

THE BIBLE

Lesson 3

The Attitude Toward and Love for the Bible

Scripture Reading: Psa. 119:66, 173, 47-48, 16, 103, 14, 117, 180, 36, 45, 40, 147, 42, 128, 161, 31, 87, 157, 59, 1, 32; Prov. 23:12b; 2 Tim. 3:16a; Matt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16; 2 Pet. 1:19

I. We need to see how the Old Testament seekers of God enjoyed His law, considering God's law to be His word—Psalm 119:

- A. Believing it (v. 66); according to the New Testament, the first requirement in taking the Word of God is that we believe in it; we must believe in its genuineness, its accuracy, its authority, and its power.
- B. Choosing it (vv. 30, 173); along with the Old Testament seekers of God, we should also choose God's word; we all need to make a strong decision in favor of the word of God.
- C. Lifting up their hands unto it (v. 48); to lift up our hands unto the Lord's word is to welcome it, to indicate that we receive it warmly and say "Amen" to it.
- D. Loving it (vv. 47, 48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167); the Old Testament seekers loved God's word; no book is as lovable as the Bible.
- E. Delighting in it (vv. 16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 174); the psalmist also delighted himself in God's word; there is joy to be found in the word of God (cf. Jer. 15:16b); daily we need to take time to delight ourselves in the holy Word.
- F. Tasting it (Psa. 119:103); the psalmist even tasted God's word; if we realize that God's law is His word for our nourishment and life supply, we shall enjoy its sweet taste.
- G. Rejoicing in it (vv. 14, 111, 162); when we taste the word of God, we rejoice in it; Whenever we are helped by the Bible, in a living way, we spontaneously rejoice in the Word.
- H. Respecting it (vv. 6, 117); if we would be genuine seekers of God, we must respect His word.
- I. Having a sound heart in it (v. 180); such a heart is healthy, having no spiritual sickness related to God's word; we need to be healed of all spiritual disease so that our heart may be pure, sound, and healthy toward the word of God.
- J. Inclining their heart unto it (vv. 36, 112); we need a heart inclined to the word of God; because our heart often has the tendency to depart from God's word, we need to pray that our heart would be called back to God's word and be inclined to it.
- K. Seeking it, longing for it, hoping in it with prayer, and trusting in it; the Old Testament seekers of God also sought God's word (119:45, 94), longed for it (vv. 20, 40, 131), hoped in it with prayer (vv. 43, 74, 114, 147), and trusted in it (v. 42).
- L. Esteeming it right concerning all things (v. 128); the word "right" here means upright, straight, strict in all things; when we muse upon the Word and consider it, we shall regard it upright in all things.
- M. Treasuring it (cf. Prov.23:12b); the psalmist also treasured the Word of God as great spoil (v. 162), as all riches (v. 14), above thousands of gold and silver (vv. 72, 127), and as a heritage forever (v. 111); spoil refers to valuables taken away from an enemy; if we muse upon the Word, the enemy will be defeated, and we shall gather much spoil.
- N. Standing in awe of it (v. 161); we should stand in awe of the Word of God; concerning it, we should be in fear and trembling (v. 120).

- O. Cleaving [or clinging] to it (v. 31); this verse says, “I cling to your testimonies”; the King James Version uses the word stuck; we need to stick ourselves to the Word of God, to cleave to it.
- P. Not forsaking it, not swerving from it, not turning aside from it, and not going astray from it; with the psalmist, we should not forsake God’s Word (v. 87), not swerve from it (vv. 51, 157), not turn aside from it (v. 102), and not go astray from it (v. 110); swerving from the Word is different from turning aside from it; to turn is to go in another specific direction, but to swerve is to veer off without direction, regulation, or control.
- Q. Turning their feet unto it; verse 59 says, “I considered my ways / And turned my feet toward Your testimonies”; instead of turning aside from the Word, we should turn our feet unto it [or toward it].
- R. Walking in it and running the way of it (vv. 1, 32); the psalmist walked in the Word and ran the way of the Word; this indicates that he lived according to the Word of God.

