

PSALM 119

Twenty-Two Devotional Studies

by

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Posted in the United States of America for everyone throughout the world
seeking to do the will of God.

Glory, honor, and praise to Him now and forever more.

DEDICATION

Family devotions are a holy privilege, a sacred obligation. Dads and moms must spend quality time providing spiritual food for their children. The centerpiece of these special moments is the inspired truth handed down from ages past.

Gathering around our family altar seemed at times like a fruitless effort. But seeds were sown. Thoughts took root. Faith was formed. Character was nurtured. God was glorified. Lives were changed.

These devotional studies are dedicated to Jennie, Sheri, and Deena—my precious daughters. They heard His word. They accepted His call. They follow His commands. They were fed during those memorable moments focused on the word of the Lord. May He bless each of them as they embrace His way.

Your dad
January 12, 2012

A WORD CONCERNING DEVOTIONAL STUDIES

The Lord revealed His will. He asked His children—young and old—to follow it “*carefully*,” Deuteronomy 4:5,6. And, should they do so, they would “*prosper*,” Deuteronomy 5:32,33, and enjoy a “*long life*,” Deuteronomy 6:2; cf. Ephesians 4:1-3.

This was not a casual recommendation. It was a serious responsibility. The older generation was to “*impress*” the commands of God on the younger generation, Deuteronomy 6:7; cf. Titus 2:1-5. Whatever the occasion, wherever they were, adults were to train their children, Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4.

- **Why this book was written?** The following pages were written for people of all ages. It appeals to those who are concerned about walking in the light. The book goes beyond polite religion. It asks the reader to look beneath the surface, to consider the deeper meanings of belief in God.

The emphasis found in this book is not new. It occurs throughout the pages of the inspired word. But obeying the Lord is often a novelty. This series of devotional studies is a call to personal obedience. It is an invitation to drink the water of life more deeply. It is a reaffirmation of the goodness of God. It is an encouragement to abandon a mild commitment in order to experience a deeper faith.

- **What is a devotional study?** Many devotional books have been written. They captivate the heart and inspire the soul. They refer to the biblical text but give major space to human story. Devotional books intentionally walk in the shallow waters of inspirational thought. They are helpful. They encourage weary minds and sagging spirits. Their value is obvious. Yet the loose connection of devotional books with the text of scripture is equally obvious.

Biblical studies also abound. They discuss complicated ideas. Words are defined. Contexts are weighted. Meanings are rendered. The reader is ushered into serious, painstaking analysis of the Bible. The process is technical and tedious. Only an inner circle of specialists can understand the vocabulary. The enormous value of biblical studies is limited to a relatively small number of people.

Devotional studies attempt to combine the benefits of devotional books and biblical studies. They infuse a daily, inspirational thought with a serious scripture study. The results are twofold. Each devotional addresses those on earth with the thoughts of heaven. Each study calls for renewed action, a closer walk with God. A devotional study is an appetizing diet of biblical nourishment spiced with inspirational thoughts.

- **Who should read this book?** Everyone is welcome to ponder the material. The serious student of the word, the committed follower of Christ will likely find it most intriguing. The supple heart, the curious mind, the willing spirit will accept the challenge

and celebrate the instruction. The book is addressed to the eager searcher. It is a voice beckoning all saints to honor the King of kings, to walk new paths of surrender for His sake.

- **Where should it be read?** *Psalm 119* requires a single minded attention. It demands an alert mind, an open heart, and a quiet place. Distractions must be minimized. Readers are asked to “*be still*” before the throne of heaven, Psalm 46:10. *Psalm 119* should be read around the family altar, in a place where the noise of life is muted. Cell phones should be laid aside, televisions turned off, and ipads put away. God wants to meet us in a place of reverence and calm, a place away from the intrusion of the world.

- **When should the book be read?** Devotional time can be anytime—day or night—whenever the heart opens out to let the Almighty in. People differ. Circumstances vary. Schedules change. The secret to profitable time with God is flexibility. Tailor the devotional retreat to fit personal lifestyle. It may be in the morning, at noon, or in the evening. It may be multiple times scattered throughout the day. The important thing is to set aside a sacred interlude and keep it sacred. Let it be a time that works best for you. God is on call twenty-four seven.

- **How should it be read?** Central to any devotional exercise is the manner of doing it. Time and place are important. Behavior is more important. People find devotional material most helpful when they read it aloud slowly with appropriate voice inflexion. Savor the words. Feel the emotions. Grasp the ideas. The deeper they go, the greater their effect. Read each devotional study twice. During the first reading, only the comments are read. Then, in the second reading, the passages of scripture are also located and read. The whole exercise can take as little as fifteen minutes. A quarter of an hour that becomes a launching pad, a stabilizing force, an inspiring moment in which God is glorified and the worshipper is refreshed, renewed, and recharged.

Psalm 119 respects the Bible as the very words of God. This is why the scripture occupies a prominent place in each devotional study. The voice of the Lord speaks. The disciple listens because the word of God is his guide, Proverbs 3:1,2. It is a permanent record of what the Lord expects of humankind, Psalm 119:4.

The righteous walk in the way of the Lord, Psalm 119:2,3. His way is clear—as clear as the sun on a cloudless summer day. His word is a light to illuminate the path ahead. It is the road to righteousness, the highway to holiness, the sidewalk to celestial glory.

This short book is a serious effort to reveal the will of God in a devotional format. If it achieves that goal, let God be glorified. If it fails, the fault lies in human frailty. Let readers hear the voice of heaven. Let them prepare to enjoy a long life.

INTRODUCTION TO *PSALM 119*

Psalm 119 is unique in several dimensions. First, it is the longest psalm in the Old Testament. It contains 22 stanzas. Each stanza has 8 verses. Therefore, 8 verses times 22 stanzas equals 176 verses.

Second, *Psalm 119* is unique in format. It is an “*acrostic*” or “*alphabetic*” poem. The first word in each line of the first stanza begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The first word in each line of the second stanza begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And, so on, stanza after stanza, the psalm works down through the entire 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Though the motive for employing an acrostic format is not known (and beyond translating into another language), it may have served as a memory devise. Whatever the reason, the writer expressed an undying reverence for the word of God, Psalm 119:105. Moreover, in these ancient teachings, the Lord revealed His character. He set forth His purpose. He called all people to obey His will, Psalm 119:4.

- **The psalm.** One thought pervades the entire poem—the unsurpassed excellence of the law, Psalm 119:18. The power of this lengthy song lies in the unrelenting repetition of that single theme, Psalm 119:54. To the receptive heart, there is music in the monotony. Verse after verse addresses the same subject till at last the psalm weaves a grand tapestry of priceless worth, Psalm 119:14, 96.

Upon closer examination, it also becomes evident that there is little variation in the poetic style of the psalmist. Still, with a minimum of pieces in his verbal kaleidoscope, the author forms an intriguing array of word-pictures about the will of Jehovah, Psalm 119:35. One or another of the synonyms for the law—precepts (verse 4), commands (verse 10), ways (verse 15), decrees (verse 33), statutes (verse 59), words (verse 130), and promises, (verse 140)—are found in every verse (except 84, 122, and 132).

Due to its rigid format, the psalm hardly allows emotional expression, poetic imagination, or personal enthusiasm. Its mechanical, hum drum arrangement effectively inhibits such reaction. But, within the constrain of such narrow limits, the skillful writer proclaimed his profound appreciation for and his boundless devotion to the word of God, Psalm 119:164.

- **The poet.** The name of the author is lost in antiquity (though he might have been a “*young man*,” Psalm 119:99,100). He found himself in a precarious situation—opposed, oppressed, and persecuted by those who despised the message of the Almighty, Psalm 119:23,46,61,86,107,110,141,161. Yet, despite his outward circumstances, it was apparent to him that the Lord was in control, Psalm 119:89,90.

In the midst of uncertainty, the word of the Lord was reassuring, Psalm 119:76,165. Hence, *Psalm 119* is the testimony of a resolute disciple in a time of considerable distress, a season of aggression against the faith of a committed saint, Psalm 119:33,42,51,74,112,147.

The writer possessed an intense love for the will of heaven, Psalm 119:47,119,131,163,167. He was equally indignant toward those who compromised the sacred message, Psalm 119:21,104,136,158. Surely this should be our attitude, too.

- **The purpose.** Throughout the ages, many have abandoned the Lord, Psalm 119:126. They failed to grasp the intent of the divine mind, Psalm 119:150. The author of *Psalm 119* was different. He held the truth. He vowed to never let it go, Psalm 119:112,146. His poem beckons us to do the same.

The world wants to know “*what is good?*” It asks “*how men should live?*” There are many human suggestions. But, in the end, none of them really work. So mankind trudges blindly along—frustrated and helpless. But the inspired poet gave the answer years ago—long before Plato, long before Confucius, and long before the ancient sages. The psalmist declared dogmatically that God revealed what was good. He told us pointedly how we should live, Psalm 119:39; cf. Micah 6:8.

