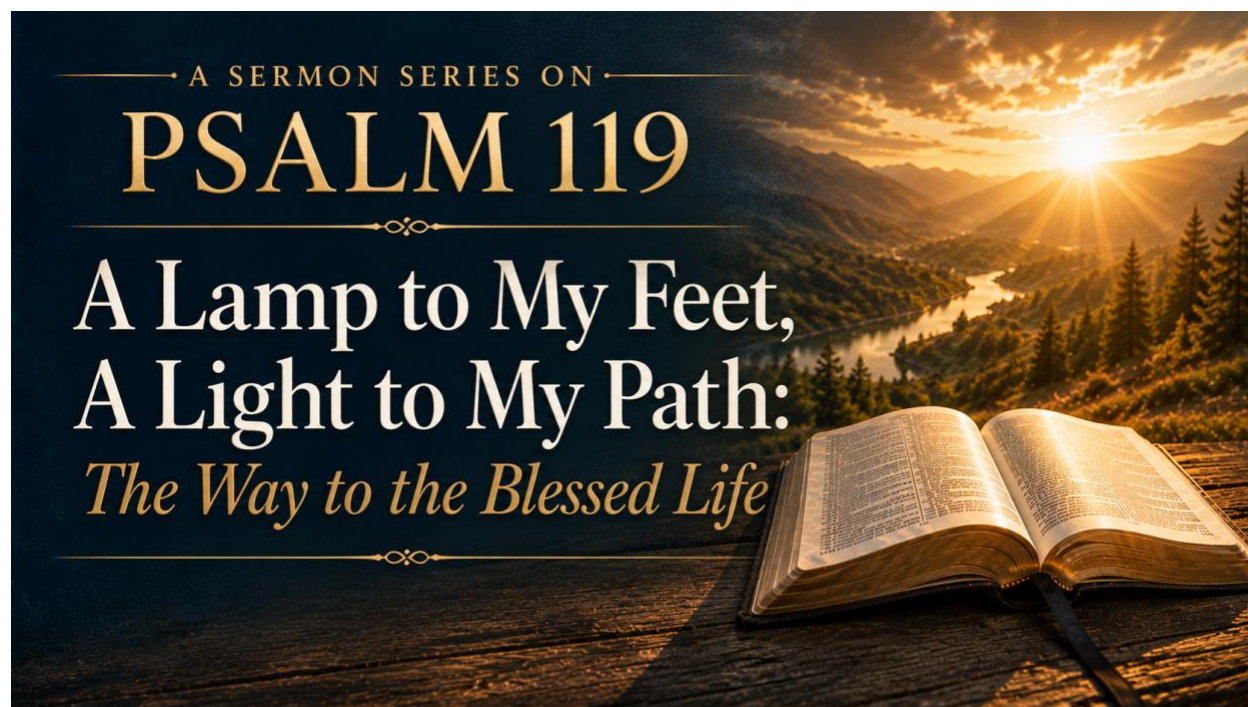




The Lord Is My Portion

Psalm 119:57–64

(Heth)

Intro: One thing I have noticed about Psalm 119 is that each stanza often has an **internal narrative**. What do I mean? Well, the psalmist isn't merely making theological, impractical observations. He's taking us with him on a pilgrimage to the blessed life. In this case, *Heth* feels almost like a testimony. The psalmist begins by telling us what he has discovered (“*The LORD is my portion*”), then shows us what that discovery has done in his life, then where it has led him, to see God in everything. What a journey.

The Big Idea: When the Lord becomes our greatest treasure, He progressively transforms every area of our lives. He –

- captures our hearts,
- redirects our steps,
- sustains us through life's trials, and
- enlarges our vision until, seeing Him in all things, we long to know Him more.

In other words, this stanza reflects the “*fear of the Lord*” as the “*beginning of wisdom*” Solomon talked about in Proverbs 1:7.

Introduction Every life is organized around a supreme treasure.

- For some it is comfort.
- For some it is marriage or family.

- For some people it is education.
- For some people it is comfort or security.
- For some people it is reputation.
- For some it is financial success.
- For some it is employment status.

