

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

The Psalms

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Psalm 119

Reading:
Part of Psalm 119

Introduction

Through the ages preachers have delivered thousands, possibly millions of sermons based on the Psalms; simply because the Psalms contain some of the most beautiful spiritual concepts on which the human mind can dwell. The Psalms are the **Hymn Book** of Scripture; a collection of spiritual songs which were set to music and sung by the choirs of Israel. Many of Christianity's best loved hymns are based on the Psalms.

The Psalms cover many subjects: **history, war, peace, health, sickness, happiness, sorrow, wealth, poverty, leadership, good advice** etc. The Psalms also contain some of the most profound **prophecies** in Scripture. All this means that the Psalms are as relevant today as they were over two thousand years ago. They tell of the Saviour's life, his work and death; even the very words he would speak as he hung on the cross. They also tell of his second coming and subsequent rule over all nations.

Like Psalm 1, which has only 6 verses, Psalm 119 with its 176 verses is all about the Almighty's law and the **blessings** that flow from obedience. In a world where church leaders consider it clever to set aside the laws of the Creator, preaching sermon after sermon about how irrelevant, obsolete or even barbaric it is, Psalm 119 shines forth like a beacon on a hill. Together with the Messiah's **Sermon on the Mount** (Matthew chapters 5 to 7) Psalm 119 is the finest testimony for Yahweh's law you will find in all Scripture. Let us take a brief look at this magnificent Psalm today.

Acrostic Structure

Psalm 119 is **acrostic** in its structure; in that each of its **22 sections** begins with a different letter in the 22 letter Hebrew alphabet. Moreover the 8 verses in each section start with that same letter and so we have $22 \times 8 = 176$ verses in all. In other words all 8 verses in the first section begin with the Hebrew character **Aleph** (equivalent to our A) and in the next section all 8 verses begin with **Beth** (equivalent to our B) and so on. This alphabetical pattern of A followed by B is lost when translating to English simply because the English alphabet not only has 26 characters but in Hebrew the equivalent letter to B is not followed by C. Nor is it possible to translate each verse into English with the same alphabetical character and still maintain the correct meaning. Nevertheless, do remember that the original **acrostic pattern** did help the Hebrew reader or singer to memorise the verses and words of this lengthy Psalm.

Keywords

To begin you will notice that virtually **every verse** in Psalm 119 contains one or more of the following keywords: *law, commandments, precepts, testimonies, judgement/s, word, statutes, ways* or *name*. This is significant, because it tells us that composer of Psalm 119 poured over the **Torah**, the law of God, and understood its various divisions as few others do. He knew that **God's law represented His Name, His character and His will; that it was a transcript of the Almighty's own soul and an everlasting fountain of blessing**. To obey Yahweh's law was the psalmist's one goal, the all-consuming passion of his life. Never a day or night passed, but found him pondering the mysteries of the Almighty's words, **laws, commandments, statutes, precepts** and **judgements**.

We will now examine this Psalm under various **keywords** which tell of certain spiritual concepts and realities. Because of its length I will simply mention the **keyword** and then the verse number/s or phrase/s which explain it.

1. Blessing

To be blessed by the Almighty is by far the greatest privilege any human can have. *Wealth, possessions, good health* and *fame* count for nothing if the Almighty's blessing is absent in one's life. This Psalm begins with the secret of blessing.

- Verse: 1: ***“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.”***
- Verse: 2: ***“Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.”***

2. Peace

The world is in turmoil. People are in turmoil. Peace is a dream to countless millions. Men talk about peace, pray for peace, march for peace, attend peace conferences and sign peace treaties. But the way of peace they know not. Why not? Because they have rejected the **Prince of Peace** and his formula for peace. What's the formula for peace?

- Verse: 165: ***“Great peace have they which love thy law and nothing shall offend them.”***

In other words - only those who love and obey the Almighty's law will know real peace - peace within. All others will live in silent turmoil.

3. Teaching

It goes without saying that no one learned anything without wanting to learn. Before we can learn from the Almighty His most valuable lessons we must **want to learn!** We must **ask** Him to teach us!

