

Psalm 119

Earlier this morning Joetta read the 119th Psalm. It's the longest Psalm, and longest chapter in the Bible, with 176 verses. Bible scholars do not know who wrote it, however, according to the traditions in the Eastern Orthodox church, the Psalm was written by King David, to teach his young son, Solomon, the Hebrew alphabet. If you happen to have a New International Version Bible, you'll notice throughout the Psalm that it has subheadings with Hebrew letters. The first line of each verse under the subheading starts with that particular letter in the Hebrew language.

The Bible is a really neat book! I think hearing how people share God's word in the world today is exciting! I'm always happy to hear the great things our Shelby County Gideons are doing, and what the Gideon International is doing, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, and how people's lives are being changed – they're literally being saved! If you have a Bible, or Bible app handy, turn with me to 2 Timothy 3:10-17. I'm reading from the New Revised Standard Version this morning. **Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17.**

Paul Writes to Timothy

The letters to Timothy were written by Paul. In them, we find that Paul is encouraging the young man to keep the faith. To be persistent. You see, while Timothy was in Ephesus, and Paul was traveling between Ephesus and Rome, some leaders in the local church had caused an uproar, and had caused Timothy great disappointment. Paul tells Timothy, "You have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my sufferings, the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them," (2 Tim. 3:10-11). In other words, "You know how I've lived, and what I've been through."

Paul goes on. "Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived," (verses 12-13). Welcome to the club, Timothy. Friends, we may not like to hear this – but this applies to us today as well. If we strive to live godly lives in Jesus Christ, we can expect persecution. As Christians, we don't often think about being persecuted for our faith in America, but it has happened before. In fact, it happened here in Ohio, prior to statehood.

Gnadenhutten Massacre

Back in the 1780's there was a band of Native Americans in what's now eastern Ohio who listened to Moravian missionaries, and accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The Moravians were a German group who were committed to non-violence, and had instilled this way of life into a group from the Delaware tribe. So when the Pennsylvanian militia rode into Gnadenhutten, Ohio, these Christian Native

Americans – all 96 of them – were brutally murdered. They were martyred for their faith. I've heard people make comments about Jesus whisking us out of here before things get real bad. I'd like to know what makes people who say those sorts of things think that they are more deserving of escaping persecution than the martyrs who laid their lives down for their faith in Christ throughout the ages. Friends, don't ever think that we won't be persecuted – it's happened before. The problem is people who don't study history are bound to repeat it.

Notice what Paul tells Timothy next. He writes, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have known sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus," (verses 14-15). In some versions, rather than saying "sacred writings," in verse 15, they say, "Holy Scriptures," so that the verse reads, "and how from childhood (or infancy) you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." At the time Paul was writing this, the Holy Scriptures would have been the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament. Apparently Timothy had studied them extensively over the course of his childhood.

Scripture is God-breathed

Paul closes the chapter by saying, "all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work," (verses 16-17). The New International Version reads, "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." The Bible is a remarkable book. But for it to be useful to us, we have to be willing to open it. To read it. To study it. To think about what it is that Almighty God is speaking to us through it.

And then, to take what He's telling us, which in nearly every case is the same message over and over again, that we ought to love Him and love others, and actually put it into practice. And that's precisely what the Gideons do. They shine the light of Christ into the dark places of the world. They demonstrate God's love to others by putting His word into the hands of people who are as desperately in need of His grace as we are. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.