

## Psalm 119 (Part Three)

A Way of Life  
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On the first Day of Unleavened Bread we saw how fundamental and necessary the law of God is to the Christian. In the type of the exodus from Egypt, which we know to be analogous to our redemption from bondage to sin and this world, God revealed His law to His now free people immediately after He freed them from slavery. Now, it was not the next minute, but it was within a few days they had to flee Egypt. Once they were out of Egypt, He led them directly to Mount Sinai where He met with them. But even before then, He revealed His Sabbath day to them in Exodus 16—this is giving you a pretty good idea of how important the Sabbath is to God that this is the first thing He revealed to them after they left Egypt. In chapter 20 shortly after getting to Mount Sinai, He revealed the full slate—pun intended—of the Ten Commandments.

After this, He gave the laws that apply under the Old Covenant.

But, He gave His law to them—not as a demanding king, not as a something that He was going to stuff down their throat—as a blessing, a gift to them. This is because if they were going to get along in this journey across the desert, then there were certain stipulations that had to be made, certain commands that had to be given, certain guidelines that the people had to follow so that they all could get to that destination in one piece. So He gave the law to them as a means for them to reach the goal—the Promised Land. And of course, in doing so He gave them a great gift—a blessing.

Paul tells us, as we went through Romans 7 and saw last time, that the law is not evil. It is not useless. In fact, it is just the opposite. He says that it is spiritual, holy, just, and good. He echoes the psalmist in Psalm 119 as you see in Romans 7:22 where he delights in the law of God in the inward man. So, Paul knew that the law was something good—a gift, a blessing—for his good, and all who would obey it throughout their lives.

Let us begin in Exodus 13.

**Exodus 13:3-10** And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD [that is today]. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth [the direct connection of coming out, and keeping this feast so that we have God's law ready to use]; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

Now, much of the necessary instruction for keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread is right here. It is mostly a repeat from the previous chapter, squeezed between two sets of instructions on the Passover. This passage adds a few details, such as to be kept in the month Abib. In chapter 12 it says that this month is to be the beginning of months for you, and then continues with Passover regulations, but it never names the month, until here.

Also the destination is added in this section. We were told earlier that they were going to be coming out of Egypt on this day, but here we are told where the coming out ends. It ends all the way up in the land of Canaan—the land of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Essentially we see that even though God brought them out here, He began the process with His strong hand and outstretched arm, bringing them out of Egypt, but it was not completely finished. They still had a great deal of walking to do before they got into the Promised Land, which was the end of the whole process. They were not completely out until they were in the Promised Land. Of course, they were free through that whole time, but the entire process that He was putting them through to give them a land of their own was not finished until they actually got into the land.

We can also see here in this section that eating unleavened bread is stressed once again because, of course, this is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So, we should do as it says—get the leaven out, and eat unleavened bread. But the emphasis, it seems to me, especially as we get to the second portion of the whole passage, is that God brought them out of Egypt by the power of His strong hand. It is emphasized a couple of times. Actually it is at the beginning and the end, like bookends for the entire passage; that we are to understand that God was the One who did this; He is the power behind this; it was His will that made this happen. The Israelites essentially did little more than obey the command to leave, and start walking. God did it. It was His doing that brought them out of Egypt.

What this shows in the Bible's inimitable way, is that God's bringing Israel out of bondage was only just the first step in a very long journey; one that would not be completed until they reached the land of Canaan. In physical terms this was not all that far away. If I did the calculations correctly, from Ramses (tell-Avaris) to Beersheba (the closest location belonging to Canaan), was only about 175 miles. It is not that far. It would take a while for 2.5 million people to walk there, but even so, they should have been able to get there in few months. It is really not that far. There were not a lot of things that would stop them between here and there, so they could just walk straight there, 175 miles.

But the journey ended up being years away, even though it was only about 175 miles away. For most of them, it became unreachable, because they did not have the faith. They died in the wilderness. They would not believe. And so, as we heard, their bodies were strewn from one end of the wilderness to the other—hundreds dying every day (on average). They could not make it. They could not complete the journey.

