

Psalm 119:113-120 || Ep. 935 – Hope, Hate, and Holding On

Dwelling Richly Podcast – Summer 2024

[lightly edited from the podcast episode]

Well, hello, we are back. This is Jennifer. I started the podcast different today. I was getting a little tired of, hey, welcome back. Anyway, I'm glad you're here with me.

This is Jennifer, and this is the Dwelling Richly podcast, of course. And I'm really glad you're here with me again today. We're going to get right into it.

We're continuing on in the How to Study the Bible series. And that's important to keep in mind because we're going to be breaking down into another stanza or section from Psalm 119.

And as much as I would love to do a Bible study on this, that's not the purpose of this particular podcast. Bible studies coming up, by the way, I'll give a shout out to the new upcoming Dwelling Richly Community Bible study. That begins just in a few weeks here.

We're going to be going through Galatians in a study I've called Free and Filled. And I know you're going to be super blessed by that. So be sure to check that out and stay tuned, get on the podcast or the La Mirada Church website, and I want to encourage you to be a part of that.

So that's Bible study. This is more, this is a series. This is a series about how to study the Bible, how to enjoy the Bible, how to love the Bible, how to apply the Bible, how to above all, let the word of Christ, and you can finish the sentence by now, right? Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

What do we do? We return the favor. Instead of just checking off the Bible like a to-do list, instead of treating the Bible like a self-help book—which both could be true. We want to check it off our list. Some days we just need to be, you know, simple-minded in that way. And it is definitely helpful. But that's not why we go to the Bible. We go to the Word of God because it's the living, powerful, two-edged sword. And it separates out fact from fiction. It keeps us focused on God and his truth if we approach it like that.

So that's what we're going to do. That's what we've been doing this whole time. So we're moving our way through right now through Psalm 119.

We are in the 15th section of the longest psalm in the entire Bible. How many verses does Psalm 119 have in it? Good job, 176 verses. Today we'll be covering verses 113 to 120.

This is a section of the psalm that every letter, every word of this psalm in the Hebrew begins with the same letter as it has been in the pattern for the whole psalm. Today's letter is Samech. It's the 15th letter. It makes the S sound.

We're going to talk about the meaning of Samech and how that plays a role in this particular portion of the psalm. Isn't God smart? Aren't his people brilliant and well-inspired to write his word out in such a way that helps us, even today, remember his word?

So we're going to dive into this section. We're going to talk about what Samech means, how it applies to this section, and how we can be better students of the word because of this portion of the psalm.

Let's go ahead and jump in. I'll read from the English Standard Version yet again today like I normally do. Then we'll go back through and we'll break it down verse by verse.

Here we go. Verse 113: "I hate the double-minded, but I love your law." "You are my hiding place and my shield. I hope in your word." "Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God." "Uphold me according to

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your promise that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope." "Hold me up that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually." "You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain." "All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies." "My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments."

All right, let's take a look at this. This is one of those psalms, the section of this psalm, that I read and re-read, read and re-read, and just got more and more and more excited about it. There are so many extremes in this particular portion and so many reminders of how we can study the Bible and get better at studying the Bible.

And, you know, you can see from the title of this particular episode, I'm calling this "Hope, Hate, and Holding On." And I love how this particular psalm kind of gave the title to me in a sense. Because the psalmist opens up with that very simple phrase, "I hate."

In the previous psalm and many of the psalms before this, the psalmist is going on and on about how much the word is a light, it's a lamp to our feet. Of course, that's beautiful. "Accept my freewill offerings. You hold on to my life. I hold on to my life. I hold it in my hand, and it's tenuous, but I trust in your word" and all that, "that your testimony is the joy of my heart, I incline my heart to perform your statutes" (verse 112).

Then 113, "I hate the double-minded, but I love your law." So I love the passion of the psalmist in this particular section.

A couple of other passages came to mind as I was reading it. There's a portion in 1 Kings during the prophet Elijah's life, and he comes to the people, and he kind of puts them on blast. Listen to 1 Kings 18:21: "And Elijah came near to all the people and said, 'How long,' listen to how he phrases this, 'How long will you go limping between two different opinions?'" It's just so, just blast them out for that. "'If the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal, then follow him.' And the people did not answer him a word."