II. We need a proper attitude in reading the Bible; this attitude is based on our knowledge of the Bible:

- A. We know that the Bible is the word of God, containing life that surpasses knowledge and containing light that surpasses doctrine; therefore, we should have a serious attitude when we read the Bible.
- B. When we read the Bible, we should have an attitude of contacting God Himself—*Hymns*, 812:
 - 1. The Bible is the word of God, and the word of God is the embodiment of God; it is the breathing out of God—2 Tim. 3:16a.
 - 2. Hence, each time we come to read the Bible, we should be inwardly prepared to meet God, to contact God Himself—cf. John 5:39-40.
- C. We should also have an attitude of coming to receive the life supply—*Hymns*, 811:
 - 1. The Bible is a treasure store of the spiritual bread of life; thus, we should always have the attitude of taking the bread of life from this treasure store for our supply.
 - 2. This is not merely a matter of understanding or comprehending with our mind; it is a matter of receiving the life supply from the Bible with our spirit.
- D. We should also have an attitude of coming to receive enlightenment—Psa. 119:130; 2 Pet. 1:19:
 - 1. To receive enlightenment, we need our heart and our spirit—Eph. 1:17-18.
 - 2. We need to come before God and say, “I want to touch the light in Your Word. My heart and my spirit are open to You. Lord, enlighten me through Your Word. As I read, grant me not only the understanding, but even more, shine Your light through Your Spirit on the letters. Enlighten me concerning Your heart’s desire and expose my true condition. I do not want merely to comprehend, but even more I want to see. I want enlightenment and revelation.”
- E. We should also learn to pray when we read the Bible—Eph. 6:17-18:
 - 1. We should spontaneously have a prayer deep within us, saying, “Lord, I come to Your Word to contact You, not merely to read. Cause my heart to incline toward You and my spirit to open to You. Cause me to love You more than knowledge and doctrine. May my inner being be nourished and enlightened by Your Word.”
 - 2. We should have this kind of prayer, intention, and attitude.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

CONSIDERING GOD'S LAW TO BE HIS WORD

Believing It

Considering God's law to be His word, the psalmist believed in the word: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments" (119:66). According to the New Testament, the first requirement in taking the Word of God is that we believe in it. We must believe in its genuineness, its accuracy, its authority, and its power.

Choosing It

Along with the Old Testament seekers of God, we should also choose God's word. Psalm 119:30 says, "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me." Verse 173 says, "Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts." What a marvelous choice this is! We all need to make a strong decision in favor of the word of God.

Lifting Up Their Hands unto It

In 119:48 we find an unusual expression: "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments." What does it mean to lift up our hands to God's word? If we consider the way we lift our hand to greet someone, we shall be able to understand this. To lift up our hands unto the Lord's word is to welcome it, to indicate that we receive it warmly and say "Amen" to it. Many of us have spontaneously lifted up our [663] hands when inspired by God's word. Therefore, to lift up our hands to the word of God means to receive it gladly.

Loving It

The Old Testament seekers loved God's word. Eleven times the writer of Psalm 119 speaks of loving the word of God (vv. 47, 48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167). I also can testify that I love the Word of God. No book is as lovable as the Bible.

Delighting in It

The psalmist also delighted himself in God's word (119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 174). He enjoyed the word and found it a source of delight. There is joy to be found in the word of God. Daily we need to take time to delight ourselves in the holy Word.

Tasting It

The psalmist even tasted God's word: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (v. 103). Notice that the writer does not say, "How sweet is thy law!" Instead, he declares, "How sweet is thy word!" If we regard the law as nothing more than the commandments of God, it will not be sweet to us. But if we realize that God's law is His word for our nourishment and life supply, we shall enjoy its sweet taste. According to his experience, the psalmist realized that the law was the sweet word of God. It was not just a list of commandments to regulate him; it was a word full of enjoyment and life supply, a word that, to his taste, was sweeter than honey.

Rejoicing in It

When we taste the word of God, we rejoice in it. The psalmist says, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies" (119:14), and "Thy testimonies...are the rejoicing of my heart" (v. 111). In verse 162 the psalmist testifies of his rejoicing in the word: "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." [664]

To rejoice is more than just to be joyful. We may be joyful silently, but we must use our voice in order to rejoice. There is a difference between making a joyful noise and having a joyful voice. When

we rejoice, praising the Lord and even shouting, we make a joyful noise to Him. To certain opposers, this is bedlam. They condemn us for making a joyful noise to the Lord. Nevertheless, we must be those who rejoice in the Lord and in His word. If you have never spontaneously rejoiced in reading the Bible, perhaps you have never been fully inspired by the Word. Whenever we are helped by the Bible, in a living way, we spontaneously rejoice in the Word.

