

## Psalm 119: I *Love* the Law?

### I. Psalm 119 - “The Long One”

- A. Ten times the length of the average psalm.
- B. Every verse—except vv. 84, 122—alludes to God’s Word in some way.
- C. 176 verses divided into twenty-two sections of eight verses each, with each line of each section beginning with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet (which has only twenty-two characters). Hence, it is an ‘acrostic’ psalm like Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112 and 145.
- D. Intended for instruction in the faith (children?)
- E. Roughly half-way through the whole Bible...implications?

*“I know of no part of the Holy Scripture where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated as in the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm.”*

-Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*

### II. Ps 119

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| <p><sup>1</sup> <i>Blessed are those whose way is blameless,<br/>who walk in the law of the LORD!</i></p> <p><sup>2</sup> <i>Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,<br/>who seek him with their whole heart,<br/><sup>3</sup> who also do no wrong,<br/>but walk in his ways!</i></p> <p><sup>4</sup> <i>You have commanded your precepts<br/>to be kept diligently.</i></p> <p><sup>5</sup> <i>Oh that my ways may be steadfast<br/>in keeping your statutes!</i></p> <p><sup>6</sup> <i>Then I shall not be put to shame,<br/>having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.</i></p> <p><sup>7</sup> <i>I will praise you with an upright heart,<br/>when I learn your righteous rules.</i></p> <p><sup>8</sup> <i>I will keep your statutes;<br/>do not utterly forsake me!</i></p> <p><sup>9</sup> <i>How can a young man keep his way pure?<br/>By guarding it according to your word.</i></p> <p><sup>10</sup> <i>With my whole heart I seek you;<br/>let me not wander from your commandments!</i></p> <p><sup>11</sup> <i>I have stored up your word in my heart,<br/>that I might not sin against you.</i></p> <p><sup>12</sup> <i>Blessed are you, O LORD;<br/>teach me your statutes!</i></p> <p><sup>13</sup> <i>With my lips I declare<br/>all the rules of your mouth.</i></p> <p><sup>14</sup> <i>In the way of your testimonies I delight<br/>as much as in all riches.</i></p> <p><sup>15</sup> <i>I will meditate on your precepts<br/>and fix my eyes on your ways.</i></p> <p><sup>16</sup> <i>I will delight in your statutes;<br/>I will not forget your word.</i></p> <p><sup>17</sup> <i>Deal bountifully with your servant,<br/>that I may live and keep your word.</i></p> | <p><sup>18</sup> <i>Open my eyes, that I may behold<br/>wondrous things out of your law...</i></p> <p><sup>96</sup> <i>I have seen a limit to all perfection,<br/>but your commandment is exceedingly broad.</i></p> <p><sup>97</sup> <i>Oh how I love your law!<br/>It is my meditation all the day.</i></p> <p><sup>98</sup> <i>Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,<br/>for it is ever with me.</i></p> <p><sup>99</sup> <i>I have more understanding than all my teachers,<br/>for your testimonies are my meditation.</i></p> <p><sup>100</sup> <i>I understand more than the aged,<br/>for I keep your precepts.</i></p> <p><sup>101</sup> <i>I hold back my feet from every evil way,<br/>in order to keep your word.</i></p> <p><sup>102</sup> <i>I do not turn aside from your rules,<br/>for you have taught me.</i></p> <p><sup>103</sup> <i>How sweet are your words to my taste,<br/>sweeter than honey to my mouth!</i></p> <p><sup>104</sup> <i>Through your precepts I get understanding;<br/>therefore I hate every false way.</i></p> <p><sup>169</sup> <i>Let my cry come before you, O LORD;<br/>give me understanding according to your word!</i></p> <p><sup>170</sup> <i>Let my plea come before you;<br/>deliver me according to your word.</i></p> <p><sup>171</sup> <i>My lips will pour forth praise,<br/>for you teach me your statutes.</i></p> <p><sup>172</sup> <i>My tongue will sing of your word,<br/>for all your commandments are right.</i></p> <p><sup>173</sup> <i>Let your hand be ready to help me,<br/>for I have chosen your precepts.</i></p> <p><sup>174</sup> <i>I long for your salvation, O LORD,<br/>and your law is my delight.</i></p> <p><sup>175</sup> <i>Let my soul live and praise you,<br/>and let your rules help me.</i></p> <p><sup>176</sup> <i>I have gone astray like a lost sheep;<br/>seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.</i></p> |
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- (Ps 119:1-16, 17-18, 96-104, 169-176)

1. What does the word “blessed” mean? Where have you seen it elsewhere in Scripture? What is purpose of the “law of the LORD” in v. 1?

*“Make me as holy as a saved sinner can be.” - Robert Murray M'Cheyne*

2. How do the following verses square with Ps 119? I thought we were saved from the law, you legalist!

*“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (Rom 3:20)*

*“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Rom 6:14)*

*“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (Rom 10:4)*

### Three Uses of the Moral Law

**1<sup>st</sup> Use – Civil Use (Civil Law):** The Law serves the purpose of restraining sin and promoting righteousness through God's common grace in the world at large (i.e., basis of U.S. law)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Use – Pedagogical Use (Schoolmaster leading us to Christ, Gal. 3:24):** The Law serves the purpose of bringing man under conviction of sin, and of making him conscious of his inability to meet the demands of the law. In that way the law becomes his tutor to lead him to Christ, and thus becomes subservient to God's gracious purpose of redemption.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Use – Normative Use (Guide for Christian living):** The Law is a rule of life for believers, reminding them of their duties (yes, duties) and leading them in the way of life and salvation. This third use of the Law is denied by Antinomians. (See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 614-615)

*“But now that you have been set free from sin...” (Rom 6:22) “For sin will have no dominion over you...” (Rom 6:14)*

3. Why did the Psalmist use so many words for God's (law (torah), testimony, precept, statute, commandment, judgments, word, way)?

*“To all perfection I see a limit; but your commands are boundless.” (v. 96)*

*“This is my comfort in my affliction, that your word gives me life.” (v. 50)*

*“I rejoice at your word like one who finds great treasure.” (v. 162)*

4. How does the paradox of v. 32, vv. 44-45, v. 96 and v. 156 run contrary to the world's perception of Christianity? Have you ever experienced this benefit of God's law? Perhaps in a surprising way?

5. What are we really doing when we “cling to [God's] testimonies” (v. 31) from a forgiven and cleansed heart? See vv. 2, 7, 10. Do you have an appetite for the Word of God? Is it time to cry out with the Psalmist in v. 176?

*“My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.” (v. 20)*

*“Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!” (v. 40)*

*“I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight.” (v. 174)*

*“The beauty of this psalm lies, not only in the recitation of devotion to the law, but in the psalmist's absolute devotion to the Lord.” –Willem A. VanGemeren*

*“The way marked out [in the Scripture] is the only channel wherein the stream of spiritual affections takes its course unto God.” - John Owen, Works, Vol. 7, 469.*