

Psalm 119
(Part 1)

9/22/2024

Many see Psalm 119 as a longer version of Psalm 19 and I think perhaps rightly so. Let us consider verses 7-9 of Psalm 19 from last week's lesson for comparison as we begin looking into Psalm 119 in today's lesson. For review - Psalm 19:7-9 (NIV)

The **law** of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The **statutes** of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The **precepts** of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The **commands** of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
The **fear** of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.
The **decrees** of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

Here we see six things we need to consider about God's Word. I have highlighted these 6 items and below are the Hebrew words from which they are translated into English along with a definition to help us in our understanding. We will be seeing these same things spoken of in greater detail in Psalm 119.

Law = Torah - Defined as a *precept* or *statute*, especially the *Decalogue* or *Pentateuch*

Statutes = Eduth pronounced ay-dooth' - Defined as testimony

Precepts = Piqud pronounced pik-kood'. Defined as properly *appointed*, that is, a *mandate* (of God; plural only, collectively for the *Law*)

Commands = Mitsvah pronounced mits-vaw'. Defined as a *command*, whether human or divine (collectively the *Law*)

Fear = Yirah pronounced yir-aw'. defined as *fear* (also used as infinitive); morally *reverence*

Decrees = Mishpat pronounced mish-pawt' properly a *verdict* (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially, especially a *sentence* or formal decree (human or (particularly) divine *law*, individual or collectively), including the act, the place, the suit, the crime, and the penalty; abstractly *justice*, including a particular *right*, or *privilege* (statutory or customary), or even a *style*

Let's begin this morning with a question -

Do you recognize the following?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	200	300	400

Here is another clue -

Alef, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, Heh, Vav, Zayin, Khet, Tet, Yud, Kaf, Lamed, Mem, Nun, Samekh, Ayin, Peh, Tzadi, Qof, Resh, Shin, Tav.

How about this -

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

The first line above is the letters of the Hebrew alphabet with the corresponding number value of the letters.

The second line is the letters of that alphabet being pronounced. Note* you may find when researching this there are variations of these letters being translated.

And the third line is the English alphabet of which I am sure most of us are more familiar with.

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm of the 150 Psalms. If considered chapters, Psalm 119 would be the longest chapter of the Bible – in both verses and words. It is longer than several books of the Bible. The psalm contains 176 verses that are divided into 22 stanzas.

Each stanza is eight verses long. These sections are arranged into an acrostic poem using every letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In most Bible translations, you will find the word or symbol for Aleph or Alef above verse 1. Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Aleph begins each word that begins a line in verses 1-8. The pattern continues with Beth in verses 9-16, Gimel in verses 17-24, and so on.

The theme of Psalm 119 is the Word of God. This Psalm is often admired because of its intricate structure and poetic nature but its real importance is found in its declaration of the sufficiency of God's Word for all matters great and small. For it is this very Word of God that not only spoke the universe into existence but also maintains the universe and everything in it.

Several words are used in this poem or song which describe elements of God's Word. Some of these we looked at last week in Psalm 19. And they are paralleled here in this Psalm and repeated often within the Psalm showing how they apply to many situations. One such example is the Hebrew word piqqûd pronounced pik-kood' which is often translated as 'precepts'. This Hebrew word appears in verses 4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168 and 173 of this Psalm.

The word precept is defined by [vocabulary.com](http://www.vocabulary.com) as - 'a rule or direction, often with some religious basis, dictating a way you should act or behave. Precepts are little life lessons that are usually passed down to children by authority figures such as parents, teachers, or religious figures.'

Thus God's piqqud's or precepts provide us direction for many things such as what Paul wrote to Timothy about - *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."* (2nd Timothy 3:14-17).

And since God does not change neither does God's Word and the 'precepts' found in it.

As Christians we should find great joy in this about the Word of God. For we can rely on these precepts to guide us in situations we find ourselves as we walk through this world. Often referred to as taking the right path in Scripture.

