

# St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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## ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER 21/5/2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for God's sovereign grace towards us, who turns us around to see his radiant glory in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's encouragement is "Psalm 119 Daleth – From Dust to Freedom" before moving onto church matters.

### ENCOURAGEMENT: Psalm 119 Daleth – From Dust to Freedom

Have you ever found yourself laid low, struggling to get up? There are various instances in life where this may be the case. It could be a physical situation, where you are trapped and enclosed and in trouble. It was like in my younger years when I am in 12ft surf from a storm surge. I am ducking under a pounding wall of whitewash and both my legs cramp. I am tossed around struggling to surface, lungs burning. When I do break the surface, gulping in air, I see another two waves headed my way. It could be the deteriorating health from age, each day becomes a struggle to do what needs to be done. It could be our mental health. I have heard depression described like being at the bottom of a deep well sinking in the mud below. People cry out from the top to climb up, but you have not the strength nor the skill to rise out of your depression. It could be any number of situations: a struggle with unemployment, relationship breakdowns or any other manner of difficult circumstances we might find ourselves in. But perhaps the most difficult of these is spiritual: without Christ, we are laid low, separated from God, unless he saves us.

In Psalm 119 and the stanza Daleth we see a journey from dust to freedom. The Psalmist rising from his circumstances, not because he can make the climb, but because God shows him grace and lifts him up. Let us trace his journey from dust to freedom.

*I am laid low in the dust;  
preserve my life according to your word.*

Psalm 119:25

The Psalm begins at the lowest, sprawled in the dust. Circumstances have left him beaten down and defeated, so he lifts his eyes to the Lord, to preserve life as he has promised in his word.

*I recounted my ways and you answered me;  
teach me your decrees.*

Psalm 119:26

The Psalmist prays to God, telling him what is happening and asking God to act. And God hears his prayer and delivers him from his circumstances. So the Psalmist continues to pray, asking for the Lord to teach him his decrees so he might live for him, which is further developed in the next verse.

*Let me understand the teaching of your precepts,  
that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.*

Psalm 119:27

The Psalmist wants the Lord to teach his decrees and give understanding of “the teaching of your precepts”, a full orb view of life grounded on God’s word. The purpose of this is so he can meditate and reflect on the word and God’s wonderful deeds of salvation for his people. He finds his delight in considering the glory of the Lord. It leaves him in awe, amazed.

Yet, while the Lord lifts him from his circumstances, his soul is still heavy.

*My soul is weary with sorrow;  
strengthen me according to your word.*

Psalm 119:28

Sorrow and grief overwhelm him. Even with God’s intervention his situation still has had an impact on his life, and it threatens to press him down and overwhelm him. It saps his strength and motivation to go on. So he looks to the Lord for strength, leaning on the promises of God to give him what he needs. It is only by the grace of God that he can move forward.

*Keep me from deceitful ways;  
be gracious to me through me your law.*

Psalm 119:29

He asks the Lord to keep him from wandering into deceitful ways – the lies of the world and the deceptions of the spiritual forces of evil. He asks for God’s grace, ministered to him through the law, God’s word to keep him on the right path. It is in clinging to God’s grace that we find what we need to live his way.

So since God gives understanding, strength and grace the Psalmist resolves to live for God.

*I have chosen the way of faithfulness;  
I have set my heart on your laws.  
I hold fast to your statutes, Lord;  
do not let me be put to shame.*

Psalm 119:30-31

He fixes his heart upon living God’s way – to be faithful and obedient, holding fast to the Lord’s good word. There is no better way to live. But he can only hold fast to such a commitment by God’s work within him, and so prays – do not let me be put to

shame. Do not let me stumble into sin. Do not let me fail in my pursuit to know you. Keep me on your narrow way.

It is the life lived to know God in accord with his word where true freedom is found.

*I run in the path of your commands,  
for you have set my heart free.*

The picture here is of being in a broad open place to run free, in any direction, with the wind rushing through your hair. It is freedom of movement that stands in contrast to the beginning where the Psalmist is sprawled in the dirt – without strength and ability to change his situation. Freedom that makes the heart soar is found in the Lord and living according to his word.

The prayer and the journey of ‘Daleth’ is ultimately answered in Christ. He is the one who lifts us from the dust, to give us understanding, strength and grace so we might live his way according to his Spirit at work in us. Christ did this by plumbing the depths of our sorrow and despair. He is laid low in the dust, slain on the cross, then risen to glory. He treads our path that we might be united to him in his death and resurrection and so share in his victory. In Christ, we journey from dust to freedom, from far away to near to God. And the sorrows and helplessness in this life can never take this away from us, for our hope is in Christ and we find in him all we need. Where do you find yourself laid low in the dust? Will you use the prayer-journey of Psalm 119 Daleth to find in Christ all the strength and grace you need?

## **FINAL COMMENTS**

*Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.  
I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold.  
I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.  
I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched.  
My eyes fail, looking for my God.  
But as for me, afflicted and in pain—  
may your salvation, God, protect me.  
I will praise God’s name in song  
and glorify him with thanksgiving.  
This will please the Lord more than an ox,  
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.  
The poor will see and be glad—  
you who seek God, may your hearts live!  
The Lord hears the needy  
and does not despise his captive people.*

Psalm 69:1-3, 29-33

As always, love and prayers, Steve.