

My Portion

Psalm 119:57-64
Halifax: March 2, 2008

Introduction:

Every few weeks, as most of you know, I break from our regular sermon series to introduce you to a new Psalm of Focus—

- The Psalm of Focus is a Psalm I select for us to sing for several weeks that relates to the theme of our morning sermon series.
- As our present series is in Ephesians,
 - and as we have just come up to verse 17 of chapter 4 where we are exhorted to put off our old way of living and put on God's way,
 - I have selected a portion from Psalm 119 that corresponds to this.

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible, but it is divided into 22 sections of eight verses each.

- Each section corresponds to a letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and all eight verses begin with that letter...
 - For example,
 - Verses 1-8 all begin with the *aleph* which is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet.
 - Verses 9-16 all begin with *beth*, which is the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet.
 - And the section I have selected for our Psalm of Focus is the *kheth* section, which is found in verses 57-64.
 - In this section, all eight verses begin with *kheth*
 - The first *kheth* word that the Psalmist selected is the word קַלַּח *khay'lek* which means "portion."
 - It has a suffix attached to it that makes it possessive, so in English we get "my portion"
 - I think the word that starts off each section is significant...it has a special importance...
 - We are inclined to ask,
 - "What word did the Psalmist choose to begin the aleph section?"
 - "What word did he choose to begin the kheth section?"

- And in this *kheth* section (vs. 57-64), you essentially find a confession that is true of all those who have the Lord as their portion—their $q\bar{l}x$ *khay'lek*.
- Christian, this is your song!
 - If can't honestly say these things, then it may well be that you have not yet found new life in Jesus Christ.
 - For all those who have truly come to Christ for salvation have God as their God...
 - He is their portion and they are His people.
 - They have been transformed by divine power so that they can honestly sing this song before God as their own.
 - Not that they have fully perfected any of these things,
 - Indeed... this section ends with a prayer that God would teach us His statutes—hardly the prayer of one who has been perfected...
 - It is not a confession of perfection,
 - but a confession that the things confessed here are present and increasing in them by the grace of God.

Let's look at all eight of them... look at them and make them your own.

- First...

I. When the Lord is your portion, you are one who has openly confessed Him as Lord.

- **as your Lord to whom you will submit and obey...**
- Verse 57 says:
 - "I have said that I will keep your words."
- A. This is a commitment that all of you who belong to the Lord have made.
 1. I don't mean that you have said precisely these words, "I will keep your words,"
 - but you have said the equivalent of them...
 - You have confessed with your lips that Jesus is Lord.
 2. God starts out His relationship with us in the same way He has appointed that a man should start out a marriage...
 - a. He enters into a covenant with us in which He openly promises that He will be our God, and asks us to openly promise that we will be His people.

- A covenant is serious business...
 - You go before witnesses to say that you will be true, and you go before God as witness, asking Him to judge you if you don't do what you promised...
 - Sexual relationships are not meant to be casual affairs,
 - they are meant to be between persons who are openly committed to each other as long as they both shall live.
- b. In the scriptures, a person's relationship with God is never a casual relationship that they just kind of slide into either...
- The Lord calls His people to officially enter into a covenant in which mutual promises are exchanged.
- B. The Lord has always asked this of His people.
1. When He first took Abraham to be His own,
 - He called him to be circumcised to mark him out before the world as His own.
 - By circumcision, Abraham and his descendents were committing themselves to serve God.
 - They openly confessed that the Lord was their portion and that they were His people.
 2. Later, when the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt,
 - He called them into an assembly and had them declare that they would be His people and do what He commanded...
 - It was verbal renewal of the covenant.
 - And again, after the wandering in the wilderness, Moses ordered them to renew the next generation to renew their promise to be God's people.
 - You can find many more covenant renewal services besides these—
 - for example,
 - under Joshua... when they entered the land...
 - under Samuel as their prophet...
 - under David when he became king...
 - under Nehemiah and Ezra when they returned to the land...
 3. In the New Testament, it is the same, only, now that Jesus has been revealed, we confess that He is our Lord.
 - a. Jesus said that those who refused to do this—even if it is because of fear—will not be recognised by Him on the day of Judgement.