Psalm 119 does not mention the temple, does not speak of the holy ceremonies. It only talks about the truth of God and His instructions for humankind. His commands are a dependable road map for life, a secure foundation for hope, Psalm 119:74. This remarkable psalm invites us to obey His righteous word, Psalm 119:129,145. In a nutshell, that is the reason for writing the following devotional studies.

Psalm 119:1-8

“Blessed are they who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart,” Psalm 119:2.

Happy are those who “*delight*” in the precepts of the Lord, Psalm 1:1-3. They are richly blessed, Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Happy are those who “*listen*” to His words. They keep His “*ways*,” Proverbs 8:32-35. They seek Him “*with all their heart*” and “*with all their soul*,” Deuteronomy 10:12; Psalm 119:10,34,58,69.

The Almighty took the initiative. He willingly made Himself known. He stepped into the world—to inform, to command. Happy are those who “*fully*” obey, Psalm 119:4.

If I do not bend
To Your loving way;
Dwell, O Lord, dwell in me,
So I can hear what You say.

Why must we yield? What difference does it make? What do we gain from our submission? The inspired author suggested two important things.

- **No blame**, Psalm 119:1. The “*ways*” of the obedient are “*the path of righteousness*,” Psalm 23:1-3. The divine Shepherd guides His sheep toward what is good. Therefore, those who follow Him “*do nothing wrong*,” Psalm 119:3; I John 3:9; 5:18. In doing His will, they “*escape the corruption in the world*,” II Peter 1:3,4. Hence, the saints pray that they may remain “*steadfast*” in His decrees, content to follow His directions, Psalms 119:5.

- **No shame**, Psalm 119:6. Shame is the fruit of sin. If one does not sow wickedness, he will not harvest embarrassment, Psalm 119:80. God has His rules. Society does, too. Heaven and earth rebuke the wayward. The proud are scorned. The mocker is mocked. Shame is their lot, Proverbs 3:31-35.

If we are true to God, we will not be false to man.

The outcome is sure. No blushing. No awkwardness. No fear. When a person rivets his gaze on the precepts of God, his feet remain glued to the way of righteousness. His heart will be calm. His future will be secure. His soul will be certain, Proverbs 4:26.

Consequently, the poet resolved to obey the decrees of God, Psalm 119:8. But he had no thought of being faithful on his own. He asked the Lord to walk with him. This is the secret to a good life. The rewards are huge. We will be blameless and shameless. Yet we must remember our weakness, Romans 7:18,19. The goal is beyond our grasp. We cannot attain it on our own. Only God can lead us to victory, Psalm 28:7. He has spoken. We must listen.

Father, I want to walk in Your way, to follow Your directions. When I do, there will be no regret, no loss of face. Open my ears that I may hear. In Him who knows best, Amen.

Psalm 119:9-16

“O Lord, teach me Your decrees,” Psalm 119:12.

The psalmist was keenly aware that temptations lurked along his path. *“How can a young man keep his way pure?”* he asked, Psalm 119:9. And, we could add, how can a young woman remain righteous? Indeed, how can anyone—young or old—stay faithful to God?

- **Seek the Lord**, Psalm 119:10. In order to be pure, the creature must submit to the Creator, I Chronicles 16:11. For, if we yield to empty superstitions, we will become the victim of vain speculations, Isaiah 8:19-22. The righteous study the inspired word, Ezra 7:10.
- **Treasure His law**, Psalm 119:11. The path of righteousness is the highway of the Lord. Heaven is its destination. It must be treasured above our daily food, Job 23:12. The saints must not neglect His way, Psalm 37:30,31; 119:16. Truth is more than an after-thought. It is the marrow of existence, the essence of life. Therefore, the faithful hide His word in their hearts, Proverbs 2:1-5.
- **Rejoice in obeying Him**, Psalm 119:14. The instructions of God are of greater value than all the riches in the world, Psalm 119:72,127,128. His wisdom is beyond the price of precious metals and fine jewels, Job 28:12-19; cf. Proverbs 3:14,15. The righteous rejoice in His commands. Their joy in obeying them will never fade, Psalm 119:111,162.

Long ago there was a prisoner in a dungeon. He was without light except for one, small ray of sunshine. This beam of light came through a tiny hole in the roof of his cell late every afternoon. The prisoner anxiously waited for it. He longed for the hour in which it pierced the darkness of his lonely existence. In those fleeting moments, he read a chapter from his Bible. It was the high point of his day. He rejoiced in the refreshing words of God. It gave him food for meditation until the sun revisited his bleak world again the next day.

Similarly, the saints live in a dark world. But they rehearse His statutes in their daily devotional studies, Psalm 119:13,15. They reflect on His commands, ponder His words, savor His instructions. When the child of God leaves his solitude of reflection, he is ready again to endure the darkness that surrounds him, Psalm 119:30,48,59,97.

Evil cannot find room in those who are full of the precepts of God.

We must seek the Lord, treasure His law, and rejoice in obeying Him. This is not an idle aspiration. It is a lifestyle. Yet past compliance is not a guarantee of future conformity. Hence, the poet prayed, *“Do not let me stray from Your commands,”* Psalm 119:10. We must daily commit ourselves to His way.

Thank You, kind Father, for instructing me. You will not leave me ignorant when I seek Your will. I love Your word. May I allow it to fill my soul, gladden my hungry heart, and reign in my life. Through Jesus, the Great Teacher, Amen.

Psalm 119:17-24

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law,” Psalms 119:18.

We are aliens in this world, Psalm 119:19; cf. I Chronicles 29:15; Psalm 39:12; I Peter 2:11. As wondering pilgrims, our time here is temporary, Hebrews 11:13-16; 13:14. Though we call our present address home, there is a part of us that belongs elsewhere, Philippians 3:20a.

Guide us with Your hand to that distant fatherland.
Shelter us with Your wing till around Your throne we sing.

- **Prayer for vision.** In asking God to open his eyes, the psalmist was confessing his blindness, Psalm 119:123. He did not grasp all of the truth. Much was beyond his understanding. Without the help of God, he was clueless. Consequently, for him to claim he “saw,” would be the greatest sin of all, John 9:41.

- **Longing to know.** The writer wished the Lord would give him insight. He longed to see the unseen, I Corinthians 2:9. He was certain there were things in the word of God he did not comprehend, Psalm 119:125. Perhaps, to him, sections of the Bible seemed worthless. This would not change until he was “*consumed with longing*” to know, Psalm 119:20.

A man inherited a piece of land. He thought it was useless dirt. For years he paid no attention to it. Then someone suggested he give it “a closer look.” Eventually he did. And, to his surprise, it was worth a fortune. Likewise, there are “*wonderful things*” in scripture for those who take a closer look, Job 22:21-25; Psalm 119:72; Proverbs 8:10,11.

- **Observe the teachings.** God guides us to righteousness, Psalm 23:1-3. His word “*revives*” the soul, Psalm 19:7. Literally, the term “*revive*” means to turn. For, when we observe the teachings, we “*yield to the Lord*,” Joshua 24:23, we “*wash the evil*” from our heart, Jeremiah 4:14. We gain the victory over self and sin.

- **Know the promises.** The law is more than a cruel master demanding obedience. It is a compassionate shepherd encouraging the sheep. The precepts of the Lord declare “*wonderful things*,” proclaim “*great and precious promises*,” II Peter 1:3,4. His commands are not hidden (though they remain useless until we acknowledge them), Psalm 119:19. His statutes must become our “*delight*,” our constant “*counselor*,” Psalm 119:24.

There are several important truths in this text. Only the Lord can heal our spiritual blindness. Only His word can provide the treasures of truth we need, Psalm 25:4,5. We are essentially vagabonds on our way to another world. This is not our home. Our mansion is above. The journey is good when we follow the will of God, when we delight in His promises, II Corinthians 4:16-18. Hallelujah! Heaven is just around the corner.

O Lord, help me see my blindness. Give me grace to know. May Your will be my refuge, my delight, my counsel, and my hope. For, without it, I cannot survive. In His great name, I pray, Amen.

Psalm 119:25-32

“Preserve my life according to Your word,” Psalm 119:25.

The acrostic nature of this psalm is quite obvious in this stanza. Out of the eight verses, five of them (in the Hebrew text) begin with “way” or “ways.” Two others begin with “cleave.” Yet, in spite of these constraints, the message is clear and challenging.

The writer was in deep trouble, Psalm 119:25. It was a sign of misery “*to be in the dust*,” Psalm 44:23-25. He was “*wearily with sorrow*,” Psalm 119:28. Nevertheless, the poet held fast to the testimonies of God, Psalm 119:31; cf. Deuteronomy 10:20; Joshua 23:6-8. He was confident the Lord would raise him up, Psalm 119:153,154.