So, if we look at it from our perspective in keeping this holy day, the extent of this holy day's meaning stretches out over the whole of our converted lives, because if we place our lives as a template over that type—God called us, forgave us our sins, and brought us out of “Egypt” (as it were), out of this world, and set us apart as His people. He gave us His law; He is teaching us His way, He gently prods us into life as a Christian, and we go for many years trekking across the “wilderness” of our Christian lives as a pilgrimage toward His Kingdom, just as they were on a pilgrimage—a trek—across the wilderness to the Promised Land.

So, we are, as this holy day pictures, continually removing leaven from our lives, and we are continually trying—endeavoring, attempting—to live that unleavened life, to eat that unleavened bread, and to move forward toward the Kingdom of God growing in God’s character.

So, as the wilderness trek shows, the life of God’s people is a pilgrimage toward His Kingdom.

We see this repeated again in the fall holy days, because the Feast of Tabernacles also looks back upon this time. Remember that the children of Israel lived in temporary dwellings for all that time, yet God brought them into the Promised Land. He kept His promise just as He will keep His promise to us to bring us into His Kingdom.

As I started out mentioning, the law of God plays a vital role in the pilgrimage; otherwise God would not have given it right away. It is the roadmap along the way; it is a guide. We could say that it is the signposts alongside the road that tell us, “Go this way, go that way; if you want to reach this point, do this; this is the speed limit; here are the historical markers to find out what happened along the way for somebody else before you for you to learn his lessons.” That sort of thing is what the law does for us. God’s instruction helps us to get to our destination.

As we saw last time, God’s law both instructs our minds, and it constrains our conduct. It is a two-pronged deal so that we are not only educated, but we are also given a hedge and guide so that our conduct matches what we know. Of course, the law also comes with penalties for breaking it. So, it teaches us, it disciplines us as we walk toward His Kingdom. It illuminates our understanding, and it gives us instruction for our daily walk. It is a teacher on one hand, and a guide on the other. Clearly the law is a crucial part of Christian life. Do not ever let anybody tell you that you do not need it, because God provided it so that His children will be with Him in His Kingdom.

Psalm 119 is all about God’s law. But unlike other sections, or other peoples who have had contact with God’s law, Psalm 119 does not wax rhapsodic about legal minutiae, like the scribes did in Christ’s day. Nor does it make stern warnings about breaking this or that command, like the Pharisees did. They were always pointing their fingers at people telling them you should not do this or that, otherwise God is going to come down and smite you.

What this psalm stresses, on the other hand, is living by God’s instructions. There are not too many stern warnings in Psalm 119, but there is a great deal of praise that God’s way of life, and His instruction smoothes the way—helps along the way; gives us answers; provides us instruction; gives us boundaries.

We see this, actually, right in the first verse:

**Psalm 119:1** Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD!

This is the theme of the entire psalm; that blessings are going to come to those who are pure, unleavened, you might say, in the way of God. These people walk according to the law. That is what this whole psalm is about—giving hope to people; giving encouragement that the law of God is all that it claims to be, and that it is going to be helpful in our daily walk before our God. In other words, from the very beginning of this psalm, we are to understand that the keeping of the law of God is a practical, daily matter—it is a way of life. It is not a dry academic study, or a fearful obligation. It is something that we become immersed in, and we do, because God is the One who gave it to us. It is

what we do as our response to God—it is what we do in gratitude for what God is doing for us, and where He is leading us.

Now truly knowing the law means experiencing and using it in the manifold situations of life. The law would get a bit stale if it was just a rote thing. But, whose life is rote? I mean, we have our routines, we have the ruts we get in, we do things similarly a lot of times, but our lives never stay the same for very long. Something new will happen. When we are younger, we go to school. We get a job. We start along that routine. But somebody brings a pretty girl or a handsome young man into our lives, and things change. You cannot just continue doing what you did in order to attract this other person. You have to be spending a lot of time with him/her. And then, comes marriage, and a baby in the baby carriage. Well, those little changes bring different ways that we have to conduct our lives.

