

## Week 11 – Psalm 119

### A Wisdom Psalm

### Psalm 119 – A Love Poem to God's Word

- The psalm was written by a man who draws strength by meditating on God's word despite being ridiculed for his faith
- The psalm is an acrostic poem. The psalm has twenty-two sections, one for each of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section has eight lines each with each of the lines beginning with the same letter. Verses 1-8 begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, verses 9-16 with the second, and so on.
- Each strophe contains a meditation on God's word, referred to by ten synonyms.
  - o "Law" occurs 25 times. Refers to God's instructions and sometimes to the Pentateuch as a whole.
  - o "Word" occurs 20 times. It is a general term for God's revelation.
  - o "Saying/Promise" occurs 19 times. Similar in meaning to "Word."
  - o "Commandment" occurs 21 times in the plural and once in the singular. Refers to a definite command.
  - o "Statutes" occurs 21 times. Always plural and often with the word "commands." Literally means "things inscribed."
  - o "Judgement" occurs 19 times in the plural and 4 times in the singular. Refers to judicial decisions that form a precedence making it a binding law.
  - o "Precepts" occurs 21 times. The word is found only in the Psalms and means injunctions.
  - o "Testimony" occurs 22 times in the plural, once in the singular. In this instance, testimony is a solemn attestation of the will of God. Sometimes gets translated as statutes in the NIV.
  - o "Way" occurs five times in the plural and six times in the singular. Metaphoric way of referring to the pattern of life created by God's law.
  - o "Path" occurs five times and is parallel to way.
- The psalmist also uses a variety of ways to talk about his interaction with God's word. He delights, loves, obeys, meditates, and rejoices in God's word.
- He trusts God's word to both "renew" him and "preserve" him.
- His favorite way to describe himself is as "God's servant."
- The most frequently used word is the pronoun "your," as in, "Your word...your laws...your precepts." This is not a love poem to a book, but rather to the author of the book.

### Psalm 119 – Twenty-Two ways to praise God's Word.

- A. Blessings of Obedience (119:1-8) – "Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord."
- B. Guidance by God's Word (119:9-16) – "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word...I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
- C. Prayer for Insight (119:17-24) – "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."
- D. Prayer for Strength (119:25-32) – "My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word."

## A Song for Every Season: A Study on the Psalms

- E. Prayer for Understanding (119:33-40) – “Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.”
- F. Salvation through God’s Word (119:41-48) – “May your unfailing love come to me, LORD, your salvation according to your promise.”
- G. Hope from God’s Word (119:49-56) – “In the night, LORD, I remember your name, that I may keep your law.”
- H. Obedience to God’s Word (119:57-64) – “I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes.”
- I. Trust in God’s Word (119:65-72) – “You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.”
- J. Hope in God’s Word (119:73-80) – “May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word.”
- K. God’s Word is Faithful (119:81-88) – “All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for I am being persecuted without cause.”
- L. God’s Word is Sure (119:89-96) – “Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.”
- M. God’s Word is Sweet (119:97-104) – “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”
- N. God’s Word is a Light (119:105-112) – “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”
- O. God’s Word Protects (119:113-120) – “You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.”
- P. Vindication from God (119:121-128) – “I have done what is righteous and just; do not leave me to my oppressors.”
- Q. God’s Word is Wonderful (119:129-136) – “Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them.”
- R. God’s Word is Righteous (119:137-144) – “Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true.”
- S. God’s Word is True (119:145-152) – “Those who devise wicked schemes are near, but they are far from your law. Yet you are near, LORD, and all your commands are true.”
- T. Prayer for Deliverance (119:153-160) – “Look on my suffering and deliver me, for I have not forgotten your law.”
- U. Rejoicing in God’s Word (119:161-168) – “Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws.”
- V. Deliverance by God’s Word (119:169-176) – “I long for your salvation, LORD, and your law gives me delight.”

## Other Wisdom/Instruction Psalms

- Psalm 53 – “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”
- Psalm 63 – “On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.”
- Psalm 78 – “O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from old.”
- Psalm 127 – “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.”
- Psalm 128 – “Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways.”

## Sources

- Davidson, Robert, *The Vitality of Worship* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
- Goldingay, John, *Psalms*, Volume 1: Psalms 90-150, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2008).
- May, James L., *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville KY: John Knox, 1994).