Happy are those who in their sadness cling to the will of God.

- **Clinging.** The author was aware of his great peril. He had been unfaithful, Psalm 119:67,176. His affliction was a wakeup call, Psalm 119:71. The statutes of God snatched him from destruction, Psalm 119:92. In gratitude, he turned to the Lord, Psalm 9:9,10. He submitted to His word, Psalm 119:107. He knew there was much he did not know. He longed for God to teach him, Psalm 119:26; cf. Psalm 25:4,5; 86:11. Certainly he had heard the word. But he wanted a deeper understanding of what it meant. And, once he did, he would “*meditate*” on its wonders, Psalm 119:27.

- **Living.** In the grip of persecution, the psalmist made the scripture his refuge, Psalm 119:41,42,69,78,95,110,134,141,157,161. He already possessed spiritual life. What he desired was a “*full*” spiritual life, John 10:10. Hence, the poet asked to be “*preserved*” in his peril. The word “*preserve*” meant to give life, to make alive or to sustain life, Psalm 119:37,40,88,149,159. Life was granted by a right relationship to the word, Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Therefore, a thoughtful person chooses life, Deuteronomy 32:47; Proverbs 6:23; 10:17.

He lives who lives in God;
Everyone else is a spiritual fraud.

The fourth stanza of *Psalm 119*, then, focuses on the “ways” of man and the “way” of God, Psalm 119:26,29,30. The “way” of the Lord transforms the “ways” of men, Psalm 119:32. His way is the road of righteousness. Deceitful ways are abandoned. Crooked paths are forsaken. Life is embraced. Escape from sin is found, Psalm 26:2-7.

God requires us to change. The will of heaven is about movement. Life is not a static experience. It is a march toward a goal. It offers deep satisfaction along the way because the traveler knows he has overcome, I John 5:3-5. Life is good regardless of the difficulties.

*I rejoice, Lord, that You have spoken, that Your will has been revealed.
I cling to it as my source of life. Through it I have overcome. To You all
credit is due, all thanks is expressed. In Him, who is the Word of Life, Amen.*

Psalm 119:33-40

“Give me understanding and I will keep Your law,” Psalm 119:34.

The text is a fervent prayer of a serious saint. He longed for divine enlightenment. Eight times he asked God to teach him, Psalm 119:12,26,33,64,68,108,124,135. He recognized that understanding scripture preceded obeying the Lord, Psalm 119:104.

The one who wrote these words was aware of two essential things. (1) There was something he must learn. He did not know everything. And (2) he knew he could not teach himself. God must instruct him. These insights were the burden of his request.

It is foolish to think we can teach ourselves everything we need to know.

- **God must teach.** The psalmist knew enough to start his spiritual journey. But, as often happens, he stalled along the way, Psalm 119:5; cf. Matthew 13:18-21; Galatians 5:7. The poet could discuss the commandments. He felt warmly toward them. He spoke kindly about them. He desired sincerely to keep them. But something got in his way, Psalm 119:36,37. What he wanted to do, he did not accomplish, Romans 7:14-19. The author of *Psalm 119* had good reason to seek the help of God, Psalm 119:35. Material things still captivated his heart, Matthew 13:22; Colossians 3:5; I Timothy 6:9,10. Only the Master Teacher could rescue him, could break the grip of his nagging temptation, Psalm 119:34.

A student does not direct the class. Neither does he write the textbook, formulate the lesson plan, or issue the final grade. His responsibility is to respect the teacher, listen to his instructions, and do the assignments. Otherwise, the teacher does not teach and the student does not learn.

- **Man must learn.** Obedience is required, Deuteronomy 5:32; 10:12,13. God does not force compliance. Unless men decide to live a godly life, the Lord will not override their desire to be sinners. He will step aside—simply allow them to be who they want to be. Yet, if, in their sin, they seek Him, He will respond, Deuteronomy 4:29. He never comes without an invitation, Revelation 3:20; cf. Matthew 7:7,8. He never helps until help is wanted. Hence, it is written, “*set your heart on seeking God,*” II Chronicles 19:3. The need for Him often comes after the failure of self effort. But, whenever it comes, it comes to teach men to walk on higher ground, Isaiah 55:8,9. He teaches those who want to learn, Job 32:8.

We obtain the assistance of heaven when we demonstrate that we want it, when we ask for it, Psalm 119:38. Until we want it, it will be wasted. After we ask for it, it will change our lives, Psalm 119:34.

I am blind, Lord, without Your light. Teach me Your way so that I can walk in it. Give me a deeper understanding of Your commands. Though my steps falter, I long to be Your servant. Hear this prayer, through Your Son, who is my Teacher, Amen.

Psalm 119:41-48

“May Your unfailing love come to me, O Lord, Your salvation according to Your promise,” Psalm 119:41.

There are almost no words in the Hebrew language that begin with the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The conjunction translated “and,” “so,” or “then” is an exception, Genesis 1:3,6,9,14,20,24,27. Thus, each verse of the sixth stanza of *Psalm 119* begins with this conjunction. The pieces of the message are linked together and piled on top of each other. Only the King James Version retains (for the most part) this unusual acrostic form.

The writer asked God to send him salvation, Psalm 119:41. He hoped to be rescued from the power of sin—from wanting what the Lord had banned, Psalm 119:36. He wished to walk in wholehearted obedience, Psalm 119:34. He desired to render prompt and cheerful compliance, Psalm 119:32. Above all, he longed for God to give him freedom, Psalm 119:45.

Sin enslaves. Salvation is the deliverance from the bondage of sin. It is the liberty found in submitting to the Lord, Psalm 119:94,155; cf. James 1:25. It is the freedom to do what we ought to do. The statutes of heaven are not our burden. They are our song, Psalm 119:54.

- **Foundation of obedience.** As long as humans are under the domination of sin, they will ignore the will of God, John 8:34; Romans 6:12. When they are set free from sin, they will be truly free, John 8:36. They will be free from the bondage of worldly passions, Titus 2:11-14. They will be liberated from the fear of death, Hebrews 2:14,15. They will be free to serve the Lord, to keep the commands, to be a servant of God, 1 Peter 2:16. That is real freedom. It is the essence of being “*free indeed*.”

- **Gift of God.** Though free, obedience is still required. Commands must be kept. The poet felt obligated, Psalm 119:44. But, since he could not keep the law without divine assistance, how is his responsibility to be explained? And, if he broke the law, how is his sin to be understood? God offers the gift of empowerment, Philippians 2:12,13. We are encouraged to make use of it. Without force, without coercion, the enabling is supplied so humankind can do what should be done, Psalm 28:2; Ephesians 2:8-10.

Salvation is easy to gain. It is more difficult to explain.

Salvation came. The psalmist rejoiced. He was free. But he was concerned. His brain said he was saved. Yet would his mouth declare it? Psalm 119:43. He resolved to make it known, Psalm 119:46; cf. Matthew 10:18-20. Because the law was his “*delight*,” because he loved the precepts of God, he spoke out, Psalm 119:47; Isaiah 63:7. His gratitude was obvious to everyone. Is our appreciation equally as obvious?

Your grace is my greatest gift. Your salvation is my richest blessing. I am free. May I use my freedom to honor You, to proclaim Your will. You deserve nothing less. I can give nothing more. Through the One who saved me, Amen.

Psalm 119:49-56

*“Remember Your word to Your servant,
for You have given me hope,” Psalm 119:49.*

God promised to protect His saints. His assurance gives them strength in trying times, Job 11:16-19. Will the Lord keep His word? In the above text, the psalmist begged God to do so. For the faithfulness of heaven is the hope of those on earth, Psalm 33:22; 42:5.

The rest of the seventh stanza of *Psalm 119* states the firm convictions of the poet. He trusted in the promises of God, Psalm 119:50. He knew by experience that the inspired word gave comfort, Psalm 119:52. Thus, it made perfect sense to obey its precepts, Psalm 119:56.

Expectations fairly deduced from scripture will certainly come to pass.

- **Plight of man.** Like breathing, human suffering is an inevitable part of life, Job 5:6,7. Affliction is our constant companion. We “*suffer much*,” Psalm 119:107. Trouble grips our soul, Psalm 119:143. Sometimes it is due to cruel injustice, Psalm 119:51,61,69,78. Other times it springs from religious earnestness, Psalm 119:53,136. Whatever the source of the difficulty, we are pained by the delay of God in responding to our request, Psalm 119:82; cf. Psalm 89:46. The distress is real. The outlook is bleak. Only the Lord can heal the hurt, Psalm 34:19.

