

Psalm 119 – Study Guide¹

With Psalm 119's unique emphasis on the Word of God, I thought that it would be fitting to direct our attention to the magnificence of the whole of the Scriptures as we now have them. A fitting summary can be found in the introduction of the Bibles distributed by Gideon's International.

"The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. Here too, Heaven is opened and the gates of Hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure.

It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."²

Introduction

Psalm 119 is different, and therefore this Study Guide is different. The objective of this resource is to help you see patches of trees in a most glorious forest. There would be an indisputable advantage to walking through every fine detail of this psalm and exposit in a like effort to other psalms that we have walked through in our study, but its magnificent breadth would require more than the design of our present study would allow. However, there is in this a certain advantage because it forces us to see Psalm 119 in larger and thematic portions which also inform our understanding, work in our hearts, and transform our worship. It is my hope that this will serve as a true *study guide* as you too give necessary attention to this magnificent psalm. During different seasons of my life Psalm 119 was my daily primer before giving further attention to various portions of the Scripture, this has served me well and I know giving it attention these two weeks will serve you well too, and I hope it will foster a like habit in your life. Finally, I have included the entirety of Psalm 119 throughout this guide, and at times verses are duplicated under various headings. This was not to fill pages, this was to provide you the ability to walk through the text in tandem to your examination of the various breakdowns I have provided. This is particularly helpful as the breakdowns are not verse by verse. Also, I want you in the text and not just examining headers, some commentary, and taking mental note of provided references. I want you in the text and it would be a particularly grave disservice to Psalm 119 to do anything that would direct your attention elsewhere.

This psalm will demand time of you. Time spent here will prove rewarding – the return being greater than the momentary investment.

AUTHOR AND STRUCTURE OF PSALM 119

We do not know the author of Psalm 119 and there are not overt indicators (personal, historical, or geographical) within the psalm that give insight regarding authorship. Perhaps more tangibly than any other psalm the emphasis on its greater author is the primary focus – The LORD whose Scriptures are extolled throughout is the psalm's chief author.

¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School

ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

² As of 103016 - Available on the Gideon's International Blog: <http://blog.gideons.org/2010/12/the-bible-contains-the-mind-of-god/>

Psalms 119 is an alphabetic acrostic. This was a magnificent form of poetry in which every line of each section begins with the letter of the alphabet that corresponds with that section of the psalm.

KEY TERMS FOR PSALM 119

There are one thousand one hundred and eighty-nine chapters in the Scriptures. Psalm 119 constitutes not only the longest psalm, but the longest chapter of the whole of the Scriptures. In Psalm 119 the Word of God is clearly the chief element of this longest psalm as it is referred to directly or by synonym one hundred sixty-eight times in the one hundred and seventy-six verses. The psalmist employs eight different terms to communicate the Scripture's breadth and richness: Law, Testimony, Precept, Statute, Commandment, Rule, Word, and Promise.

Law or Torah

God's special revealed law to the people of Israel, instructing them in holy living – obedience and distinction with elements spanning the whole of Israelite life and religious contact.

Law or Torah is used twenty-four times in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 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

Testimony

The act of recalling observed and known facts/truths, appear to have an instructional element when applied to God's truths for his people. Another term for testimony is also used and it is frequently referred to in conjunction with the ark of the covenant. Even the tablets with the Decalogue are referred to as the "two tablets of the testimony." The ark of the covenant was also referred to as "the ark of the testimony."

Testimony is used twenty-two times in Psalm 119.

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

Precepts

A command or rule of action.

Precepts is used twenty times in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, 173

Statutes

Decreed rule.

Statutes is used twenty-one times in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 5, 8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171

Commandments

That which has been commanded by God, divine imperatives for life and obedience.

Commandments is used twenty-two times in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 158, 166, 172, 176

Rules

Codification of expected conduct that would include ideas of order, submission, and just/right.

A hand full of times the word is translated in various ways outside of rules to communicate judgment/justice (this appears to be a very consequential translation choice outside of the Psalms too).

Rules is used seventeen times in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 102, 106, 108, 137, 156, 160, 164, 175

Word

That which is spoken or written – a unique quality of God that he has graced man with the ability to exercise, and by which he communicates and secures his truth to/for man.