Whatever occupies that central place in our lives becomes the lens through which we interpret everything else.

That is why Jesus said, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 16:21).

This means that Psalm 119:57 asks perhaps the greatest diagnostic question in Scripture. *“What is your portion?”*

In Israel, a person’s “portion” was his inheritance, his security, his future, and his wealth. It was what he counted on most of all.

The psalmist says something astonishing. *“The LORD is my portion.”* That one confession is engine that drives every verse that follows in this section.

IMP: This also means – and this is important - that what follows is **not** a list of spiritual disciplines. This is the story of what happens when God Himself becomes enough.

It all begins with...

First: A New Treasure Changes Our Hearts (vv. 57–58)

- a) Everything begins with affection.

Basically, you are what you love (and you know that).

Notice that the psalmist doesn’t begin with obedience. This is because Christianity is a relationship of the heart and obedience is simply, yet profoundly, the evidence of that transformed heart.

This is why he begins with delight - *“The LORD is my portion”* (1a)

- b) Also, this is Levitical language.

The Levites, the priests of Israel did not receive any tribal inheritance when they entered the Promised Land. This is because God said, *“I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel”* (Numbers 18:20).

Here, the psalmist adopts that language for himself. He is saying, *“I have discovered that possessing God is greater than possessing anything God could give.”*

c) That immediately reshapes his interests -

Overwhelmed with love, the psalmist promises – *“to keep your words” – 57b.*

Again, notice the order. God is not his portion because he obeys. He obeys because God has become his portion.

This is one of the great differences between religion and the gospel.

- Religion says, *“Obey so that God might become yours.”*
- The gospel says, *“God has given Himself to you in grace; so delight in Him and walk with Him.”*

After 11 chapters of listing the benefits of knowing God, Paul writes, *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [reasonable] worship [lean toward] (Romans 12:1).*

God should be the (super) natural inclination of your heart.

In other words, *“This only makes good sense. Anything else is a waste of life.”*

God is the discovered treasure for which everything else is traded (Matt 13:44-46).

d) It also forms your speech- *“I entreat your favor with all my heart” (58a).*

The heart that treasures God wants more of God.

Yet even here the psalmist knows he cannot earn God’s favor and that the Christian life is one of grace. So, he prays, *“Be gracious to me according to your promise” (57b).*

He knows that every step of the Christian life rests upon grace. Christianity begins with, is sustained by and ends with God.

IMP: What you love shapes your interests. You know this is true. You know what you love because of where you spend your time, effort and money. You know what you love because of what you talk about.

Here the psalmist is

- interested in the Bible and
- prayer forms his speech.

In one, God talks to him. In the other, he talks to God.

APP: What about you? How’s your Bible time? How’s your prayer time?

Does the amount of time you invest in either reveal what's at the center your center of your heart? That's an important question. Is God your portion?

Transition: When God becomes your treasure, something remarkable happens. Your heart changes. But God never changes only the heart. A heart change changes the direction of your life. What happens internally become evident.

Second: A New Treasure Redirects Our Steps (vv. 59–60)

Verse 59 is one of the great turning-point verses in Scripture. *“When I think on my ways...”* Literally, *“I considered my paths.”*

The psalmist pauses long enough to evaluate his life. Is God his portion? Is he on the path to the blessed life or not? Most people never do this.

- We are busy.
- We are too distracted.
- We are too afraid.

The psalmist actually stops and asks, *“Where am I actually headed? If I keep going where I’m going, where will I be? What kind of person am I becoming?”*

Those can be frightening questions and it's the reason we don't reflect on them. But when the psalmist sees a discrepancy, he writes, *“I turn my feet” 59b)*

And notice the measuring stick for the answer to this question (this repentance). He turns his feel *“to your testimonies” (59)*. Why? Because from the very beginning, the psalmist has told us that knowing and obey God's rule leads to the blessed life.

So, wherever in his life, he finds that he has stepped off the path of following God, he repents.

- Repentance is not primarily emotional.
- It is directional. It is a change of course that is not measured by
 - Public opinion.
 - Social media.
 - Personal happiness.