So this is that infamous portion of 1 Kings, an account with Elijah challenging the people like, hey, look, you choose who you're going to serve. "How long are you going to go on limping between two different opinions?" And we see the psalmist kind of saying the same thing in the opening in this psalm. He says, "I hate the double-minded. I love your law." They're out there. They're the ones who are double-minded. They can't decide, are we going to serve Baal or are we going to serve the Lord?

And that's honestly the choice that we have in front of us today. If we're going to do like I talked about in the previous episode, take God's word seriously, or like the psalmist said in verse 106, Psalm 119:106, "I have sworn an oath and confirmed it to keep your righteous rules." This is serious business. Elijah's stake puts it all out. You're either serving basically Satan, Baal, or you're serving God. Don't go limping between two different opinions.

Then we jump over to the New Testament, and the brother of Jesus says the same thing in the same way. He says, let me open this up. He says, to be succinct about it, James 1:8, "He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." Who's a double-minded man? James 1:8. Well, he says it like this: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like the wave of a sea, driven tossed by the wind, for that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord." And here's how he describes him: "a double-minded man." And what's he like? "He's unstable in all his ways." And that's from James 1:5-8.

He talks about being double-minded and that you can have repentance from being double-minded later on in James 4. He says in James 4:8, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hand, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

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There's hope for the double-minded. And like I said at the beginning, the purpose of this particular series is not to do Bible study, although we're doing a little bit of that now, but to get our mind right on how to study the Bible.

So what do we learn then from studying this particular psalm? Well, we take a look at this and we see that we should not be double-minded. We should be like the psalmist, David, Ezra, or whoever it is, right? We should place value. We should have loyalty in God's word. We should not be double-minded. We should do like he said in the previous passage, be committed, take an oath to God and his word over anything else, right?

And I would ask that our prayer could be today that you would ask God, you know what, God, reveal to me any areas of my life that I actually am I'm acting very double-minded because I don't think we go to bed at night and say, oh, I'm so glad, you know, I'm not, at least I'm not double-minded. But I think we live like we are. We treat the Bible in such a way that it makes it look like we are double-minded.

And again, I talked about this last time. The importance of taking the Bible seriously

might look like stepping up your game and actually bringing your Bible with you wherever you go. Bring it to church with you. There's a thought. Bring it to Bible study. There's a thought. I know you have your Bibles on your phone. I know it's on your tablet and whatnot. It's even on the screen, right? Bring it with you to church anyway. Hold it in your hand. Take notes in it, right?

Maybe this will help taking it seriously. And also, like we see in verse 113, "I hate the double-minded. I love your law." There's that juxtaposition. And then he says in verse 114, "You are my hiding place and my shield." And he's, of course, talking about God's law there and how beautiful that is. And then he says, "I hope in your word." I hate the double-minded. I hope in your word.

And then he ramps it up and he's thinking about how much he loves God's word. And he gets to verse 115 and he says, "Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God." In other words, when those people around him who are double-minded, when they're around him, he's distracted. And so he's like, get away from me, you evildoers. I want to focus on, I want to keep God's word. I don't want distraction.

And again, in line with a previous portion of this Psalm, the noon section, the 14th section, we have the seriousness that he takes the word of God. You know, in Psalm 73:26, one of my absolute favorite verses, we read, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." What a beautiful connection and a beautiful reminder in that, that I could take God seriously, take his word seriously, love and respect God's word. And even though I might fail, God's word, God is the strength of my heart. He is my portion. We talked about this last time as well. He's my portion forever.

And we also see this incredible heart of reality that the psalmist has, and it reminded me so much of David. It's one of the reasons why I think about this psalm, and I think actually it feels like David could have written this because listen to what King David wrote in Psalm 139:19-22. He's just gotten finished saying how much he loves God, how in awe he is of the mystery of who God is and how God's always with him. And then in verse 19, he shifts gears and he changes tone, he gets really ticked off and he says, "Oh, that you would slay the wicked, oh God. Oh, men of blood, depart from me. They speak of you with malicious intent. Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, oh Lord? And don't I loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with a complete hatred and I count them my enemies."

