

# DAY NINETEEN

## “CONVERSING WITH GOD”

### PSALM 119:145-152

This morning when arising before dawn, our selected verses from Psalms were a reminder that my incessant conversation with God, which begins upon waking consciousness, is not simply a recent phenomenon of modern religious teaching. Men and women of God have always pursued a dialogue with their Creator, often through studying Scripture or prayer. The Psalmist reminds us that speaking to God, and anticipating His responses, are things *which are most normal* for those seeking Him. But before commenting on these realities, take the time to Count the Omer by reflecting upon the following Psalm selections. Perhaps as you speak the Word of God before Him, He will hear and respond to the pleadings of your heart!

### PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

### PSALM 119:145-152

**Qoph. I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD! I will observe Your statutes. I cried to You; save me and I shall keep Your testimonies. I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words. My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word. Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; revive me, O LORD, according to Your ordinances. Those who follow after wickedness draw near; they are far from Your law. You are near, O LORD, and all Your commandments are truth. Of old I have known from Your testimonies that You have founded them forever.**

An interesting thing happened to me this morning as I began to converse with my Heavenly Father. Having spent some time reflecting on our selection for today (Psalm

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119:145-152), the word “cry” really stood out.<sup>1</sup> I initially thought that a word study would be appropriate. But as my morning routine settled in, I was actually led to do something else, which caused me to actually cry. These were *not* tears of joy, but instead tears of sorrow and great concern for the current state of affairs in our world today. Let me explain.

My first inclination when considering conversing with God was to discuss the great privilege that Believers have when it comes to communing with Him. For people like me, who can point to a specific time (in my case September 1978) when they were born from above, it is easy for us to know when our stony hearts were miraculously turned into hearts of flesh. We can recall the vivid differences between the way we were, and the new life we received. Even though the sanctification process was just beginning, we knew that we were new creatures and that God was now resident inside of us in the presence of His Holy Spirit.

Quite logically, because we truly believed what the Scriptures said about the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God as our Helper and Teacher, it was not unusual for us to begin spending more and more time asking questions, seeking insight, and dialoging with our Maker and others who had the same beliefs. Many times I have known that I was hearing from the Holy Spirit when I would talk with other born again Believers. In their comments, I can subtly hear the Voice that at times actually recited important words of life. Another thing that I learned was that reading the Holy Scriptures was undeniably one of the most *direct* ways to receive specific instruction about a plethora of issues that God’s people might confront.

This morning, as I began my concentrated meditation on Psalm 119, when I began with v. 145 after reflecting on the word “cry,” the phrase “**with all my heart**”<sup>2</sup> led me on an interesting tour all the way to 2 Chronicles chs. 14-24. As I first glanced at Psalm 119:10, some reference notes pointed me to 2 Chronicles 15:15 for a parallel passage. Reading back a few chapters focused me, and I found myself totally absorbed in the historical account of the lives of a number of kings who reigned during the Divided Kingdom era. Starting with the life of Asa through the reign of Joash, my reading covered about four generations of kings from both of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel. Reading through the history was very enlightening, because it also included an era when for six years, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, Athaliah, had actually ruled over the Southern Kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 11; 2 Chronicles 22; 23:12-21). My interest in reviewing some of these tumultuous times was focused enough to make the effort to review chapters, but since this was not going to be the focus of my morning devotional, I did not go ahead and read parallel passages in 2 Kings.

Little did I know that while first reading these historical accounts, later comparing them to my own life and how I have witnessed different “kings” or American presidents come and go, that the Spirit of God was preparing my heart for a serious time of intercession for the United States and its leadership—people who desperately need our prayers and supplications. If you read about the history of Ancient Israel, you can see that when different people in leadership positions approached the Lord in heartfelt ways, according to these passages, **He actually responded to the actions generated.**

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *qara* (קָרָא); “The root *qr*’ denotes primarily the enunciation of a specific vocable or message. In the case of the latter usage it is customarily addressed to a specific recipient and is intended to elicit a specific response” (G. Lloyd Carr, “קָרָא,” in *TWOT*, 2:810).

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *b’kol-lev* (בְּכָל־לֵב).

