**Psalm 119:57 — The LORD is My Portion**

Valley Scharping

I need reminding that the Lord is my portion, so you all get to be reminded with me. Let's start by praying. [Opening prayer.]

 The most difficult book for me to read is the Psalms. For some brothers, this is unthinkable; Psalms is their most accessible book. But for me, it is full of abstract, spiritual statements, or full of phrases and words that, hopefully against my will, have acquired the barnacles of rote hearing, so to speak, things like, "I lift my heart, my hands, my eyes up to you," "Blessed be the name of the Lord," "His love endures forever," or even "Hallelujah." From hearing them so frequently, my brain accepted these words and imbued them with meaning long before my heart did; in this way, some of these precious words have actually come to have a kind of *meaninglessness* because I "know" them so well.

 I need to retrain myself to hear these words afresh, anew. But at the same time, there is an ever present danger in trying to read Scripture in a new way. In seeking novelty or freshness in the words, we cannot depart from what the words were intended to mean. As Christians we need to reject the Marxist idea of deconstructionism which was taught to me in college. It's becoming more common amongst Christians as well, whether consciously or no. **X** The pet theory of the despicable anti-philosopher [term mine], Jacques Derrida, Deconstructionism (also called the New Criticism or "Death of the Author") is, roughly, that the reader determines the meaning of a text. **X** *Of Mice and Men* author, John Steinbeck, famously said,

" ...a story has as many versions as it has readers. Everyone takes what he wants or can from it and thus changes it to his measure. Some pick out parts and reject the rest, some strain the story through their mesh of prejudice, some paint it with their own delight."

 What he failed to realize is that while this may be true—in fact many Christians approach the Bible this way— this does not mean that any of these readers are **right** to do so. In fact, they are not. But this theory was a necessary philosophical tool for the Marxist (and anti-Christian) "Critical Theory." If you haven't heard of Critical Theory, you've surely been affected by it. **X**

 Critical Theory is "the critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and the humanities to reveal and challenge power structures." If this sounds just like something that first rebel, Satan, would cook up, you're probably right. **X** Critical Theory philosopher Max Horkheimer said that Critical Theory seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them." But Max's heart was hard, and he could not see that there is no liberty outside of Christ and specifically in *submitting* to Him as our Author. Biblical hierarchy and power structures are beautiful, and we gladly chain ourselves to the Father, because we know in His rules and in His ways, there is true liberty. **X**

 Chesterton said it best, "The more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild." And if you don't believe him, just look for the flurry of little children running around the second this service ends. This is an orderly place, **and** we love the vitality and wildness of children. To some, those two things are irreconcilable, but Psalm 119:44-45 says this: *"I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, and I shall walk in a wide place"* or *"I will walk about in freedom"* or *"I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought your precepts."* I will keep your law continually... and I shall walk at liberty, for I seek your precepts. Is it liberty to keep the law continually? Continually constrained and yet... the most **free.** That is nonsensical to the world, but to the Christian, that's just a daily fact of life.

"*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* *The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 'For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ. "* 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.

 So we need to know **this** in our heart of hearts today more than ever: **X** freedom lies in submission to God and His Word. Our dear country around us swells with claims of oppression and power inequality and injustice, and it really is enslaved... to debt, to sexual immorality, to comfort-seeking; they really are oppressed... by their own sin, by their father the devil; and there really is the promise of justice for them... but not with the outcome they want. Our unbelieving neighbors **hate** slavery, **hate** suffering, **hate** being la victim, and yet they continually choose it in rejecting the Lord. But we are not cold-hearted sadists. We are burdened with mercy and sorrow for those in bonds to sin as we once were. That is why it is crucial that we know the truth that freedom lies only in bondage to God. We cannot spread the freedom of Christ without first knowing and loving and submitting to God and His Word. And that is what Psalm 119 is all about.

 So as sure as the Author Himself dwells in us, we must reject deconstructionism and cling to the freedom of absolute Authorial Intent, as the Scriptures say in 2 Peter 1:21:

*" For* ***no*** *prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from* ***God*** *as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

 Thus in my reading of the Psalms, I force myself to refuse any cliché reading of the words, but fully submit to the intent of the author, the Holy Spirit, which is never cliché no matter how many times Psalm 136 says, "His love endures forever." Every single one of the 26 repetitions is imbued with importance and special meaning, amen? And we can trust God's purpose in every good word, simple or complex or novel or grave or bright or rote.

So with that, I'd like to start by reading our lengthy Scripture portion for today. Open with me to Psalm 119, starting in verse 57 if you would. Try to keep up with me here as I read the whole passage, and I'll stop us when we get to a phrase we need to dig into. Ready?

*"The LORD is my portion."* Stop.