Things change. But the law still applies. It still gives us instruction, so that when we move into another stage of life, the law is still there giving us the encouragement and instruction that we need.

As we get older, our kids go off to school; we become an empty nester. We go through our “mid-life crises.” Whatever it is, the law is there to help guide us. We get a lot of gray hair; we feel bent and stooped. The law is still there to help us.

What we are going to see in Psalm 119 today is that it helps in the best of times, and it really helps in the worst of times.

We are going to be flipping through Psalm 119 a great deal today, because we have not gotten into the psalm in the past two sermons except just briefly. So, we are going to be picking out verses here and there just to see how it functions for us. This first part is just to see that the psalmist brings out very generally what the law can do for us, and all the wonderful services that it gives to us throughout our lives.

**Psalm 119:9** How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

Here we see in the second stanza how the law cleans us up, and keeps us that way. We need this especially when we are young. We need to know what is right, and how to be clean before God; how to be righteous before God; then maintaining that throughout the rest of our lives. So, he says that the law will clean us up.

**Psalm 119:162** I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure.

This is said several times throughout the psalm, that the law brings us joy. How many people in this world think that the law just brings only condemnation? That the law is a downer, that the law is a burden? The psalmist says that is not true. The law gives us joy. He rejoices in it.

**Psalm 119:24** Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.

So the law is testimony giving him advice, helping him over the rough spots. It helps him to decide what to do.

**Psalm 119:11** Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

What he is saying is that the law helps him establish his values; he puts them into his heart; he makes them part of his character, and in doing so, it keeps him within the way, on the path, and within the hedges. A similar thing is said in verse 37, “Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way.” This is not just things that are bad or evil that we call sin, but also worthless things—vanities—that we do not need to get involved in. The law helps us to avoid such things. We avert our eyes from them.

How about something else?

**Psalm 119:49** Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.

This is especially crucial in today’s world where so many people are hopeless. They look at things, and it looks like whole societies going down into the trash bin, and heading there fast; there does not seem to be much hope. But the psalmist says that God’s Word given to His servants gives him hope. Things are not all that bad. Even though things are bad, and are going to get worse, there is that proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. And it is God who is that light.

In the meantime,

**Psalm 119:165** Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.

So, even though things are really bad out there and the world is getting worse—sin is increasing, men are waxing worse and worse—we can have great peace in the midst of this because we adhere to God’s law; we will not stumble. We can glide right through this time, in a sense. It may not feel that way, but if we keep an even keel on God’s law, then it will be easier than it would be otherwise. We certainly do not want to get caught in the sins of this world; that would be stumbling, and that would be very tragic.

Another issue that is being talked about here in the United States:

**Psalm 119:45** And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.

We keep talking about how the liberties of the people are being taken away right and left by the government. Well, if we keep God’s law, we have our own special liberty within ourselves under God. So, there might be consequences to our walking at liberty, but we know in our heart of hearts that we are still free, because God is behind our freedom.

**Psalm 119:71** It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

The law of God helps us to make sense of, and see purpose in suffering and affliction so that we can see what we are going through and say, “Even though it hurts on the outside, this has been a good thing. It has actually made me a better person. It has actually taught me more about God and His way of life. It has helped me see escape routes that I would have never seen before. It has taught me foundational principles of Christian living that if I had not gone through it, I would have never learned.”

So, in principle, we can say that the idea behind Psalm 119 is that God's law covers every circumstance that we could find ourselves in. We could not come up with a circumstance where God's law would not have something to say, or some advice to give, or some consolation for us. It would not happen, because God has revealed everything in this instruction manual that we might ever need to know.

We could go so far as to say that Psalm 119 is a New Testament psalm! It would fit perfectly in the New Testament. While it does glorify keeping God's law, it does not dwell on rites and rituals, sacrifices, or strict conformity to details or physical requirements; it does not go into things like that. Psalm 119 focuses on the heart—the internal, the spiritual, the growth, the closeness to God and fellow man—that keeping it brings to us. The psalmist, as we saw in verse 11, knows that God's law is to be written on our hearts.