Before I settled into writing this essay, I casually read an article written by one of my favorite editorial writers. In this piece, the author was describing her impression of the press preview of a new rendition of the play, written over forty-years ago by Lorraine Hansbury, entitled “Raisin in the Sun.” Since I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s and had a recollection of it (of at least the movie that starred Sidney Poitier), I was able to follow the logic of her essay. But when she got to her punch line, where she described how the press-filled audience reacted to a line in the play regarding the \$5.00 down payment on a 1960 “pre-Roe v. Wade” abortion, *I was utterly brought to tears*. Without any seeming hesitancy, when the line confiding the decision to dispose of a baby was spoken—which in the 1960s would have created angst—this apparently brought a **standing ovation** by a media savvy audience, which had been a by-product of pro-abortion conditioning from the past forty years.

For some reason, the combination of reading the history of some of the kings of Ancient Israel, and the realization that many in the media elite of our society have been turned over to a reprobate mind, are powerfully moving. I remember how as a relatively young Christian I had been involved with some major efforts during the 1980s, to come against the growing problem of abortion, and also some efforts in politics that were instigated by my concerns. At that time, as a relatively new Believer, I was convinced that abortion was murder of an unborn child. *I still am*. Today, though, with partial birth abortion and all of the additional ways that humans can terminate a developing life (perhaps with only swallowing a pill now), my distress over this exacerbating holocaust literally generated another flood of tears.<sup>3</sup>

As my tears continued to flow, I commented to my Creator that this was certainly not what I was expecting as I was Counting the Omer this morning. I did not get much of a response, just the recollection that many of my efforts in years past—being involved in various political causes and Christian rallies, mostly—seemed to end in relative futility. No matter what my colleagues tried to do to stop the wholesale murder of unborn children, the tide of people choosing death continued to rise. Today (2004), taking a peek at the over thirty years of slaughter of the innocent in America, was a disturbing reality check.

The Spirit reminded and encouraged me, that what I was now devoting my time to, was one small way to get people focused on what one of Yeshua’s last directives was to His followers. Before His ascension into Heaven, the Lord gave His Disciples what is commonly referred to as the “Great Commission”:

“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Yeshua had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful. And Yeshua came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in

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<sup>3</sup> Editor’s note: While there are many evil and sordid causes and reasons behind the popularization of abortion, Old Testament theologian Walter C. Kaiser directly blames it on how many evangelical Christians have largely dismissed the Law of Moses as having any relevancy for their lives:

“What advice will [a certain teacher] give on marriage to close relatives (cf. Lev. 18), involvement with forms of witchcraft and various forms of the occult (cf. Lev. 19), the case for capital punishment (cf. Gen. 9), or the proscription against abortion (cf. Ex. 21)? Did Americans not learn in 1973 that a New Testament exclusivistic ethic landed us squarely in one of the largest legalized murdering ventures in recent times—now exceeding Hitler’s six million Jews sent up a chimney by four times over with some twenty-four million babies going in a bucket? What will it take to wake us up to the narrowness of our views?” (Walter C. Kaiser, “Response to Douglas Moo,” in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 400).

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the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:16-20).

Here, Yeshua makes it abundantly clear that He is in charge of all things in Heaven and on Earth. Nothing happens without Him allowing it to happen, even if His chosen on Earth do not want things like abortion and poor leadership in high places to be present. But the most important instruction He makes is that disciples of all peoples are to be made, by directing people to observe His teachings (cf. Matthew 5:17ff). Yeshua comforted His Disciples by letting them know that He would be with them always until the consummation of the age. Here in absolute terms, for all to read, is the ultimate instruction **that we are to make disciples of Him** with people from all over the world. Most importantly, if you will simply read and believe the words He spoke, we are to teach His followers to observe God’s commandments.

Whether you are Counting the Omer or not, or whether you are going to participate in a *Shavuot* commemoration or not—these are some of the commandments that I have been teaching about and encouraging you to consider through these reflections. *I would submit that they are just as important to heed as the respect we are to show for human life.* In a small way, I believe that I am trying to the best of my ability to follow some of the last recorded words given by our Savior.

My tears of sorrow turn **to tears of joy** as I press on in the work of helping to equip those who called into the salvation of God’s Kingdom!