

Psalm 119 ...God's Word in the Believer's Life.

Psalm 119 is devoted entirely to praise of God's word and its role in the life of the believer. The psalm is an amazing acrostic poem in which each of the verses in each of 22 eight-verse segments begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet, thus covering all 22 Hebrew letters. For instance, verses 1 through 8 each begin with *aleph*, verses 9 through 16 each begin with *beth*, and so forth.

The other unique feature of the psalm is its repeated use of nine different words to describe God's revelation. These appear in random order and with differing frequency.

Joy in his judgments (119:1–8). Those who keep God's law "with all their hearts" are assured of great blessing.

Purity in his precepts (119:9–16). "How can a young person stay pure?" By "hiding" God's word in his or her heart—studying, meditating on, and even memorizing Scripture.

Security in his statutes (119:17–24). Amid persecution, the psalmist felt like a stranger in the world but found comfort in God's word.

Deliverance in his decrees (119:25–32). Lying "in the dust, completely discouraged," the psalmist knew that deliverance from his sinful nature would come as the Lord helped him understand his laws.

Worth in his word (119:33–40). If the psalmist could truly learn God's law and keep from desiring the "worthless things" of this life, then he would find delight, revival, and reassurance.

Liberty in his law (119:41–48). The person who trusts in God's word will "walk in freedom," fearing no one and even speaking of his or her faith "to kings."

Comfort in his commands (119:49–56). Because the psalmist had kept God's laws (119:55–56), they were a comfort in the hour of pain and persecution.

Meeting with God at midnight (119:57–64). The psalmist declared his loyalty to God and his word: God was his portion; he was loyal to God's people (119:63); he hurried, "without lingering," to keep God's commandments, even arising at midnight to spend time with the Lord.

"Thank God for my affliction!" (119:65–72). The psalmist's affliction was a good thing (119:65, 68, 71) because it had turned him from his wayward life back to God and his word (119:67).

"You did it because you loved me!" (119:73–80). Again the writer expressed his belief that God had afflicted him for his own spiritual good, because it had turned him to his word.

Worn out like a wineskin (119:81–88). Though worn out by persecution, the psalmist was also wearing himself out seeking comfort in God's word (119:81–82)!

Forever standing firm in the heavens (119:89–96). As surely as the earth itself endures, so also will God's word stand firm (119:89–91). The psalmist hoped God's word would bring that same endurance to his own life (119:92–96).

Wiser than his enemies, instructors, and elders (119:97–104). The psalmist had surpassed all his associates in wisdom (119:98–100) because he studied and practiced God's law (119:99–100).

A lamp and a light (119:105–112). God's word offered the psalmist both illumination and inspiration. Though his enemies always threatened, God's word was his heritage and joy (119:111).

Depart, all you double-minded! (119:113–120). The psalmist would separate himself *from* the ungodly that he might separate himself *to* God's word (119:113, 115).

A time for action! (119:121–128). While pleading for mercy for himself as a lover of God's law, the psalmist implored God to exercise justice against those who disregarded God's law.

"Easily understood, even by the uneducated!" (119:129–136). Even the "simple" can become wise through God's word. The writer "panted" for more of this wisdom (119:131; see 42:1) and expressed great sorrow over the widespread disobedience to God's law.

The Scriptures in the time of storm (119:137–144). Though consumed with anguish over the wickedness around him (119:139), the psalmist found delight in God's word (119:143).

Delighting in them day and night (119:145–152). Though many sinful people were near him, the psalmist found the Lord near as well (119:150–151) as he arose before dawn and stayed awake at night contemplating the Scriptures.

Error-free and eternal (119:153–160). Amid persecution, the true believer can trust in a God whose words are totally trustworthy and will not change (119:160).

"I pray seven times a day!" (119:161–168). In spite of persecution, the psalmist found peace and hope (119:165–166) through his faithful and frequent practice of prayer.

"Come seek me," said the straying sheep to the Shepherd! (119:169–176). Confessing that he had gone astray, the psalmist declared that, nonetheless, he had not forgotten God's word, and he hoped that God would seek him (119:176) and would hear, help, and save him (119:169–170, 173–174)

Willmington's Bible handbook

Psalm 119... The Torah of the Lord

Essentially a didactic poem, this psalm takes the form of a personal testimony. Although the poem contains allusions to persecution and shows certain characteristics of laments, its main purpose is to glorify the Torah (God's law or teaching). The psalmist directs almost every verse to God, using many forms of petition. At the same time, he uses some synonym for the law in all but seven verses. The synonyms are: law, testimonies, precepts, judgments, commandments, statutes, sayings, word, way, and path. Possibly in employing ten terms to describe God's Torah, he was following the lead of Ps 19:7-9, where six such synonyms for the law are used.