Psalm 1:1-2 says: *"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night."*

The very 1st word in the 1st Psalm is 'blessed'. And it is also the 1st word of Psalm 119. What Psalm 1 affirms, Psalm 119 explains in detail: God blesses those who live by his word.

Psalm 119:1-2

1. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.*
2. *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*

Here in the KJV we find the Hebrew word *êdâh* pronounced ay-daw' translated as testimony. Other translations use the word 'statutes'. The word *edah* incorporates the idea of a witness giving a testimony. Thus we are blessed when we keep God's witnessed testimony of the truth.

And God blesses those who show sincere devotion to his Word the testimony of truth. This is what Jesus told Pilate - *"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, **that I should bear witness unto the truth.** Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."* (John 18:37)

In Matthew 5:8 Jesus says - *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."*

Jesus' statement above from Matthew 5:8 is true in this world as well as in the next. And although I believe Jesus was referring to seeing God in Heaven as recorded here in Matthew, Paul drives home the idea of people seeing God in this world through God's creation. - Romans 1:19-20 - *"Because that which may be known of God is*

manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

Sadly though many do not see God in this world because they reject the very Word which speaks of it and created it.

Again the very 1st verse of this Psalm reminds us that we are blessed if we walk undefiled in the way of God’s law. Following God’s direction for us through His Word.

Here, and throughout this psalm references to the law encompass all God teaches so that we may be right with him. We are not to picture walking in the law of God as some negative, restrictive, or oppressive way of life. I have a book called Leviticus written by Samuel Kellogg, originally written back in 1899, in which the author walks us through each verse of Leviticus pointing out the beauty of it. That it provides purpose, direction and insight to a people who were not long ago slaves in this world. A people who now found themselves lost in the wilderness of a barren desert and in desperate need of guidance and a home. In Ezekiel 16 the prophet vividly describes Israel as an abandoned unwanted baby laying in its own blood. The implication is that they (Israel) had been cast out, unwanted. The prophet then describes God finding this baby, rescuing and caring for it. And raising it as His own. God took them out of physical slavery and rescued them. Ultimately giving them a home, and caring for them.

The Gospel speaks of God leading us out of the spiritual slavery of sin. Rescuing us, caring for our needs, and ultimately taking us to a home He has prepared for us.

Christ came to save the lost in a fallen world. He came that we might have life and have it to the full. And it is in God’s Word that we find that life.

I recently read an article about God’s Word where the author describes it this way - The Bible is like a telescope. If you look at a telescopes all you will see is the telescope. If you look through the telescope, you can see worlds beyond. We need to look through the lens of God’s Word as we walk through this life. For in doing so we will see many things much more clearly.

To find God in scripture we need to seek him with our whole heart. We are to have no divided loyalties. Give God our full attention, affection, and adoration.

Matthew 6:33 - “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

And now let’s look at the first 8 verses of Psalm 119 which tell us some things about God’s Word -

Psalm 119 begins by reminding us of the blessings of doing so in verses 1 & 2 -

1. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.*
2. *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*

The next 2 verses of this Psalm reminds us of our responsibility or duty to keep God's Word -

3. *They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.*
4. *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

And the next verse speaks of the challenge of doing so -

5. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

Verses 6-8 remind us of the positive results of doing what God asks -

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*
7. *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*
8. *I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.*

This is but the 1st of 22 stanzas in this Psalm about the importance of having God's Word in our lives. As we saw in previous lessons on John chapter 6 where in Matthew Henry's commentary he spoke on 'application of Christ to our lives' that statement means more than just adding Christ to our already busy lives. Rather as Paul states in his letter to the Colossians - *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. **When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.***

I have read where it has been suggested that this Psalm was sung in verse form as we sing hymns today. And that each of the 22 stanzas were sung individually by a different group of singers. Being that each stanza is 8 verses long and are written in Hebrew in alphabetical order, this would make it easier for those singers to remember its words.

Let us close this morning by reciting this the A-LEPH of Psalm 119

1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

As the old saying goes - there is plenty more where this came from'. And Lord willing we will look into more of Psalm 119 next week.