

Walking in God's Ways

A Journey Through Psalm 119

Introduction

The crown jewel of Hebrew poetry! Psalm 119 gives everything we need to walk in God's ways and live a life full of wisdom and truth.

Charles Spurgeon opened his commentary on Psalm 119 with this beautiful quote:

"There is no title to this Psalm, neither is any author's name mentioned. It is the longest Psalm, and this is a sufficiently distinctive name for it...Nor is it long only; for it equally excels in breath of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervour. It is like the celestial city, which lieth four-square, and the height and the breadth of it are equal. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning, which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs, it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes. As those who drink the Nile water like it better every time they take a draught, so does this Psalm become the more full and fascinating the oftener you turn to it. It contains no idle word; the grapes of this cluster are almost to bursting full with the new wine of the kingdom. The more you look into this mirror of a gracious heart, the more you will see it. Placid on the surface as the sea of glass before the eternal throne, it yet contains within in its depths an ocean of fire, and those who devoutly gaze into it shall not only see the brightness, but feel the glow of the sacred flame. It is loaded with holy sense, and it is as weighty as it is bulky. Again, and again have we cried, while studying it, 'Oh, the depths!' Yet these depths are hidden beneath, an apparent simplicity, as Augustine has well, and wisely said, and this makes the exposition all the more difficult. Its obscurity is hidden beneath a veil light, and hence, only those discover it who are in thorough earnest, not only to look on the word, but, like the angels, to look into it."

Matthew Henry, while writing about his father, Phillip Henry, says:

"Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of this Psalm every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in the year; and that, saith he, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures. He often said, 'All grace grows as love to the word of God grows.'"

There is a depth here that truly cannot be put into words and it is the challenge of the author, that you move beyond just a cursory understanding of this Psalm and dive deeper into its depths and walk with God.

Acrostic Poetry in God's Word

Psalm 9 - incomplete

Psalm 10 - incomplete
Psalm 25 - incomplete
Psalm 34 - incomplete
Psalm 37 - complete
Psalm 111 - complete
Psalm 112 - complete
Psalm 145 - incomplete
Proverbs 31:10-31 - complete

Lamentations

Chapter 1 - 22 verses, each verse in alphabetical order
Chapter 2 - 22 verses, each verse in alphabetical order
Chapter 3 - 66 verses, 3 verses are given to each letter in order (a, a, a; b, b, b; etc)
Chapter 4 - 22 verses, each verse in alphabetical order
Chapter 5 - 22 verses, not in alphabetical order

Psalm 119 stands out by its intricate detail. First of all, it is complete; but its detail is second to none. Each corresponding Hebrew letter gets eight verses, each verse consists of two lines. Second, it consists of the most verses in this format! Lamentations has 154 verses whereas Psalm 119 consists of 176.

Acrostic Poetry at a Glance

Here is what the first section (Aleph א) looks like in the Hebrew Bible.

- (1) Blessed are the undefiled in the way, אֲשֶׁר־יִמְיִי-גֵרָף הַהֹלְכִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה:
Who walk in the law of the Lord.
- (2) Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, אֲשֶׁר־יִבְצְרֵי עֲדוֹתָיו בְּכָל-לֵב יִדְרֹשׁוּהוּ:
And that seek him with the whole heart.
- (3) They also do no iniquity: אִם לֹא-פָעְלוּ עֲוֹנָה בְּדַרְכֵי הַלְכוּ:
They walk in his ways.
- (4) Thou hast commanded us אַתָּה צִוִּיתָהּ פְּקֻדֹתַי לְשָׁמֵר מְאֹד:
To keep thy precepts diligently.
- (5) O that my ways were directed אֲחֻלִּי יִכְנֹו דַרְכֵי לְשָׁמֵר חֻקֶּיךָ:
To keep thy statutes!
- (6) Then shall I not be ashamed, אֲזו לֹא-אֶבֹּשׁ בְּהֵיטִי אֶל-כָּל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ:
When I have respect unto all thy commandments.
- (7) I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, אֹדֶךָ בְּיֶשֶׁר לִבִּי בְלִמְדֵי מִשְׁפָּטֶי צְדָקָה:
When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

- (8) I will keep thy statutes: אֶת־חֻקֶיךָ אֲשַׁמֵּר אֶל־תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי עַד־מָאֵל:
O forsake me not utterly.

The Theme of Psalm 119

The overarching theme of Psalm 119 is the **value** of God's teachings and commandments, emphasizing the significance of **living** according to divine guidance. It reflects on the **moral** and **spiritual** significance of following God's law and seeking understanding through it.

The Facets of the Word of God

1. **Commandment** (Mitsvah) - A definite command imposed by **authority**.

Used **22** times: 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 172, 176

2. **Judgments** (Mishpatim) - Judicial **decision** or sentence.

Used **23** times; 19 times in the plural and 4 times in the singular: 7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 91(ordinances), 102, 106, 108, 120, 121, 132*, 137, 149, 156, 160, 164, 175)

*Verse 132 "As thou usest to do" is the Hebrew word Mishpat, or judgement.

3. **Law** (Torah) - A law, instruction, teaching, revelation of the **will** of God for the life of man.

Used **25** times: 1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174

4. **Precepts** (Piqqudim) - **mandates**, injunctions.

Used **21** times: 4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, 173

5. **Saying** (Imrah) - An utterance and the purport of it; something communicated **orally**.

Used **19** times: 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 158, 162, 170, 172

6. **Statutes** (Chuqqim) - comes from the root "to hew, cut in, engrave" so it comes to mean that which is **ordained**, decreed, prescribed or enacted.

Used **22** times: 5, 8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171

7. **Testimonies** (Eduth or Edah) - A reiteration, attestation, **witness**

Used **23** times: 2, 14, 22, 24, 31, 36, 46, 59, 79, 88, 95, 99, 111, 119, 125, 129, 138, 144, 146, 152, 157, 167, 168

8. **Way** (Derek) - It signifies a road that has been trodden; a **mode** of life, a **course** of action marked by God's law.

Used **13** times: 1, 3, 5, 14, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37, 59, 168

9. **Word** (Dabar) - It comes from the root word which means to set in a row or to set forth in speech. It signifies the **articulation** of God's will to men.

Used **24** times: 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42 (twice), 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, 169

Parallelism of Christ in Psalm 119

Derek Kidner remarks: "This untiring emphasis has led some to accuse the psalmist of worshipping the Word rather than the Lord; but it has been well remarked that every reference here to Scripture, without exception, relates it explicitly to its Author; indeed, every verse from 4 to the end is a prayer for affirmation addressed to Him. This is true piety: a love of God not desiccated by study but refreshed, informed and nourished by it."

Light of the world	Psalm 119:105	John 8:12
Eternal nature of Christ	Psalm 119:89	John 1:1
Christ's use of scripture memory	Psalm 119:11	Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15
Christ's emphasis on obedience	Psalm 119:10	Matthew 22:37