 How many times have I heard this phrase, even said it, and never known what it meant? That's an exaggeration, but I was reading this passage and it hit me that what I was doing while reading this was the furthest thing from the righteous man in Psalm 1:

*"[H]is delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night."*

 What I was doing could barely be called reading, let alone meditating. I had basically skipped over the words, "The Lord is my portion." But I cannot disrespect God's words like that. This phrase deserves to be meditated on, and I want to do just that with you.

 Many of you know, Psalm 119 is like much of Proverbs in that the verses adjacent to each other may not be directly connected. For this reason, the immediate context does not clearly illuminate the meaning of "The Lord is my portion" for us either. The passage goes on, but verse 57 is the one I want to focus on, so I will need to connect it to **other** verses in Psalm 119 and elsewhere in Scripture.

 I think the best place to start is with our responsive reading passage again; it parallels beautifully with the meaning here while expanding it. **X** Turn with me to Lamentations 3, verses 22 through 33:

*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.' The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; let him put his mouth in the dust— there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men."*

 I don't want to unpack that whole passage, but the idea of God being your portion is directly connected to you having hope.*"'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'"* It is a reason to hope if you have God as your portion. **X** And we see three basic reasons Jeremiah says he can have hope in God as his portion:

1. Future end to suffering. When he says, *"The Lord will not cast off forever."*

2. Future reward for waiting. When he says, *"The Lord is good to those who wait for Him."*And not only that, but

3. Future reward for enduring suffering. When he says, *"It is good for a man to bear the yoke."*

 And how is he so sure that despite this suffering, there is hope to be had? Because he is convinced the Lord is what He says He is: full of never-ceasing love, never-ending mercies, and great faithfulness.

With a clearer picture now of what *having* God as your portion means, let's define "portion" itself. How was portion used in the Bible? **X** The Hebrew word (חֶלְקִ֖י [pronounced cheleq in root form]) often means portion, share, part, or property, and it evokes the idea of inheritance. It also evokes the idea of a distribution, a ration; The Lord is your lot. With the former idea of inheritance, we get a feeling that our portion is *secure* and *eternal.* Psalm 16:5 says, *"* *LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you secure my lot."* With the latter idea of the Lord being our lot, we get a contrast, a juxtaposition with what we usually consider rations, lots, and portions to be: this is the richest, best, wisest, most beautiful, most excellent, most powerful lot of all, God Himself. Whereas portions and rations are usually characterized by feeling small or insufficient, this ration could not be more sufficient. Because God is infinite, God can give of Himself in only a portion and still have given infinitely not just to you, but to every single one of his millions of children. This portion does not leave you hungry or unfulfilled. This portion does not leave you wanting more or grumbling or spending the rest of the day thinking about the rest that your portion came from. You aren't worried about having the whole because of your part. This part **is** the whole; and He is ours.

 Is he though? Can I say "The Lord is my portion" truly? If I examine my life, do I see that that is true?

 The Lord is my portion. He is my reward; He is my lot; He is what I get. And I get what I get, and I don't throw a fit. Imagine being given $100 trillion dollars, and the giver hands you the $100 trillion dollars and says, "Now you get what you get and you don't throw a fit!" You would laugh because of how **easy** that would be. "Why are you telling me not to throw a fit? Why would I throw a fit? You just gave me impossible riches!" Are you able to joyfully laugh when you are denied what you want outside the Lord? Proverbs 31:25, *"She can laugh at the days to come."* Are you able to laugh because you know **God**is your portion? Do you throw a fit still when you don't get what you want? Forgive me, Lord, for I know I do. But it's because I fail to remember this: "The Lord is my portion. He's not just all I have; He's all I **need***.*"

 When I need something else outside the Lord, I am implicitly saying the Lord is not my portion, He is not enough. Infinity is not enough; I should get more even though I know I don't deserve it. I don't even deserve to be **alive**, but I need better looks, better friends, a better house, a more reliable car, better family, more money, more sleep, less pain, less persecution, less temptation, less suffering. I get to have the world and none of the consequences and I get to reject God and keep Him at the same time. It's the ultimate offense, the ultimate injustice.

 Don't mishear me; I'm not saying it is sinful to want things, to petition God for good things. God promises He will hear us and will give us our desires prayed for in accord with His will. But when God doesn't give us what we want, when we suffer, listen to what Jeremiah says again,

"*It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; let him put his mouth in the dust— there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults."*

I'm saying want good things, yes, but only insofar as they come from God and come from your desire for God Himself.