- **Appeal to God.** When blessings abound, we are more likely to forget God. But, when adversity comes, we turn to Him for deliverance, for rescue, and for salvation, Nehemiah 13:31b; Psalm 40:13; 71:2. It is instinctive for humans to look up when their hearts are downcast. We depend on His word. We are certain He can deliver, Jeremiah 1:8; II Timothy 4:18; II Peter 2:9. Therefore, we put our hope in Him, Psalm 41:1; 46:1; Isaiah 43:2; John 14:18; Hebrews 13:5,6. His past goodness is the guarantee of present rescue and future bliss. He leads us in right and wise ways. We can trust Him. No loss, no hardship, no discomfort can remove from us the favor of God, Job 10:12; Proverbs 8:35.

*“I know, O Lord, that Your laws are righteous, and
in faithfulness You have afflicted me,” Psalm 119:75.*

Some lessons cannot be learned in the light, Psalm 119:81,82. Trust in God is one of them. Only against the dark backdrop of suffering can the strong arm of deliverance be seen, Psalm 119:71. When all else fails, the rod of affliction opens our eyes to neglected truth. Then we will turn from the path of evil. We will seek the way of righteousness, Psalm 119:55. Worldliness will give way to devotion. Questionable companions will be replaced with spiritual friends. Lukewarm commitment will become burning zeal, I Thessalonians 5:23,24.

*Though I may not understand my troubles, I can surely
trust Your grace. Your kindness never fails. I put my
hope in You. This I pray, through Him who learned
obedience by the things He suffered, Amen.*

Psalm 119:57-64

“You are my portion, O Lord,” Psalm 119:57.

The word “*portion*” referred to something divided, apportioned, or allotted. It described distributing food at a feast, II Samuel 6:18,19, or sharing the plunder of war, Proverbs 16:19. A “*portion*,” then, often referred to an inheritance, Numbers 26:52-54.

Each tribe of Israel (except the Levites) inherited a piece of the Promised Land. The priests inherited the Lord, Deuteronomy 10:9. The relationship of God with His people is frequently described as “*the Lord is my portion*,” Psalm 73:26. In other words, He is the inheritance of every believer, Genesis 15:1; Psalm 91:2.

- **Confession.** It is a defining moment when the faithful confess that God is their portion, Lamentations 3:24. Until faith reaches that level, it remains a mere religious preference. But, when He is recognized as “*my*” inheritance, obedience becomes a natural reaction, Psalm 119:57. God takes over. Believers submit. The commands are kept. The Lord is praised, Psalm 119:58; cf. Psalm 63:1-8.

- **Consideration.** Because God is our inheritance, we consider our ways, Psalm 119:59. We think about our actions. We examine them. We hold them up to the light of truth, Deuteronomy 4:39; Haggai 1:5,7; Hebrews 12:3. When we consider Him, we will “*hasten*” to obey His commands, Psalm 119:60. Such consideration is not day dreaming. It is serious thought, deep analysis, and careful assessment.

- **Consolation.** There is a predictable outcome in claiming that God is our inheritance. The world objects. Sinners slander. The wicked persecute. But the saints remain unmoved, Psalm 119:61; cf. I Corinthians 15:58. In times of affliction, questions may surface. Are trials and burdens our “*heritage from the Almighty?*” Job 31:2. No! Not at all! We have the company of fellow pilgrims, Psalm 119:63. We bask in the “*love of God*,” Psalm 119:64. This is our consolation. It is our heritage.

There is one song that fills the night,
That comforts the soul till dawn’s early light.
It is the song of the morning dove,
The message is loud and clear: God is love.

Where the love of God is, the hatred of man will come, John 3:19. Such is life. Yet affliction can be a blessing, Psalm 119:71. It humbles the proud. It awakens to sin, Hosea 5:14,15. It turns the wayward back to God, Jonah 2:2; James 4:9,10. Affliction reminds us of our inheritance. It coaxes us to put our trust in the Lord, Psalm 119:62,75. Affliction, then, is a blessing, Psalm 119:71.

Because You are my portion, Lord, I am rich. I am overwhelmed by the thought, strengthened by the realization. I am encouraged to move forward, to keep the faith, to finish the race. You are the game changer. Thank You. In Jesus, Amen.

Psalm 119:65-72

"You are good," Psalm 119:68.

In the ninth stanza, the restrictions of an acrostic are again obvious. Five of the eight verses (in the Hebrew text) begin with the word "good." The term describes the action of God, Psalm 119:65. It applies to human judgment, Psalm 119:66. It portrays the nature of Jehovah, Psalm 119:68. And it throws light on the blessing of affliction, Psalm 119:71.

The idea behind the word is "goodness" in the broadest sense. It defines people, things, ideas, and behaviors as "good," "beneficial," "pleasant," "favorable," "happy," or "right," Genesis 2:9; 41:5; 50:20; II Samuel 17:14; Ecclesiastes 3:13; Isaiah 41:7.

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;
His love endures forever," Psalm 118:1,29.*

Goodness is the open hand of God. From past experience, faith is certain that there is plenty for the present, Deuteronomy 6:24. Faith is also certain there will be plenty in the future. For "the Lord will do what is good in His sight," II Samuel 10:12b.

- **Certainty in the present**, Psalm 86:5. From the mountain top of faith, we see the grace of God. "Give thanks to the Lord," we shout, "for He is good," Psalm 136:1. But, in the valley of despair, we often sing a different song. "If the Lord is with us," we cry, "why has all of this happened to us?" Judges 6:13. In order to have the certainty of David, we must have the faith of David, Psalm 25:10a. "Let us," then, "draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance." And "let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promises is faithful," Hebrews 10:22,23.

- **Certainty about the future**, Psalm 23:6. It is more than a wish, a hope, or a dream. For the child of God, it is an absolute surety. We will enter the pearly gates. We will walk the golden streets. We will see our Lord face to face. Beyond our rough and winding path lies eternal rest. Beyond our weary and trying way lies a peaceful shore, I Corinthians 2:9. The contradiction of His dealings—compared to His promises—will not last much longer, Revelation 6:9-11. Faith sees the goodness of God, Lamentations 3:25,26. Thus, we live in calm security. Though a mere mist, though clueless about tomorrow, James 4:13,14, we believe in eternal life. Why? A good God said it is so, John 14:1-3,19; II Corinthians 5:1.

The Lord is good, I Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 25:8; 34:8; 100:5; 135:3. He gives what is good, Psalm 85:12. He never withholds His care, Psalm 84:11. "The Lord is good, a refuge in time of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him," Nahum 1:7. So, I beg, "according to Your love," Father, "remember me, for You are good," Psalm 25:7.

*What a reassuring truth. You are good, Lord.
You do only what is good. I trust in this
truth. May I never let it slip away. In Christ,
who relied on Your goodness, too. Amen.*

Psalm 119:73-80

"I have put my hope in Your word," Psalm 119:74.

The tenth stanza opens and closes with a prayer for understanding, Psalm 119:73,80. The verses in between mention the struggle of the poet in difficult circumstances. The writer was concerned. Can the sufficiency of God satisfy the needs of man?

- **Human need.** The psalmist was having a hard time, Psalm 119:78,86. He was suffering for his religious convictions. His soul fainted while waiting for the rescue of God, Psalm 119:81a. The delay tested his faith, Psalm 119:82. His life hung in the balance, Psalm 119:87. He wanted to remain loyal, Psalm 119:1. But his strength was limited, Psalm 119:96.

- **Divine sufficiency.** The Lord knew the author better than the author knew himself, Psalm 94:9,10. God created the psalmist, Psalm 119:73. He was faithful, Psalm 119:90. He did not forget. The poet belonged to Him, Psalm 119:94. God sought his highest good. He was being groomed for a nobler service in a higher place. The purposes of heaven could be trusted, Psalm 33:11; 119:138.

"Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all," II Corinthians 4:17.

- **Human conviction.** The faith of the poet remained firm. The Lord sustained him. He came through his trials wiser and stronger. He was convinced that dark days have happy endings, that bad times yield good outcomes, Psalm 119:116,117. For God knows the way men take, Job 23:10. He is aware of human limitations, Psalm 103:14. The Lord cares for those who trust in Him, Jeremiah 17:7.

- **Divine assurance.** Blessed are those who believe in providence. They are not a pawn of blind chance. They are under the watchful eye of a compassionate God, Psalm 103:13; cf. I John 3:1a. He is faithful in affliction, Psalm 119:75. His discipline is carefully designed to train humankind. It is the boot camp of heaven, Hebrews 12:5-11. The righteous put their *"hope in His word," Psalm 119:74*.

"My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice," Psalm 34:2.

The psalmist wanted to understand the promises of God, Psalm 119:27,34,125,144,169. He longed to grasp the meaning of life. Knowledge was crucial, Psalm 14:2; 82:5; Isaiah 6:10. For, when he understood, he turned to the Lord, he obeyed His commands. Hence, come what may, we should also put our hope in His word, Psalm 119:81b.