- Luke 12:8-9: Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.
 - Many have made such confessions under the pain of death—and they have done this because God is their portion—
 - If human approval was their portion, they would not do it, but because God is their portion, they confess Him
- b. And so it is that the Apostles constantly called for those who believe to come forward and openly confess that they were His disciples...
- even though the Jews were putting them out of the synagogue when they did...
 - which usually meant that they lost their job and all the privileges of citizenship.
- 1) Nevertheless, all who believed were baptised—without exception...
 - except in the case where for some reason they could not be baptised—as with the thief on the cross...
 - but ordinarily, it was done right away—even on a desert road.
 - 2) Paul speaks of confession with the lips as an essential part of a profession of faith when he says,
 - Romans 10:8-10: "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

TRANS> When you sing this Psalm, you are to look back and remember that when God became your portion, you obligated yourself to keep His words...

- How thankful you should be when you look back at your wedding to the Lord!
 - How it ought to stir you up to keep what you have promised!
 - You gave yourself to be the Lord's and He gave Himself to be yours!
 - Here, in this Psalm, you sing of your commitment to Him!
- If you have the Lord as your portion, you have openly promised that you will keep his word.
 - Now let's look at the second thing that is true of you...

II. When the Lord is your portion, you have also sought His mercy.

A. The words of verse 58 are:

- Psalm 119:58: I have entreated your favour with my whole heart. Be merciful to me according to your word.
1. Mercy is that which is sought in this verse from the Lord...
 - a. The Hebrew word translated mercy here is $\gamma\eta : \eta\chi$ which means, “be merciful to me.”
 - The mercy conveyed in this word refers to mercy that is a heartfelt response of one who has something to give to one who is in desperate need...
 - It is mercy given to one who has no claim for gracious treatment!
 - It is what you ask for when you know that you are sinner whom God has every reason to condemn...
 - b. The words, “entreated your favour” are similar...
 - They even indicate the smoothing out of an angry countenance...
 - The phrase connotes pleading with God to turn from His anger and bless us when we know that we ought to be cursed.
 2. And you can see that this is also a desperate cry...
 - to *entreat with the whole heart* is to plead earnestly for this mercy...
 - it is to do it sincerely—
 - it is to put everything you have into it.
 - You don’t really know God or understand what He requires until you have been stripped of your pride and become a beggar for mercy...
 - You do not know Him as your portion until you have seen what was so clearly taught in the Old Testament—that God is holy and we cannot approach Him at all unless He first cleanses us.
 - All the Old Testament rituals continually pointed to this need for cleansing...
 - And those who learned from it were blessed because they were poor in spirit, they mourned, they were meek before God, they hungered and thirsted for righteousness—
 - In short, they cried out to God for mercy.
 - Indeed, anyone who has dealt with the true God, even as He is revealed from creation, already know that he needs this cleansing.
 - It is only because of excessive hardness that the human race does not see this so clearly.
 - Indeed, God must open our eyes by His Spirit—

- He must convince us of sin before we will admit or even see that we are condemned and in desperate need of mercy.
 - But once we do, we cry out for it and God hears us—He becomes our portion—He has mercy on us.
 - Until you do, though you may worship what you call God, you are only worshipping idols...
 - God is only the portion of spiritual beggars.
- B. But how is it that we, once we have seen our wretched condition, ever dare to approach God to ask for this mercy?
1. Ah—the answer is given at the end of the verse—
 - We say, “Have mercy on me **according to your word**”
 - It is because of His promise!
 - We would have no reason to approach Him if it were not that He comes to us with a promise to be gracious...
 - And not only with a promise, but now, for us, with a provision—
 - with a Redeemer who has been openly crucified to atone for our sin,
 - with a Redeemer whose sacrifice has been openly accepted by the Father as the satisfaction for sin!
 2. Brothers and sisters, how glad you should be to have such a gracious God as your portion—
 - A God who loves you so well that He gave His only Son to bear His curse for you...
 - How freely, how joyfully, how boldly, you come to this God when you know Him to be such a merciful God...
 - Until you know Him thus, you will not dare to come to Him—only to idols that you pretend to be Him.

