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.

Read verses 121-128: I Am Your Servant

Q: What is the nature of the situation being addressed?
A: Persecution or conflict being inflicted by others.

• (v.121) “...Do not leave me to my oppressors.”
• (v.122) “...Do not let the arrogant oppress me.”

Q: What are these oppressors specifically called? How does this reflect their attitude when it comes to God’s Word?
A: They are called “arrogant” (v.122) and “they have broken Your law”.
(v.126) They either think they know better, or above God’s Word, or both.

Q: How does this serve as the basis for how the writer of this Psalm presents himself in contrast to the opposition’s behavior?
A: He has a completely different regard and practice where God’s Word is concerned:

• (v.122) “My eyes fail with longing...for Your righteous word.”
• (v.127) “...I love Your commandments...”
• (v.128) “...I esteem right all Your precepts...”
• (v.128) “...I hate every false way.”

Application: In other words, he is the opposite of someone characterized as arrogant and a law breaker in terms of his own personal treatment of God’s Word. How would we fare in a similar comparison?
Q: In the believer’s statement of longing for salvation, what are the accompanying requests which work towards that goal?

- (v.124) “...teach me Your statutes”. These are limitations placed on believers for their own good. In this case, they stand in stark contrast to “the arrogant” (v.22) who “have broken Your law”.
- (v.126)
- (v.125) “...give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies”. These are God’s personal responses on the benefits and consequences of His Word and contrast the pursuit of “every false way” (v.128) which characterizes their overall behavior.

**Application**: God’s Word provides the believer insight not only into what God is doing in their personal life and situation, but into the root causes of those working in opposition to the believer. God’s Word is a dual-edged sword cutting in opposite directions for each based on the condition of their heart, the believer for comfort and understanding, the nonbeliever for condemnation and judgment.

Q: What might be interesting about the request, “It is time for the Lord to act”?

**What is the justification, and what specific actions are being requested?**

A: The justification is, “For they have broken Your law” (v.126), but all of the requests have to do with requests for God to provide the believer a deeper understanding of the different aspects of His Word. There is never a request for something specific to happen to the non-believers, that being left solely to God’s discretion.

**Application**: Even when it comes to non-believers, the primary concern is still God’s Word.

Q: What are the labels presented in the course of these verses which best provide insight into the fundamental difference between the one following God’s Word and ways versus the one who is not?

A: “I am your servant” (v.125) versus “the arrogant” (v.122). A Scripture-practicing believer is always first and foremost concerned about his own personal compliance with God’s Word which results in a subservient relationship to Christ.

**Application**: When a believer is actively opposed by others, the right response is to run back to God’s Word. Even when completely justified by one’s personal obedience so as to be the total innocent victim of oppression, it is not only left up to God to act according to His will, but seen as yet another opportunity to gain greater personal insight into His Word and ways.
Psalm 119:129-136: The Power of the Name

Q: What are the specific personal traits of someone who truly puts God’s Word into practice?

- (v.131) “I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.” They do not merely view God’s Word as leading to or describing life, but a vital integral part of their life.

- (v.132) They “love Your name”—that is, their obedience stems from not simply following instructions, but motivated by personal love. An example is when David confessed, “Against You, You only I have sinned” (Ps. 51:4); where God’s Word is concerned it is extremely personal.

- (v.136) “My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not keep Your law.” Having personally established themselves in God’s Word and ways, they experience an equally personal burden for those who have not.

Q: What is contained in v.132-135 which identifies the nature of what the writer is asking God to do where these qualities are concerned?

- (v.132) The writer begins by requesting treatment which begins with an examination of his own, personal faithfulness, and not for an exemption because of the lack of it.

- (v.133) This is a way of stating that the way to avoid sin’s undue influence is by sticking to God’s path alone. In NT terms we call this the process of “sanctification”.

- (v.134) The writer does not request action against “the oppression of man” except that it go hand-in-hand with the opportunity, “That I may keep Your precepts”. It is an opportunity for personal witness where the working of God’s Word is concerned.