In this final sermon on Psalm 119 we will see that, indeed, God's law is written on the heart through a story. Admittedly, the story in Psalm 119 is quite vague, but it does run through the entire psalm; a story of a man who has some problems. This contemplation and praise of God's law is set on a nearly invisible framework; a shadowy persecution in a man's life that tells the story of a man who gives credit to His knowledge, understanding, and use of God's law for bringing him through the many ups and downs that he experienced in his life.

Before we get to that, I want to quickly recall the synonyms that we hurriedly ran through last week. I will not dwell on them; I am going to give them to you one more time, just to review and get a running start for the remainder of this sermon.

There are eight main terms, which are all found in the first stanza, as well as a few others that occur throughout the psalm. So, if you did not get them from last time, jot them down today; or, fill in what you missed in last week's notes.

**Way:** “derek,” which means a well traveled path describing a pattern of life marked out by God's revelation. **Law:** “torah,” implying instruction or direction from God; a body of teaching, covering all of God's instructions to mankind. It equates to everything that God has revealed. The emphasis is on how one should live—one's application, not the commands themselves. **Testimony:** “edah,” a solemn declaration of God's will; implies the expert opinion of One who really knows His subject. Testimonies in God's word are generally ordinances that God reveals as a standard of conduct. **Precepts:** “piqqudim,” a poetic term for orders, or mandates; responsibilities and duties that God lays upon His people.

**Statutes:** “chuggim,” things that are inscribed, as in stone. It indicates things that are permanent, and have substance. It usually refers to a law of a particular festival, or a ritual. **Commandment:** “mistwah,” an authoritative command that spells out one's duty under a covenant. Keeping these commands is a personal response to God Himself, because He is the other party in the covenant. If we keep the commands of the covenant, then we are personally responding to the other party in the covenant. It shows how one must live to remain in harmony with the Holy One.

**Righteousness:** “tsadaq,” implying conformity to a norm; an established moral and ethical standard. It does not emphasize sinlessness, but conformity. **Judgment:** “mispat,” a judicial decision that

constitutes a precedent, which is then legislated as a binding law, and backed by the power of the Executive. This is the word that implies government. In Psalm 119 this word refers to a rule for living. **Word:** “dabar,” a general term for God’s revelation of His mind.

**Truth:** “emet,” true and faithful; suggests that what is established should be believed on the authority of God; it is infallible testimony from One who cannot lie. It is truth because God said it. **Saying:** “imrah,” an utterance, or speech; often translated “Promise,” because most of the time these sayings are really promises that God gives to us.

All of these are woven through the 176 verses of Psalm 119; almost every verse has one of these words. In doing so, the psalmist has added variety and depth to this monumental study of God’s revelation. If you remember from last time, if he used “God’s law” every time, it would be rather boring. But he does not mean only just law, but all the pieces inside that big body of law.

If we make these terms handy as we study out Psalm 119, we will have a bit better idea of the meaning and applications to us, because we will then be able to see what he is specifically referring to in a particular verse. I know that they all seem very much alike, but there are differences and as you study them more and more, you begin to see how they differ.

Obviously, 176 verses is a lot of verses just to read. That would take us a long time. There are 22 stanzas. I could bore you by reading the whole thing. I will not do that. I am going to leave a lot of this to you. Also, I hope by now that you have gone through it at least once so that you have an idea of what is going on. Maybe you do not. That is part of the problem.

Even after a quick reading of Psalm 119, if you are not looking for the story, you do not see one there. No story seems to suggest itself in Psalm 119. It just seems to be 22 stanzas related only by the general topic of God’s law. You can start reading and get into a bit of rhythm, and it might dull you a bit, because things seem to be repeated so often; especially the praise for God’s law. It does not seem to vary much, and it can get a bit boring as you go through it.

Occasionally he will throw in something where he shakes his head at those who do not believe God’s law because they are missing out on all the benefits. But even so, it does not seem to have much of a story there.