Word is used twenty-nine times in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 9, 11, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42, 43, 49, 57, 65, 67, 74, 81, 89, 101, 103, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, 162, 169, 170, 172

Promise

A sure word of hope from The LORD to his people who submit themselves in faith and obedience.

This term is used thirteen times in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 41, 50, 57, 58, 76, 82, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154

REGARDING THE STUDY GUIDE'S LAYOUT

The psalmist provides an exceptional breadth of material in Psalm 119 and it can be categorically divided any number of ways all while keeping a central focus on God's precious word. The following has two intended purposes: first to demonstrate the categorical breadths of the psalm and second to call on those who have the high privilege of having the Scriptures to cherish them and seek their full benefit to the glory of their chief author.

THE PSALMIST AND THE WORD OF GOD

Our first engagement of Psalm 119 will be to consider in the broadest of categories: "The Psalmist and the Word of God," where we will observe how the psalmist engaged the Word of God to the glory of God and the benefit of his soul. These categorizations are intended to press you to observe a model that we would do well to follow in its affectionate delight and satisfaction in God's Word.

The Blessed Condition.

Just as Psalm 1 established at the very beginning of the Psalter, there is a life that is blessed, happy, or fully satisfied in The LORD. Here the psalmist picks up on that wonderful truth and demonstrates again that blessing cannot be separated from submission to and affection for the Scriptures. It is no cavalier experience with the Word of God, but an absolute consumption by it and of it.

"Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" Psalm 119:1-3

Keeping God's Word.

Keeping God's Word is a robust section and reasonably so as this is a crucial element of our relationship to the Scriptures - keeping them! Through these passages the psalmist clearly articulates that not only does keeping the Scriptures result in blessing, but it is what The LORD expects and commands. Further, not only can one keep the Word of God while under duress, but there is great delight and satisfaction in these things, demonstrating that they do not only lead to blessings but are themselves a blessing too. Finally, it is no surprise that the psalmist articulates not only a faithfulness in this area, but a deliberate faithfulness by means of prioritization in his life.

Keeping God's Testimonies

"Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart..."

Psalm 119:2

"Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies." Psalm 119:22

"In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth." Psalm 119:88

"Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them." Psalm 119:129

"My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly. I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you." Psalm 119:167-168

Keeping God's Ways Diligently

"You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently." Psalm 119:4

Keeping God's Statutes

"I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!" Psalm 119:8

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end." Psalm 119:33

"With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes." Psalm 119:145

Keeping God's Law

"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart." Psalm 119:34

"I will keep your law continually, forever and ever..." Psalm 119:44

"I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law." Psalm 119:55

Keeping God's Precepts

"This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts." Psalm 119:56

"I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts." Psalm 119:63

"The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts..." Psalm 119:69

"I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts." Psalm 119:100

"Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts." Psalm 119:134

"I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you." Psalm 119:168

Keeping God's Words

"The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words." Psalm 119:57

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word." Psalm 119:67

"I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word." Psalm 119:101

Keeping The Commandments of God

"I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments." Psalm 119:60

"Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God." Psalm 119:115

"I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments." Psalm 119:166

Meditating on God's Word

Perhaps one of the most precious and yet overlooked disciplines of engaging the Scriptures is that of meditating or musing over the text. The psalmist placed a substantial premium on this discipline and would have found its absence strange if not unimaginable for one who genuinely loves the Scriptures and the God of the Scriptures. This discipline is where the Spirit of God gently marinates the soul, reforms the thinking, and secures an affection and insight to the Scriptures that cannot be done by any other means and simply cannot be expedited – it demands and deserves your time.

Meditating on God's Precepts

"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways." Psalm 119:15

"Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts." Psalm 119:78

Meditating on God's Statutes

"Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes." Psalm 119:23

"I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes." Psalm 119:48

Meditating on God's Wondrous Works

"Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works." Psalm 119:27

Thinking on God's Rules

"When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD." Psalm 119:52

Meditating on God's Law

"Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97

Meditating on God's Testimonies

"I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation." Psalm 119:99

Meditating on God's Promise

"My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise." Psalm 119:148

Delighting in God's Word

A man of poor taste and little knowledge delights in simple and valueless things. The psalmist, by contrast, has found a priceless treasure and knows that he lacks the natural capacity to appreciate and delight in it like he should; but he wants to, and he works hard at delighting all the more in this most chief of treasures. It would serve one's soul well to examine the object of its delight and to repentantly redirect one's affections to where they belong – the Scriptures. We will never be a people of The Book if we are not a people who delight in The Book.