O God, how great are Your promises. I put my hope in them. Trials may test my faith. An understanding heart will carry me through. I long to see Your face. Until, then, let Jesus intercede for me, Amen.

Psalm 119:81-88

“I am like a wineskin in the smoke,” Psalm 119:83.

Every believer has trying moments. He hopes heaven will come to his aid, Psalm 119:81,82. During the interim, however, when life is difficult, he may likely feel like *“a wineskin in the smoke,”* Psalm 119:83.

Rich people stored wine in jars, Jeremiah 48:11. Poor folks put freshly squeezed grape juice into skins, I Samuel 16:20. A skin bottle was made from a slaughtered goat. The head and feet were removed. The remaining part of the carcass was pulled out of the hide. The holes left by the feet and tail were sewn shut. The neck skin was folded over. It served as a vent to release the gases from the fermenting wine, Job 32:18,19; cf. Matthew 9:17.

When not in use, a skin bag was hung on the center pole of the tent (not far from the cooking fire). Over time a wineskin would blacken and dry out from the smoke and heat. The phrase *“like a wineskin in the smoke”* referred to being old and useless, cf. Joshua 9:3,4,12,13.

- **Feeling alone.** In the best of times, a saint yearns to be with the Lord, Psalm 84:2. These feelings are greatly intensified in seasons of distress, Psalm 119:123. The sufferer wears himself out begging for relief. He loses his voice. His eyes grow weary, Psalm 69:3. He is consumed with sadness, Lamentations 2:11. It is a pitiful sight. Hard, indeed, is the lot of the downcast. He is like a discarded wineskin—blackened and shriveled, set aside and neglected. He wanders about parched and wrinkled, cracked and abandoned, Psalm 119:84. His persecutors seek to trap him as if he was a wild animal, Psalm 119:85. They almost wipe him from the earth, Psalm 119:87.

Holding on to anxiety can be the end of faith. Clinging to faith will be the end of anxiety.

- **But not forsaken.** The psalmist hung on. He still had hope, Psalm 119:81. He believed in the word of God, Psalm 119:31,50,86. The Lord will do what He pleases. No one can stop Him, Job 23:13. It is only a matter of time. Still the poet presses his case. He reminds God of the brevity of his life. He urges the Lord to act soon, to do something quickly, Psalm 119:126. The judgment on his enemies must be swift if it is to be of any use. In the meantime, faith refuses to surrender. Every believer must carry his cross, Matthew 10:38; 16:24. The path to heaven goes through Calvary. The traveler may get weary but he need not feel forsaken, Deuteronomy 31:6.

“Blessed are those who mourn.” Why? Are we blessed by sorrow? Absolutely! And they *“will be comforted,”* Matthew 5:4. God has promised He *“will wipe away every tear,”* Revelation 7:17c. The Lord works in us at the pace His love decides, Psalm 119:88. Hence, let us be content to obey His statutes, to wait for His comfort.

Compassionate Father, I am a fragile wineskin. My heart may feel abandoned but my head knows You are nearby. Stay close. I am almost home. In Christ Jesus, my Lord, who learned obedience by the things that He suffered, Amen.

Psalm 119: 89-96

“Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens,” Psalm 119:89.

The universe was created by the command of God, Hebrews 11:3. It remains because of His decree, Psalm 148:5,6. The stability of the world is a testimony to the power of His word, Psalm 74:16,17. It began and continues because God “*spoke*,” Psalm 33:8,9.

The word of God is not dead. It is “*living and active*,” Hebrews 4:12a. It accomplishes what the Lord intends, Psalm 147:15-18; Isaiah 55:11. His word is reliable, firm, solid, dependable, and steady. It “*stands forever*,” Isaiah 40:8.

- **It endures**, Psalm 119:89-91. The Lord is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Psalm 102:25-27. He does not change, Malachi 3:6a; James 1:7. His eternal word is a reflection of His eternal nature, Psalm 36:5. His precepts are immutable. They are fixed and established in the heavens, Psalm 89:2. They do not vary nor fluctuate. “*The plans of the Lord stand firm forever; the purposes of His heart through all generations*,” Psalm 33:11. What His word was long ago, it is now, and ever will be.

- **It sustains**, Psalm 119:92,93. The burdens of life crushed the psalmist. The testimonies of heaven gave him hope. They were his “*delight*,” Psalm 119:16,24,35,47,70,77. God was his sole source of stability in a precarious world, Psalm 119:25,50,67. The eternal word snatched him out of disaster. It preserved his life, Psalm 103:2-5. Trust in God sustained him, Deuteronomy 6:24; Psalm 16:1; 32:7; 41:1-3; 86:2; 121:7; II Timothy 4:18.

- **It saves**, Psalm 119:94,95. He who was cast down owed his rescue to the Lord, Psalm 34:22. The poet belonged to God. Though the wicked still lay in wait for him, he found strength in the statutes of heaven, Psalm 56:5,6; 59:3,4. He was certain God would act in due time. He had before. He would again, Psalm 119:28. So the psalmist reposed in perfect peace, Romans 8:31,32.

Each hurt of mortal birth
Is a gift of caring love,
To ready the saint on earth
For his joyful flight above.

Experience taught the ancient singer that humans are limited. Their resourcefulness is finite. But God is boundless, Psalm 119:96. His measure is “*longer than the earth and wider than the sea*,” Job 11:7-9; 32:26; Ephesians 3:20,21. And, like Him, His word is beyond comparison. It is “*perfect*,” “*trustworthy*,” and “*right*,” Psalm 19:7,8. Truly, “*blessed are those who keep His commands*,” Psalm 119:1.

Thank You, God, for Your word. It shows me where to walk. It instructs me in truth. It exposes my mistakes. It trains me to live as You intend. Through it I am thoroughly equipped to meet every challenge of life. In humble gratitude, through Jesus, Amen.

Psalm 119:97-104

“Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long,” Psalm 119:97.

The thirteenth stanza is more unified than most of the others. Its main theme is the superior wisdom gained in a regular study of scripture. A cursory glance through the Bible yields little results. An in depth investigation of the word harvests much knowledge, II Timothy 3:16,17.

What follows, then, is a series of reasons for meditating on His precepts, Psalm 119:97. It is good to practice daily devotional study. The habit is not natural. But it can be cultivated. And those who do will reap a prize beyond price, Psalm 112:1; 119:2,3.

- **More wisdom.** The poet praises the practical wisdom in the word of God, Deuteronomy 4:5,6. The wisdom of the world is mere child’s play, I Corinthians 1:20. Even the “*foolishness of God*” is wiser than man, I Corinthians 1:25. How silly to think otherwise, Isaiah 45:9. True wisdom comes from above, Job 12:13. It leads to moral behavior, James 3:17. It is not a wisdom of this world, I Corinthians 2:6. Earthly wisdom has a short shelf-life, I Corinthians 13:8. The wisdom of heaven is eternal. Therefore, those who drink from the fountain of divine truth are “*wiser,*” Psalm 119:98.

- **More insight.** The righteous grasp the deeper activity of God in the world, Isaiah 41:17-20. This insight is a gift from above, Jeremiah 3:15; Daniel 9:22. Secular teachers get their ideas from human sources. Their perceptions are earthy and limited. Insights from the inspired word are a higher truth, an instinctive discernment of good and evil, Psalm 119:99. Such perception has greater intrinsic value than all the arts, sciences, and humanities combined. It is ultimate truth because it leads to a “*good life,*” James 3:13. If one is to boast, then, he should boast about insight concerning the Lord, Jeremiah 9:23,24.

- **More understanding.** Advanced understanding does not come from advanced age. It comes from the Almighty, Job 32:7-9; cf. Psalm 119:33,34,102. Antiquity is never an insurance against stupidity. Quite to the contrary! The psalmist gained understanding from the precepts of God, Psalm 119:104. He panted for the Lord. His soul thirsted for the living God, Psalm 42:1,2; 63:1; 143:6-8. He knew the poverty of his own thoughts. He turned to the inspired word. It was his heritage, the joy of his heart, Psalm 119:111. The word encouraged him to get understanding, Proverbs 4:5-7.

God’s way is always the best way.

The will of the Lord is the delight of the righteous, Job 23:12. It is written in our heart, Psalm 40:8. It is sweeter than honey, Psalm 19:10; 119:103. We should relish it above all the delicacies of life. Our obedience of His will is food for the soul, John 4:34. It is not a snack. It is the whole meal.

Gracious Lord, many think Your word is harsh and rigid. They feel its constraining power but fail to repent. To me, Your word is a map. It leads me gently home. I will be there soon. Thanks for the scripture. Through Him, who blazed the trail, Amen.

Psalm 119:105-112

“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path,” Psalm 119:105.