- Verse: 12: ***“Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.”***
- Verse: 18: ***“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”***
- Verse: 135: ***“Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.”***
- Verse: 144: ***“...give me understanding, and I shall live.”***

4. Understanding

The world spends billions of dollars, pounds, marks and yen etc. on education; filling the minds of adults and children with facts and theories. Knowledge in virtually every branch of learning is on the increase. But, alas! true **understanding** as to what life is all about is sadly lacking.

- Why were we created?
- How are we supposed to live?
- What is right and what is wrong? Who decides?

- What happens to us after we die?

These questions are seldom answered in the popular institutions of learning. But they are answered in Yahweh's law. Indeed those who study and live by the Almighty's commandments will excel in understanding.

- Verse: 104: ***“Through thy precepts I get understanding...”***
- Verse: 99: ***“I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.”***
- Verse: 100: ***“I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.”***

5. Protection

Protection is big business these days. The armed forces, the police and fire services, insurance companies and even the makers of protective clothing are all aware of the ever-present need for **protection**. But what about protection from sin, that deadly virus which can rob a person of present happiness and eventually of eternal life? In a world obsessed with protecting temporal goods I offer you the **Word of God** as the best protection against sin.

- Verse: 11: ***“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”***

6. Eternal

The Scriptures abound with evidence that the laws of the Almighty are eternal; that they will outlast the present universe and go on and on for all time. Yahweh's laws are as eternal as Himself; simply because they are transcripts of His own character. The Almighty is immortal; He will live for all time. Therefore His laws, which describe Him are also eternal. They will endure as long as He does.

- Verse: 44: ***“So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever”***
- Verse: 144 ***“The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting:”***
- Verse: 152: ***“Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.”***
- Psalm 111: 7-8: ***“...all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.”***
- Matthew 5: 17: ***“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
18: For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”***

7. Affliction

Nobody likes to be afflicted or punished. But there are times when affliction is necessary. Affliction is a vital part of discipline and it will only cease when perfection is reached.

- Verse: 67: ***“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”***
- Verse: 71: ***“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”***

8. Yearning

Are you eager to learn about the Almighty and His Word? Do you really want to understand His will for mankind and how He reacts to human behaviour? To be sure all Christians want to be holy, just and true. But do we **yearn** for these things? Do we want them with **all our heart and soul**? No one, be they musician, singer, sportsman, artist, poet, writer or inventor, ever accomplished anything of worth without **total dedication, absolute commitment and maximum effort**. It is exactly the same with the things of the Spirit. To arrive at your goal you must give it all you've got. Nothing less will do.

- Verse: 10: “With my **whole heart** have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.”
- Verse: 20: “My soul breaketh for the **longing** that it hath unto thy judgments”
- Verse: 131: “I opened my mouth, and panted: for **I longed for thy commandments.**”
- Verse: 145: “I cried with my **whole heart**; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.”

9. Salvation

Most sensible people want to be saved; to live for ever and ever. But is salvation possible for the folk who deliberately break and reject the Almighty's statutes? Will the persistent sinner somehow gain entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven? The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the wicked will not be saved if they persist in their sins. This Psalm says the same thing.

- Verse: 155: “**Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.**”

10. The Lost Sheep

But can a backslider, a repentant sinner, echo the words of Psalm 119? Sure he can. A backslider may stray from the pathway of truth and become entangled in sin. He may break one or more of the commandments of the Most High. But as long as he repents, asks forgiveness and then turns back to the pathway of obedience, **salvation is possible**. Millions of backsliders have found salvation again. They were lost, but somehow *they never forgot the law of the Most High*. Yahweh is eager to save them. He is searching for His *lost sheep*!

- Verse: 176: *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*

Psalm 119 is a spiritual gold mine. I have merely scratched the surface; retrieving a nugget here and a nugget there. I recommend to you Psalm 119; a psalm written by **a man after God's own heart!**

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.
Elder: *Max W. Mader*

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