But if we look at it a bit more closely, we will notice that every stanza seems to be an individual prayer, in which God is addressed personally. “Your,” seems to occur hundreds of times, such as “Your law,” or “Your statutes.” He is always referring these things back to God Himself. His aid is requested for various problems and failures time and time again. It just seems like an endless repetition of these same things every stanza.

Try to find the 14 verses in Psalm 119 that are not addressed to God. Out of 176 verses, only 14 are not addressed to God Himself. So, it just seems like a prayer—that he is talking to God stanza after stanza. And each stanza begins to look alike. But they are not.

There is a story there, even though no story is apparent. Frankly, the story is a less important facet of the psalm, but it is an interesting facet of the psalm. But, when you have a story on which you can hang instruction, then it becomes even more interesting. You get more out of it.

It is from this idea that there is an allusive story underneath the praise for God's law that the idea that Jeremiah is the author comes to the fore, because the story seems to parallel what he went through. We saw a bit of this in the first sermon.

Now, I do want to go over a little bit from that first sermon, quickly, especially that portion about the fact that Psalm 119 has a cast of characters. Obviously, there is the psalmist himself. He wrote it; obviously he is going through something, and it is not very good, and he needs God's help. The psalmist (number 2) is talking to God all the time (number 1). God is there in the background all the time. He never appears directly, but He is always present, because the psalmist keeps bringing Him back into the story; He is Someone hovering there and able to help—but He is not helping yet. Again, He is always there, and the psalmist knows it. God is very real to the psalmist. That is why he keeps up this running conversation of 176 verses, 22 stanzas. He is continually praising Him, and beseeching Him for aid.

Then there is remnant of godly people (number 3). They are also kind of in the background. You will see this in verse 63:

**Psalm 119:63** I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.

So, we get the idea that whatever time that this takes place in, wherever the location is, the psalmist is not alone. But the people who fear God, who keeps His precepts as he says, are a little bit remote from him. They are not there with him, but they are around nearby somewhere. They may be in hiding. Remember the life of Elijah where he did not know that there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. He did not know they were there, but God knew they were there. Evidently, the psalmist knows that there are others in the kingdom—in the city, out in the countryside—who obey God. They are there. He says that when he is free to do so, he is a companion to them. He is their friend, fellowshiping with them when he can.

You can find this also in verse 74:

**Psalm 119:74** Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Your word.

He is saying that these people—let us assume that the psalmist is in prison; or somehow removed from them. And when he is released, when God delivers him, then there will be great rejoicing by all of the remnant of the faithful who have been waiting and praying for him and his return. So, this is the third character.

And then, of course, there are the enemies (number 4). There are a great deal more people who despise him.

**Psalm 119:141** I am small and despised, yet I do not forget Your precepts.

They despise him.

**Psalm 119:84-85** How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me? The proud have dug pits for me, which is not according to Your law.

So, he calls these enemies “the proud,” who persecute him, and have put him in a pit. They want to destroy him.

**Psalm 119:95** The wicked wait for me to destroy me, but I will consider Your testimonies.

He says that this will not bother him, even though they are out to kill me. I am just going to contemplate Your testimonies.

These ungodly people are not just your run-of-the-mill bad guys. They were also born into the covenant. They used to be part of the congregation as it were. But they do not value the relationship with God anymore. They do not value the covenant. They openly disobey the law.

**Psalm 119:21** You [God] rebuke the proud—the cursed, who stray from Your commandments.

**Psalm 119:53** Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.

So, these are people who know God’s law, who were taught it, who perhaps go to the Temple, and appear like they are good people, part of the congregation of Israel; but they are not. They are the wicked. They have forsaken God’s law, and put His prophet (whoever this psalmist happens to be) into prison for, essentially, being loyal to God! They have persecuted him, and tormented him; they are accusations against him are entirely false.

