

# Sunday School Lesson

By Mrs. Bessie Wilbon

## INTRODUCTION

The 119th Psalm is an unusual literary production - one of the most interesting in the book of Psalms. It is not only the longest Psalm, but it has other distinctions, too. It is divided into 22 sections, each of which contains eight verses.

Each of the eight verses of each section begins with the same Hebrew letter, and each section features a different Hebrew letter, progressing from the beginning to the end of the alphabet. Thus, verses 1-8 begin with the letter Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, verses 9-16 begin with Beth, the second letter of the alphabet, etc. Furthermore, almost every one of the verses in the Psalm contains a reference of some sort to God's self-disclosure to man. Some of these are "laws," "ways," "statutes," "testimonies," and "promises."

The memorization of this great Psalm was a favorite task with which children were challenged in the Victorian era. Because of its beautiful reiteration of the value and validity of the Word, committing it to memory would be a rewarding effort to make in our own time.

"How I love your law! I think about it all day long. Your commandment is with me all the time and makes me wiser than my enemies. I understand more than all my teachers, because I meditate on your instructions. I have greater wisdom than all men, because I obey your commands," Psalms 119:97-100.

Most of us know people who think of God's way as one continual "no" to all joy and exuberance of life. They picture Biblical devotion as a group of long-faced dour individuals sitting around and frowning at every move happy children may be making. How different the attitude of the Psalmist! He sounds here the note of genuine religious experience and convictions. In so doing, he makes it plain that the truths of God are not to be regarded as burdens or straitjackets within which all the freedom of human movement is confined and constricted.

As in so many incidents and circumstances of life, the attitude we have as we approach them determines their usefulness to us and our use to them.

The psalmist is not speaking in an arrogant manner. He is speaking of those whose teaching does not include the principles of God's law. Because he meditates on God's testimonies, he regards all that his teachers say on the basis of what he believes, and knows, to be certainties of God for life. The truths his teachers utter are confirmed or underscored by many general realities he already has discerned and knows. In cases where they conflict he has a strong foundation of faith that stands serene and secure amid temporary intellectual "fashions." Thus Paul urges Christians not to be "blown here and there by every wind of teaching," (Ephesians 4:14).

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of who, thou hast learned them. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," (2 Timothy 3:14-16).

The passages from Psalm 119 and 2 Timothy illustrate the fact that the Word of God is a source of truth for the guidance of our lives. It brings us wisdom and expands our horizons. It promotes steadiness of life and clarity of vision. It makes us aware of opportunities for service and also of whole areas of blessing for which we gladly express our gratitude to God. We come to take great pleasure in learning of His truth and of His love. Above all, we come to know the Living Word, our Lord Jesus. He knows our joys and sorrows, our friendships and fellowships, and also, alas, the sweat of our toil and the scars of our wounds.

We seek to meditate on this Word in order to let its truths soak into our souls and its examples and commands to challenge our lives. This is a far cry from that type of meditation that is mainly a self-hypnosis induced by concentrating constantly on a single word or phrase. Such a repetitive trance-inducing procedure seeks to deny or shut out or transcend in some way the sensory world. By contrast, meditation on God's Word enlivens our minds and spirits through careful consideration of diversified truth to challenge and encourage us to live out that truth in our daily lives.

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," (2 Timothy 3:17).

There has been some discussion as to whether a man of God here means anyone who is in Christ, or a man set apart for some special service as Timothy was. In either case, the scriptures accomplish the same purpose. Perfect, when applied to a person, means he is mature, fully grown, complete. One can find an adequate knowledge of God's will only here, in this inspired Word. One may learn much through general study as to how it is relevant, or is to be applied or utilized - but the revealed reality that is to be dealt with is discovered only here. All good works - the purpose and end of all the revelation is not just that one may think good thoughts or possess good intentions, but that one may accomplish good deeds.

The things that happened in the Bible are to be taught and caught so that things will happen for God outside the Bible in our minds, homes, and total lives.



Nathaniel and Carolyn Gaskin of 3509 Jefferson Davis, recently celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary during a party attended by close friends and family. The party was a surprise for Mr. Gaskin. Mrs. Gaskin had invited special people who have known the couple through their 30-year marriage. One guest was Mrs. Janie Gordon, Carolyn Gaskin's sister, who had stood in as a witness during the Gaskins' wedding in 1954. Mrs. Gaskin recalls how she met her husband at one of his friend's home and since the marriage, she tells, "He's always been a good husband, father and provider, I thank God for my husband and children," she added. The Gaskins have six children including Nadine Gaskin, Michael Gaskin, married to Janice, Angela Gaskin, Yalerie Harris, married to William Harris, and Melvin Gaskin. Their four grandchildren are DeVaki and LaVita Harris and LaKenya and LeMichael Gaskin. The family attends Salem Baptist Church. Mrs. Gaskin proudly announced, "I'm looking forward to 30 more years."

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