Oh no. His life is measured by God's Word.

Then comes perhaps the strongest expression in the stanza - *“I hasten and do not delay” (60a)*. Think about that. It's like the psalmist has walked both sides of the track and knows which one is sane.

And...there is an urgency here. He does not negotiate with sin. He does not postpone obedience. He knows delayed obedience is disobedience and sin will deceive him.

ILL: One of the pieces of evidence that God truly has become our treasure is that we stop making excuses for disobedience. We simply turn and we turn to God.

Transition But every believer knows repentance is easier on Sunday morning than on Tuesday afternoon. Eventually obedience collides with reality. And that is exactly where the psalmist takes us next.

Third: A New Direction Is Proven in the Real World (vv. 61–63)

Now the scenery changes. The quiet place of reflection gives way to the battlefield of daily life. Sunday turns into Monday and the opposition appears.

He writes, *“The cords of the wicked ensnare me” – (61).*

This is just another way of saying that life is complicated.

- Temptation intensifies.
- Opposition comes.
- Pressure mounts.
- Life becomes real.

And decisions made at church, or at home, are challenged by the workplace, by school, by friendships, by family, etc.

But something has fundamentally changed and it proves itself in those moments.

What has changed? *“I do not forget your law” (61b).* The circumstances may change. They always do. But his allegiance has not.

Then comes one of the most beautiful pictures in the stanza.

This is true for the psalmist even in the darkest moments. - *“At midnight I rise to praise you” (62a).*

Midnight represents those moments when life feels darkest.

- It may be physical suffering.
- It may be mental anxiety.
- It may be loneliness.

Whatever it is, it has stolen the psalmist’s sleep. (What steals yours? And what do you do when you’re awake in the middle of the night?)

- Notice what he does not do. He does not complain.
- Notice what he does not do. He doesn’t seek secular answers.
- Notice what he does. He praises.

It would be easy at this point to slip back into that old mindset, into the routine of “*Woe is me,*” or complaining or justifying the way he feels. Or of finding the kind of distractions that will offer him temporary relief.

Oh no. The psalmist’s life has changed and midnight proves it.

Not because life is easy but “*because of your righteous rules*” (62).

APP: When you can’t sleep, what walks you around the house? What dominates your thinking? Perhaps Scripture and prayer are the answer to sleepless nights.

Now, two things end this section:

- 1 – Other people
- 2 – The Lord’s love

Here is the first. What has made this change? Well, it’s other people – “*I am a companion of all who fear you*” (63).

IMP: You are not in this alone. Don’t be.

- Let people help you.
- Help other people.

The three most prevalent NT images for the church are:

- A bride (needs a groom)
- A body (needs limbs)
- A building (needs parts)

Ephesians 4:15b-16 – “*we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...*”

How do we do this?

“*...from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*”

Everyone needs everyone else: children, youth, singles, couples, seniors...

APP: It’s a biblical reality: Your friends will make you or break you.

ILL: Several weeks ago, Jeff and Shane highlighted our *biblical counseling* ministry. That’s one way to exercise this verse. Another is *CGs*. Another is *service*. Another is *getting together with people*. There are so many ways to join with others who are equally committed to God and struggling to stay on the path to the blessed life.

But you know that God never intended us to persevere alone. The man whose treasure has changed discovers his relationships changing too. His closest companions are now those who love the same Lord. His identity has reshaped his most meaningful friendships.

Transition: The remarkable thing is that the farther this journey progresses, the larger the psalmist's vision becomes. He began with his own heart. Now he sees something much bigger.

Fourth: A New Vision Produces a Lifelong Hunger for God (v. 64)

The stanza opens with one man saying, *"The LORD is my portion."*

It closes with that same man looking across the whole world and saying, *"The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love" (64).*

What happened? His vision expanded. The more he walked with God... the more he saw God everywhere. His steadfast love is woven throughout creation. His covenant faithfulness surrounds His people. His mercy is evident on every side. God is no longer on his periphery. He's at the center.

Psalm 24:1 - The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof...

You might want to say 'ironically,' but it's really, 'naturally,' the more he learns about God, the more aware he becomes of how much remains to learn and the more he wants to know.