Respecting It

Furthermore, the psalmist had respect unto all the Lord's commandments (119:6). In verse 117 he declares, "I will have respect unto thy statutes continually." If we would be genuine seekers of God, we must respect His word.

Having a Sound Heart in It

Psalm 119:80 says, "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes." We need to have a sound heart in the word of God. Such a heart is healthy, having no spiritual sickness related to God's word. With respect to the word of God, we should not be sick in our heart. We need to be healed of all spiritual disease so that our heart may be pure, sound, and healthy toward the word of God.

Inclining Their Heart unto It

In 119:36 the Lord's seeker prayed, "Incline my heart [665] unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." Then in verse 112 he declares, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end." We need a heart inclined to the word of God. Because our heart often has the tendency to depart from God's word, we need to pray that our heart would be called back to God's word and be inclined to it. The psalmist prayed in this way and could also testify that he himself inclined his heart toward the Lord's statutes. On the one hand, we need to pray that the Lord will incline our heart to the word; on the other hand, we need to exercise our spirit to bring our heart back to the word and to cause it to incline unto it. We need both a sound heart and a heart inclined to the word of God.

Seeking It, Longing for It, Hoping in It with Prayer, and Trusting in It

The Old Testament seekers of God also sought God's word (119:45, 94), longed for it (vv. 20, 40, 131), hoped in it with prayer (vv. 43, 74, 114, 147), and trusted in it (v. 42). According to our experience, these matters go along with having a sound heart in the Word and inclining our heart unto the Word. If our heart is sound in the Word and is inclined to the Word of God, we shall seek the Word. Many people read the Bible and get nothing from it because their heart is not right. A certain scholar admired the Chinese version of the Bible and sometimes quoted from it. Nevertheless, he did not receive help from reading the Word, and he died an unsaved man. Even Christians may study the Bible and teach it without being helped by the Word themselves. The reason for this lack is that they have a problem in their heart. Their heart either is not sound or is not truly inclined to the Word of God. But if our heart is right, we shall not only seek the Word; we shall also long for it, hope in it, and trust in it.

Esteeming It Right concerning All Things

The psalmist also esteemed God's Word right concerning all things (v. 128). The word "right" here does not mean right as opposed to wrong. It means upright, straight, strict in all things. When we muse upon the Word and consider it, we shall regard it upright in all things.

Treasuring It

The psalmist also treasured the Word of God. He treasured it as great spoil (v. 162), as all riches (v. 14), above thousands of gold and silver (vv. 72, 127), and as a heritage forever (v. 111). Spoil refers to valuables taken away from an enemy. If we muse upon the Word, the enemy will be defeated, and we shall gather much spoil. Then we shall become rich and possess gold and silver,

which will become our heritage. In ancient times, when a king conquered his enemies, he seized the gold and silver. Likewise, when we enjoy the Word and defeat the enemy through the Word, we shall gain spoil from the conquered enemy. Then we shall have the riches, the gold and silver, and the heritage.

Standing in Awe of It

In verse 161 the psalmist says, "My heart standeth in awe of thy word." We also should stand in awe of the Word of God. Concerning it, we should be in fear and trembling (v. 120). Paul used such an expression both in 1 Corinthians 2:3 and in Philippians 2:12.

Cleaving to It

Verse 31 says, "I cleave unto thy testimonies" (Heb.). The King James Version uses the word stuck. We need to stick ourselves to the Word of God, to cleave to it.

Not Forsaking It, Not Swerving from It, Not Turning Aside from It, and Not Going Astray from It

With the psalmist, we should not forsake God's Word (v. 87), not swerve from it (vv. 51, 157, Heb.), not turn aside from it (v. 102), and not go astray from it (v. 110, Heb.). [675] Swerving from the Word is different from turning aside from it. To turn is to go in another specific direction, but to swerve is to veer off without direction, regulation, or control. On occasion, certain things will happen to cause us to swerve away from the Word of God. But we should not swerve from the Word, turn aside from it, or go astray from it.