TRANS> So then, we have seen first of all that if you have the Lord as your portion, you have openly submitted to Him, and secondly, that you have besought His mercy...

- Now, thirdly, in verse 59 we are shown:

III. When the Lord is your portion, you have repented—you have turned from your sin.

- The words are:
 - Ps 119:59: “I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies.”

- A. The substance of this verse is turning...or repenting...
1. The word used here is one that speaks of both sides of repentance—turning from what you were doing to what you ought to be doing...
 - Turning the **feet** is a very graphic way of showing that you are still walking, but now in a new direction...
 - You didn't stop, but you turned to go in a new way.
 - Too often people think only of stopping when they think of repentance—but it is not stopping, it is turning.
 2. We are going to run into this in Ephesians quite a lot...
 - a. Paul will speak of lying, but he will not merely tell us to stop lying...
 - He will say:
 - Eph 4:35: Putting away lying, Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.
 - You stop lying in order that you might start telling the truth instead.
 - b. To use another example from Ephesians...
 - Paul will say:
 - “Let Him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands that he may have something to give to those who have need.”
 - You see that it is not enough to just give up your stealing—every thief does that between jobs—
 - but he has not really changed the way God wants until he has learned to work and then to give to those who are in need!
 - The energy that was used for stealing is now to be used for giving.
- B. But this is not something that just happens...
1. You see that the Psalmist says, “I thought about my ways.”
 - You have to do that—
 - You have to look at what you have been doing and you have to think about it... you have to see where you have gone wrong...
 - That is one the things preachers try to get you to do when they preach...
 - That is what you must do when you come to God's word...
 - If you don't personalise it and think about *your* ways, you won't see how you need to change.
 2. This is an ongoing thing...

- None of us have arrived in this life—
 - and the Lord is going to keep showing you things from His Word and you need to keep shining the light of the word on your ways and looking hard at what you are doing...
 - This is really what biblical meditation is about...
 - It is not at all like mystical meditation where you try to empty your mind... not at all...
 - It is where you turn the word over and over in your mind so that you can see what it says about you and apply it.
3. Never forget what we are trying to do, according to Ephesians...
- a. We are trying to walk worthy of our calling...
 - b. The Lord has called us to be His own people—to be His children—to live in His household forever!
 - If you are in His house, He is training you in the ways of His house...
 - He is seeking to shape you into all that He wants you to be as His child...
 - And that means that your sinful ways and attitudes will have to be cut out, and replaced with His ways.
 - You have put off the old man and put on the new, now you must continue to make further refinements.

TRANS> That is the third thing you do when He is your portion...

- The fourth is closely related to this:

IV. When the Lord is your portion, you get on with serving Him.

- That is the main idea of verse 60 which says:
 - Ps 119:60: “I made haste, and did not delay to keep your commandments.”
- A. This is said with good reason...
1. You know how easy it is to put off obedience until a more convenient time...
 - Our flesh is very lethargic—
 - We deceive ourselves, saying,
 - “I want to serve God. I have the very best intentions. I will get around to it soon.”
 - This is very common.
 2. This is also very dangerous.

- The old saying is that the highway to Hell is paved with good intentions...
- There are many who presume that they will get around to repentance and faith in time...
 - They know that they need to confess the Lord, they know that they need to cry out to Him for mercy, they know that they need to repent and start living for Him...
 - but they don't ever get around to it.
- This is a very dangerous presumption,
 - for it may be that the time will come that they have even less inclination than they do now to repent...
 - It may be that they will become so entangled in the world that they will be unable to escape it.

