressed out, overwhelmed and on the verge of throwing up our hands in defeat. But be of good courage, there is mercy in the Lord. Not just singular mercy, but plural; mercies.

The prophet Jeremiah realized that same truth and expressed it this way in Lamentations 3:22-23, “*The LORD’S lovingkindnesses (mercies) indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*” These verses were written in a book called Lamentations which means Jeremiah was lamenting the circumstances of life, which just so happened to be the bondage of God’s people in Babylon. But he realized as did the psalmist that there is freedom in the mercies of God. Daily freedom that never ceases. Daily freedom in the form of compassion and faithfulness. Even in the midst of restrictive circumstances, there is freedom by the mercies of God.

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Now look at the end of verse 41 as the psalmist describes what that mercy looks like “*Your salvation according to Your word;*” The word “salvation” quite literally means to be delivered out of your circumstances. There is freedom in the mercies of God that will save us from that which we deserve. Paul is very clear when he writes in Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The mercies of God not only overshadow the wages of sin but blot them out completely because of the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Psalmist goes on to say in Psalm 119 that there will be those who question or doubt this kind of freedom. Regardless of who may or may not question the freedom found in the mercy and salvation of God, it comes down to your trust in God’s Word. This is foundational for each

³ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David, Volume 3 Psalms 111-150*; Zondervan Publishing House 1979, Grand Rapids, MI; p. 226.

Christ-follower, as we put our trust in the Word of God; both in the truth of the Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ.

2. FREEDOM TO WALK

PSALM 119:44-45 *I will keep on obeying your instructions forever and ever. ⁴⁵I will walk in freedom, for I have devoted myself to your commandments. (NLT)*

As we experience the mercies and salvation of the Lord, there is movement not stagnation.

The life of a Christ-follower is one of continued learning and growing. It is not something that is done just one time in a person's life. Nor is it designed to be done just one time a week in a specific location such as a church building. The life of a Christ-follower is just that, life. We are to be living and breathing people of God in a world that does not stop but keeps on moving faster and faster.

There is optimism in the words of the psalmist, "I will keep on obeying. I will walk in freedom." Both are phrases marked by movement and confidence. There will be people in your life that will not understand why you respect, revere and obey the Word of God. To many people today the Bible is a collection of old stories that may or may not be true. It is considered to be literature but nothing more. But there is a reason that the Bible continues to be the best-selling book of all time. There is a reason that the full Bible is translated into 698 languages; the New Testament is translated into 1,548 languages. ⁴ There is a reason that the Bible has documented history, geography, and culture in the context of God's Word. We are to do exactly as the psalmist vowed to do, *keep on obeying the instructions of God*, regardless of whether or not friends and family understand.

There will be people who will not understand why you take time out of your weekend to go to church. After a long week at work, certainly you deserve to be on the golf course or at the park instead of going to church. There will be those who will challenge your belief system in how you make choices and prioritize your life. But as we have seen over the last several months of our study, others throughout history had to make the same choice on whether or not to keep moving forward with confidence and optimism.

Joshua put it like this, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego put it like this, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). Nehemiah, a cupbearer to the king, walked in freedom to Jerusalem to organize God's people to rebuild the wall and establish a new home.

We have freedom to walk the path before us with confidence as we devote ourselves to His Word. The devotion means it is a choice we make to be committed to His Word, seeking answers to life in His Word. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). It is the illumination of His Word guiding us each step of the way.

3. FREEDOM TO SPEAK

PSALM 119:46 *I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed.*

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⁴ www.wycliffe.org/uk statistics from October 2019.

We enjoy the freedom of speech in this country, though it has been debated in a variety of settings over the years. However, with that freedom comes responsibility. And as Christ-followers, we have a responsibility to speak of the testimonies of God. It is our opportunity to tell other people our story of what God has done in our life. In this verse, the psalmist gives the example of speaking before kings and not being ashamed. It reminds us that we have nothing to be ashamed of when we base our life on the Word of God. Earlier this year we challenged our church to embrace a program called “Focus Your Influence.” It was a challenge to focus on 20 people, to pray for them and share our faith story with them in the year 2020.

We each have a circle of influence at work, home, in neighborhoods, community activities, sports leagues, and more. We have the freedom to speak truth in those settings as we have an opportunity. Paul would say it like this, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*” (Romans 1:16).

We are to be bold in our freedom of speech without shame or embarrassment. Whether it be in front of a king or a cashier. Whether it be in front of a Jew or Muslim. The Gospel is far-reaching as noted by Paul in the verse above. It is for both the Jew and the Greek; that encompassed everyone in the first century! The psalmist references the extreme of their time of speaking to the kings. For us, it would be talking to a family member, neighbor or co-worker using discernment in our freedom.

4. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

PSALM 119:47-48 *I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love. ⁴⁸And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes.*

Two times the psalmist uses the phrase, ‘which I love’ as He is talking about the commandments of God. There is a very personal connection between the psalmist and the Word of God. It is an emotional connection that goes beyond the intellectual understanding and appreciation of God’s Word. Rather, it has penetrated his very soul as exemplified by the phrase ‘which I love’ to describe God’s Word.

For many of us, we delight in a sunny day at the park. We delight in an extra day off from work. We delight in a bonus on the paycheck. How often do we delight in the commandments of God? I have to remind myself to pause and reflect on true delight in God’s Word. There is no doubt I revere the Word of God. I believe the Word of God. I embrace the Word of God foundationally in making life choices. But do I daily delight in the Word of God?

The psalmist is saying there is freedom of expression in underscoring appreciation with delight. Notice what this freedom of expression causes the psalmist to do. In verse 48, he says, “*And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments.*” This is not worshipping the commandments themselves, rather it is an expression of his delight of and love for the commandments of God. If you have ever been at a ballgame and your child scores a run, makes a basket, kicks a goal, or catches a pass, dare I say you have raised your hands in delight and love. You did not raise your hands merely because it was a goal, run, or basket; you delight and love your child in such a way that you celebrate that which he or she accomplished. God’s Word is His revelation of Himself to us. We are to delight and love His Word in such a way that we celebrate His truth as it is revealed in Scripture.

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And then it is almost as if the psalmist takes a deep breath, puts his hands down to his lap and bows his head as he meditates on the statutes of God. The reality is that you cannot just throw your hands in the air and call it a day, there needs to be a time that you reflect, meditate and pray. Psalm 1:1-2 says it like this, “*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of*

the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

Again, we see the combination of delight and meditation. Meditating on the Scripture means you study, ponder, pray and reflect on the Word of God. We are fortunate to live in a country where we have the freedom to read and study the Word of God; freedom to delight and meditate on His truth.

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

The commandments, laws, precepts of God are not restrictive, through obedience they allow us to experience freedom. In these verses, the writer talks about keeping the laws and yet being free. Contrary to what we often expect, obeying God’s laws does not inhibit or restrain us. Instead, it frees us to be who God designed us to be. By living God’s way, we have the freedom to fulfill God’s plan for our lives.⁵ There is nothing greater than walking in freedom and moving forward with confidence.

The mercies of God allow us to be free. Freedom to walk. Freedom of speech. Freedom of expression. The greatest freedom of all is the freedom we have in Jesus Christ. The ultimate freedom at the ultimate cost; the crucifixion of Jesus who was innocent yet bore our sins. We celebrate our country’s freedom this week, but more importantly, let us celebrate our freedom in Christ.

JOHN 8:36 *So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*

⁵ *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, IL 1988, p. 879.