

A photograph of a stone church building with a large Gothic-style window and a cross on the roof. In the foreground, there are branches of a tree with white and pink blossoms.

Weekly Newsletter: 5th December 2023

Reflection: How to Get Over Your Fear of Psalm 119

By Joe Barnard

Psalm 119 is a bit like a Munro on the Isle of Skye. Any Christian can look from a distance and recognise the beauty and majesty of the Psalm. However, when we actually try to read the Psalm, or appropriate its sentiment, we often wear out quickly and end up giving up. If we actually make it all of the way through the Psalm, we feel fatigued at the end, having trodden one ridge after another without taking in much of what we have passed.

Yet, length and repetition are not the only difficulties that we encounter as we read the longest chapter in the Bible. There is also the challenge of knowing what to do with the Psalmist's intense passion for laws, statutes, precepts, and commands. Very few of us relish the seasons of our Bible reading plans when we are led into the wilderness of Leviticus or Deuteronomy. We cannot sincerely say that "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies as much as in all riches" (Ps. 119:14). Although we can appreciate the personal devotion of the Psalmist to God, this intimate love often appears tediously bundled with an appetite for laws and commands that – if we are honest – not many of us share.

What should we do with such struggles? How can we imbibe the spiritual passion of Psalm 119 without our joy feeling somewhat suffocated by the rigidity and formalism of a relationship defined by law?

The Power of Seeing Christ as Mediator

The shift between the old and new covenants is a shift of mediation. Whereas under the Old Covenant, the people of God had Sinai standing between God and them, under the New Covenant we now have Christ in the middle. No longer is our relationship with God depicted by tablets of law; rather, we now know God and relate to Him in and through the person of His Son. Jesus himself is our prophet, priest, and king. All of our devotion to God now has Christ in view. Every command, as it were, is now a command from the mouth of Jesus. To obey God is to obey Christ. In each step of faithful obedience, we serve the one who served us. Our king and lawgiver is also our redeemer and high priest.

This covenantal shift is significant in terms of transposing the spirituality of Psalm 119. As we read the Psalm, we need to take all of the devotion that an Israelite would have directed toward the Torah and redirect it toward the person of Christ. We still live under authority just as they did. There is no such thing as "autonomy" or "independence" in our relationship with God. Yet, our submission is not focused on a set of rules, but rather on a living Saviour. Even the commandments now lead us to the pierced feet of our commander.

We don't just worship the God who redeemed us from Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; we worship a God who redeemed us from Hell with arms outstretched on a cross and hands fixed by nails.

Reading Psalm 119 with Christ in View

Now, in my experience, Psalm 119 takes on fresh beauty and life when we begin to read the Psalm, not just as a script of general devotion to God, but as a script of particular devotion to Christ. The way to do this is by inserting the name of Christ each time we read of testimonies, of laws, or of statutes. In others words, don't let the law of God be the primary object in sight as the Psalm is read. Let each mention of the law lead you to the mediator of the new covenant, Jesus himself.

Here is a sample of what I mean. Imagine reading Psalm 119 in the following way:

Blessed are the undefiled in the way [of Christ],
Who walk in the law of the LORD!
Blessed are those who keep the testimonies [of Jesus],
Who seek [the Lord Jesus Christ] with the whole heart!...
[Jesus] You have commanded us
To keep Your precepts diligently.
Oh, that my ways were directed to keep your statutes!

The power of this method of reading the Psalm is that, rather than the emphasis on law distracting us from Christ, the emphasis on law now leads us back to Christ. We are reminded that, if Christ is king, we are indeed under his authority and owe him obedience. Yet, all of such submission and obedience is aimed toward the one who shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Psalm 119, in effect, becomes a love poem to Christ. We don't just rejoice in the law of God as distinct from Jesus; we rejoice in the law of God as an opportunity to show love and gratitude to Jesus.

Do you struggle to maintain a sense of close and intimate communion with Christ? If so, try reading Psalm 119 – not as an expression of love for the law of God – but as an expression of love for the Son of God. You may find that familiar words take on a whole new world of meaning. You might just discover that, rather than looking at the Psalm as if it were a beautiful but intimidating mountain in the distance, you feel re-inspired to go out and experience its lofty peaks of devotion yourself.

Baby Moore is here!



We are rejoicing with Andrew and Shelby at the safe arrival of their daughter early on Saturday morning.