B. Obedience without delay shows that the Lord really is your portion...

1. When something is your portion you are eager to give yourself to it...

- Just look around you...
 - If someone said that soccer was someone's portion and you never saw that person play soccer,
 - you would have to say that the statement was false.
 - "Soccer is not his portion—he never plays soccer."
 - And if the person said he intended to play and meant to play,
 - you still couldn't say that it was his portion until he at last started!

2. But now I want say something about this...

a. Some of you are hearing this and you are surely thinking...

- How often my obedience has been delayed—
 - How many times I have put off something I knew the Lord wanted of me because it was distasteful to me...
 - Does this mean that I do not have the Lord as my portion?

b. Not necessarily...

1) If it is initial repentance that we are talking about—turning to the Lord for salvation—

- If you have not done that, then indeed He is **not** your portion, despite how sincere you may think your intentions are—
- He is not your portion until you get on with following Him.

- 2) However, if you mean that you struggle to put God's commandments into immediate action...
 - but you do go on and follow him at last,
 - then you are like the son in the parable Jesus told who at first did not do his fathers will, but afterward went ahead and did it,
 - which is far better than to be like the son who said he would do his father's will, but never followed through.
 - I don't mean that we should ever be content with sluggish obedience...
 - It is something that needs to change—it is something we need the cleansing power of Jesus' blood to be applied to so that we may forgiven...
 - but it is not necessarily a sign that we are not true disciples of Christ.
- 3) But don't you see how inconsistent it is to be sluggish when God is your portion?
 - When something is your portion, you live for it... you give yourself fully to it...
 - You are eager to obey...
 - You get up early, as Abraham did, to go and do what God has called you to do.

TRANS> But of course it is not enough for you, if God is your portion, to only begin...even if you do it immediately...

- This brings us to our fifth point...

V. When the Lord is your portion, you continue serving Him despite all opposition.

A. This is brought out in verse 61 which says

- Psalm 119:61: The cords of the wicked have bound me, *But* I have not forgotten Your law.
- 1. The wicked want nothing more than to bind the Lord's true disciples...to entangle you so that you will not serve the Lord.
 - They want you to be like the stony ground hearer in the parable of the sower who turned from following Christ because of a little opposition...
 - This is exactly what hypocrites do because the Lord is not their portion...
 - If they do not obtain whatever they were trying to obtain in God's service, they are quickly out of His service...

2. Here are some of the tactics the wicked use to try to make you turn from God's way...
 - a. Sometimes, they try to entice you by showing you the pleasures of sin that you are missing...
 - The seductress described in Proverbs is not ugly—she is beautiful and she tries to catch you with her eyelids...
 - Likewise, false worship is often very beautiful or very appealing to the flesh, but if it is not what God has appointed, then it is idolatrous.
 - b. Sometimes, they ridicule you and try to make you look foolish for serving the Lord...
 - “You mean to tell me you actually believe that God made the world in six days?”
 - “You mean to tell me that you think it is wrong for two people who love each other to have sex, even if they are not married?”
 - c. Sometimes they make up lies about you and call you evil...
 - The believers in the early church were accused of cannibalism and were even called atheists because they did not serve the Roman pantheon.
 - d. Sometimes, they use threats to try to discourage you...
 - In the Old Testament, Jezebel threatened to kill any prophet of the Lord.
 - Likewise, the Jewish leaders in Jesus' day used their ecclesiastical authority to keep people from following the Lord—
 - they threatened to put anyone out of the synagogue who confessed the Jesus was the Messiah.
 - e. And then if all of these fail to dissuade you, they persecute you...
 - They torture you and they even kill the body—

TRANS> These are the cords they use to try to bind you—so that you will stop serving the Lord...

B. But when the Lord is your portion,

1. None of this can stop you—
 - You keep on serving Him.
 - They cannot take away your life and all your goods, but they cannot take away your portion...
2. No matter what they do, you will not forget God's commandments...