So, he ends this section with a dependence on God and not confidence in himself, writing, *"Teach me your statutes" (64).*

He's saying, *"This is good. This is blessed. I want more!"*

That may be the greatest mark of maturity in the entire stanza.

- Spiritual children often think they know enough.
- Mature saints never do.
- The closer they draw to God... the more they long to know Him.

IMP: Dear Christian friend, arrogance

- will kill your marriage.
- It will kill your employment.
- It will kill your friendships.
- It will kill your spiritual life.

And there is nothing in life to be arrogant about. All of life is God's grace.

And that is where this stanza ends: not with the psalmist arriving anywhere but longing for more. After all, ***how can you ever get enough of forever?***

Fifth: And This Is Where the Gospel Meets Us

- a) The Father has always intended His people to find their inheritance in Him alone.

Yet every one of us has sought our portion elsewhere. We have treasured gifts more than the Giver and created things more than the Creator.

- b) Jesus is the only One who could truly say, “*The LORD is my portion,*” without reservation.

He delighted perfectly in His Father’s will, turned neither to the right nor the left, obeyed without delay, worshiped in the darkest night, and remained faithful even when surrounded by the cords of wickedness.

At the cross, He willingly surrendered every earthly possession and was wholly forsaken so that we might receive an inheritance that can never perish.

Now the Holy Spirit takes what Christ has accomplished and makes it real in us.

- He loosens our grip on lesser treasures and teaches us to delight in the Lord.
- He
 - convicts us when our feet wander,
 - gives us strength to persevere in suffering,
 - draws us into fellowship with God’s people, and
 - continually enlarges our vision of God’s steadfast love.

So, the Christian life is not simply trying harder to obey. It is learning, day by day, to treasure the God who has first given Himself to us.

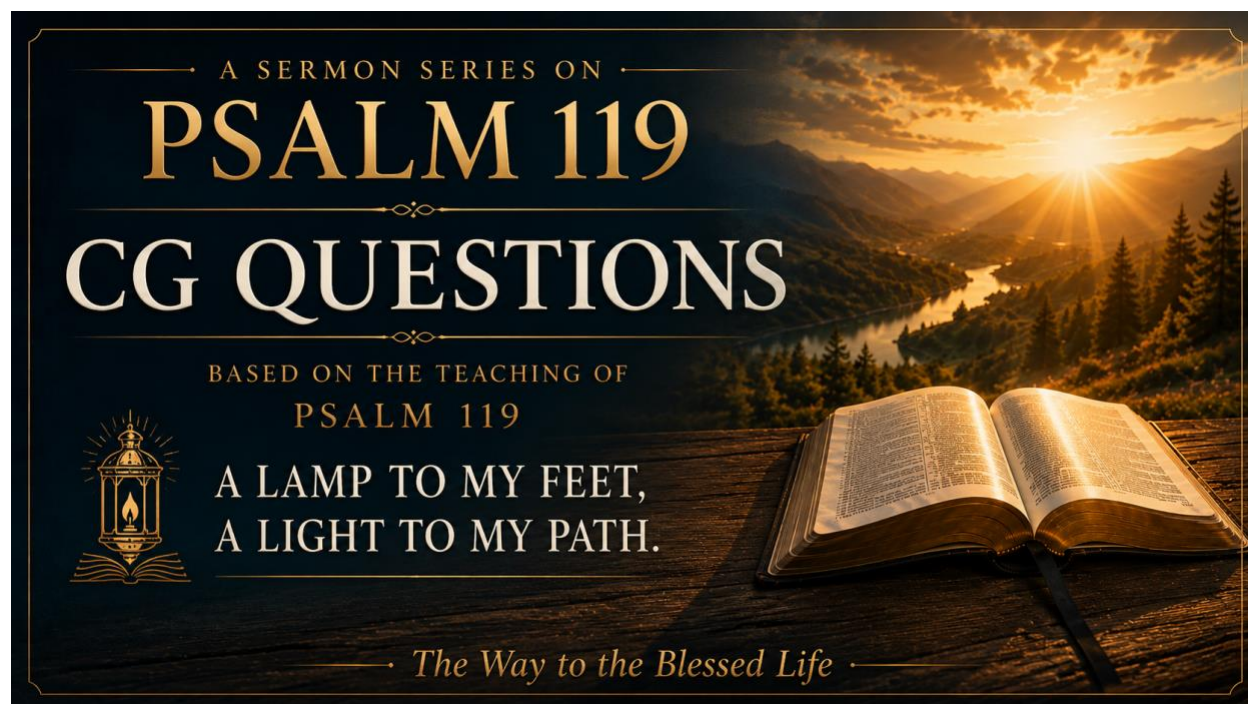
Conclusion: Notice where we have traveled just in this stanza alone. The journey began with a treasure. “*The LORD is my portion.*”