Turning Their Feet unto It

Verse 59 says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Instead of turning aside from the Word, we should turn our feet unto it.

Walking in It and Running the Way of It

Verse 1 says, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of Jehovah" (Heb.), and verse 32 says, "I will run the way of thy commandments." The psalmist walked in the Word and ran the way of the Word. This indicates that he lived according to the Word of God. (Life-study of Exodus, Messages 56 and 57, pp. 662-675)

THE ATTITUDE IN READING THE BIBLE

We need a proper attitude in reading the Bible. This attitude is based on our knowledge of the Bible. We know that the Bible is the word of God, containing life that surpasses knowledge and containing light that surpasses doctrine. Therefore, we should have a serious attitude when we read the Bible.

Contacting God Himself

When we read the Bible, we should have an attitude of contacting God Himself. The Bible is the word of God, and the word of God is the embodiment of God. It is God Himself, the breath of God, that is, the breathing out of God. Hence, each time we come to read the Bible, we should be inwardly prepared to meet God, to contact God Himself.

We should not read the Bible merely with our mind. We must seek God with our spirit and our heart. We must have a sincere heart to draw near to God and a quiet and open spirit to fellowship with Him. This attitude is completely different from the attitude we have when reading newspapers and magazines or secular books. When we read secular publications, we need only a focused mind. However, when we read the Bible, we are contacting God, who is Spirit. Thus, we must have a heart that is true and sincere toward God and a spirit that is quiet and open to Him.

In this way, we may be reading the Bible, but inwardly we are actually contacting God Himself. This is the attitude we should have when reading the Bible.

Receiving the Life Supply

We should also have an attitude of coming to receive the life supply. We should never come to the Bible to seek knowledge or study facts. This can be compared to studying the rice, meat, and vegetables on the table instead of eating them so that we can be nourished and supplied. The Bible is a treasure store of the spiritual bread of life. Thus, we should always have the attitude of taking the bread of life from this treasure store for our supply. This is not merely a matter of understanding or comprehending with our mind; it is a matter of receiving the life supply from the Bible with our spirit. This point must be emphasized. We must change our concept. We should not say in our heart, "I come to the Bible in order to study it." The proper attitude is to regard the Bible as a treasure store of the bread of life from which we draw the bread of life and are supplied. We read the Bible in order to obtain the life supply.

Receiving Enlightenment

We should also have an attitude of coming to receive enlightenment and not to study the truth. To study the truth is one attitude, and to receive enlightenment is another. In studying the truth we need only our mind, but to receive enlightenment, we need our heart and our spirit. We need to come before God and say, "I want to touch the light in Your Word. My heart and my spirit are open to You. Lord, enlighten me through Your Word. As I read, grant me not only the understanding, but even more, shine Your light through Your Spirit on the letters. Enlighten me concerning Your heart's desire and expose my true condition. I do not want merely to comprehend, but even more I want to see. I want enlightenment and revelation."

We should also learn to pray when we read the Bible. We should spontaneously have a prayer deep within us, saying, "Lord, I come to Your Word to contact You, not merely to read. Cause my heart to incline toward You and my spirit to open to You. Cause me to love You more than knowledge and doctrine. May my inner being be nourished and enlightened by Your Word." We should have this kind of prayer, intention, and attitude.

Those who read the Bible must realize what the Word of God is and have a proper attitude toward the Word of God. Many do not read the Bible properly because they lack this preparation. If we are well prepared with regard to these two points, it will be much easier for us to read the Bible in a proper way. We will immediately be on the proper path to touch life, to come to the light, and to fellowship with God in life and light. In other words, we will contact God, and in Him and through His Word, receive the life supply and the revelation in light. Only then can we gain the real benefit from the Bible. This is not a matter of knowledge or a matter of truth.

A person who obtains nourishment and receives revelation will spontaneously have understanding. However, the nourishment and revelation he receives is above and beyond understanding. We must have such an attitude in reading the Bible. (*Lessons for New Believers*, Lesson 6, pp. 81-83)

References and Further Reading:

1. *Lessons for New Believers*, Lesson 6.
2. *Life-study of Exodus*, Messages 56 and 57.