**Psalm 119:161** Princes persecute me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your word.

So, here the things that have been said against him are baseless. There is no reason for it. Well, no reason for it in a sane world. But, these people want him out of the way. They want him shut up—vocally, as well as confined in a place—so that what he says cannot be heard. There is no cause to do this!

So we have here the cast of characters: God; the psalmist; a group of faithful people; and a great group of wicked people. And we find that princes—leaders, authorities—are part of this cabal against him. They are powerful enough to keep him in prison for a long time.

Commentary author, Frank Delitzsch of the *Keil and Delitzsch Old Testament Commentary* describes very simply what he sees as the story in Psalm 119. This will be a fairly long quote. We are going to go to the verses that he cites, so this will be broken up with the verses that he uses to reference why he thinks the story is there.

“The poet is a young man who finds himself in a situation that is clearly described.”

I will just add in here that he gets the “young man” part from verse 9, “How can a young man cleanse his way?” The psalmist is thinking of himself, and uses God’s law to be clean before Him. Now, he could be a bit older and reflecting on his youth. But, remember that Jeremiah was called when he was very young. So, much of his ministry was done while he was quite a young man. Of course, it lasted a long time too, even after the fall of Jerusalem. So, he could have been a young man at this point, if it is Jeremiah.

Picking up the quote again: “He is derided, oppressed, persecuted, and that by those who despise the divine word for apostasy encompasses him round about; in more particularly by a government hostile to true religion.”

**Psalm 119:23** Princes also sit and speak against me, but Your servant meditates on Your statutes.

So, as we saw, princes are behind this.

**Psalm 119:46** I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

If we are just looking at it without any outside information, he is going to be brought before kings—plural—perhaps a succession of kings on the same throne; perhaps by kings that are travelling, and visiting the sitting king where he is. But, the psalmist as part of his imprisonment has to testify before the king—being brought before the king for judgment. So he says here that he will speak God’s testimonies before the king. He will make a witness for God before these kings.

**Psalm 119:161** Princes persecute me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your word.

So, we get from these clues that there are princes and kings—people in highest authority—who are part of the group of wicked sinners who have done this to him. He is not just facing a punk gang down the street, but wicked people in great authority over the land. But, God is always there with him.

“He is lying in bonds.”

**Psalm 119:61** The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law.

**Psalm 119:85** The proud have dug pits for me, which is not according to Your law.

So, he is bound by cords; he is in chains you might say. But, he has also been put into a pit. And being in a pit, you cannot get out. In the life of Jeremiah the pit was very rank. He had to be saved out of it by Ebed-Melech, one of the eunuchs who went to the king and was granted permission to pull him out.

“He expected death.”

**Psalm 119:109** My life is continually in my hand (*margin: in danger*), yet I do not forget Your law.

“And in the midst of it, God’s word is his comfort and wisdom. But, he also yearns for help, and earnestly prays for it. The whole psalm is a prayer for steadfastness in the midst of an ungodly degenerate race, and in the midst of great trouble, which is heightened by the pain he feels after prevailing apostasy, and a prayer for ultimate deliverance which rises in verses 81-88 to an urgent, “How long, O Lord?”

Now, that was the “cliff-notes” version of the story of Psalm 119.

So, now I want to take it stanza by stanza, which is 22 stanzas in about 18 minutes. I am going to be giving these stanzas by their Hebrews letter. Most of you probably have that in your Bibles. I intend to give you just a one or two sentence summary of each stanza, and we might go in and pick out a verse from there for you to see it pop out. But I really want you to see the story in a bit more detail than what Delitzsch gave. Obviously, he had the story pretty much covered, because that is what it is. But, I want you to see it as we go through it ourselves.

## **ALEPH**

The poet praises faithfulness to the Word of God. This is his opening stanza. You might call it the prologue of the entire book. It sets out, as we saw earlier, the words that he is going to be using in the entire psalm, so that we get the idea that these are the things that he is going to be talking about. What he is doing is actually referring back to Psalm 1, and he is expanding this out into an entirely new psalm; no matter what the vicissitudes of life, if you live by God’s law, you will be blessed. That what he states in the first stanza—praising faithfulness to the Word of God—those who are faithful will be blessed.

