

Psalm 119:113-120

The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters. Psalm 119 has twenty-two sections, one for each letter. Each section has eight lines. All eight lines begin with the same Hebrew letter. Verses 113-120 begin with “samek,” the fifteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet (“s” sound.) This pattern of writing is called an alphabetical acrostic. English translations do not reflect the pattern.

TWO SIDES

¹¹³ *I hate the double-minded; but I love Your law.*

¹¹⁴ *You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your Word.*

¹¹⁵ *Depart from me, you evildoers; for I will keep the commandments of my God!*

¹¹⁶ *Uphold me according to Your Word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.*

¹¹⁷ *Hold me up, and I shall be safe; and I shall observe Your statutes continually.*

¹¹⁸ *You reject all those who stray from Your statutes; for their deceit is falsehood.*

¹¹⁹ *You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love Your testimonies.*

¹²⁰ *My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments.*

In this world everything has front and back. Even a Möbius strip, that has only one “side,” has, at any one point, front and back. Even in the metaphysical realm (beyond-physical), there are two sides: +10 and -10. Truth and Lie. In a similar vein our text for this morning presents Two Sides.

Psalm 119 is the longest of the 150 Psalms. It has 176 verses. It is a song, or poem, of personal devotion to the Lord, centering in God’s Message—God’s “Word.” We commonly think of God’s “Word” as being the Bible, a book. But we do talk about the “latest word” from the doctor, from the office, or from Washington DC. We don’t mean a book. God’s “Word” is His Message to us, with or without a book. We thank God that He has given us His “message,” decrees, promises, statutes, in written form—the Bible. He Himself did not write it; He used men to do so. “Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” (2 Timothy 3:16). This Message of God has two sides. There are rules and regulations for our conduct—His “laws”—summarized in The Ten Commandments. There are also His promises of rescue for every law-breaker, sinner. It is the Gospel—the Good News of Jesus—summarized: “He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation [*payment of peace*] for our sins” (1 John 4:10). There are Two Sides in God’s Message: 1) Condemnation because of our sin, 2) Pardon because of our Savior.

The Psalm-writer says: ¹¹³ *I hate the double-minded. But I love Your law.* What do you think of double-minded people? One day they are your best friends, the next they don’t bother to say Hi. When they are with you, they hold to the values, morals, and principles on which you stand; but when with others, they readily take the opposite side and make you look foolish. One day they speak and act with faith in Christ the Savior, the next day they deny His truths. Double-minded. Not good. Does God ever see that in you? At church you speak His name in honor, love, and respect; but away from church you use His name to curse people, to “swear by God” that your words are true—though they are stretching the truth; to sound “cool” like one of the guys; or not to sound like a “church girl.” Do you always stand up for this congregation and its Bible confession and teachings, or do you turn around and say, “It doesn’t matter what one believes or teaches; there is no Total Truth”? Double-minded people are irksome to us and to God! The psalm-writer says, *I hate* [I detest] *the double-minded, but I love Your law*; that is, Your Truth, Your Message. *Law*, as used here, is literally Your “*Torah*.” The words of the “Torah” were God’s words of instruction—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—given to Moses. We love God’s Torah also, plus all His Words given to the other prophets and the apostles. His Word, His Message, shows us that we fail, but that we are rescued by Jesus from our deserved condemnation.

¹¹⁴ *You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your Word.*

If one is being pursued by the enemy or an evil-minded man, whether in war or on the street, or be it by a beast in the woods, prairie or pasture (your own cow?)—what is better than a place to hide?! Precious security! Whether a fortress of walls that cannot be scaled, or a simple veil to camouflage your hiding place! The Lord is your hiding

place from the onslaughts of evil, from Satan, and from your own record of sin. The Lord is your “shield.” The Lord protects you with His love and power. Talk about a “force field”! You can say, “Depart from me you evil doers”—Satan himself! *I hope in Your Word.* God has given His Word. He does not go back on His word. (He is not double-minded.) “Hope” can be simply a fond wish—“I hope I get a fiddle for my birthday.” But “hope” can also express sure confidence. “I have hope to make it across the lake, because I have done it many times before.” Our trust in God is our sure hope! *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1).