Delighting in God's Testimonies

"In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches." Psalm 119:14

"Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors." Psalm 119:24

Delighting in God's Statutes

"I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word." Psalm 119:16

Delighting in God's Commandments

"Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it." Psalm 119:35

"...for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love." Psalm 119:47

"Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight." Psalm 119:143

Delighting in God's Law

"...their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law." Psalm 119:70

"Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight." Psalm 119:77

"If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." Psalm 119:92

"I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight." Psalm 119:174

Loving God's Word

Inseparable from delighting in the Scriptures is loving the Scriptures. The psalmist did not make casual tribute to The Word of God, he loved The Word of God. Jesus was not ambiguous on this matter: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." John 14:15. It is not only logical, but true that a reflection of loving God is keeping his commandments, but even further that one would love the commandments themselves as they are God's commandments.

Loving God's Commandments

"...for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes." Psalm 119:47-48

"Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold." Psalm 119:127

Loving God's Law

"Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97

"I hate the double-minded, but I love your law." Psalm 119:113

"I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law." Psalm 119:163

Loving God's Testimonies

"All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies." Psalm 119:119

"My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly." Psalm 119:167

Loving God's Promise

"Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it." Psalm 119:40

Loving The LORD's Precepts

"Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love." Psalm 119:159

Conduct Avoided

One is defined by both what they are and what they are not. The psalmist makes his conduct and commitments clear – he will not stray, wonder, or forget The LORD's magnificent word.

Does No Wrong

"...who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" Psalm 119:3

Not Forgetting God's Word

"I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word." Psalm 119:16

Does Not Turn Away from God's Law

"The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law." Psalm 119:51
"Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law." Psalm 119:61
"I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me." Psalm 119:102
"I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law." Psalm 119:109
"Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law." Psalm 119:153

Not Forgetting God's Statutes

"For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes." Psalm 119:83

Not Forsaking, Forgetting, or Straying from God's Precepts

"They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts." Psalm 119:87
"I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life." Psalm 119:93
"The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts." Psalm 119:110
"I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts." Psalm 119:141

Not Swerving from God's Testimonies

"Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies." Psalm 119:157

Not Forgetting The LORD's Commandments

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments." Psalm 119:176

A Resume' of Faithfulness, Testimony, and Genuine Godliness

This last section of the "The Psalmist and The Word of God" consists of an abundance of singular elements all packing tremendous truth under their respective headings. Partly because of the structure of the psalm being an alphabetic acrostic piece of literature and partly because of its inexhaustible subject matter, namely the Word of God. The following passages are treated more individualistically than the prior passages have been. Some subjects lent themselves to be clustered under larger headings, while these appear better suited more individualistically.

Not all sections will receive additional commentary as several could be summarized rather succinctly as elements of a working definition of faithfulness and relationship with The LORD.

How many of these elements mark your faithfulness, testimony, and genuine godliness?

Seeking God Wholeheartedly

Man cannot have a greater pursuit than pursuing God, and where he can be found is quite plain and obvious. Seeking God is only truly satisfied when one pursues him through his Scriptures.

"Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart..." Psalm 119:2
"With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!" Psalm 119:10

Walking in God's Ways

"...who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" Psalm 119:3

Remaining Steadfast

"Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!" Psalm 119:5

A Righteous Gaze

"Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments." Psalm 119:6

"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways." Psalm 119:15

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." Psalm 119:18

"My eyes long for your promise; I ask, 'When will you comfort me?'" Psalm 119:82

"My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise." Psalm 119:123

"My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise." Psalm 119:148

Learning God's Righteous Rules

"I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules." Psalm 119:7

Purity and Obedience Through the Safeguarding of the Scriptures

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word." Psalm 119:9

"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:11

Declaring Lips

"With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth." Psalm 119:13

Living to Keep God's Word

"Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word." Psalm 119:17

Sojourner On This Earth

"I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!" Psalm 119:19

"Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning." Psalm 119:54

Soul Consumed with Longing

Could one be any more enraptured than for their soul to be consumed with longing for God's Word!