The acrostic principle is highly developed in this psalm, employing all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza is composed of eight lines, which stanza is composed of eight lines, which begin with the letter characteristic of that stanza. This artificial yet artistic arrangement makes for a certain monotony in the great repetition of words and phrases. *However, this mechanical monotony is overcome by the intensity of the psalmist's own devotion to God's teachings.*

1-8. The Blessing of Obedience. Blessed ... who walk in the law of the Lord. The theme of the psalm is here set forth clearly. Note that most of the ten synonyms for the law are used in this first strophe.

9-16. The Way of Cleansing. Where-withal shall a young man cleanse his way? The question and answer are in keeping with the emphasis of the Wisdom writers. The answer to the problems of youth in any period of history is to heed God's Word by meditating on it (v. 15) and committing it to memory (v. 11) and by testifying concerning it to others (v. 13).

17-24. The Delight of Experience. Thy testimonies are my delight. This delight is based upon his past experience with God in times of persecution. A note of sorrow and desire runs through this strophe, but the section ends in delight.

25-32. The Strength in Understanding. Quicken ... teach ... make me to understand. The peril confronting the psalmist makes him call for strength and comfort. He realizes that the quickening he desires comes from an understanding of God's teachings.

33-40. The Need for Guidance. Teach me ... and I shall keep it. In phrase after phrase, the speaker pleads for God's guidance in ordering his life and in refraining from folly.

41-48. The Courage for Witnessing. Let thy mercies come. This appeal for help is not selfish; it is inspired by a desire to have wherewith to answer him that reproached me. The speaker further declares that he will witness to kings without being ashamed.

49-56. The Source of Comfort. Remember the word unto thy servant ... this is my comfort. In the time of affliction, God's teachings have been his stay and the songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

57-64. The Resolution of Faithfulness. I have said that I would keep thy words. Thinking upon his ways brought him to the point where he could turn his feet unto God's testimonies. His gratitude is evident in his promise to arise at midnight to thank God.

65-72. The Discipline of Affliction. It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Having gone astray before his affliction, the psalmist now sees a beneficent purposes in his suffering.

73-80. The Justice of Retribution. Let the proud be ashamed. After voicing again his desire for understanding, he pleads for God's blessings upon himself and shame upon his enemies. His end desire is that he may strengthen the faith of others.

81-88. The Hope in Darkness. My soul faintest ... I hope in thy word. In a succession of sobs, he expresses his hope and determination in his darkest hour. With each plea for comfort he reiterates his desire to be faithful.

89-96. The Triumph of Faith. Unless thy law (had been) my delights, I should then have perished (v. 92). The hope of the preceding strophe becomes an assured victory here. He affirms that he will never forget God's precepts since **with them thou hast quickened me.**

97-104. The Rapture of Enlightenment. O how love I thy law! Without the usual petitions, the psalmist describes how his study of the divine law has made him wiser and more understanding than his enemies, his teachers, and the aged. The emphasis is here upon the law itself, the source of knowledge rather than on native intelligence.

105-112. The Light of Life. Thy word is a lamp ... a light. His pilgrimage through life is under the guidance of God's teachings. He thus vows to follow the light wherever it may lead and whatever dangers may be involved.

113-120. The Inspiration of Loyalty. Thou art my hiding place and my shield. The sharp contrast drawn between faithless men and the psalmist emphasizes the loyalty of the latter. This loyalty gives him a sense of safety and the inspiration to face the future.

121-128. The Time of Intervention. It is time for thee, Lord to work. After declaring that he has diligently followed the right, the psalmist appeals for action on God's part. So completely have his oppressors disregarded God's law that only divine judgment is left for them.

129-136. The Wonder of Illumination. Thy testimonies are wonderful. The greatest wonder is the inner light that gives understanding even to the unlearned man. The psalmist is broken-hearted over those who do not keep God's law.

137-144. The Challenge of Righteousness. Righteous art thou, O Lord. The concept of God's nature as righteous finds emphasis here in verses 137, 138, 142, and 144. Because the Lord is righteous, his judgments and testimonies, also, are everlasting righteous.

