

Psalm 119:1-8, 9-16, & 17-24 • Aleph, Beth & Gimel (#1-3)

Introduction

[Note: Each stanza of Psalm 119 is a study in and of itself. For the purposes of leading a small group study, these three are presented together as a single study.]

It should not surprise anyone that Psalm 119 is the largest of the 929 chapters in our Bible as it is dedicated to not only explaining how Scripture is organized by its consistent use of 8 categories of God's Word, but repeatedly provides real world examples of how we are to apply every facet of God's Word to our life. The goal is not to determine what we can expect from God's Word, but that which we need to do to meet the personal shortfalls of what God's Word expects from us.

¹How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.
²How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,
Who seek Him with all *their* heart.
³They also do no unrighteousness;
They walk in His ways.
⁴You have ordained Your precepts,
That we should keep *them* diligently.
⁵Oh that my ways may be established
To keep Your statutes!
⁶Then I shall not be ashamed
When I look upon all Your commandments.
⁷I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
⁸I shall keep Your statutes;
Do not forsake me utterly!

[Read v.1-8] My Way is His Way

Q: Who is "blessed"?

A: "...those...who walk in the law" (v.1) and "observe His testimonies" (v.2)—not just His instructions, but His affirming testimony of the benefits and requirements of His Word.

Q: Is this an unconditional state of blessedness?

A: It is experienced by those who are "blameless" only because of walking in, observing and seeking from the heart the pursuit of obedience to God's Word.

Q: How is the behavior of such a person visibly proven?

A: They "...do no unrighteousness" (v.3). Truly keeping God's Word is always reflected in the quality of one's behavior.

Q: Why are "statutes" connected with "commandments" in v.5-6?

A: The OT Covenant included commandments whose requirements could not be met without properly observing the rituals, observances and sacrifices detailed in God's Word. "Commandments" provide the requirement, "statutes" specify how to carry it out.

Q: What is the personal effect when a believer does not keep His Word?

A: They experience shame (v.6) as His Word identifies their personal shortcomings in this regard.

Q: What is v.7 referring to?

A: The application of God's Word so as to be obedient in all things, properly applying God's Word even when a situation is not specifically spelled out word-for-word in Scripture.

Q: What is the potential result of a lack of obedience to His Word?

A: Being utterly forsaken. (v.8)

Application: The way by which to walk "blameless" in Christ is to put into practice His ways as specified by His Word. This will not only be evident in our personal relationship with Him, but reflected in our visible behavior and witness to others.

⁹How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping *it* according to Your word.
¹⁰With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.
¹²Blessed are You, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.
¹³With my lips I have told of
All the ordinances of Your mouth.
¹⁴I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.
¹⁵I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard Your ways.
¹⁶I shall delight in Your statutes;
I shall not forget Your word.

[Read v.9-16] Staying & Not Straying

Q: What is the main issue raised in v.9?

A: Keeping “*pure*”. This is the scriptural way of characterizing someone as being “unpolluted by sin”. This can only be accomplished by not straying from God’s Word. (Especially an issue for a “*young man*”.)

Q: How is this evidenced in the following verses?

A: The ability to “*not sin against You*” is only possible in someone who does not “*wander from Your commandments*” (v.10) and treasures God’s Word “*in my heart*”. It describes someone who behaves and practices what is truly within them. (Jesus said in Mt. 15:17-20 it is what comes out of someone which proves his inner spiritual state.)

Q: What is the list of actions properly taken in v.9-13?

- “*Keeping*” (v.9)
- “*Sought*” (v.10)
- “*Treasured*” (v.11)
- Testimony (“*I have told*”) (v.13)

We must be active both personally in our internal pursuit of a relationship with Christ, as well as externally as a visible example and testimony of the working of His Word to others through us.

Q: What is the contrast between v.10 & 14?

A: A true seeker from the heart does not confuse it with the earthly pursuit of material gain, which is one of the primary tools of sin.

Q: What is most likely listed as the greatest danger?

A: “*Do not let me wander*” (v.10) so as to avoid sin.

Q: How is this followed up with a list of appropriate responses in v. 14-16?

- “*...rejoiced in...Your testimonies*” (v.14)—that is, the right response to God’s affirmation of both the consequence and benefits associated with His Word.
- “*...meditate on Your precepts*” (v.15)—that is, obedience to those things for which believers are responsible after coming into a covenant relationship with God.
- “*...regard Your ways*” (v.15)—that is, seriously remaining on the path of God’s Word.
- “*...delight in Your statutes*” (v.16)—that is, view positively the benefits of the boundaries and restrictions specified in God’s Word.
- “*...not forget Your word*” (v.16)—that is, to bring to every decision, situation and relationship the application of God’s Word for each and every thing.

Application: *Obedience to God’s Word is the remedy for both wandering from God’s path and preventing the allowance of the inevitable pollution of sin.*

¹⁷Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
¹⁸Open my eyes, that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your law.
¹⁹I am a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from
me.
²⁰My soul is crushed with longing
After Your ordinances at all times.
²¹You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed,
Who wander from Your
commandments.
²²Take away reproach and contempt
from me,
For I observe Your testimonies.
²³Even though princes sit *and* talk
against me,
Your servant meditates on Your
statutes.
²⁴Your testimonies also are my delight;
They are my counselors.

[Read v.17-24] The Earthly vs. the Heavenly

Q: Who are the people mentioned here? (Not every person has a proper name or stated position.)

- "Your servant" (v.17)
- "a stranger in the earth" (v.19)
- "the arrogant" (v.21)
- "the cursed" (v.21)
- "princes" (v.23)
- "counselors" (v.24)

Q: How are these figures being compared and contrasted to each other?

A: One who puts God's Word into practice is not only a "servant"—in the service of and indebted to the Master, but is "a stranger on earth"—that is, no longer a citizen of the earthly but rather the heavenly. They are no longer following the wisdom and advice of those still belonging to the earthly, who are here characterized as "the arrogant", those who are ignorant of God's Word and ways, or even having a position of earthly authority such as "princes".

Q: What do the earthly heap upon those focused on God's Word?

A: "...reproach and contempt..." (v.22) This is to be the expected response from the earthly to those in obedience to God's Word.

Q: How does this situation highlight the believer's personal character trait, "My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times"? (v.20)

A: An ordinance is the application of God's Word in all things, particularly those which are not categorically spelled out word-for-word in the text of Scripture. It is erring on the side of God's Word where all things are concerned.

Application: *We should not be living as an earthly resident following its ways and listening to its messengers, but as "a stranger in the earth" who in all things regards God's Word as "my counselors".*

Overall Application

Q: What do these three teachings have in common?

A: We not only no longer according to our life, but neither do we live by the world's standards.

Q: How do we know what standards to pursue?

A: God's Word.

Application: *How well do you realize that your personal struggles in your Christian walk may be related to how you approach and handle God's Word? How might the Word be able to deal with such issues? Discuss how this works for...*

- *We go to the Word to maintain a "blameless" walk both with Christ and others.*
- *We go to the Word to prevent our wandering and allowance of sin.*
- *We go to the Word as our personal guidance counselor.*