Light can suggest instruction. For, when someone finds wisdom, his face lights up, Ecclesiastes 8:1. The command *“to walk in the light”* denotes loyalty to the teachings of heaven, Isaiah 2:5; I John 1:7. Our path in this world is often dark. But the word of God reveals the way, Psalm 119:130; cf. II Peter 1:19. His commands are a lamp. His teachings are a light, Proverbs 6:23; cf. Psalm 18:28.

Since the Lord revealed His will, it has never been found false. It is counsel for all difficulty. It is comfort for every trouble. It is guidance for any perplexity. Men go wrong not for lack of knowledge but for an unwillingness to follow the available light. The psalmist promised he would walk in it, Psalm 119:106.

- **His resolve.** The poet knew by experience how good it was to pursue the way of God. Therefore, he resolved to stay on the path, Psalm 119:2. This was his secret of perseverance, Psalm 119:93. Nothing will allure the truly committed to take a detour. Not even threatening peril will drive them off course, Psalm 119:110. The child of God sticks to the straight and narrow, Matthew 7:13,14. He keeps his feet off the side streets of evil, Psalm 119:101. He makes a firm commitment to stay faithful, Psalm 119:112.

- **His practice.** The writer knew that his life was in constant jeopardy, Psalm 119:109; cf. Judges 12:3; I Samuel 19:5; 28:21; Job 13:14. He also knew his security was in the Lord. When trouble came, he turned at once to the word, Psalm 119:107. Likewise, the ungodly, during affliction, say a prayer, dust off the Bible, or send for a minister. People are convinced that life resides in the light, John 8:12. The unrighteous sense it. The righteous know it.

- **His gratitude.** The author of *Psalm 119* was thankful, Psalm 119:108. He was grateful for the protection of God. His word illuminated the way, Psalm 119:105. It kept him from falling. It preserved his life, Psalm 119:40. A person absorbed in keeping himself alive is apt to think he has no time for praising God. The psalmist found time to express gratitude. His praise was prompted by an inner impulse of appreciation, Exodus 35:20,21. It was a free will offering. The poet had freely received. It behooved him to freely give, Matthew 10:8.

When life hangs on a thread, God offers a rope.

The devil has many tricks. The psalmist called them *“snares,”* Psalm 25:15; 119:110. Often these allurements are subtle, hidden, and secretive. We do not see them coming. Our safety, in such cases, depends on the enlightenment of God, Psalm 119:18. The more we walk in it, the brighter it becomes, Proverbs 4:18. Our task is to swerve neither to the right nor to the left, Proverbs 4:25-27.

Your light is my salvation. Help me choose to walk in it. You have marked the way. You have leveled the path. You have provided the directions. It is up to me to stay on the road. Bless my journey. In Him, who enables the traveler, Amen.

Psalm 119:113-120

"I hate double-minded men," Psalm 119:113.

The fifteenth stanza has a clear, internal continuity. It develops one central theme: the love of the law, Psalm 119:119b; cf. Psalm 119:97,127,159,163. The writer passionately states his determination to keep the inspired word. He vows to remain faithful.

There is nothing contradictory in the will of God. Neither should those who follow the Lord be double-minded, Psalm 119:113. For the "two-faced" are shameless pretenders. They cannot be trusted. They are unstable, James 1:7,8. The double-minded are hypocrites, "*wolves dressed in sheep's clothing,*" Matthew 7:15. They are not what they appear to be.

- **Disdain for double-mindedness.** The psalmist had little patience with those who were divided, wavering, or undecided in their faith. He knew they were not completely committed, I Kings 18:21. The author was disgusted with them. They were evil doers, Psalm 119:115. He ordered them to depart, Psalm 6:8.

The double-minded tamper with the truth. They compromise their faith, Matthew 6:24. They make professions of fidelity but they live a lie, Acts 5:1-4. The double-minded spread an evil contagion among believers. They encourage disobedience. They must not be tolerated.

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?" II Corinthians 6:14.

- **Deliverance from double-mindedness.** It is a tepid devotion that comes half heartedly to the altar, Revelation 3:15,16. It is useless to straddle the fence. The psalmist gave himself entirely to God, Psalm 119:114; cf. Psalm 27:5; 32:7; 91:1,2. He looked for the Lord while He could be found, Isaiah 55:6. God was his refuge, Psalm 3:3; 18:2,30.

The double-minded like their Sunday religion and their week day fun. They are comfortable with the contradiction. Middle-of-the-roaders do not want to be seen as religious fanatics or hopeless reprobates. They desire to get along with the world and maintain a pleasant, pious reputation. No wonder double-mindedness is so common!

The double-minded must repent or suffer the consequences, James 4:8. God knows their thoughts, Psalm 94:11. He does not approve of their evil schemes, Jeremiah 6:19. Their end is dreadful, Psalm 119:118,119a. But it is not enough to denounce double-mindedness. We must focus on the will of heaven, Psalm 119:116. We should avoid evil doers, I Corinthians 15:33,34. We must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to God, Psalm 119:120. He will uphold us, if we uphold His word, Psalm 119:117. Is that not a fair exchange?

The world laughs at faithfulness. It makes fun of piety. Yet You, Lord, will have the last laugh. I fully commit my heart to You. I refuse to be double-minded. Sustain me in troubles, trials, and temptations. Through Him, who is my only refuge, Amen.

Psalm 119:121-128

“My eyes fail, looking for Your salvation,” Psalm 119:123.

Evil doers are frequently mentioned in this stanza. They hassle the psalmist at every turn. His eyes grow dim with sorrow, [Psalm 6:7](#); [31:9](#); [88:6-9a](#); [Lamentations 2:11](#). The torment of his oppressors is relentless, [Job 17:6,7](#). His grief is deep because his longings are unsatisfied, his hope is deferred, [Psalm 69:1-3](#); [119:82,123](#); cf. [Deuteronomy 28:32](#); [Isaiah 38:14](#).

The poet reminds God that he has not oppressed others. Why are others allowed to oppress him? [Psalm 119:121](#). He felt he was innocent, [Job 27:6](#). But he was treated as if he was guilty. Should his heart condemn him, he knew God was greater than his heart, [I John 3:19,20](#). Hence, the writer looked to heaven for help, [Psalm 40:11](#). He begged for mercy, discernment, protection, and intervention.

- **Mercy**, [Psalm 119:124](#). The author appealed to God. He felt his appeal would not be in vain, [Psalm 119:132](#). He trusted the Almighty. His grace would prevail. The Lord is mindful of His own, [Psalm 8:3-5](#); [115:11-13](#). To us, His children, He has promised His *“unfailing love,”* [Psalm 6:4](#). We abide in His favor. He turns to us in mercy, [Psalm 25:15-21](#).

- **Discernment**, [Psalm 119:125](#). The psalmist also wished for clarity amidst confusion. Many have prayed the same thing, [I Kings 3:8,9](#); [Ezekiel 44:23](#); [Malachi 3:18](#). We desire to distinguish between the plausible and the true. We want to differentiate the will of God from the wishes of men. Thankfully, the Lord says that we can, [Hebrews 5:14](#).

- **Protection**, [Psalms 119:121](#). Oppression is everywhere. The faith is under attack. We beg for relief, [Psalm 27:9](#); [71:4](#); [119:8,134](#). Only God can snatch us from the snare, [Psalm 119:122](#). He promised again and again to be with His people, [Genesis 26:3](#); [Exodus 3:12a](#); [Deuteronomy 4:31](#); [31:6](#); [Joshua 1:5](#); [I Samuel 12:22](#); [Psalm 138:8](#). We have nothing to fear, [Romans 8:31](#).

- **Intervention**, [Psalm 119:126](#). We are grieved at the sight of evil having its way. Why does God allow sin to triumph? We are perplexed by the silence of heaven. When will God right the wrongs in this world? [Psalm 119:136](#). After all, we were taught to *“cut off”* the sinner, [Number 15:30,31](#). Loathing sin is appropriate, [Psalm 119:158](#). Waiting for God to intervene is also appropriate, [Psalm 27:14](#); [37:7-9](#); cf. [Romans 12:19](#).

Hope is not wistful thinking but calm assurance.

So we wait. We trust the Lord to *“ensure”* our well-being, [Psalm 119:122](#). We ask Him to be our surety—our pledge of security, [Job 17:3](#). This is more than bail. We dare God to take the blame, to stand in our place as the accused. Is that not what Jesus did? [Romans 5:6-8](#).

Gracious Lord, thank You for Your mercy and Your protection. I walk through a troubled land. I see injustice on every hand. But You will intervene. I wait patiently. In hope, I pray, in the name of my surety, Amen.

Psalm 119:129-136

“Your statutes are wonderful,” Psalm 119:129.

The Bible is a treasure of infinite worth, Psalm 119:14,72,162. It is the masterpiece of God. It sheds light on the perplexities of life, Psalm 19:7,8. It is a virtual fountain of knowledge, Psalm 119:97-100. Within its pages are the refreshing waters of life, Psalm 119:77,107.