"My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times." Psalm 119:20

Counseled by God's Word

"Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors." Psalm 119:24

The Prioritization of Faithfulness and God's Rules

"I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me." Psalm 119:30

Clinging to God's Testimonies

"I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame!" Psalm 119:31

Running In The Way of God's Commandments

"I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!" Psalm 119:32

"I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word." Psalm 119:101

Observing The Law of God Wholeheartedly

"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart." Psalm 119:34

Valuing The LORD's Rules as Good

"Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good." Psalm 119:39

Longing For The LORD's Precepts, Salvation, Commandments, and Promise

"Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!" Psalm 119:40

"My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word." Psalm 119:81

"My eyes long for your promise; I ask, 'When will you comfort me?'" Psalm 119:82

"My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise." Psalm 119:123

"I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments." Psalm 119:131

"I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight." Psalm 119:174

Trusting in God's Word

"...then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word." Psalm 119:42

Hope Is In The LORD's Rules

"And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules." Psalm 119:43

Seeking God's Precepts

"...and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts." Psalm 119:45

"I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts." Psalm 119:94

A Shameless Testimony Before Kings

"I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame..." Psalm 119:46

Indignation Against Those Who Forsake God's Law

What makes us angry will frequently betray our priorities. Yielding to anger should serve as a tool to examine what pushed you to this place. For Jesus it was the abuse of his Father's house/The Temple (John 2:17) and the hypocritical vulgarities of the religious leaders (Matthew 23). For the psalmist it was the forsaking of God's law. What makes you angry and what does this say of your heart?

"Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law." Psalm 119:53

"Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." Psalm 119:104

"I hate the double-minded, but I love your law." Psalm 119:113

"Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way." Psalm 119:128

"My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget your words." Psalm 119:139

"I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commands." Psalm 119:158

God's Statutes Are The Sojourner's Songs

"Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning." Psalm 119:54

Night Time Thoughts and Worship Fixed On The LORD

"I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law." Psalm 119:55

"At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules." Psalm 119:62

"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words." Psalm 119:147

"My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise." Psalm 119:148

Wholehearted Entreating Of The LORD's Favor

"I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise." Psalm 119:58

Thinking On His Ways and Turning to God's Testimonies

"When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies..." Psalm 119:59

Believing In God's Commandments:

"Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments." Psalm 119:66

Learning Through Affliction

It is a unique disposition to be grateful for affliction, but the psalmist saw it for its value as a teacher of God's truth. Might we also have a proper perspective of our hardships too.

"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." Psalm 119:71

"I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me." Psalm 119:75

A Superior Valuation of God's Law

"The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." Psalm 119:72

Hoping In God's Word

"Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word." Psalm 119:74

"My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word." Psalm 119:81

You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word." Psalm 119:114

"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words." Psalm 119:147

Considering God's Testimonies

"The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies." Psalm 119:95

Always Accompanied By God's Commandment

"Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me." Psalm 119:98

Understanding Through Precepts

"Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." Psalm 119:104

Sworn To Keep God's Righteous Rules

The psalmist has bound himself in obedience to a prescribed set of rules, but they are not just any rules – they are God's righteous rules. What are the nature of your commitments – are they as valuable in view of eternity and the glory of God, or are they artificially constraining you?

"I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules." Psalm 119:106

God's Testimonies Are Joy To The Heart

"Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart." Psalm 119:11

Inclined Heart To Perform God's Statutes

"I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end." Psalm 119:112

Weeping Over Others Breaking God's Law

"My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law." Psalm 119:136

Desire To Observe God's Testimonies

"I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

Knowing God's Testimonies

"Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever." Psalm 119:152

Salvation Is Far From The Wicked

Whereas the righteous find no greater delight than in knowing and walking in the light of the Scriptures, the wicked find such matters repulsive. Whereas the righteous greatly hope in The LORD's salvation, it is far from the wicked.

"Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes." Psalm 119:155

Heart In Awe of God's Words

The psalmist is unambiguously God's man. Here, in contrast to authorities who would persecute him, he is described as being in awe of God's Words – amazed at The LORD of Glory's revealed truth as provided in the Scriptures.

"Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words." Psalm 119:161

Rejoicing At God's Word

"I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil." Psalm 119:162

Praising God for His Righteous Rules

"Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules." Psalm 119:164

Hoping For The LORD's Salvation

"I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments." Psalm 119:166

Singing Of God's Word

"My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right." Psalm 119:172

Choosing God's Precepts

"Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts." Psalm 119:173

THE WORD OF GOD PROPER AND ITS MAGNIFICENT AUTHOR

This section places a particular emphasis on details of the Scriptures that are addressed throughout Psalm 119 and elements of attention regarding the author of the Scriptures as addressed throughout Psalm 119.

Insights Regarding The Word of God

While the whole of Psalm 119 is centered and saturated with the Word of God, a significant majority of its emphasis is on the psalmist's engagement, experience, and understanding of The Word of God. There is, however, significant insight and discourse regarding the Word of God proper where it is singularly addressed and precise, and magnificent details are able to receive due attention. Such is the attention of this section.

The LORD's Rules Are Righteous

As the Word of God, an inherent element must be righteousness – perfectly right before God. Such is the quality of God's Word. Though secured through the medium of men and their pens it is not tainted by their weaknesses as inspiration preserves this most precious and necessary element.

"I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me." Psalm 119:75

"I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules." Psalm 119:106

"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever." Psalm 119:160

"Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules." Psalm 119:164

The LORD's Words Is Fixed In The Heavens

"Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." Psalm 119:89

God's Commandment Is Exceedingly Broad

This is a fascinating contrast, whereas there is a limit to all "natural perfections" outside of God, with God his Word is exceedingly broad, not lacking in the full scope of truth for life, godliness, and worship.

"I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad." Psalm 119:96

God's Words Are Sweet

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalm 119:103

God's Word Illuminates The Path

This is a magnificent kindness. God's Word is not designed to illuminate to one's mind's eye the full scope of their future, but it is intended to make their steps clear in view of truth.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

God's Testimonies Are Wonderful And Righteous

"Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them." Psalm 119:129

"Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live." Psalm 119:144

God's Rules Are Right

"Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules." Psalm 119:137

God's Promise Is Well Tried

"Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it." Psalm 119:140

God's Law Is True

"Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true." Psalm 119:142

God's Commandments Are Sure, True, and Right

"All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me!" Psalm 119:86

"But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true." Psalm 119:151

"My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right." Psalm 119:172

God Has Founded His Testimonies Forever

"Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever." Psalm 119:152

The Sum Of God's Word Is Truth

This is a most appropriate final reference for this section as indeed God's Word is truth, enduring truth.

"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever." Psalm 119:160

The God Of The Scriptures

As noted above, while it is the Scriptures that are the emphasis of the whole of Psalm 119, there are clear patterns of articulation that put a heavy perspective from the psalmist's vantage point and reasonably so. Here though are passages that give a little more precise attention to the God of the Scriptures, he who has provided his precious Word.

The LORD Commands His Precepts Be Kept

The Word of God is not an elective resource to consult, it is fully expected and even commanded to be kept.

"You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently." Psalm 119:4

The LORD Is Blessed

"Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!" Psalm 119:12

The LORD Rebukes Those Who Wander and Rebukes The Wicked

As sure as there is an expectation that The LORD's Word be kept, there are consequences for failing to keep and submit to his Scriptures: rebuke, spurning, and judgment.

"You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments." Psalm 119:21

"You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain." Psalm 119:118

"All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies." Psalm 119:119

"It is time for the LORD to act, for your law has been broken." Psalm 119:126

The LORD Answers

"When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes!" Psalm 119:26

The LORD Gives Ability

"I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!" Psalm 119:32

The LORD Is To Be Feared

The Scriptures are clear, The LORD is to be feared, and here we see that those who fear God make good company.

"Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared." Psalm 119:38

"Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word." Psalm 119:74

"My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments." Psalm 119:120

The Earth Is Full Of God's Steadfast Love

"The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!" Psalm 119:64

The LORD Is Good And Does Good

"You are good and do good; teach me your statutes." Psalm 119:68

The LORD Is Righteous

The truth that The LORD is righteous is why we can have perfect confidence that his Word is righteous too.

"Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules." Psalm 119:137

"Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true." Psalm 119:142

The LORD Has Appointed His Testimonies In Righteousness And Faithfulness

"You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness." Psalm 119:138

The LORD's Mercy Is Great

"Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life according to your rules." Psalm 119:156

The LORD's Hands Have Fashioned Man

"Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments." Psalm 119:73

The Creator's Faithfulness Endures

The LORD is not only a Creator and Composer, but a Sustainer too. The LORD has revealed himself through the Scriptures and it is there that we learn of his magnificent sovereignty over creation.

"Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast." Psalm 119:90

The LORD Is A Hiding Place and Shield

This is a familiar and rightfully comforting place for those who worship the God of the Psalter and the whole of the Scriptures. It is his Word that has provided this precious comfort that he is our hiding place and shield.

"You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word." Psalm 119:114

REQUEST ROOTED IN THE WORD OF GOD

While Psalm 119 submits itself to the exceptional discipline of an alphabetical acrostic from start to finish, and while it stays unwaveringly true to its central element of the Word of God, it also demonstrates that it is a psalm written by a man who loves, trusts, and delights in God, but who also has an abundance of requests. The requests secured here in Psalm 119 are a testimony to the psalmist's heart and the truths of God and his Scriptures. Good requests are not blindly asking for the unreasonable or inappropriate, but knowing what might be had if the giver would be compassionate or charitable to the proper requests that are made. In view of this it is my hope that sitting in place of observers of skilled and proper requests might shape how we too petition the God of the Scriptures. That our requests would reflect depth of understanding and relationship and not only betray our tragic distance from that which has been generously revealed.

Requests For The God Of The Scriptures

Do Not Forsake, Give Me Surety of Preservation

"I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!" Psalm 119:8

"I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors." Psalm 119:121

"Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me." Psalm 119:122

Let Me Not Wander

"With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!" Psalm 119:10

Teach Me Your Statutes

This is a most proper request given the nature of Psalm 119 and the Word of God. Accordingly, this request is one that is seen with some frequency. May it also find a redundant frequency in our own lives before The LORD.

"Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!" Psalm 119:12

"When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes!" Psalm 119:26

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end." Psalm 119:33

"The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!" Psalm 119:64

"You are good and do good; teach me your statutes." Psalm 119:68

"Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes." Psalm 119:124

"Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes."

Deal Bountifully That I May Keep Your Word

Note the quality of this request. The psalmist is not simply requesting favor or good graces from The LORD. He is making his request with the clear objective: that he may live and keep God's Word and that he may learn his statutes.

"Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word." Psalm 119:17

"Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes." Psalm 119:135

Open Eyes To Behold

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." Psalm 119:18

Hide Not Your Commandments

The voice of petition and not demand. Lord... I need your Word, please do not keep it from me.

"I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!" Psalm 119:19

Take Away Scorn, Contempt, and Reproach

The psalmist has both an awareness of the offense of sin and of The LORD who alone can properly deal with it.

"Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies." Psalm 119:22

"Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good." Psalm 119:39

Give Life According To Your Word

The LORD is clearly both the object of the psalmist's affection as demonstrated throughout the psalm, but most certainly The LORD is his hope too.

"My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!" Psalm 119:25

"I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word!" Psalm 119:107

"Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!" Psalm 119:40

"Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live." Psalm 119:144

Make Me Understand Your Word

The psalmist has a desire to be strong in the Scriptures!

"Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works." Psalm 119:27

"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart." Psalm 119:34

"Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments." Psalm 119:66

"Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments." Psalm 119:73

"I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies!" Psalm 119:125

Strengthen Me According To Your Word

"My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!" Psalm 119:28

Put False Ways From Me And Teach Me

This is a valuable disposition as it is one that is teachable in its humility, its self-awareness, and its God-awareness. Humility is present by its very request – self-awareness as he knows he is susceptible and must be kept, and God-awareness as he knows that it is God who must both keep and instruct him. These are dispositions that would serve us well.

"Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law!" Psalm 119:29

Keep Me From Shame

"I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame!" Psalm 119:31

"May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!" Psalm 119:80

Lead Me In Your Commandments

The psalmist is asking to be lead where he delights! What a kind grace to delight in that which is truly good, truly satisfying, and truly pleasing to God.

"Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it." Psalm 119:35

Incline My Heart Properly

"Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!" Psalm 119:36

Turn My Eyes From Worthless Things

"Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways." Psalm 119:37

Act According To Your Promise

The psalmist is rooting his petition in prior truth from God. Further, the psalmist's request is not simply for comfort or expectant delight, but with a right view of God – confirm your promise that you may be feared! A right view of God is a high view of God and man will rightly diminish in comparison.

"Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared." Psalm 119:38

"I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise." Psalm 119:58

"Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant." Psalm 119:76

"Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!" Psalm 119:116

"Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me." Psalm 119:133

Let Your Steadfast Love And Salvation Come To Me

"Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise...." Psalm 119:41

Preserve Your Word In My Mouth

"And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules." Psalm 119:43

Remember Your Hopeful Word

"Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope." Psalm 119:49

Teach Me Good Judgment And Knowledge

"Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments." Psalm 119:66

Let Your Mercy Come To Me

"Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight." Psalm 119:77

Let The Insolent Be Put To Shame

The psalmist is not simply petitioning in a selfish request, but is joining The LORD in his disdain of those who have no regard for his Word, his command, or his precepts – this is demonstrated in how they mistreat The LORD's people.

"Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts." Psalm 119:78

Let Those Who Fear God Turn To Me

Note the continued reasons for various petitions such as here: that they may know your testimonies. A most worthy request and this for others.

"Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies." Psalm 119:79

Help Me, Save Me

Short, direct, and to be received by him who can help and can save.

"All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me!" Psalm 119:86

"I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts." Psalm 119:94

"With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes." Psalm 119:145

"I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies." Psalm 119:146

Give Life According To Your Steadfast Love

"In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth." Psalm 119:88

"Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love." Psalm 119:159

Accept My Sacrifice And Teach Me

The psalmist requests that The LORD would be pleased to accept his spiritual service of sacrifice. He further requests that the God he worships would teach him his rules. A wonderful pairing: LORD accept my worship and expand my capacity to please you by teaching me your rules.

"Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your rules." Psalm 119:108

Preserve For Service

The psalmist is not simply requesting to be persevered or held up, but rather preserved or held up *for* continued faithfulness before The LORD. That is a proper petition – not exclusively with a view *to take from God*, but *to serve God*.

"Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually!" Psalm 119:117

Deal With Me According To Steadfast Love

The psalmist roots his petition in the covenant love of The LORD and gives it strength by demonstrating his own covenant fidelity by a desire to learn his statutes.

"Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes." Psalm 119:124

Turn To Me And Be Gracious

"Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name." Psalm 119:132

Redeem Me, Deliver Me From Man And For Service

"Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts." Psalm 119:134

"Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law." Psalm 119:153

"Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise!" Psalm 119:154

Hear Me and Give Me Life

"Hear my voice according to your steadfast love; O LORD, according to your justice give me life." Psalm 119:149

"Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life according to your rules." Psalm 119:156

Let My Cry And Plea Come Before You

A direct request for The LORD to hear and to answer. Crying and pleading before The LORD with confidence of being heard and confidence of being answered.

"Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word!" Psalm 119:169

"Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word." Psalm 119:170

Request Rooted In Obedience

The psalmist does not have special leverage for obeying God, but is petitioning as an obedient child. Beware the temptation to skew this in your heart and its application.

"Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts." Psalm 119:173

Let My Soul Live And Praise God

"Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me." Psalm 119:175

Recover Me From Straying

Having the psalm conclude on this request can be seen as rather somber. However, it is magnificently kind that The LORD seeks out his own to restore them, and that he keeps them by his Word. This is both very honest and very encouraging in view of our temporal sojourning in this world.

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments." Psalm 119:176

ADVANTAGES THAT ACCOMPANY THE WORD OF GOD

Among the excellencies of God is that he is good and *generously* good. His character provides those who are his and who submit to his Scriptures great advantage.