## **BETH**

He says that God’s Word is the virtue of all virtues; especially they are good for the young to learn so that they can be shaped by God’s Word. And, he has devoted himself to inscribing it on his heart:

**Psalm 119:11** Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!

**Psalm 119:16** I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

He has dedicated himself for his whole life to studying God’s Word, to applying God’s Word, for allowing God to write it on his heart, making it a part of his character. So, this gives us the underpinning for the rest of the chapter, because this is the character of the man that we are going to see come out in his problems as he goes through life. This sets it up: “I’m not moving from God’s law. It’s in my heart, you can’t change that.”

## **GIMMEL**

He is surrounded by scoffers and persecuting officials; he feels very alone. But, he prays for the gift of enlightenment to deal with the situation.

**Psalm 119:19a** I am a stranger in the earth.

He means that he is alone in the land. There is no one like him around him. God has set him apart, and then he says,

**Psalm 119:22a** Remove from me reproach and contempt.

**Psalm 119:23a** Princes also sit and speak against me.

**Psalm 119:24a** Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.

So, he is in a situation where he is under reproach, and contempt from very high officials; he needs help. He asked God to deal bountifully with him—blessings that he needs so that he can have the right advice for his situation.

## DALETH

He is weak and dejected; he prays for both spiritual and physical strength.

**Psalm 119:25** My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word.

**Psalm 119:28** My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word.

**Psalm 119:32** I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart.

He had just said that he was weak, that his soul clung to the dust—this means that he was lying on the floor, breathing the dust of the earth, and he needed help and revival from God. But, by the end of the stanza he says that he is going to run! He has been given the strength from God's Word.

## HE

He prays for understanding and deliverance from reproach.

**Psalm 119:34** Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

**Psalm 119:37** Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way.

**Psalm 119:39** Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your judgments are good.

**Psalm 119:40** Behold, I long for Your precepts; revive me in Your righteousness.

He needs understanding so that he can be delivered.

## WAW

This one is interesting. He prays for suitable words to witness before those in authority.

**Psalm 119:43a** And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.

**Psalm 119:46** I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

**Psalm 119:47** And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love.

He is not going to hold back at all once he gets the chance to talk. He is going to give them what God tells him to give, what God inspires him to give, even if it is before the king himself.

## ZAYIN

This one is God's Word is his hope and comfort during affliction.

**Psalm 119:50** This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life.

**Psalm 119:52** I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself.

He went back and thought about the things that God had said before, the judgments that God has made, the ways that He had worked with people before, and it comforted him because he saw that God always worked in love, and worked things out well in the end. So, he was able to be comforted.

## HETH

Despite being bound and in prison, he declares God to be His greatest blessing. How different this is from a lot of people when they get into tight straits, who curse God!

**Psalm 119:57** You are my portion, O LORD; I have said that I would keep Your words.

So even under duress, he will be loyal to all those who fear God. He will be loyal to God, and he also declares that he will be loyal to all those supporting him, too, because they are looking to me in my tribulation, and they do not want me to give in.

**Psalm 119:61** The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law.

**Psalm 119:63** I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.

**Psalm 119:64a** The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy.

So that is what he is going to rely on.

## TETH

He recognizes that his unjust persecution has done good; it has humbled him, and brought him to repentance.

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

**Psalm 119:71** It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

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

**Psalm 119:72** The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

The growth in character that he was able to make in his imprisonment did him so much more good than any kind of treasure could.

## YOD

Even though he knows that his imprisonment will ultimately work out for good, he still needs comfort and mercy. "Perhaps God's faithful remnant can help me."

**Psalm 119:74a** Those who fear You will be glad when they see me.

**Psalm 119:79** Let those who fear You turn to me, those who know Your testimonies.

He is saying that there is going to be good, and maybe they can help him.

## KAPH

This is the one where he says, "How long, O Lord?" He still has hope, though he feels weak, aged, and brittle. This is where it says that he has become like a wineskin in smoke, verse 83.