The scripture guides the weary pilgrim to peaceful shores, Psalm 119:52. The Bible is drenched with the tears of the saints, washed in the blood of martyrs, Psalm 119:145-149. The inspired word breaks the chains of sin, diminishes the pain of parting, dulls the sting of death, and destroys the gloom of the grave, Psalm 119:30-32.

- **Wonder of the word**, Psalm 119:129. The word is wonderful because God is wonderful, Job 11:7-9. He is beyond human understanding, Isaiah 40:13,14. He is superior to everyday life, exalted above simple explanation, Job 42:1-3; Psalm 139:1-6. His word is “wonderful” because of how it was written, because of what it contains. It is “wonderful” because of its purity, power, and perfection. It is “wonderful” because it is from God. May He open our eyes to see its wonder, Psalm 119:18; cf. Acts 16:14.

- **Enlightenment of the word**, Psalm 119:130. The careful interpretation of His statutes bring understanding, Psalm 119:104; cf. Proverbs 1:2-5. Vistas of learning are opened to those who study it. The psalmist called it “*unfolding*” the word. We call it “exegesis of the text.” It is the process of bringing out the meaning of scripture. We open our mouth in hunger for His nourishment. We pant in thirst for the water of instruction, Psalm 119:131. The Lord promises to satisfy our needs, Psalm 119:132; cf. Psalm 81:10.

- **Guidance of the word**, Psalm 119:133. The poet asked God to “*order*” his steps, to “*prepare*” his heart for faithfulness, I Chronicles 29:18; II Chronicles 12:14. He plead for the Lord to fix his mind on heaven, Psalm 112:7,8. Through His word, God “*establishes*” and “*directs*” us on our journey, Psalm 37:23,24; 90:17. Apart from His guidance, our way is shaky at best. We often stumble. We stagger. We grope along uncertain of our direction, unable to endure. We need the help of heaven, Psalm 119:135.

It is good to master the word and let the word master us.

Our first obligation is to go to the source, Psalm 119:25-27. Many have started their spiritual pilgrimage with confidence. But along the way, they have faltered. They have wandered off course. They have failed to drink daily from the living word, Hebrews 4:12a; I Peter 1:23. If there are any signs—no matter how slight—of decline, we must refocus on the Lord, Psalm 25:15. We must rest again on His promise, willing to be instructed by His precepts. There is no hope for those who refuse to yield. Over them the righteous weep, Psalm 119:136.

Your word is beyond compare. Nothing on earth is like it. You call me through its message. You direct me with its testimony. You strengthen me by its promises. It is my treasure, my guide, and my hope. To You be the glory, in Jesus Christ, Amen.

Psalm 119:137-144

“Righteous are You, O Lord,” Psalm 119:137.

Four out of the eight verses in this stanza speak of righteousness, Psalm 119:137,138,142,144. Obviously it is a key word in this section. Two thoughts stand out. God is “righteous,” Nehemiah 9:7,8. And the law is “true” (or, literally, “righteous”), Psalm 119:151,160.

The word “righteousness,” in the Old Testament, is often misunderstood. It is not behavior required by an ethical, legal, or religious norm. Rather “righteousness” is fulfilling the demands of a relationship, Genesis 38:1-26; I Samuel 24:17; 26:22,23.

Everyone has a multitude of relationships. These include civil magistrates, religious authorities, family members, fellow citizens, and God. Each of these relationships carries specific demands. The satisfaction of those demands constitutes righteousness.

- **God is righteous.** Jehovah is always righteous, Psalm 103:17; 111:3; Daniel 9:14; Zephaniah 3:5. Righteousness is one of His chief characteristics. But that righteousness is not conformity to some standard of right outside (or above) Him. Not at all! His righteousness is His faithfulness in His relationship with His people. It is the keeping of the covenant that He made with those He chose to love, Nehemiah 9:32,33. Therefore, in times of distress, we appeal to His righteousness for deliverance, Psalm 31:1; 143:11.

- **His word is righteous.** When addressing daily conduct, the law was given as a guide to human relationships, Leviticus 19:1-37. Thus, the faithful keep the law, meditate on it day and night, Psalm 1:2. For, he who does not keep the law—and the relationships it requires—cannot be righteous. But, obedience, by itself, does not make a man righteous, Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 4:13. Instead, it is faith, “made complete” by obedience, that secures our righteousness, James 2:21,23.

The Lord protects the righteous, their way to Him is known.
The path of sinners is far from God, they are on their own.

God maintains His righteousness. He does so by imputing righteousness to us who are not righteous, by delivering us who have no right to be delivered, Isaiah 46:12,13. In His salvation, we will be declared righteous, Isaiah 45:24,25. In spite of our failings, our compassionate Father will not hold our sins against us, Romans 4:5-8.

Our righteousness does not depend on our greatness, Psalm 40:17; 119:141. It is based on our covenant connection with God, Deuteronomy 7:9; 14:2. The Lord does not despise the afflicted or disdain the sufferer, Psalm 22:24. Consequently, the servant of the Most High loves His promises, Psalm 119:140. His word is our delight, Psalm 119:143.

*I am humbled, Lord, by Your majesty, overwhelmed by
Your righteousness. Your covenant is my only hope.
Please keep Your promises. In Him, who is right, Amen.*

Psalm 119:145-152

"I call with all my heart," Psalm 119:145.

A child on his knees is the picture of trust. He speaks in simple faith. He believes God hears. He expects an answer. Adults are amused. They think it is cute. But, all too often, they regard prayer as a childhood memory, a useless waste of time.

If a person is weak in prayer, he cannot be strong in the Lord.

The psalmist believed in prayer. He spent a lot of time talking to God, Psalm 119:26,55,56,62. He wanted the Lord in his life. He set aside regular times for public and private devotion, Psalm 63:2-4. His prayer-life was the measure of his spiritual-life.

- **His sincerity.** The poet put his whole heart into communicating with God, Psalm 119:145a. He stayed awake through the night, Psalm 119:148a. He faithfully kept a prayer vigil, Psalm 63:6. He *"prayed continually,"* I Thessalonians 5:17. He eagerly anticipated these intimate conversations with the Lord.
- **His request.** The author had one, reoccurring plea: *"save me,"* Psalm 119:146a, *"preserve my life,"* Psalm 119:149b. He had voiced these requests earlier, Psalm 119:40,94. His very existence hung in the balance, dangling by a thin thread. He hastened to secure the protection of heaven. Without it, there was little relief. With it, there was joy even in the eye of the storm, Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 50:10.
- **His hope.** The psalmist put his hope in the word of God, Psalm 119:147b. He was confident the Lord would respond, Psalm 91:14-16. Trials were close, Psalm 119:150. Deliverance was closer, Psalm 119:151. He rested his faith on the promises of God. He relied on the Lord, took Him at His word, and waited for His redemption, Psalm 6:4; 25:15-21; 41:1-3. His confidence was firm. His resolve was strong.
- **His rationale.** The word of God is established forever, Psalm 119:152; cf. Psalm 111:7,8; 119:89; Matthew 5:18. He promised to hear our prayers, Psalm 6:9; Proverbs 15:29. They are a direct pipeline to the throne. They release the power of God on the circumstances of man. They are not our last resort but our first response. Our prayers unlock the storehouse of heaven, I Peter 3:12.

"The Lord is nigh to all who call on Him," Psalm 145:18.

Our attitude toward prayer must be carefully guarded. Otherwise, we may come to think of it as a routine activity, a commonplace ritual. The blessings of prayer are similar to the sunrise. Their regularity can cause us to take them for granted. Vigilance is required. Regular renewal is needed, Psalm 51:10-12.

Thank You for hearing my prayers. I know You will answer. I wait patiently for Your response. Your will be done. In Jesus, who intercedes for me, Amen.

Psalm 119:153-160

“Preserve my life,” Psalm 119:154.

Throughout the Old Testament, life was considered inherently good, Ecclesiastes 9:4. It was a blessing to be alive. Only in deep despair did one dare question the purpose for living, Job 3:11-26. For life comes from God, Genesis 2:7. Jehovah is the “*fountain of life*,” Psalm 36:9, “*the spring of living water*,” Jeremiah 2:13. He is the source of existence, Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 12:10. Life, then, is a gift from heaven.

The psalmist asked the Lord to spare him from death, Psalm 30:3. He asked for his life to be preserved, Psalm 119:25,40,88,107,149,154,156,159; 143:11. The poet wanted to remain alive. He wished for his life to be sustained. Life is preserved when we choose to follow the word of God, Deuteronomy 30:15,16; 32:45-47; Amos 5:14; cf. Psalm 119:50,93. That choice has two imperative elements.