Her name is still to be confirmed and she weighed 7.5lbs. Mum and baby are doing well and we're giving thanks for this precious gift!

Prayer Meeting this week

Just to highlight that our prayer meeting on Wednesday will be in person in the church at 7pm. Hard copies of the prayer bulletin will be provided.

Plans for the Christmas Season

Here are the plans for over the Christmas season:

- **Monday 11th December** – last Baby and Toddlers and Warm Space of the term.
- **Tuesday 12th December** - Carols by Candlelight from 6.30 to 7.15pm. Please come along, wrap up warm and bring a torch with you if you can!
- **Sunday 17th December**
 - Worship Service at 10.30am with a Christmas message from the Sunday Club
 - Baby and Toddler Nativity at 3pm. Everyone welcome!
 - Carol Service at 6pm
- **Sunday 24th December** – Worship service at 10.30am (no Home Groups)
- **Wednesday 27th December** – Prayer meeting (on Zoom) at 7pm
- **Sunday 31st December** – Worship service at 10.30am (no evening service)



Christmas Appeal 2023

The Christmas Appeal will run for the month of December and the four projects that we are supporting this year are –

- **Tim Rawlinson and the Tranent Church Plant**
- **Kilmallie Free Church (where Euan Dodds is the Minister) to support their Minister in Training**
- **Scripture Union Scotland**
- **Tearfund for their Middle East Emergency Appeal**

We'll hear more about each of these projects during our morning services. The elders decided that the funds would be allocated with the Tranent Church Plant and the Kilmallie Minister in Training receiving 30% each. Scripture Union and Tearfund will receive 20% each.

Giving towards the appeal can be made by bank transfer to the church account <https://holyroodevangelical.org/giving/> (using the reference 'Christmas Appeal') or can be placed in an envelope marked 'Christmas Appeal' in the offering box. Thank you!

Offerings to Holyrood Evangelical Church

By Nick Archer

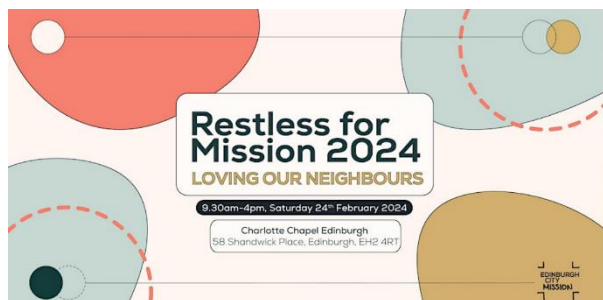
One of my many Christian heroes is Oliver Cromwell who before the Battle of Dunbar in 1650 told his troops "Trust in God and keep your powder dry" (gunpowder attracts moisture very easily). When it comes to our giving to the work of the church it is only right for us to trust God for the finances but also to give most efficiently and generously.

Please remember that if you pay UK tax on income, be it salary or pension, then the charity that you give to can reclaim the tax at a rate that is 25% of your gift. The charity will need you to complete a gift aid form. If you are a higher tax payer then it would be advantageous to give to charity via your Payroll through a scheme called GAYE. Most companies offer this scheme to their employees. An explanation is given [here](#) and hopefully explains things relatively simply. If you do decide to give to HEC via the GAYE scheme, please let me know as the church will not be able to claim tax back on your gifts as the gifts have been deducted from your pay before being taxed. Many thanks and please speak to me if you have any questions.

Women's Discipleship

We're meeting this Thursday morning from 10.30 – 11.30am in the church for our last Ladies' Bible Study of the term. Come along if you can!

Edinburgh City Mission – Restless for Mission 2024



Restless for Mission is the Edinburgh City Mission annual conference where they encourage and empower the church in Edinburgh to do mission! This year the theme is 'Loving Our Neighbours' and Alan and Diane McWilliam are the keynote speakers. The conference will take place in Charlotte Chapel on **Saturday 24th February** from 9.30am to 4pm and for tickets go [here](#).

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info:

- Monday:
 - Baby & Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
 - Warm Space 12noon – 3pm
- Tuesday: Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm in person
- Thursday:
 - Women's Discipleship 10.30-11.30am in the church
 - Session Meeting at 7pm in person
- Friday: Holyrood Youth – The Hudson Taylor Challenge from 1.15-2pm on Zoom. Last one!
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Choir practice after the morning service – all welcome!
 - Home Groups



www.holyroodevangelical.org

Incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Scottish Charity Number SCO44820