- (v.135) The favor of God sought in this life is characterized as someone who is teachable when it comes to God’s Word.

Q: Why is it specified, “those who love Your name”? Why doesn’t it state, “those who love You” to make it even more personal?

A: This is most likely another allusion to the importance of God’s Word in the believer’s life. A great many names for the members of the Godhead are provided in both Testaments, each provided in order to teach about important attributes. God is so vastly big, and yet His Word allows us to know Him personally through each of His names, teaching us what He is truly like. All of these attributes combine to teach about the inherent power in His name.
Application: When we study in detail each of the names of God rather than just reading them, we not only acquire knowledge about His working and character, but it actually provides a foundation for why we love Him.

Q: What is fundamentally different about Christ’s name, for instance, from our own? How is it more than just a label?

A: The name of Christ actually has power and produces tangible results, unlike every other name which cannot result in anything.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Application: A personal relationship characterized by biblical love with Christ is not just defined by our deep emotional and spiritual attachment to Christ personally, but it results in our deep concern for others who are not experiencing the same. We understand that it is not just the eternal consequences they will experience in the next life, but the benefits and blessings they are foregoing in this one.
Psalm 119:137-144: The True Working of Righteousness

Q: Based on its repeated usage in this passage, what is the main theme of this teaching?

A: “Righteousness”. (v.137, 138, 142, & 144) An additional related term is “upright”. (v.137)

Q: What are some of the accompanying descriptions of God’s Word which go hand-in-hand with the quality of righteousness?

- (v.138) “…exceeding faithfulness”—that is, consistent in its adherence to God’s Word and ways.
- (v.140) “…very pure”—that is, unpolluted by sin.
- (v.142) “…an everlasting righteousness”—that is, it is not temporal but stands from eternity past to eternity future.

Q: What are the personal issues which the writer provides insight, things with which he is struggling?

A: “I am small and despised” (v.141) and “Trouble and anguish have come upon me”. (v.143)

Q: But how does he deal with them?

A: “…yet I do not forget Your precepts” (v.141) and “…yet Your commandments are my delight”. (v.143) Regardless of the circumstances, he is still obedient to the biblical requirements for a covenant relationship with God (“commandments”) and God’s requirements after such a commitment (“precepts”).

Application: When we find ourselves in similar situations, how often do we run to God’s Word rather than put all our effort into praying a way out of the situation? Have you noticed how the words “prayer” and “pray” are seldom featured in Psalm 119? Why do you suppose that is? Consider the old saying, “Prayer is how we talk to God, His Word is how He answers us”.

Q: How is this a major difference when it comes to those who follow His Word and those who do not?

A: “My zeal has consumed me, because my adversaries have forgotten Your words”. (v.139) It is the dual aspect that opponents disregard God’s Word and live according to something else in its place, most often working and behaving in direct opposition, and in spite of what takes place; the practitioner, however, never steers away from obedience and compliance.
Q: What is probably the greater meaning in the closing request, “Give me understanding that I may live”?

A: The true biblical definition of “life” is to begin living now in accordance with God’s Word and ways so that we may ensure eternal life; it is not to automatically seek comfort and security in the temporal years on this planet which is in general referred to as “life”. Obedience to His Word allows us to live both now and in eternity to come.

**Application:** No situation abrogates not just the requirements, but the greater personal need, for obedience to God’s Word and ways. This is the working of righteousness where the believer is concerned.

**Overall Application**

Q: In whom is the Word working in these three examples?

A: The primary conduit is the believer, but if applied correctly, it works through them in others, in this case both the unsaved and even outright personal enemies.

Q: So what is the visible evidence of the working of righteousness in the individual believer?

A: The world—that is, others—will be treated in accordance with God’s Word and ways.

**Application:** The proof that we are obedient to God’s Word internally is clearly revealed by our treatment of others externally.