- **Yielding to God.** The writer asked the Lord to look upon his suffering, Psalm 119:153a. He wanted God to consider it, to examine it, to weigh it carefully. He knew he would probably miscalculate, Psalm 13:3. He wanted the Lord to unwrap its complexity. Plainly his problems were beyond his ability to manage, Psalm 25:15; 31:15. Hence, he committed his case to God. He sought the intervention of heaven, Psalm 55:16. There is no honor in being a fool. God must save, and God alone. Hence, like Israel, boxed in at the Red Sea, he stood still and waited for the deliverance of the Lord, Exodus 14:13a.

- **Depending on God.** Throughout *Psalm 119*, the poet portrayed himself as a troubled man. But he also described himself a blessed man, Psalm 119:157. The psalmist refused to trust in shrewd strategies, clever maneuvers, or ingenious schemes. God was his refuge, Psalm 119:17,28,37,94,122. If he had the grace of heaven, no matter how heavy the burden, he could endure, Isaiah 40:29. The author would move ahead with renewed strength, Isaiah 40:30,31. His plea to “*preserve my life*” made perfect sense. The promise of protection would be kept, Psalm 71:20. The word of God was trustworthy, Psalm 34:9,10. The writer learned the pain of affliction as well as the power of faith, Psalm 119:140.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus,” Philippians 4:6.

In times of tribulation, we must rely on the Lord. He will deliver us, Psalm 4:7,8. Though He may delay, remain firm, remember His statutes, and trust in His promises, Psalm 119:160. Life is good.

*My body is weak. My faith is strong. Protect me, Lord.
Show Your grace. Keep Your word. Sustain my life. I
cannot navigate through the hazards by myself. Guide me
to peaceful shores. In Him, who always preserves me, Amen.*

Psalm 119:161-168

“All Your words are true,” Psalm 119:160.

The root idea of “*true*” is faithfulness, Genesis 24:27; Exodus 34:6. It is often translated “*truth*,” Psalm 25:5; Jeremiah 4:1,2. What Jehovah says is true, Psalm 119:142,151,160. Fittingly, then, His words are called “*the Book of Truth*,” Daniel 10:21.

“Send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to Your holy mountain, to the place where You dwell,” Psalm 43:3.

- **True fear**, Psalm 119:161. The displeasure of God over human disobedience far outweighs the scorn of corrupt rulers. So we shrink from any thought, any feeling, any action that the Lord would disapprove, Psalm 119:24.
- **True treasure**, Psalm 119:162. Those who meditate on His word discover unexpected riches. These gems of truth bring great joy, Psalm 119:111. The excitement does not fade. The taste never grows bitter, Psalm 119:103.
- **True speech**, Psalm 119:163. Those who love righteousness will not pursue evil, Psalm 119:128; Proverbs 13:5. A lying tongue and a truthful heart are not compatible, James 3:9-12. Hence, the genuine servant of God always speaks the truth, Titus 2:7,8.
- **True praise**, Psalm 119:164. The saint worships everywhere, all the time—at work, during mealtime, at home, during play. His life vibrates with the unceasing music of praise, Psalm 104:33. Our inner sense of His goodness overflows in continual adoration.
- **True security**, Psalm 119:165. Tranquility abides with those who obey God, Isaiah 32:17. It saves them from falling into vices that bring shame, I John 2:10. They bask in perfect peace—the approval of conscience, the favor of man, and the “*well done*” of God.
- **True hope**, Psalm 119:166. The poet expected to be saved, Psalm 119:81,123. It was not an idle anticipation. It was a firm realization, Psalm 40:1,2. It was based on the faithfulness of God and the fidelity of man, II Peter 1:10,11. Such is our hope, Hebrews 3:6.
- **True love**, Psalm 119:167. Intentional obedience is the product of conscious appreciation. The author loved the statutes of God, Psalm 119:47,97,127,159,174. He was devoted to the Lord, Psalm 86:2. He embraced God. God embraced him.
- **True obedience**, Psalm 119:168. The faithful saint is confident. He does not boast of flawlessness, Psalm 119:67,176. But he knows where he stands with God, Psalm 16:8. Thus, we also walk before the Lord—aware of His presence, assured of His grace.

His word is true! That is why we seek its light, follow its guidance, and proclaim its worth.

To You, Lord, belong all praise, all glory, and all thanks. In His name, Amen.

Psalm 119:169-176

“I have strayed like a lost sheep,” Psalm 119:176.

The various threads that run through *Psalm 119* are tightly knotted together in this final stanza. The writer sought the Lord. He discovered the truth. He confessed his faults. He begged for rescue. He found the grace of God. He vowed to sustain his devotion. These things are the fabric of this song. They are also the successive stages of spiritual liberation.

- **Seek God.** The psalmist was *“laid low,”* Psalm 119:25. He was unable to escape. He longed for deliverance, Psalm 119:117. He prayed for rescue, Psalm 119:145. Only the Lord could save him, Psalm 119:169. The poet began with his helplessness. So should we, Philippians 4:6. We should seek God and wait for His salvation, Psalm 119:166,174.
- **Learn the truth.** The Lord does not reject the sincere seeker. On the contrary, He invites every searcher to *“come,”* to *“learn”* from Him, Matthew 11:28,29. The psalmist was filled with praise. God had taught him. He realized that the commands of heaven were *“righteous,”* Psalm 119:171,172. The decisive hour arrives when we put the Lord first, choose His precepts, and follow His will, Psalm 119:173.
- **Confess our faults.** The author admitted his spiritual wandering, Psalm 119:176. He knew he was a transgressor, living in a *“distant country,”* Luke 15:11-13. He had deviated from the narrow road, Matthew 7:13,14. It is a common trait among men, Romans 3:10-12; I John 1:8. But, when we err, *“if we confess our sin,”* God will forgive us, I John 1:9; cf. Psalm 32:1-5. Confession is obviously a steppingstone into heaven, Romans 10:10.
- **Find grace.** The poet sensed his danger. He knew he hung precariously on the edge. He needed deliverance, Psalm 119:170. He trusted the *“promise”* of God to rescue him, Psalm 50:14,15; 91:14,15. His *“unfailing love”* delivers those who seek His mercy, Psalm 13:5,6; 31:16; 77:7-9; 85:7,8; 119:41.
- **Sustain our devotion.** When God rescues us, we praise Him, Psalm 119:175. We bow in worship, lift our voices in adoration. He sustains us, Psalm 3:5; 55:22. Therefore, in humble gratitude, we sustain our devotion to Him, Psalm 34:1-3; Ephesians 5:19,20. Joyful exultation fills our hearts till our work is done, till the roll is called up yonder.

Deliverance is a free gift to be received with humble thanks.

Psalm 119 was composed by a saintly person. The tokens of his humility are clear. There is no boasting. No glorying. No gloating. Instead, there are only cries of a modest man confessing his frailty, begging for deliverance. He makes no plea of merit, no expression of personal goodness. He is powerless and imperfect but prayerful. What an example!

Father, Your word illuminates the way. It shows me what I am. It tells me who I need to be. It points me toward eternal life. I love Your precepts. I trust Your promises. I praise Your name. Prayerfully, through Your Son, Amen.

TOPIC AND TEXT INDEX

The theme of *Psalm 119* is obeying the Lord. Therefore, the preceding twenty-two devotional studies focus on one or the other of the following ideas: the reason for obeying, the resolve in obeying, or the result of obeying the will of God.

Topic	Text
Blessing of obedience	Psalm 119:2 Blessed are they who keep His statutes.
Instruction of God	Psalm 119:12 Teach me Your decrees.
Seeing the unseen	Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see.
Clinging to the Lord	Psalm 119:25 Preserve my life according to Your word.
Seeking the will of God	Psalm 119:34 Give me understanding and I will keep Your law.
Salvation from above	Psalm 119:41 May Your unfailing love come to me.
Promise of protection	Psalm 119:49 Remember Your word to Your servant.
Inheriting the Lord	Psalm 119:57 You are my portion, O Lord.
Goodness of God	Psalm 119:68 You are good.
Assurance from heaven	Psalm 119:74 I have put my hope in Your word.
Feeling abandoned	Psalm 119:83 I am like a wineskin in the smoke.
Word of God	Psalm 119:89 Your word, O Lord, is eternal.
Meditating on the law	Psalm 119:97 Oh how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long.
Following the light	Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Avoiding the pretender	Psalm 119:113 I hate double-minded men.
Rescue of God	Psalm 119:123 My eyes fail, looking for Your salvation.
Wonder of the word	Psalm 119:129 Your statutes are wonderful.
Righteousness of God	Psalm 119:137 Righteous are You, O Lord.
Practice of prayer	Psalm 119:145 I call with all my heart.
Life in the Lord	Psalm 119:154 Preserve my life.
Certainty in God	Psalm 119:160 All Your words are true.
Deliverance of the Lord	Psalm 119:176 I have strayed like a lost sheep.