- You will not sort of set aside those things that draw the most opposition or the most ridicule...
 - You will remember them all!

- a. It is often the case that the Church will wrongly emphasise those commandments that are fashionable...
 - 1) For example, today it is fashionable to oppose violence and oppression, but it is not fashionable to oppose immorality and blasphemy...
 - This doesn't mean that we should accept violence and oppression,
 - but it means we have to speak all the more loudly against immorality and blasphemy.

 - 2) As another example...
 - Today it is fashionable to talk about the love of God but not about the justice and wrath of God
 - (just look at how different uninspired hymns of man are compared to the Psalms in this regard)...

 - This doesn't mean that we stop talking about the love of God,
 - but it means that we speak all the more loudly about the justice and wrath of God...
 - God is our portion and we will not let them take anything from our portion—
 - we will have all of Him as He is revealed—
 - they cannot take His wrath from Him and they cannot take His mercy from Him.

- b. When God is your portion, you do not forget what He has commanded because you are living for Him,
 - not for the approval man.

 - We are not peddlers who market the gospel—who try to package Christ in a way that appeals to the world...
 - We preach Jesus and Him crucified—a stumbling block to the nominal Christian, and foolishness to the pagan...
 - but we know that the cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and nothing can turn us back from what God has commanded us to preach...
 - for the Lord is our portion and our cup.

TRANS> And this leads us to the next point...

- When God is your portion, it is not only that you refuse to depart from His way...
 - It is also that you learn to delight in His way—from within...

VI. When the Lord is your portion, you are full of gratitude

A. Your confession is that of verse 62:

- Psalm 119:62: At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, Because of Your righteous judgments.

1. It is not with reluctance that we refuse to forget God's commandments...

- It is because we delight in His righteous judgements...
 - We learn of Him as we see how He responds to us...
 - We see the glory of His wrath in punishing sin, and how much hates sin...
 - We see the glory of His mercy in saving us when we did not deserve it...
 - We see how He bestows food on all who live...
- We grow to see more and more the beauty and the symmetry of His word...
 - The longer we go on, the more we appreciate what He has given us—the way He has appointed for us to live...
 - More and more we come to see the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ in saving us...
 - And more and more we come to delight in everything that is revealed about our God.

2. To rise at midnight to give thanks speaks of a sincere gratitude...

- There are many who will praise God in the sanctuary when they are in the company of their brethren,
 - but when God is your portion and you have a true, heart-felt delight in him,
 - you will praise him when no one can see you.
 - It is a praise of Him that is directed to Him alone because you know Him and because you delight in Him.

B. What a contrast this is to the way of the flesh and the world!

1. When you wake up in the middle of night instead of being bitter that you have insomnia...

- or instead of lying awake fretting about all your problems...
- or of filling your mind with wicked and immoral passions...

- or of sulking about the way you have been wronged...
 - you begin to look at God your portion and to consider how blessed He is and how kind He is and how pure and holy...
 - And a heartfelt praise and adoration begins to swell up in you...
2. The word rendered “give thanks” here is the word yadaw that we have seen before in the Psalms...
 - It means to confess—
 - when it is used of ourselves, it means that we confess our sins... we tell the truth about what we are...
 - but when it is used of God, it means that we confess His excellence and grace... we praise Him and given Him thanks... we tell the truth about what He is.
 3. We do this when God is truly our portion because when He is our portion we come to know Him as He truly is...
 - We put away our distortions and wrong thinking about Him and we come to enjoy Him...
 - For there is no portion like our portion!
 - He is the Lilly of the Valley, the Fairest of Ten Thousand, the Bright and Morning Star!
 - Is He your portion?
 - Do you find praises in the night?

TRANS> But this private praise at midnight does not mean you have no public praise...

- Quite the contrary...
 - This private praise is the very foundation of the next thing that is true of you when God is your portion...