Same sentiment going on right here. Verse 115, "Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God." And then in verse 116 is the actual word that sounds very close to the letter of the alphabet. The letter of this alphabet for this portion, the 15th portion, is the samech, like I said earlier. And this very first word in Hebrew is, if I'm pronouncing it correctly, is "samechen," "samechani." "Uphold me, samechani. Uphold me according to your promise."

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Why? That I may live. It's a life and death situation. That's how seriously, again, he takes the word. And he says, "Don't let my hope be put to shame. Uphold me," right? And then in verse 117, "Hold me up." That's literally what samech as the alphabet letter actually means. It means to lean upon, to be upheld. It came to also being associated with a laying on of hands. "Hold me up that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually."

"You spurn all who go astray from your statutes." I don't want to be counted among those. I don't want to go astray. I don't want to be distracted. And he says, "For their cunning is in vain. Whatever they can do, they're in vain in their efforts," right?

Verse 119, "All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross." Therefore, I love your testimonies. Then he says, "My flesh trembles for fear of you. I'm afraid of your judgments." In other words, like it says in Psalm 73:26, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." And so often I read that Psalm 73:26, and I thought, oh, about, you know, the times in my life and my heart may fail, my flesh may fail. And that's true. But that also speaks to incredible submissive reverence completely laid out for the Lord. "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

So I love how 14 and 15, these two sections, Nun and Samech, connect together. This connection also between bleeding of the wicked and the hope that we have in God. And then the focus here on how the idea of samech comes into play, because the definition and the symbolism of samech, well, the letter itself, and you can see this if you look in your NIV Bible, it's written out there for you, the Hebrew letter samech is shaped like a circle, right? And so it's often associated with support and protection, the idea of surrounding, the idea of upholding. And this ties right in with the idea of relying on God, letting him be our refuge.

And the circle imagery of the protection, I picture when they would gather wagons around and circle the wagons, they would say, that's what God is for us. So, all right. As we approach the Bible, as we approach God's word, and we ask that question, all right, how can I study the Bible? How do I study God's word? When we take a look at a passage like this, we want to see that hanging in there with God's word, making it a priority, being serious about God's word, and then understanding that there's power in the distinction of what we hate and in whom we hope, right?

And to be clear on that, I think oftentimes in our day and age, we're afraid of even saying that we hate anything because you're going to be called judgmental or whatever. But let's hate what God hates, right? Let's hope in him. Let's hope in his word. Let's approach God's word and say, God, as I read your word today, how do I study the Bible? I study it with a mind open to having God teach me what I should hate and where my hope should be.

And so to answer the question for us today, how do I study the Bible better? Ask God. Say, God, give me a heart that's not double-minded, that's focused on the things that you love, and open up in me an understanding of anything that is double-minded in me so that I can fully, truly trust in you, to lean on you, to be upheld by you. Like it says in this particular Psalm, "Uphold me according to your promise that I may live and let me not be put to shame," right? Because of my own double-mindedness, because of my own failure to hold true, to take God's word seriously, "let me not be put to shame in my hope."

I pray for you today that that would be true of you, that you would have a passion and desire to love God in that strength of that way, right? All right, share your questions and your thoughts. I love to hear from you. If you're listening to this podcast, just let me know what you're thinking. Tell me what it said to you and how it fed you. I'll do a blog post based on this podcast as well. You can go read that and be sure to follow. Follow me wherever you're listening to the podcast. Maybe you're listening on YouTube or on Apple. Maybe you're right here on my blog listening. Maybe we're on Podbean, wherever it is. IHeartRadio, all the things, right? Tell me you're listening. Let me know you stopped by.

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Ask a question and give me a thought that I can improve on how I approach these podcasts. I'd love to hear from you is the point. All right. God bless you. I always enjoy being here with you. And know as always, you are loved and you are prayed for. I look forward to being back here again with you real soon. Bye-bye for now.