He asks God, "When will You avenge me? When will You help me? They are close to killing me!"

**Psalm 119:87** They almost made an end of me on earth, but I did not forsake Your precepts.

## LAMED

This is: without the eternal and sure, mighty Word of God, he would despair and perish.

**Psalm 119:89-92** Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants. Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction.

Knowing that God's law is forever, it kept his spirits up.

## MEM

God's law teaches him understanding and wisdom in difficult circumstances. (We went through this one before. We will not go through it again, right now.)

## NUN

His persecution is intensifying.

**Psalm 119:107a** I am afflicted very much.

**Psalm 119:109a** My life is continually in my hand.

**Psalm 119:110a** The wicked have laid a snare for me

But this does not matter. Whatever happens, he will remain faithful and obedient for ever.

**Psalm 119:112** I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end.

### **SAMEK**

He abhors and despises those who have apostatized. Yet, he trembles when he considers God's justice.

**Psalm 119:113** I hate the double-minded, but I love Your law.

**Psalm 119:120** My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments.

### **AYIN**

God will soon act in justice, and woe to those who disregard God's law.

**Psalm 119:126** It is time for You to act, O LORD, for they have regarded Your law as void.

### **PE**

He prays for mercy and deliverance. It saddens him that so few keep God's law.

**Psalm 119:136** Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law.

### **TSADDE**

Though small, weak, and despised, overwhelmed by trouble and anguish, he is still zealous for God's Word, and confident that it will preserve him.

**Psalm 119:139** My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words.

### **QOPH**

He continually cries out to God to save him. (And this is interesting,) though his persecutors draw nearer and nearer, he knows that God is nearer still.

**Psalm 119:150-151** They draw near who follow after wickedness; they are far from Your law. You are near, O LORD, and all Your commandments are truth.

He is going to trust in God.

## RESH

As his tormentors and his dangers increased, he asked God to revive him, and redeem him.

## SHIN

Though princes persecute him without a cause, he praises God and feels great peace and hope.

**Psalm 119:165** Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.

**Psalm 119:166** LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments.

## TAU

He cries out to God to seek and deliver him; he compares himself to a wandering sheep, and a faithful servant.

**Psalm 119:175-176** Let my soul live, and it shall praise You; and let Your judgments help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments.

Now, unfortunately, the story, as much as we have of it here in Psalm 119, it ends right there on a cliff-hanger. He is not rescued. We do not see the rescue in the chapter. We do not know for sure if God acted to free him or not. But if it was Jeremiah, then we know that the story has a happy ending of sorts.

You might want to jot down Jeremiah 38:28, where Jeremiah is still mentioned being in prison, but then Nebuchadnezzar comes. And then Jeremiah 39:11-14, it says that Nebuchadnezzar puts him into the care of Gedaliah, and was allowed to go free with the remnant of Judah.

He eventually ended up in Egypt, and then we believe that he took the king's daughters to Ireland and the British Isles.

Be that as it may, Psalm 119 has a broader application to us. The psalmist stands for the faithful Christian in his trials—troubled, ridiculed, reviled, oppressed, and persecuted; even under the threat of death. We all go through something similar at some time or another during our pilgrimage to God's Kingdom.

Psalm 119 is a lesson in faithfulness, in standing firm, in having hope, and being appreciative and thankful to God for His love and blessings that He extends to us no matter what our situation. The lesson is that we can always rely on God and His Word to bring us out of Egypt and into His Kingdom, as he said, "with a strong hand."

I want to end in Psalm 136. This is the, “His Mercy Endures Forever” psalm. But, I am not going to read each “His mercy endures forever” in each verse. I am just going to read through the first halves:

**Psalm 136:10-26** To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, and brought out Israel from among them with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm. To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, and made Israel pass through the midst of it, but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. To Him who led His people through the wilderness. To Him who struck down great kings, and slew famous kings, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to Israel His servant. Who remembered us in our lowly state, and rescued us from our enemies, Who gives food to all flesh—Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.