¹¹⁵ *Depart from me, you evildoers; for I will keep the commandments of my God!* When others want to back you down, when others want you to dishonor your God, your sinful fear and weakness would lead you to give in; but stand firm in the Lord, your hiding place and shield! See what He has done for you in His Son! Rescued you from yourself! Do not turn away from Him. Gladly keep His commands.” *I will keep the commandments of my God!* God’s “command” for sinners centers in Jesus: *This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent*” (John 6:29). With trust in Jesus, turn away from sin, no matter how intense its allure. Trusting in Jesus, cling to the Truth of His Message and Word. No “close enough,” but keep His commandments. “Keep” is not just a mechanical obedience, but treasuring, valuing, and holding it secure—a watchman “keeps” a city.

¹¹⁶ *Uphold me according to Your Word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.* We are weak, frail, and apt to “crash and burn—and die forever. But in God’s message, in His Word, there is sure hope: forgiveness, resurrection from death, and life forever in heaven! Live in Him! Live in hope! Do not be ashamed of your sure hope in Him. Beware of, “I will skip hearing His message this Sunday morning, because I have other things to do,” or “My company will not come along.” “Lord, *do not let me be ashamed of my hope.*” He upholds you. Do not “fold” before Him.

¹¹⁷ *Hold me up, and I shall be safe; and I shall observe Your statutes continually.* Instead of failing, falling, and being ashamed of your Savior and God by your words and actions, lean on Him. “Lord, hold me up. I can’t. I’m a weak-kneed sinner.” “Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.” *Hold me up, and I shall be safe.* Hold me up with Your forgiveness; do not cast me away. Then I shall be safe—in a spacious place, with no evil crowding me, no sin, no guilt. Forgiven. Safe.” The word for “safe,” here, is the very word from which the name “Jesus” is derived. Do you remember what the name “Jesus” means? (The devil doesn’t want you to remember this. He just wants you to think that it is only His label—like Joe or Pete. “Jesus” means “He saves!” or “Savior!” When Joseph was planning to end his agreement to marry to Mary, because she was expecting a child which he knew wasn’t his, an angel spoke to Joseph. The angel told him to take Mary as his wife, for the child she was bearing was “conceived by the Holy Spirit.” The angel told him to name the child “Jesus,” “for He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)! Savior—Safe! Sins are forgiven in Him, and life restored in Him. *Hold me up, and I shall be safe* [“Jesus” shall be my Savior]! *I shall observe Your statutes continually.* According to the New Man in Christ, the rescued child of God is never ashamed of Jesus and lives in keeping with His decrees. The New Man strives to keep His words “continually.” There is no, “Well, I can’t be good all the time.” It is the new man’s privilege to serve and obey God.

¹¹⁸ *You reject all those who stray from Your statutes; for their deceit is falsehood.* Those who disregard God’s will and commands are rejected by God. Can you imagine to be rejected by God?! “Get out of here—out of My sight! I will not do one more good thing for you!” Rejectors with all their twisted logic and reasoning are only fooling, deceiving, themselves. Your excuses only fool yourself—“Getting drunk, getting high, is not a problem. Misuse of sex is not a problem. Bad mouthing others is not a problem.” It’s all self-deception!

¹¹⁹ *You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore, I love Your testimonies.* Dross--the impurities that come to the top when refining, silver and gold. What good is dross to the refiner? None! Toss it! The wicked, the rejectors, the despisers of God’s will in Christ, will be tossed! Your New Man of faith in Christ rejoices in having no part with that. The New Man loves the testimonies and message of our Savior God!

¹²⁰ *My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments.* The old Adam fears the wrath of God. Without Jesus, the sinner quakes in his boots—trembling before God’s unyielding justice. *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:2-10).* Remember, remember, remember! Yet, on the other side, turn to Jesus. God is kind and merciful in Christ! ¹¹⁷ *Hold me up, and I shall be safe; and I shall observe Your statutes continually.* Two sides

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---