VII. When the Lord is your portion, you are a companion of all who fear Him.

- Verse 63 says:
 - Ps 119:63: “I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep your precepts.”
- A. The idea here is that you search out and band together with those who truly love the Lord—with those who have Him as their portion...
 - You find such persons.
 1. You delight in them because they also have come to delight in the Lord—
 - They also are seeking to know Him better, to discover more of Him...

- They also are seeking to praise Him and to tell of His greatness...
 - They also are standing against opposition in the world and declaring Him to the world...
 - They also are desirous to put walk in His ways and to do what is pleasing to Him.
2. The word “companion” that is used here speaks of someone that is not only a friend, but also a helper...
- You are band together with other believers that you might grow together—encouraging one another along in His way.
 - Remember what we saw in Ephesians 4 just last week...
 - God has placed us in a body and given a measure of grace to each one of us...
 - We are not meant to be hermits who live in isolation,
 - but an ekklesia—a church—an assembly that serves God together as each member does His part.
 - We are there to comfort each other, to restore each other, to serve each other, to teach each other, to encourage each other...
 - In this way, the body edifies itself in love.
 - We are companions in the Lord.
- B. Something is wrong with the Christian who continually resorts to wicked counsellors... and who isolates himself from those who walk in God’s ways...
1. The Bible says that evil companions can even corrupt good habits...
- When a person likes soft preaching that gives them excuses, and counsellors and friends that console them when they need to be called to repentance,
 - you can question is such a person has God as his portion...
 - He is trying to avoid God, no matter what he may say...
2. Brothers and sisters, you know what I mean!
- Do you like to be around people who are holy, or do you want to avoid them and keep a good distance from them?
 - If you want to be holy, you will be drawn to them—you will want to be challenged by those who keep God’s precepts...
 - You will want to be stretched and challenged because you want to be all that God wants you to be.
 - If He is your portion, you will delight in the company of the godly.

TRANS> And now, finally, this Psalm shows you in verse 64 that:

VIII. When the Lord is your portion, you yearn to be taught of Him.

- Verse 64 says:
 - Psalm 119:64: The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes.
- A. Here you are, rejoicing in God your portion, considering how the earth is full of His mercy...
 1. You see Him giving, giving, giving, to sinful fallen creatures in this world...
 - You see Him giving them food and gladness...
 - You see Him giving them mercy and mercy...
 2. And you look at what He has done for the Church...
 - You see His patience with us over the years...
 - You see Him chastening us and restoring us again and again...
 - You see Him, in the fullness of time, sending His Son in human flesh and causing that holy righteous son to die on the cross for our sins...
 - You see Him accepting that sacrifice and declaring all who have interest in Him justified...
 - You see Him taking us as His own sons,
 - working in us to make us holy...
 - giving us His precious word...
 - giving us the church and sending His ministers to instruct us...
 - you see the promise of eternal life and of everlasting communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

TRANS> Truly, His mercy fills the earth!

- B. And as you see all this mercy, there is a mercy that you want above all others when God is your portion...
 1. You already have forgiveness and adoption and justification and a precious Saviour...
 - but you look at yourself and you see that you are not yet perfect...
 - You see that you, who have come to delight in God's ways,
 - still have need to learn to walk in His ways—
 - You, who are called to live in His house forever,
 - have not yet learned to live as God's children ought to live...

2. And so the prayer that concludes this division of Psalm 119 is: Teach me your statutes...
 - This is the mercy you desire most of all...
 - That the Lord would show you how to be like Him...
 - That He would give you grace not merely to learn what His statutes ask of you, but to do them...
 - You want to learn them...
 - You want to become like your heavenly Father.
 - He is your portion and you want to be restored to His image.
3. Brothers and sisters, let this be your prayer as we go into Ephesians 4:17 and follow...
 - Ask the Lord, whose mercy fills the earth, to teach you His statutes...
 - To make them a part of you!
 - To make you like Jesus Christ!