145-152. The Assurance from Prayer. I cried ... hear me, O Lord. Recalling the many times he has prayed unceasingly for divine help, he cries again for God's quickening power. Then he reaffirms his faith in the Lord's nearness and the verity of His teaching.

153-160. The Consciousness of Need. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me. The severity of the speaker's affliction and his understanding of his personal need are clearly shown in the repetition of **quicken me** in verses 154, 156, and 159. The enduring nature of God's righteous judgments is his hope and assurance.

161-168. The Peace in Love. Great peace have they which love thy law. Even in the presence of potent enemies, the psalmist has an inner peace that grows out of his love for God's way. Note the absence of any petition, as in verses 97-104.

169-176. The Determination of Steadfastness. My lips shall utter praise. The psalmist sums up his message by pleading for further spiritual help, while declaring his intention to stand fast upon the foundation of God's teachings. *The Wycliffe Bible commentary*



PSALM 119 *The Torah of the Lord.* *“The Great Psalm”*
 **God’s Word in the Believer’s Life*
***The Golden ABC of the Word of God**

The “Mt. Everest” of the Psalter.

Responses of the Believer to God’s Word

“Walk according to the Law of the Lord” (v. 1).

“Keep His statutes” (v. 2).

“Obey [God’s] decrees” (v. 8).

“Living according to Your Word” (v. 9).

“Hidden Your Word in my heart”(v. 10).

“Recount all the laws” (v. 13).

“Rejoice in following Your statutes” (v. 14).

“Meditate on Your precepts” (v. 15).

“Delight in Your decrees” (v. 16).

“Longing for Your laws at all times” (v. 20).

“Let me understand the teaching of Your precepts” (v. 27).

“I have chosen the way of truth” (v. 30).

“I run in the path of Your commands” (v. 32).

“Keep them to the end” (v. 33).

“I long for Your precepts” (v. 40).

“I trust in Your Word” (v. 42).

“I will always obey Your Law” (v. 44).

“I will speak of Your statutes before kings” (v. 46).

“I delight in Your commandments because I love them” (v. 47).

“I do not turn from Your law” (v. 51).

“I find comfort in them” (v. 52).

“I have promised to obey Your words” (v. 57).

“I have considered my ways and turned my steps to Your statutes” (v. 59).

“I believe in Your commandments” (v. 66).

“Put my hope in Your Word” (v. 74).

“I do not forget Your decrees” (v. 83).

“I have not forsaken Your precepts” (v. 87).

“I have sought out Your precepts” (v. 94).

“I will ponder Your statutes” (v. 95).

“I love Your law” (v. 97).

“I gain understanding from Your precepts, therefore I hate every evil way” (v. 104).

“I love Your commands more than gold” (v. 127).

“I have put my hope in Your Word” (v. 147).

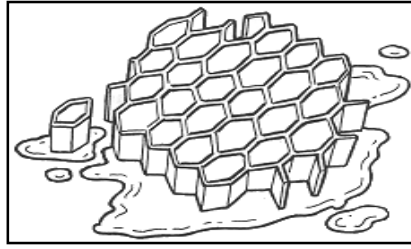
“I learned from Your statutes” (v. 152).

“I have not turned from Your statutes” (v. 157).

“I rejoice in Your promise” (v. 162).

“I follow Your commands” (v. 166).

“I have chosen Your precepts” (v. 173).



IMAGES OF GOD’S WORD “THE HONEYCOMB”

The honeycomb (119:103) was the sweetest substance known in the ancient world. No refined sugar was available, but bees were plentiful in the agricultural highlands of Palestine, and their produce was highly valued by the Israelites. *To say that Scripture is sweeter than honey is to say the psalmist values it more than any pleasure.*

Scripture is sweet to our taste:

- * *It renews our life (v. 89–96).*
- * *It makes us wiser than our enemies (vv. 97–104).*
- * *It is the joy of our heart (vv. 105–112).*
- * *It sustains our hope (vv. 113–120).*
- * *It shapes our values (vv. 121–128).*
- * *It gives understanding to the simple (vv. 129–136).*
- * *It provides inner delight (vv. 137–144).*
- * *It gives us confidence in prayer (vv. 145–152).*
- * *It is filled with promises (vv. 153–160).*
- * *It causes us to praise (vv. 161–168).*
- * *It causes us to overflow with praise (vv. 169–176).*

