

Sunday Night Message

May 1, 2016

Psalm 119

Series – The Psalms

Text – Psalm 119:1 - 8

Introduction

This psalm is the longest psalm at 176 verses as well as the longest chapter in the Word of God. It is another Hebrew acrostic, but it is different from any of the other acrostics that we have seen in that the 176 verses are divided into 22 sections, each containing 8 lines or verses. These 22 sections all correlate with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus the first eight verses all begin with “Aleph”, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The next eight verses (vs. 9 – 16) all begin with “Beth”, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet; and, so on.

The writer is unknown and the historical context is unknown, but there are some clues as to the type of person that wrote it. Wiersbe writes:

The writer must have been a “high profile” person because he mentioned the opposition of rulers (vv. 23, 161; “princes” in *κiv*), a word that can refer to Gentile rulers or local Jewish tribal leaders (Neh. 3), and he also spoke to kings (v. 46).¹

Wiersbe believes that the writer may have actually been Jeremiah. Others have speculated that it was Moses or perhaps David. We simply do not know.

There is no doubt regarding the theme of this psalm. In nearly every verse, the writer extolls his love and devotion to the Word of God. All verses, save 5 (vs. 84, 90, 121, 122, and 132) speak directly about the Word of God.

Allan Ross wrote this regarding Psalm 119:

The psalm is largely a collection of prayers and meditations on the Word of God, referred to by 10 synonyms.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). *Be exultant* (1st ed., p. 102). Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries.

“Word” (dāḇār) occurs 20 times in the psalm. It is a general term for God’s revelation, but the “Ten Commandments” are called “Ten Words” (literal Heb., Deut. 4:13).

“Saying” (’imrâh) occurs 19 times. It is often a poetical synonym for dāḇār.

“Commandment” (miṣwâh) occurs (in the Heb.) 21 times in the plural and once in the singular collectively. It signifies a definite, authoritative command. It is frequently joined with the next two words.

“Statutes” (ḥūqqîm) occurs 21 times. In the Psalms it is always in the plural. Literally it means “things inscribed.” So it refers to enacted Laws.

“Judgment” (mišpoṭ) occurs 19 times in the plural, and 4 times in the singular. It represents a judicial decision that constitutes a precedence, a binding law. In the Pentateuch it referred to the laws after the Ten Commandments. The word can also mean God’s judgmental acts on the wicked.

“Precepts” (piqqûḏîm) occurs 21 times. It is a poetical word for injunctions, found only in the Psalter (always in the pl.).

“Testimony” (’ēḏâh) occurs 22 times in the plural and once in the singular. It is a solemn attestation, a declaration of the will of God. It is a general word for ordinances that became God’s standard of conduct.

“Way” (derek), used five times in the plural and six times in the singular, is a metaphorical term describing the pattern of life marked out by God’s Law.

“Path” (’ōrah), used five times in Psalms, is parallel to “way.”²

Wiersbe’s list of words that are synonymous with “the Word” is similar but he adds the word “promise” and excludes the words “path” and “way”.

Spurgeon said about this psalm:

Nor is it long only; for it equally excels in breadth of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervour. It is like the celestial city which lieth four-square, and the height and the breadth of it are equal. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader’s own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of

² Ross, A. P. (1985). Psalms. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 879–880). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes. As those who drink the Nile water like it better every time they take a draught, so does this Psalm become the more full and fascinating the oftener you turn to it. It contains no idle word; the grapes of this cluster are almost to bursting full with the new wine of the kingdom. The more you look into this mirror of a gracious heart the more you will see in it.³

Again quoting Wiersbe:

To unsaved sinners, the law is an enemy because it announces their condemnation and cannot save them. To legalistic believers, the law is a master that robs them of their freedom. But to spiritually minded believers, the law is a servant that helps them see the character of God and the work of Christ. The Old Testament believer who wrote Psalm 119 was not satisfied with having the law in his home, his head, or his hand; he wanted the law in his heart where it could help him love what was holy and do what was right (v. 11). It was this approach that Jesus took in the Sermon on the Mount. The attributes of God as revealed in the Old Testament parallel the characteristics of the Word of God as seen in Psalm 119. Both are gracious (vv. 29, 58; 86:15), true and the truth (vv. 30, 43, 160; Ex. 34:6), righteous (vv. 106, 123, 137–138, 143, 151), good (vv. 39, 68), trustworthy (vv. 9, 73, 86, 90, 138), eternal (vv. 89, 152, 160; Deut. 33:27), and light (v. 107; 27:1). The way we treat the Word of God is the way we treat the God of the Word.⁴

"ALEPH.

Each of the Hebrew lines in verses 1 – 8 begin with the letter. “aleph”.

I **Blessing Comes Through Submission to His Word. (vs. 1 – 2)**

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.” (Psalm 119:1)

The word “blessed” is found here and in verse 2, but nowhere else in the psalm. God’s blessing come to those who walk according to the Word of God.

³ Spurgeon, Charles (2012-02-19). Spurgeon: Treasury of David (Kindle Locations 69320-69328). OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). Be exultant (1st ed., p. 105). Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries.

"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart." (Psalm 119:2)

It is amazing how the Law of the Lord is perceived by different people. Some are liberated by the word and are tremendously blessed by it. Others, see the Law as a curse, and are strangled by it. It all depends on your perspective. The saved who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness are strengthened by the Law. The lost, and even the saved who are in love with this world and controlled by their flesh, see the Word of God as a curse. The Law is not a weapon for God's judgment, but rather a tool that God uses to conform us to the image of Christ.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3)

II Security Comes Through Submission to the Word of God (vs. 3 – 6)

"They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways." (Psalm 119:3)

"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." (Psalm 119:4)

"O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" (Psalm 119:5)

"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." (Psalm 119:6)

III Praise is the Result of Submission to the Word of God (vs. 7 – 8)

"I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments." (Psalm 119:7)

"I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly." (Psalm 119:8)

When you obey the Word of God, good things happen to you and your family, which will cause you to express your appreciation to the God of the Word.