Blessed

"Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" Psalm 119:1-3

"This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts." Psalm 119:56

Not Ashamed

"Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments." Psalm 119:6

"I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame...." Psalm 119:46

Praising God With An Upright Heart

"I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules." Psalm 119:7

Keeping One's Way Pure And Preserved From Sin

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word." Psalm 119:9

"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:11

Walk In A Wide Place

"...and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts." Psalm 119:45

God's Promise And Precepts Gives Life

"This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life." Psalm 119:50

"I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life." Psalm 119:93

Finding Comfort In God's Rules

"When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD." Psalm 119:52

The LORD Dealt Well With His Servant

"You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word." Psalm 119:65

God's Commandments Make One Wise

"Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments." Psalm 119:73

"Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me." Psalm 119:98

"I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation." Psalm 119:99

"I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts." Psalm 119:100

"I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me." Psalm 119:102

"The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." Psalm 119:130

"My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes." Psalm 119:171

The LORD's Testimonies Are A Heritage

"Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart." Psalm 119:111

The LORD Is Gracious With Those Who Love His Name

"Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name." Psalm 119:132

The LORD Is Near

"But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true." Psalm 119:151

Great Peace And Sure Footing

"Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble." Psalm 119:165

STRUGGLES WITHIN AND WITHOUT

What is fascinating is that brokenness is the condition for which we discard our tools. They are no longer useful when broken. However, before The LORD it is not until one is broken that they have become genuinely useful as a beloved tool. Perhaps a rigid tool will serve a temporal purpose, but it has no lasting value. It is the broken tool in the hand of God that is mighty, enduring, and pleasing to him. The psalmist was broken, abused, and frequently in a compromised or weak standing, but here he was found useful and The LORD was found sufficient.

This section secures a substantial portion of the psalm's contents and observing how the psalmist thought, prayed, and responded to matters of affliction and hardship are quite telling.

Struggles From Without

Plotting And Affliction By Authorities And Foes

Note the magnificent contrast, those who do evil plot against him, and he is found entrusting himself and his thoughts to The LORD. May we also be so stable in the storms and fixed on our hope.

"Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes." Psalm 119:23

"...then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word." Psalm 119:42

"The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law." Psalm 119:51

"Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law." Psalm 119:61
 "The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts..." Psalm 119:69
 "Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts." Psalm 119:78
 "The insolent have dug pitfalls for me; they do not live according to your law." Psalm 119:85
 "They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts." Psalm 119:87
 "The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies." Psalm 119:95
 "The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts." Psalm 119:110
 "Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me." Psalm 119:122
 "They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from your law." Psalm 119:150
 "Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies." Psalm 119:157
 "Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words." Psalm 119:161

Unknown Struggle, But Trusting The LORD

Note that even amidst these grave, but unknown struggles the psalmist looks to God's sure Word.

"My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!" Psalm 119:25
 "My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!" Psalm 119:28
 "I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law." Psalm 119:109
 "I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts." Psalm 119:141
 "Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight." Psalm 119:143

God's Promise Is Comfort Amidst Affliction

"This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life." Psalm 119:50

Corrective Affliction By God

Note that while afflicted by wicked persons, the psalmist contrasts their conduct with his entrusting himself to The LORD and his sure Word. Here, however, it is The LORD who afflicts him and he is driven back to that most precious treasure of the Scriptures.

Note also that at times God may use wicked men as tools of discipline and restoration of his beloved.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word." Psalm 119:67
 "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." Psalm 119:71
 "I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me." Psalm 119:75

Requests For Comfort And Justice

The Psalmist longs for a reprieve, and he does not contest with God, but asks when might he know his help of deliverance. This is a challenging tension, but he is maintaining faith and a proper humility. He also maintains a proper perspective on justice, confident that The LORD will deal justly.

"My eyes long for your promise; I ask, 'When will you comfort me?' For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes." Psalm 119:82-83
 "How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me?" Psalm 119:84
 "All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me!" Psalm 119:86
 "I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors." Psalm 119:121
 "Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts." Psalm 119:134
 "Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law." Psalm 119:153

Testimony Of Preservation

The psalmist testifies to the preservational grace that God's law provided him amidst his great affliction.

"If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." Psalm 119:92

The Afflicted Request Life According To God's Word

"I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word!" Psalm 119:107

Rebuking Evildoers

The psalmist directly rebukes the one who would afflict him – making it clear that his ambition is to keep God's commandments.

"Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God." Psalm 119:115

CONCLUSION

Psalm 119 magnificently extols the Scriptures as it testifies to their glories in the life of a man who has found his complete delight in them, their beauties, advantages, and means of grace in times of great distress. The only question that remains is whether or not you genuinely believe the psalm as it alone will take fifteen to twenty minutes to read in one sitting and in that time, it is beckoning you to seek out the full breadth of the Scriptures. Do you believe Psalm 119? Will you be like the psalmist and prioritize that which is life itself? The table has been set and the hungry have been welcomed to feast.