- A changed the heart.
- The changed heart redirected the feet.
- Those redirected feet persevered through hardship.
- Perseverance enlarged the psalmist’ vision.
- And that enlarged vision produced an even greater hunger for God.

That is the Christian life.

- It never begins with behavior.
- It always begins with beholding.

When God becomes our greatest treasure, our “portion,” every other part of life begins to find its proper place.



Friends, in these CG questions I’ve tried to follow the psalmist’s progression in *Heth*. The questions move from what we treasure to our heart to the way our steps fall in line with what we love, to perseverance in trials and then, this all-encompassing view of God and hunger for him. I think they’ll produce a very natural and fruitful Community Group discussion.

Observation
(What does the text say?)

1. What declaration in verse 57 becomes the foundation for everything else the psalmist says and does in this stanza?
2. As you read verses 57-64, what changes do you observe in the psalmist’s heart, actions, and perspective?
3. What specific responses does the psalmist make after he considers his ways in verses 59-60?
4. How does the psalmist respond when he encounters hardship and opposition in verses 61-63?
5. Compare verse 57 with verse 64. How has the psalmist’s vision changed from the beginning of the stanza to the end?

Interpretation
(What does the text mean?)

6. What does the psalmist mean when he says, “*The LORD is my portion*”?
7. Why does the psalmist begin with delight in God before speaking about obedience?
8. What do verses 59-60 teach us about biblical repentance?
9. Why does the psalmist include both suffering (vv. 61-62) and fellowship with God’s people (v. 63) as marks of the life that treasures God?
10. Why does the stanza conclude with the prayer, “*Teach me your statutes*,” rather than with a declaration that the psalmist has arrived spiritually?

Correlation

(How does this passage connect with the rest of Scripture?)

7. God told the Levites, “*I am your portion and your inheritance*” (Numbers 18:20). How does that promise help us understand the psalmist’s declaration in verse 57?
8. Jesus taught, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matthew 6:21). How does Jesus’ teaching explain the progression we see throughout this stanza?
9. Romans 12:1-2 calls believers to present themselves to God because of His mercies. How does Paul’s order of grace followed by obedience reflect the same pattern found in Psalm 119:57-60?
10. The psalmist praises God at midnight despite his trials (v. 62). What other examples in Scripture show God’s people worshiping Him in the midst of suffering, and what do those examples teach us? (Consider Paul the Apostle and Silas in Acts 16.)
11. The sermon concludes by pointing to Jesus as the One who perfectly lived this stanza. Where do you see Jesus fulfilling the movement of this psalm: delighting in His Father, obeying without delay, remaining faithful in suffering, and securing our eternal inheritance?

Application

(How should this passage change my life?)

12. What is most likely functioning as your “portion” or greatest treasure right now? What evidence in your life points to that?
13. Is there an area of your life where you need to “turn your feet” back toward God’s Word? What would repentance look like this week?
14. When you experience discouragement, anxiety, or sleepless nights, what usually occupies your thoughts? How might this passage reshape your response?
15. Who are the believers God has placed in your life to help you persevere? How can you intentionally deepen those relationships this week?
16. Looking at the entire journey of this stanza, where do you most see yourself today: discovering God as your treasure, redirecting your steps, persevering through trials, or longing to know Him more? What is one step of faith God is calling you to take this week?