God is my portion; there is no room for another. And even to try and fit something else in would be to lose the both, both God and the idol. **X** Peter rebukes Simon, telling him he had no portion in the ministry of God because his heart was not right with God. Acts 8:20-23,

*“May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”*

 You can't have both. One master, one Lord, one Spirit. Which do you choose? If you have to lose one or the other, God or the thing other than God, which would you choose? Easy mentally to choose, right? So now I ask you, if you would always ultimately choose God, which every brother here would, then why are we worried when we don't get the other? I'm asking that of myself. You'd always choose God, so choose Him! But I am afraid that my portion isn't enough, that I don't have everything I need, and that's the nice way of putting it. But even that fear, that fear of the world is doubt in God. And I must be honest that it's less that I am afraid that my portion is enough than it is actually that I just don't want my portion, knowing full well it is enough; I want more. I want the other thing that I might not get in God. So just as that fear is not just fear, it's also doubt in God, so also this desire for a good job, a spouse, comfort, what have you—it's not just desire, it's not just a lack of desire for God, it is a *rejection* of God. What else could it be? To be offered infinity and say it is not enough is necessarily to reject it, for there is no neutrality in the end.

 In fact, being neutral, being in-between seems to be the worst possible choice. Jesus says in Revelation 3,

*"I know your works: you are neither hot or cold. I wish that you were either hot or cold! But, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."*

And doesn't it seem worse to claim that God is my portion and then it be false than to have just not claimed God as your portion at all? For God will not be mocked, but He will be this undeserving man's portion, if only I lose my life to gain it. And that means losing my desires outside of Him.

 It's so easy to accept in our brains that God is enough, to choose to desire Him, to trust Him to be all you need. But whether we truly believe that philosophy only becomes clear when we are met with the fire, for *"each one’s work will become manifest... because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done."* That comes from 1 Corinthians 3.

Yes, God is so easily my portion when I got a good night's sleep last night. But is God my portion when I got terrible sleep? ...and I tripped getting out of bed, the shower was cold, my new shirt ripped on the way out the door, I dropped my keys, and I stumbled on my words talking to a pretty lady, all within 5 minutes? Right then, in the very heat of the moment of frustration, is he my portion? Can we say with the Psalmist in 73, *"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever"*?

Don't be arrogant as the church of Laodicea was, whom Jesus reproached in that same chapter of Revelation by saying,

*"For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent."*

It's hard to trust God if you ever believe there's a time you don't need Him. And when you understand that you need Him all the time, that God is your portion all the time, it will start to be just as easy to trust God in the hard times as the good.

So what else does Scripture say about the Lord being our portion? **X**

➵If God is our portion, He is who we cry to: Psalm 142:5, *"I cry to you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.'"* Who else would we go to but our Abba Father, our Shepherd? Paul in Romans 8 says that because of the portion we've received, we cry to our Father this way: *"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"* The Spirit Himself cries this way: *"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"* Galatians 4:6. If God is our portion, we run to Him. **X**

➵If God is our portion, we forsake worthless things and delusions: Jeremiah 10:14-16,

*"Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of delusion... Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things..."*

Honestly, the first part of that verse is hilarious. *"Every man is stupid and without knowledge."* I'm surprised the feminists haven't gotten ahold of that one yet. Anyway... If God is our portion, we forsake worthless things, we forsake being stupid. Ephesians 5:11, *"Take no [portion] in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."* We must set aside the world, where our portion once was. This is the command from God:

*"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?"* 2 Corinthians 6.

The answer is none. So if God is our portion, we forsake the world. **X**

➵If God is our portion, we do not need another: Five separate times in the old Testament, once in Numbers, twice in Deuteronomy, once in Joshua, and again in Ezekiel 44 when God is dictating the orders for the restored priesthood, God says, *"Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance..." "You shall give them no possession in Israel. I am their possession."*And in the new covenant, God has made us all a royal priesthood, a kingdom of priests. How much more is the Lord directly **our** portion, **our** possession. Colossians 1:12 says, *"[Be filled...] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the [portion] of the saints in light."* Psalm 23, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." "I lack nothing."* So if God is our portion, we do not need another.

 And to say, "The Lord is my portion" is not merely to say, "This is my lot, and I must deal with it." It is that! But it is also to say that this suffering **is** my reward! I count it joy, not in itself, but as sent from God and for what He promises by it! Acts 5:41, *"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."* Before Christ saved us, suffering meant death. But now, suffering means life. Listen to Paul describe our reward in Romans 6:20-22:

*"But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life."*

I could meditate on that forever. Eternal life, golden and imperishable. There's no other portion that I want. **X**

Let me reflect on what precisely that portion is for one more moment. Let's hear Paul's ancient description of our inheritance in Ephesians 1:

*"In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will... In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory... [I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* *And he... gave him as head over all things to the church,... his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Let me tell you something: in death, everybody's a pauper. You may have an inheritance in this life, but when you die, **you have nothing.** Only by **God** do you have anything, anything! You have no inheritance... but with God, you have an inheritance, for the first time one that lasts. **X** Allow me to quickly list some of what your inheritance is, just an infinitesimal fraction:

* 1. You get enlightened, you don't walk around in the dark anymore;
	2. Your life, your suffering has meaning, and your burden is light;
	3. You know the order of the universe, where it has been, where it is headed, and where you are in that cosmic story;
	4. You get to know what is **true** now, having a higher standard than your own reason;
	5. You get to pray directly to God;
	6. Your joy is complete;
	7. You have a clean conscience;
	8. You have all your infinitely hellish sin not just forgiven, not just removed, not just forgotten, but paid for by someone who loves you, by the person you sinned against;
	9. You have a **Father**;
	10. You have a new heart with new, healthy desires in you;
	11. You have the perfect Spirit of God within you;
	12. The man who should have enmity for you, who hung for you, is now your best friend and happy co-heir;
	13. You don't have to be lonely any longer, you have been put in a happy family, a functionalfamily, a good family;
	14. You have a role in that family, as a part in the body;
	15. You have even been given special gifts toward the end of adding **others** to your Father's family;
	16. You are a citizen of a perfect, eternal kingdom;
	17. You are a priest of God;
	18. You have a perfect head over you,
	19. A perfect confidence,
	20. A promise of wisdom,
	21. A precise and sufficient revelation.

Everything, everything, everything has changed for you. And on top of all of that, you get to live forever. And not just eking out a life: You are promised a mansion in a city of gold, with trees that bear 12 kinds of fruit every month of the year and a river full of life that doesn't thin out as it goes, but **widens** impossibly! There's no more tears, no more zits, no more darkness, no more uncleanness at all, no more bitterness or anger, no more pain or discomfort. You will have an imperishable, unpierceable, unbreakable body that feels the highest pleasure you can't even imagine every second of every day for ever. Your soul will finally be whole. And I haven't even told you the best part yet. You get to be directly **with** your Father always. **That's** an inheritance.

 When we know that's our portion, everything we've talked about so far becomes easy. All flesh is grass, and the grass is withering, the flowers are falling—so? The Word of our Lord stands forever. That **word** is the good news of your imperishable portion in Christ [1 Peter 1:24-25].

I think it's about time we finish reading our Scripture portion for the day, huh? Let's see how far we can get. **X** Psalm 119:57,

*"The Lord is my portion. I promise to keep your Words."* Stop.

**Because of this,** because you are my portion, Lord, I promise to keep your words. The because isn't there in the Hebrew, to be clear, but that functional connection is. Spurgeon commented on this verse saying,

"[H]ere [the psalmist] confesses the binding obligation of his former vow [that the Lord is his portion]. Jesus said, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words,' and this is a case which he might have quoted as an illustration; for the Psalmist's love to God as his portion led to his keeping the words of God."

 And I think it appropriate to quote Jesus further here: *"For where your treasure is,"* or it might just as well be said, where your portion is "*there your heart will be also."* If the Lord is your portion, there your heart is also. And if your heart is with God, will you not keep His words?

 *"And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.'"[Luke 15:12]* The younger son in the parable of the prodigal son wants his portion here and now, on Earth where it will be squandered and doomed to die. But he returns because he sees and knows that only with His Father will his portion be secure and eternal. Let the worldly prosper and do not envy them; let those who virtue-signal get their reward, and do not desire it, because it will perish with them. I tell you, many men are great without being good, but no one's good without being saved. Seek to be among the good, and let the great be receiving their portion now. Yours is coming again for you, and from there it will never depart. **X**

I'll summarize, and then give a few final reflections:

1. First, read the Word both afresh and as it was intended.
2. If God is your portion, you are free.
3. If God is your portion, you have reason to hope.
4. If God is your portion, run to Him.
5. If God is your portion, forsake the world.
6. If God is your portion, do not need another.
7. If God is your portion, keep His Word. **X**

So here are a few final reflections:

I want to end with our eyes closed together, personally reflecting on a few phrases scattered throughout Psalm 119. The references are on the screen. I'm just going to read these last 8 statements and pause after each, and for each I want you to reflect on how true that statement is for you in your relationship with the Lord. And whatever comes to mind, lift that to God in faith, whether conviction or praise or petition or zeal. And after that, I will close with prayer. Bow your heads with me.

1. I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way. (128)
2. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. (14)
3. Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge. In the night I remember your name, O Lord, and I will keep your law. (54-55)
4. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. (92)
5. Look on my suffering and deliver me for I have not forgotten your law. (153)
6. My eyes shed streams of tears because people do not keep your law. (136)
7. Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. (111)

And finally, Lord,

1. I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (32) **X**

**Key:**

*Italics* = Scripture Quotation

**X** = Advance Slides

[Brackets] = Unspoken

**Unaddressed Topics:**

-Do not resist the change of seasons.

-I am not afraid to teach the Bible because some men abuse it.

**Online Access:**

Video:

Audio:

Transcript: