

# PSALMS

## Chapter 119

### *Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet*

**Ps 119** A devotional on the word of God. The author was an Israelite of exemplary piety (probably postexilic) who (1) was passionately devoted to the word of God as the word of life; (2) humbly acknowledged, nevertheless, the errant ways of his heart and life; (3) knew the pain—but also the fruits—of God’s corrective discipline; and (4) had suffered much at the hands of those who arrogantly disregarded God’s word and made him the target of their hostility, ridicule and slander. It is possible that he was a priest—and the psalm might well be a vehicle for priestly instruction in godliness. He elaborated on the themes of 19:7–13 and interwove with them many prayers for deliverance, composing a massive alphabetic acrostic that demands patient, meditative reading. In regard to length, form and type it stands alone in the Psalter. And of all the psalms, this one is the most likely to have been composed originally in writing and intended to be read rather than sung or recited. Most of its lines are addressed to God, mingling prayers with professions of devotion to God’s law. Yet, as the opening verses (and perhaps also its elaborate acrostic form) make clear, it was intended for godly instruction. It was included in the Psalter no doubt as a model of piety. (CSB)

Whereas elsewhere in the Psalter the focus falls primarily on God’s mighty acts of creation and redemption and his rule over all the world, here devotion to the word of God (and the God of the word) is the dominant theme. The author highlights two aspects of that word: (1) God’s directives for life and (2) God’s promises—the one calling for obedience, the other for faith (the two elements of true godliness; see 34:8–14 and note). In referring to these, he makes use of eight Hebrew terms supplied him by OT traditions: *torah*, “law”; *‘edot*, “statutes”; *piqqudim*, “precepts”; *mišwot*, “commands, commandments”; *mishpaṭim*, “laws” (all shared with 19:7–9; *mishpaṭim* is translated “ordinances” in 19:9); *ḥuqqim*, “decrees”; *dabar*, “word” (sometimes in the sense of “law,” sometimes in the sense of “promise”); *’imrah*, “word,” but more often “promise.” These terms he distributes throughout the 22 stanzas (using all eight in *He, Waw, Heth, Yodh, Kaph, Pe*—never using less than six), employing a different order in each stanza. It may be that the availability of these eight terms determined (in large part) for the author the decision to devote eight verses to each letter of the alphabet. The alphabetic acrostic form, especially one as elaborate as this, may appear arbitrary and artificial to a modern reader (as if the author merely selected a traditional form from the poet’s workshop and then labored to fill it with pious sentences), but a sympathetic and reflective reading of this devotional will compel a more favorable judgment. The author had a theme that filled his soul, a theme as big as life, that ranged the length and breadth and height and depth of a person’s walk with God. Nothing less than the use of the full power of language would suffice, and of that the alphabet was a most apt symbol. (CSB)

Apart from the obvious formal structure dictated by the chosen acrostic form, little need (or can) be said. It must be noted, however, that the first three and the last three verses were designed as introduction and conclusion to the whole. The former sets the tone of instruction in godly wisdom; the latter succinctly restates and summarizes the main themes. It may also be observed that the middle of the psalm has been marked by a similar three-verse introduction to the second half. For the rest, the thought meanders, turns back upon itself and repeats (with varied nuances). The following notes point out continuities of thought and possible structure within stanzas. (CSB)

Difficult to date, as no author is given. However, the Law's central role in the author's life and the opposition he faced fit well with the sixth or fifth century BC. (Daniel also knew conflict over his faith [Dn 6]. The psalmist likely intends that his words of devotion be as timeless as the Word of God, which he loves. "By this very act [of prayer] they declare that they cannot get those things that they ask of God from their own natural powers. For example, in Psalm 119 alone, David prays more than ten times that God would give him understanding, that he might rightly comprehend and learn the divine teaching" (FC SD II 15). Hbr *berith*, "covenant," does not appear in Ps 119. The idea of a covenant as a promise from God to His people may be understood in the use of words such as *'imrah* ("promise") or the broader *torah* ("God's Law"). Also, the concept of a covenant, if it is understood as God's distinct agreement with one people at one time, might be too narrow for the scope of Ps 119. The psalm describes God's universal actions and nature, which are offered to all people in His Word. (TLSB)

Format: Structured by the 22 letters of the Hbr alphabet, having eight-line stanzas in which all eight lines begin with the same letter. Ps 119 is the longest instance of the acrostic pattern. Cf Ps 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 111–12; and 145. See pp 777–78. By using the acrostic pattern, the psalmist shows how God's Word commands every part of language and life. (TLSB)

The 119<sup>th</sup> psalm is a long psalm, containing prayers, comforts, instructions, and thanks in great number. It is chiefly written to make us excited about God's Word. It praises God throughout and warns us against both the false teachers and against boredom and contempt for the Word. Therefore, it is primarily to be counted among the psalms of comfort. Its primary concern is that we have God's Word in its purity and hear it gladly. From this concern, then, come powerful prayers, instructions, thanks, prophecies, worship of God, suffering, and all that pleases God and grieves the devil. But where one despises the Word and is satisfied by it, there all these cease. For where the Word is not purely taught, there is truly an abundance of prayers, instructions, comforts, worship, suffering, and prophecies-but totally false and condemned! For it is then only service to the devil, who is thus impure with all his heretics. (Reading the Psalm with Luther)

### Aleph

**Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, 3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! 4 You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! 6 Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. 7 I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. 8 I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!**

**119:1–8** General introduction of the whole psalm. (CSB)

These verses emphasize the guidance believers receive from the Word. The first three stanzas also serve as an introduction to the whole psalm. (PBC)

**119:1–2** *Blessed*. The opening word, "Blessed", links Psalm 119 with Psalm 1, which has the same theme as Psalm 119 but is more limited in scope. (CSB)

**119:1** *whose way is blameless*. This opening general description is further elaborated in the rest of the introduction, which concludes with an equally general statement: "they walk in his ways" (v. 3). See Ge 17:1; cf. Ge 26:5. (CSB)

Only because these persons walk in the law of the Lord do they become subjects of this beatitude. It is the law that brings about blamelessness of conduct. (Leupold)

*Walk in* – The blessing of the Law encompasses all the believer does. Dt 6:6–7 commands the Law to be remembered when sitting, walking, lying, and rising. (TLSB)

*law*. † Hebrew *torah*, a collective term for God’s covenant directives for his people (see Dt 4:44). “Law” often came, especially later, to have a broader reference—the whole Pentateuch (see Lk 24:44) or even the whole OT (see Jn 15:25; 1Co 14:21). We do well if we often hear the word in that broader sense also in Ps 119—and not as the opposite of “gospel.” (CSB)

**119:2 testimonies.** Hebrew *’edot*, a specifically covenantal term referring to stipulations laid down by the covenant Lord (see 25:10, “demands”; Dt 4:45, “stipulations”). (CSB)

This verse has practically the same approach as verse 1. The persons referred to in v. 1 are here described as both seeking the Lord with their whole heart and as keeping His testimonies as a consequence of such seeking. Where these prerequisites are found great happiness results. (Leupold)

The complete devotion which God’s Word deserves is expressed in such phrases as “all their heart” and “fully obeyed.” (PBC)

**119:3 ways.** The Hebrew for this word occurs only rarely in this psalm, but is common in Deuteronomy and elsewhere as a general reference to God’s covenant requirements—used here to balance “ways” in v. 1.(CSB)

*Seek* – Translates two terms: Hbr *baqash*, “look for”; Hbr *darash*, “care about, examine, inquire.” The Lord is sought in three ways: (1) through calling on His name in prayer, (2) by consulting Him through Urim and Thummim administered by the high priest, and (3) through the study of His Word. A visit to the tabernacle or temple is frequently implied. Unbelievers do not seek God. Believers seek Him in an attitude of repentance, not selfishness. (TLSB)

Hbr *qara*’, “to call upon,” “name,” or “summon.” “Call on God’s name” describes speaking God’s name in prayer, repentance, or consulting the Lord by Urim and Thummim, administered by the high priest. (TLSB)

*Urim and thummin* – (YOO-rim and THUM-im; breastplate of the high priest. Their exact nature is unknown. They were used, however to determine the will of the Lord (Ex. 28:30; Lv. 8:8; Num. 27:21). (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

The Urim and Thummim, it seems evident, were terms to designate the revelation of the will of God by means of lots kept by the high priest. Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 1 – page 310)

Since this verse is a continuation of the thought, two further things are added to the picture, things that make the ultimate happiness referred to possible. These two factors are: they have done no wrong, and they have walked in His ways. Notes throughout how the law is sought for the very purpose of being kept, not for the sake of attaining a theoretical knowledge of it. (Leupold)

**119:4 precepts.** Hebrew *piqudim*, covenant regulations laid down by the Lord (see 19:8; 111:7). (CSB)

The attitude just referred to is reflected particularly in this verse. God's precepts are given with the very idea in mind that they may be kept, and kept diligently (the Hebrew says: kept very much). To this thought the earnest wish or prayer is appended that the speaker's ways might be so firm in their whole nature that he might keep God's statutes. We might say by way of paraphrase: O that the bent of my mind were firmly set in the direction of always keeping what Thou hast commanded. (Leupold)

*Diligently* – God's precepts are observed more intensely than other interests. (TLSB)

**119:5** *ways*. Hebrew *huqqim*, covenant directives (see Dt 6:2; 28:15, 45; 30:10, 16; 1Ki 11:11), emphasizing their fixed character. (CSB)

**119:6** *not be put to shame*. The psalmist would not suffer poverty or sickness, or humiliation at the hands of his enemies, and so become the object of sneers (see vv. 31, 46, 80; 25:2–3, 20), but he would have reason to praise the Lord (see v. 7) for blessings received and deliverances granted because the Lord does not forsake him (see v. 8). (CSB)

We might rearrange the clauses of this verse in order to clarify the thought: When I regard all Thy commandments, then shall I not be put to shame. The shame and embarrassment that come from having done the wrong thing will be avoided if one keeps looking in the direction of the suggestions that commandments offer. This may sound like utilitarian advice, but it is meant in a wholesome sense. (Leupold)

*commandments*. Hebrew *mišwot*, covenant directives (see Ex 20:6; 24:12; Dt 4:2), designated specifically as that which God has commanded. (CSB)

**119:7** *righteous*. One of the author's favorite characterizations of God's law (see vv. 62, 75, 106, 123, 138, 144, 160, 164, 172; see also 19:9). (CSB)

This verse is somewhat striking. Upright praise as being offered by the way of learning God's righteous judgments seems to be an incongruity. But not if "judgments" is thought of in the sense of those words of God that render a verdict for guiding a man's course of conduct, and if it is kept in mind that this word is one of the many synonyms of the Word of God. In practice you praise God by esteeming His Word so precious that you make it your business to learn it. Such learning is an act of praise. (Leupold)

*laws*. Hebrew *mishpatim*, covenant directives (see Ex 21:1; 24:3; Dt 4:1), as the laws laid down by a ruler (king). (CSB)

Here the psalmist confesses that although he is devoted to the Word, he still has much to learn. (PBC)

In this verse the psalmist confesses that although he is devoted to the word, he still has much to learn. (PBC)

**119:8** *not ... forsake me*. Not abandon me to poverty, sickness or my enemies. (CSB)

Confronted with God's commands, the psalmist knows his own failings but appeals to God's merciful promises to preserve him. Far from being self-righteous, he depends on God's help alone. (TLSB)

The section ends with an expressed resolution. The spirit of it is: I cannot keep these statutes unless the Lord helps. Therefore: “Oh forsake me not utterly!” No smug self-righteousness here! (Leupold)

### Beth

**9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. 12 Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! 13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. 14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. 16 I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.**

**119:9** *young man*. Some have thought this a characterization of the author, but more likely it indicates instruction addressed to the young after the manner of the wisdom teachers (see 34:11; Pr 1:4; Ecc 11:9; 12:1). (CSB)

Hbr *na'ar*, perhaps in his teens or early twenties (e.g., Isaac [Gn 22:5, 12] and Joseph [Gn 37:2]). (TLSB)

*pure*. Free from all moral taint (see 73:13). (CSB)

*according to your word* – God’s word should be read, studied, meditated upon, and memorized, so that it is hidden in our hearts for the use whenever we need it. (PBC)

God’s Word, like a sword (Eph 6:17), enables believers to guard and keep their life. (TLSB)

*word*. Hebrew *dabar*, a general designation for God’s (word) revelation, but here used with special reference to his law (sometimes promises). (CSB)

**119:10** *I seek you*. The author’s devotion is first of all to the God of the law and the promises; they have meaning for him only because they are God’s word of life for him. (CSB)

Translates two terms: Hbr *baqash*, “look for”; Hbr *darash*, “care about, examine, inquire.” The Lord is sought in three ways: (1) through calling on His name in prayer, (2) by consulting Him through Urim and Thummim administered by the high priest, and (3) through the study of His Word. A visit to the tabernacle or temple is frequently implied. Unbelievers do not seek God. Believers seek Him in an attitude of repentance, not selfishness. (TLSB p. 843)

**119:11** *stored* – God’s Word is treasured through memorization; it is brought out through action so that, by thought and deed, the believer may be kept before God. “We should daily be engaged with God’s Word and carry it in our hearts and upon our lips” (LC I 89). (TLSB)

*word*. Hebrew *'imrah*, a synonym of *dabar*. Except where noted, as here, “word” in this psalm is *dabar*; *'imrah* is usually translated “promise.” (CSB)

**119:12** *blessed are* – Luther: “Because You, the Blessed One, bestow blessing, I want to be taught by You, for You are such a lawgiver who gives blessing” (AE 11:419). (TLSB)

**119:13 lips** – Words from God’s mouth are graciously allowed on our lips to savor, recount, and rehearse. (TLSB)

*declare.* Either in meditation or in liturgies of covenant commitment to the Lord (see 50:16, “recite”). (CSB)

This telling of God’s word is a natural result of having them treasured within and used for every aspect of life. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

Hbr *saphar*, related to the noun *sapher*, “book.” (TLSB)

**119:15 ways.** The Hebrew for this word is a synonym of the Hebrew for “ways” in v. 3 (the two Hebrew words parallel each other in 25:4). (CSB)

### Gimel

**Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. 18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. 19 I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! 20 My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times. 21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments. 22 Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies. 23 Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. 24 Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.**

**119:17–24** Devotion to God’s law marks the Lord’s servant, but alienates him from the arrogant (v. 21) of the world. (CSB)

**119:17 bountifully** – God deals graciously with His servants, rescuing them and giving them far more than they deserve. (TLSB)

*keep your word.* Out of gratitude for God’s care and blessing. (CSB)

**119:18 open my eyes** – Psalmist asks that God would enlighten his eyes to see the goodness that God declares, His goodness out of evil, and His mercy from His Law. Paul prays similarly for the Ephesians (Eph 1:18). (TLSB)

*wondrous things.* Usually ascribed to God’s redeeming acts – but God’s law contains matters just as wonderful (see v. 27). (CSB)

**119:19 sojourner on the earth.** As a servant of the Lord, i.e., a citizen of his kingdom, he is not at home in any of the kingdoms of the world. (CSB)

Recalls the wandering of Moses and the people following the exodus. Though this present life is not yet the Promised Land to come, the Commandments contain that promise of a gracious rest. Augustine: “We are tenants or strangers upon earth, because we have found our country above, whence we have received a pledge, and where when we have arrived we shall never depart” (NPNF 1 8:563). (TLSB)

**119:20 My soul is.** I am (see vv. 28, 81). (CSB)

*Consumed with longing* – Continuing the theme from v 19 of a wandering sojourner, the psalmist longs for the refreshing clarity of the direction of the Law. (TLSB)

**119:21** *the insolent*. Those who are a law to themselves, most fully described in 10:2–11 (see vv. 51, 69, 78, 85, 122). The author has suffered much from their hostility because of his zeal for God and his law, as the next two verses and many others indicate. (CSB)

The scornful seethe in their rebellion against God. Rather than allowing them to wander, God finally rebukes their insolence. (TLSB)

*accursed*. Ripe for God’s judgment. (CSB)

**119:22** *scorn and contempt*. Of the arrogant. (CSB)

**119:23** *princes*. Because the author mentions also speaking “before kings” (v. 46) and being persecuted by “rulers” (v. 161), it may be that he held some official position, such as priest (one of whose functions it would have been to teach God’s law; see Lev 10:11; Ezr 7:6; Ne 8:2–8; Jer 2:8; 18:18; Mal 2:7. (These kings and rulers are probably either Israelite from the time of the monarchy or Persian in the postexilic period.)). (CSB)

If he listens to what princes say of him, the psalmist will hear only their slander. Instead, he strains to hear God’s quiet voice in His guiding and gracious statutes. Notice how the image of the psalmist as God’s servant begins the stanza (v 17) and returns now near the end. (TLSB)

*scorn and contempt*. As they share their worldly counsels, they speak derisively of the one who stands apart because he delights in God’s statutes and makes them his “counselors” (v. 24). (CSB)

**119:24** *counselors*– God’s Word has become a personal witness and confidant to the psalmist. His wisdom promises a home to the sojourning servant (73:24). (TLSB)

### Daleth

**My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word! 26 When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes! 27 Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. 28 My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! 29 Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. 31 I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame! 32 I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!**

**119:25–32** Whether “laid low” (v. 25) or “set ... free” (v. 32), he is determined to “hold fast” (v. 31) to God’s word. (CSB)

**119:25** *clings to the dust*. The author speaks much of his sorrow, suffering and affliction (see vv. 28, 50, 67, 71, 75, 83, 92, 107, 143, 153). It is likely that the ridicule, slander and persecution from his adversaries are usually occasioned by this suffering of God’s devoted servant, who makes God’s word (his law and promises) the hope of his life (see vv. 42, 51, 65, 69, 78, 85, 95, 110, 134, 141, 150, 154, 157, 161. (CSB)

*to the dust*. About to sink into death. (CSB)

Not only is the psalmist a sojourner on the earth (v 19), but he is also reduced to the earth. He is dust drawing nearer to dust (44:25). (TLSB)

*word.* Especially its promises, as also in vv. 28, 37, 42, 49, 65, 74, 81, 107, 114, 147. (CSB)

As Adam was dust enlivened by God's breath, so the psalmist is revived by God's Word. The Word gives life and righteousness (vv 28, 37, 40). (TLSB)

**119:26** *told of my ways.* Even when the psalmist recounts his deeds, God is not put off. He forgives the missteps, which He already knows (56:8). Augustine: "I have confessed my sins, and You have heard me; that is, so that You would remit them" (NPNF 1 8:564). (TLSB)

*ways.* Hbr *derek*, used five times in this stanza (vv 26, 27, 29, 30, 32), contrasting the psalmist's way with God's perfect path. (TLSB)

**119:27** *make me understand* – If he gains more knowledge and understanding of God's word, he will be able to make more sense of this life and renew his commitment to live faithfully in spite of the dangers. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:28** *strengthen me according to Your word!* Left only to itself in its body of dust (v 25), the soul trembles. However, God's Word strongly establishes the psalmist and us by confirming all of God's promises (vv 25, 37, 40). (TLSB)

**119:29** *false ways.* Ways that seem right but lead to death (see Pr 14:12)—in contrast to the ways prescribed by God's law, which are trustworthy (see vv. 86, 138) and true (see vv. 142, 151, 160). (CSB)

*your law.* By keeping me true to your law, let me enjoy your blessings. (CSB)

**119:30** *I have chosen.* Psalmist chooses God's way because God shows Himself to be trustworthy and gracious. (TLSB)

**119:32** *run.* In this stanza focused on life as a "way," it is fitting to end by running. The psalmist no longer clings to the dust (v 25), but dashes forward on the certainty of God's way. (TLSB)

*enlarge my heart.* Lit. "enlarged my heart," i.e., expanded it with joy (see Isa 60:5, "swell with joy"). Others translate it "increased my understanding" (see 1Ki 4:29, "breadth of understanding"). (CSB)

The heart is opened by insight (v 18), freed from the weight of guilt (v 31), and able to trust in the path marked by God. Augustine: "The widening of the heart is the delight we take in righteousness. This is the gift of God, the effect of which is, that we are not straitened in His commandments through the fear of punishment, but widened through love, and the delight we have in righteousness" (NPNF 1 8:564–65). (TLSB)

A number of verses in Gimel and Daleth culminate in verse 32 and state a truth repeated through the psalm: only the Lord can give us understanding of his word and the ability to believe and obey it. (PBC)

## He

**Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! 37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. 38 Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. 39 Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. 40 Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!**

**119:33–40** Prayer for instruction in God’s will as he longs for his precepts. (CSB)

**119:33** *to follow* – Psalmist wishes God to establish a single, clear path through the maze of possible human laws. (TLSB)

The psalmist knows that the Lord himself must interpret and apply his own revelation. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:34** *give me understanding* – Chemnitz: “The prayers of the faithful clearly give testimony to the captivity and bondage of free choice” (*LTh* 1:240). (TLSB)

In addition to being taught the word, the psalmist knew he needed discernment to know how to understand and apply it. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:35** Chemnitz: “The benefits of the Holy Spirit are demonstrated ... for those who walk in newness of life, by directing their will and heart toward obedience, by His contending against the flesh, by leading those who have been converted into His way of thinking” (*LTh* 1:148). (TLSB)

**119:36–37** *heart ... eyes*. In OT understanding, a person follows the dictates of the heart – the inner man and/or the attractions of the eye – external influences. (CSB)

These verses are noteworthy as a prayer for God-pleasing values and priorities in life. (PBC)

**119:36** *incline my heart...selfish gain* – The psalmist knows it will take a supernatural influence on his affections and will to make him prefer the good and reject the bad. He cannot have both mammon and the stipulations of the covenant (see also Mt. 6:24; Luke 16:13); and if he wants to follow the Lord’s way, there is no place for unjust gain. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:37** *turn my eyes* – A familiar theme in vv 25, 28, and 40 is that life and strength are found in the way of God’s Word. In the context of vv 35–37, the psalmist asks that his attention be turned solely to the good that lasts. (TLSB)

*Your ways* – Vv 3, 14, 27, 30, 32, 33 also speak of God’s Word as a way or path. (TLSB)

**119:38** *your promise* – The promise of this verse, and also vv 41, 50, is the whole counsel of God’s Word and Law along with the certainty of His action (Nu 23:19). (TLSB)

*that you may be feared*. The Lord’s saving acts in fulfillment of his promises contribute to the recognition that he is the true God (see 130:4; 2Sa 7:25–26; 1Ki 8:39–40; Jer 33:8–9). (CSB)

**119:40** *righteousness*. Augustine: “And in Him [Christ] I find Your commandments, which I have coveted, that in Your righteousness, that is, in Him, You may quicken me” (NPNF 1 8:566). (TLSB)

## Waw

**Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; 42 then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word. 43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules. 44 I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, 45 and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. 46 I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, 47 for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. 48 I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.**

**119:41–48** May the Lord deliver me and not take his truth from my mouth; then I will honor his law in my life and speak of it before kings, for I love his commands. (CSB)

**119:41** *steadfast love*. Hbr *chesed*, “loyalty” to one’s community; most common term for God’s grace in the Psalms (125 times). Luther described *chesed* as “goodness in action” (AE 14:50). God’s unwavering devotion to the salvation of His people finds its fulfillment in the cross of Christ. (TLSB p. 843)

**119:42** *taunts me*. The one who taunts the psalmist, cutting him with reproach, is defeated with the sharper sword of God’s Word (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). (TLSB)

**119:45** *a wide place*. Lit. “a wide space,” i.e., unconfined by affliction or oppression. (CSB)

Related to the Hbr words for “enlarge” (v 32) and “exceedingly broad” (v 96), giving the image of security and prosperity (cf Eph 3:18–19). (TLSB)

**119:46** *before kings*. Such will be his boldness. (CSB)

The keeping of God’s Word opens even palace doors. The psalmist can speak God’s truth, which is beyond any reproach (Lk 21:15). (TLSB)

This verse was very meaningful to Luther and the reformers when they were summoned to appear before the emperor and princes. It also must have been very comforting to the early Christians during days of persecution. (PBC)

**119:47** *delight...love* – Psalmist loves the Commandments because they are a connection with the God who loves him. The Commandments can be loved, first, because God has kept them for us through Christ, and, second, because God’s indwelling strengthens us to keep them still today (Eph 2:10). (TLSB)

**119:48** *I lift up my hands toward*. An act accompanying praise (as in 63:4; 134:2); so the sense may be: I praise. (CSB)

Likely in praise of the Commandments, which, like the temple, are the connection between God and His people. Also may be an act of prayer (Lm 2:19), signifying the truth of what one says (Dt 32:40), or an act of blessing (Lv 9:22). Ps 28:2 speaks of hands lifted to the temple’s sanctuary, and Ps 134:2 urges hands be lifted to the holy place. (TLSB)

*meditate* – As one could study the beauty of the temple’s stones and gold, so the psalmist studies God’s whole counsel for its intricate design. (TLSB)

### Zayin

**Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. 50 This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. 51 The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law. 52 When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. 53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law. 54 Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. 55 I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law. 56 This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts.**

**119:49–56** God’s word is my comfort and my guide whatever my circumstances. (CSB)

**119:49** *Remember*. Augustine: “The desire of him who prays is displayed, because he asks for what was promised; God is not admonished, as if the promise had escaped from His mind” (NPNF 1 8:568). (TLSB)

*made me hope*. God’s Word creates hope based on God’s promises and character (33:22). Frequently in Ps 119, the psalmist says that he has hope in God’s Word (vv 74, 81, 114, 147). Luther explains that the Church in distress learns to live by unseen faith: “For hope which is seen is not hope (Rom. 8:24), therefore hope is in the Word, not immediately in demonstration” (AE 11:453). (TLSB)

**119:50–51** *Your promise gives me life*. Appeals for life occur frequently in Ps 119 (vv 17, 25, 37, 40, 77, 88, 107, 116, 144, 149, 154, 156, 159). (TLSB)

*life*. Cf vv 25, 37, 40. (TLSB)

**119:50** *gives me life* – The point is that the promises God made to his people in his word bring comfort and courage – it is the nature of the word to revive the spiritual life (Ps. 19:7). (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:51** *arrogant*. Those who scorn the psalmist are also rebelling against God. The insolent lie against the psalmist (v 69) and prepare traps for him (v 85), but God can be depended upon to defend the psalmist against them (vv 21, 78, 122). Luther: “I have not therefore turned away; indeed, being contemptuous of their contempt and mocking their mockery, I have drawn near all the more” (AE 11:453). (TLSB)

**119:52** *old*. God’s law is not fickle, but it is grounded firmly in his unchanging moral character. This is a major source of the author’s comfort and one of the main reasons he cherishes the law so highly (see vv. 89, 144, 152, 160). (CSB)

Psalmist turns to the eternal consolation of God’s Word and character (25:6; Is 63:16). (TLSB)

**119:53** *Indignation seizes me*. Zeal for God’s law (see vv. 136, 139) awakens righteous anger against those who reject it (see vv. 113, 115, 158), and it brings abhorrence of all that is contrary to it (see vv. 104, 128, 163); but it draws together those who honor it (see v. 63). (CSB)

A rare word that can refer to raging heat or scorching wind (11:6). Righteous zeal burns against those opposing God (69:9; 119:139; Jn 2:17). (TLSB)

**119:54** *my songs*. God's statutes are joyous songs (95:2). (TLSB)

Singing has always been an effective way to comfort the troubled soul and renew hope and confidence. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

*in the house*. Lit. "in my temporary house." The sense may be that of v. 19. (CSB)

In v 19, the psalmist declares he is a sojourner. While the house of the psalmist may be temporary, he fills it with songs of God's permanent statutes. (TLSB)

**119:55** *remember Your name*. Songs of the day (v 54) turn to the quiet, prayerful remembrance of God's name in the night. God's promises (v 50) comfort the psalmist in the dark. (TLSB)

The word of the Lord may fill him with comfort, hope and joy, but it is the name of the Lord that inspires his faithfulness. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:56** Blessings outlined in the preceding verses have come from devotion to God's Word (16:6). (TLSB)

### Heth

**The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words. 58 I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. 59 When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies; 60 I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. 61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. 62 At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules. 63 I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. 64 The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!**

**119:57–64** The Lord is the psalmist's true homestead because it is God's law that fills the earth with all that makes life secure and joyous. So God's promises are his hope, and God's righteous laws his delight. (CSB)

**119:57** *portion*. May identify the author as a priest or Levite. (CSB)

The Lord was the portion given to the Levites when the Promised Land was divided and given to the 12 tribes (Nu 18:20). God graciously allows His servants to claim Him as their portion, their life's lot (73:26; 142:5). (TLSB)

The metaphor signifies that everything he possesses is bound up in his relationship with the Lord. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

This verse reminds us of our confirmation pledge. (PBC)

**119:58** *According to your promise* – The promise of this verse, and also vv 41, 50, is the whole counsel of God's Word and Law along with the certainty of His action (Nu 23:19). (TLSB)

**119:59** *turn my feet* – As a result of his careful consideration of his ways, he turns (s.v. Ps 126:1) his feet to the word of the Lord. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:61** *wicked ensnare me*. Figuratively describes the restraints of evil people and their attempt to bring pain to the psalmist. Elsewhere in Scripture, the evil person is described as the one “held fast in the cords of his sin” (Pr 5:22), one who draws “iniquity with cords of falsehood” (Is 5:18). Contrast this attempted restriction by evil with the breadth described in v 45. (TLSB)

**119:62** *at midnight* – Darkness becomes a time to remember and glorify God. While many wake to nightmares, the psalmist’s heart is so turned to God’s grace that he wakes with praise (cf 63:5–6). (TLSB)

**119:63** *friend*. In contrast to the solitude of midnight (v 62), the psalmist is now among those of similar character. His devotion to God is genuine in private and bold in public. (TLSB)

This reminds us of the importance of strengthening one another through the practice of Christian fellowship. (PBC)

*Follow your precepts* – He joins those who reverence God. In vv 74 and 79, he invites others to see and join him as one who honors God. (TLSB)

**119:64** *filled* – God’s Word of love is like the sun, filling and brightening everything it touches. In light of God’s mercy, the world might still hear an echo of God’s description of Eden (Gn 1:31). (TLSB)

## Teth

**You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word. 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments. 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. 68 You are good and do good; teach me your statutes. 69 The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts; 70 their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law. 71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. 72 The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.**

**119:65–72** Do good to me in accordance with your goodness, even if that means affliction, because your affliction is good for me; it teaches me knowledge and good judgment from your law. (CSB)

This section emphasizes the disciplinary value suffering may have for a Christian if it pushes him closer to God and his word. (PBC)

**119:66** *believe in*. Have confidence in; God’s commands are not deceitful or fickle. (CSB)

**119:67** *afflicted*. At the hands of God (see v. 71 “laid low”). (CSB)

Psalmist sees the humbling as a discipline from God that restores him to God’s Word (v 75; cf vv 71, 107). (TLSB)

**119:70** *unfeeling like fat*. Lit. “fat as grease.” Similar expressions occur also in Isa 6:10; Jer 5:28 (see also 17:10). (CSB)

Hearts of the insolent have no more feeling than the fat that surrounds them. (TLSB)

**119:71** *It is good for me that I was afflicted.* Luther: “It is good that You took my wisdom away from me so that You might give me Yours” (AE 11:464–65). Affliction sensitized the psalmist in heart and mind so he could learn God’s Word. “God’s truly believing, elect, and regenerate children need the daily instruction and admonition, warning, and threatening of the Law in this life” (FC SD VI 9). (TLSB)

### Yodh

**Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. 74 Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word. 75 I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. 76 Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. 77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight. 78 Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts. 79 Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies. 80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!**

**119:73–80** Complete your forming of me by helping me to conform to your righteous laws so that the arrogant may be put to shame and those who fear you may rejoice with me. (The stanza has a concentric structure; compare vv. 73 and 80, 74 and 79, 75 and 78, 76 and 77.) (CSB)

This section emphasizes the solidarity between the psalmist and all others who fear the Lord. He hopes his example will encourage them and that they will help and support him. (PBC)

**119:73** Psalmist wants God to complete His handiwork. (TLSB)

*give me understanding.* What I need to perfect the work you began when you formed me. (CSB)

Hbr *bin*, “to be attentive,” “to have discernment and insight.” Used frequently in Ps 119; cf vv 27, 34, 100, 104, 125, 130, 144, 169. Understanding brings insight into God’s continued direction for our life. (TLSB)

**119:74** *you shall see me.* When I am perfectly formed and enjoying the blessings of the godly. (CSB)

**119:75** *rules.* Here the Hebrew for this word (*mishpatim*) may refer to God’s just decisions in dealing with his servant, as the rest of the verse implies. (CSB)

*you have afflicted me.* God’s humbling afflictions are those of a faithful Father, who draws His child closer (Pr 3:11–12; Heb 12:5–11). (TLSB)

**119:76** *my comfort.* In my affliction. (CSB)

The word of God promise what God in his love will do for his people, both during affliction and in ending it. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:77** *that I may live.* And not perish in my affliction. (CSB)

The psalmist wants God's compassion to be demonstrated in the way he will enable him to overcome the affliction and live. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:78** *be put to shame.* As they have subjected me to shame. (CSB)

*for wronging me.* "laid low." (CSB)

**119:80** *my heart* – The stanza closes with a final prayer and a reason. The prayer is that his heart would be blameless (s.v. Ps. 7:8), that is, in all his decisions he would be unwavering in his adherence to God's word. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

### Kaph

**My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. 82 My eyes long for your promise; I ask, "When will you comfort me?" 83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes. 84 How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me? 85 The insolent have dug pitfalls for me; they do not live according to your law. 86 All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me! 87 They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. 88 In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.**

**119:81–88** Save me from my affliction and my persecutors, according to your promises, and I will obey your statutes. This last stanza of the first half of the psalm, like the closing stanza, is dominated by prayer for God's help. (CSB)

**119:81-88** Psalmist longs for deliverance. (TLSB)

**119:81** *I hope in your word* – His faith is expressed in terms of hoping for God's word (for hope s.v. Ps. 31:24). He believes in God's word that it promises, but there is a good deal of tension and uneasiness as he waits for the Lord. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

**119:82** *my eyes long* – The eyes reflect his weariness in watching for a sign of God's answer; so under prolonged strain of waiting, the psalmist acknowledges that he is worn out. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

*When will you comfort me* – Here begins a series of interrogatives that express the psalmist's suffering and frustration. This first asks when God will comfort him. It is when God delivers him from his oppressors and revives his life that he will feel comforted. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

**119:83** *like a wineskin in the smoke.* As a wineskin hanging in the smoke and heat above a fire becomes smudged and shriveled, so the psalmist bears the marks of his affliction. (CSB)

Items stored in crossbeams of the roof could be ruined if hung too close to the hearth's heat and smoke. The psalmist says he has become shriveled and darkened from the heat and smoke, forgotten by others and even, seemingly, by God. But he has not forgotten God's Word. (TLSB)

We would probably say something like, "I feel like I've been through a wringer." (PBC)

*I have not forgotten your statutes* – He has remembered them, meaning, he has complied with them. Here is faith persevering in the midst of persecution that God is permitting. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

**119:84** *How long ... wait?* Lit. “How (many are) the days of your servant?” That is, do not delay the punishment of my persecutors, because my life is short. (CSB)

This means “Your servant (I) has been enduring long enough. This laments his prolonged endurance. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

*punish.* Lit. “effect justice upon” (the Hebrew for “justice” is *mishpat*; “laws.” (CSB)

People were openly persecuting him, which was the cause of his horrible condition; but if God were to execute justice on them, meaning destroy them for their evil activities, the psalmist would no longer feel that he was fading away. Instead his life would be renewed. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

**119:85** *dig pitfalls.* Probably referring to slander—public accusations that the psalmist must be guilty of vile sins or he would not be suffering such affliction. (CSB)

The idea of their digging pits signifies laying some sort of trap for him. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

*contrary to your law.* Their arrogance is evidenced in the fact that they do nothing in compliance with God’s word. They completely ignore it and have no tolerance for those who seek to live by it. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

**119:86** *trustworthy.* “deceitful ways.” (CSB)

This means that all the commandments are trustworthy when they promise life will be better for those who live according to God’s laws. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

*Persecute me with falsehood...help me* – They persecute him for no purpose. Or with lies, he can but cry for God to do for him what he cannot do for himself: “help me” (s.v. Ps. 46:1) (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

**119:87** *made and end of me* – The plain meaning is that he is almost dead – finished on this earth. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

*Have not forsaken your precepts* – However, to the end if need be, he affirms his faith. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

**119:88** *love.* In vv 84–87, the psalmist described his enemies. Now he looks to God’s constant love as his sole source of life. (TLSB)

It is an appeal to God to act in his faithful covenant on behalf of his people. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

*I will keep the testimonies of your mouth* – In spite of his exhaustion the psalmist clings to his trust in the Lord. (PBC)

The testimony refers to all God's instruction, the whole covenant law, which came by direct revelation from God. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

### Lamedh

**Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. 90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. 91 By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants. 92 If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. 93 I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. 94 I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts. 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies. 96 I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.**

**119:89–91** God's sovereign and unchanging word governs and maintains all creation. (These first three verses of the second half of the psalm teach a general truth; cf. vv. 1–3.) (CSB)

**119:89** *Your word.* Here God's word by which he created, maintains and governs all things (see 33:4, 6; 107:20; 147:15, 18). (CSB)

*firmly fixed in the heavens.* The secure order of the heavens and the earth (v. 90) declare (19:1–4) the reassuring truth that God's word (his "laws," v. 91), by which he upholds and governs all things, is enduring (eternal) and trustworthy ("Your faithfulness," v. 90). And that is the larger truth that confirms the godly man's confidence in the trustworthiness of God's word (his laws and promises) of special revelation, "deceitful ways"). (CSB)

God's Word preceded the visible heavens, created the heavens ("And God said" [Gn 1:6]), and will outlast the visible heavens (Mt 24:35). The heavens are a framework around a more precious, lasting Word. (TLSB)

**119:90** *Your faithfulness.* An indirect reference to God's word. (CSB)

God's faithfulness, that is, his dependability to do what he says he will do, lasts forever. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:91***they.* Luther suggests that "they" are "the founding of the earth, the continuance of days, and the service of all" (AE 11:477–78). These are the things created by God's Word that continue to serve Him. (TLSB)

*all things are Your servants.* God controls creation, despite sin's rebellion. Cf Col 1:16–17. (TLSB)

**119:92** *would have perished in my affliction.* Would not have learned the way of life (see v. 93) from your law (see vv. 67, 71). (CSB)

The point is that if God's word created and controls everything, then living in harmony with that word enables the believer to not only survive but overcome opposition. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:93** *by them You have given me life.* Similar to the psalmist's appeal for God to give life (v 50); here, God's precepts are the unforgettable support of life. (TLSB)

**119:94** *I am Yours; save me.* Luther learned to use this as a motto from John Staupitz, his Father-Confessor. Hbr *hoshi'eni*, “save me,” is the basis for “Hosanna.” God’s creation of all (vv 90–91) makes the psalmist bold to expect God’s salvation. (TLSB)

**119:95** *The wicked.* (“the arrogant”). (CSB)

Cf 1:1; 119:119. Psalmist is at peace in God’s promises about the wicked (1:6). (TLSB)

*wait to destroy me.* “laid low”. (CSB)

On the outside the wicked were lying in wait to destroy him, but he was discerning and faithfully following God’s revealed plan for him. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:96** *perfection.* Probably that which has been perfected in the sense of completed, given fixed bounds so that it is no longer open-ended. (CSB)

*exceedingly broad.* Lit. “very broad,” i.e., an inexhaustible source of wise counsel for life (see vv. 97–100). (CSB)

God’s word is limitless; it is for all people through all time. (PBC)

The most that human wisdom can see is still blinded to God’s wisdom, power, and grace in Christ (1Co 1:20–30; Jb 38:1–42:6). Human wisdom will end (1Co 13:8–12), but God’s Commandments are a limitless wisdom (Rm 11:33). (TLSB)

### Mem

**Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. 98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. 101 I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. 102 I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.**

**119:97–104**† Meditation on God’s revelation yields the highest wisdom. (CSB)

This is one of the most noteworthy stanzas of the psalm. It expresses both the psalmist’s love for the word and the pleasure he finds in it (sweeter than honey). The person who follows the simple truths of the word is wiser and has more insight and understanding than those who follow the most sophisticated theories of men. A fuller exposition of this principle is found in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. (PBC)

**119:98** *my enemies.* Those arrogant ones who place confidence in worldly wisdom. (CSB) Living by God’s command i.e., the law, has made the psalmist wiser than his enemies, for by rejecting the law of God they have proven to be fools. The psalmist is never without the instructions of God – they are his everlasting possession. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:99** *teachers.* Merely human teachers. (CSB)

The Law gives prudent understanding and more insight than any teacher can find apart from it. Cf Dt 4:6. (TLSB)

**119:100** *aged*. Old men, taught by experience. (CSB)

Elders were respected for their wisdom, but even they are surpassed by the Law's wisdom. If the aged depend only on traditions, they miss the Word's eternal and divine wisdom. (TLSB)

**119:102** *you have taught me*. Through your laws. (CSB)

Augustine: "You have laid down a law within my heart by Your Spirit, as it were by Your fingers, that I might not fear it as a slave without love, but might love it with a chaste fear as a son, and fear it with a chaste love" (NPNF 1 8:577). (TLSB)

**119:103** *How sweet* Sweeter even than honey, the Law is a pleasant, agreeable food. Joy in the Word is fresh, abundant, and freely given (19:10; Jer 15:16; Ezk 3:3; Pr 16:24; 24:13–14). (TLSB)

*words*.† That is, promises, qualifying "laws" in the previous verse (see vv. 67, 133, 158, 172). (CSB)

Both God's Commandments (Law) and His promises (Gospel). (TLSB)

**119:104** *hate every wrong path*. In contrast to the love that begins this stanza (v 97), the psalmist hates the deception and bitterness of every way other than God's Law. Cf v 128. (TLSB)

## Nun

**Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. 106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules. 107 I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word! 108 Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your rules. 109 I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. 111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. 112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.**

**119:105** *lamp ... light*. Apart from which I could only grope about in the darkness. (CSB)

Luther notes that the Word's light is not for our eyes and our seeing but for our feet and path. But our feet cannot be lit and our paths cannot see. So this verse describes the Word's work of faith. "It guides the feet and the heart, and faith does not require understanding... Thus faith does not enlighten the understanding, indeed, it blinds it, but rather the heart. Faith leads it where it will be saved, and it does so through the hearing of the Word" (AE 11:485). "We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and norm according to which all teachings, together with <all> teachers, should be evaluated and judged [2 Timothy 3:15–17] are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament alone" (FC Ep Sum 1). (TLSB)

**119:106** *have sworn an oath and confirmed it*. Have covenanted (see Ne 10:29). (CSB)

Luther recalls here the promise in Baptism by which one renounces the devil and his evil deeds (AE 11:486). The psalmist has begun a journey (vv 105–12) and promises to finish it in God’s Word. (TLSB)

**119:108** *freewill offerings of praise.* Praises come voluntarily and will be acceptable if God instructs him. Cf 110:3. (TLSB)

**119:109** *I hold my life in my hand.* By publicly honoring God’s law even in the face of threats and hostility (see especially vv. 23, 46, 161). (CSB)

Psalmist’s life is endangered. Rather than guarding it, he offers it openly to God and the direction of His Law. Cf 19:14; 25:1–2. (TLSB)

**119:110** *laid a snare.* This verse prepared the way for the psalmist’s return to a denunciation of his enemies. (PBC)

**119:111** *my heritage.* The possession I have received from God as my homestead and that from which I draw the provisions for my life. (CSB)

The believer’s adoption by grace into God’s family brings the inheritance of the Father’s Word. Cf Eph 1:5–6; Ps 37:18. (TLSB)

### Samekh

**I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. 114 You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. 115 Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. 116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! 117 Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually! 118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain. 119 All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies. 120 My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments.**

**119:113** *hate the double-minded.* See v. 115:3. A double-minded man is “unstable in all he does” (Jas 1:8). (CSB)

Psalmist hates those who are divided in their thinking and allegiance. (TLSB)

**119:114** *hiding place...shield* – The psalmist uses two figures (metaphors) to describe the Lord, “hiding place” and “shield.” Both of these are common in the psalms: “hiding place” occurs in Psalms 27:5, 31:20, 32:7 and other places, and signifies safety in the Lord; “shield” occurs in Psalms 28:7, 33:20, 84:11 to name a few, and signifies protection. The uses of these figures indicates the psalmist learned these things about the Lord by being in the midst of assault and oppression. Because of what he has learned, he puts his hope (s.v. Ps. 31:24) in God’s word. By “word” he probably means primarily the covenant promises of God to protect and preserve him. His love for the law of the Lord is therefore based in part on his experiencing protect according to God’s word. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:115** *evildoers* – Those who would tempt the psalmist away from the Law. (TLSB)

**119:116** *not put to shame* – The verb “ashamed” (s.v. Ps. 31:1) means much more than being embarrassed or made to look silly; it is commonly used for humiliating defeat at the hands of the enemies. He does not want to be so humiliated and have his belief in God’s word seriously discredited. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*hope* – The word “hope” occurs only here in verse 116 and in Psalm 46:5; it refers to his expectation that the promises God made will be fulfilled. If he has put his trust in God’s word for help. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**119:118** *spurn*. Or “shake off” or “make light of.” (CSB)

*their cunning*. Probably their ways, which are deceitful. (CSB)

**119:119** *wicked* – Rebels, guilty in God’s judgment. Cf vv 53, 95. (TLSB)

*dross*. Scum removed from molten ore or metal. The Hebrew for this word is a pun on the word for “stray” in v. 118: Those who stray are treated like dross. (CSB)

Dross is worthless metal slag removed from valuable molten metal. Cf v 140; Is 1:22. (TLSB)

**119:120** *My flesh trembles*. He quivers out of his deep reverence for God. (CSB)

Psalmist tingles and quivers in fear of the judgment of his holy God. Luther: “My hairs have bristled and stood on end from the judgments of condemnation” (AE 11:494, n 86). (TLSB)

## Ayin

**121 I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. 122 Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me. 123 My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. 124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. 125 I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies! 126 It is time for the LORD to act, for your law has been broken. 127 Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. 128 Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.**

**119:121–128** As your faithful servant I pray for deliverance from my oppressors—another stanza in which prayer for deliverance is dominant, “laid low”). (CSB)

**119:121** *what is just and right*. God’s law. (CSB)

*oppressors*. Oppressors would surround the psalmist except for the protection of God and His Word. (TLSB)

**119:122, 124–25** *servant*. Hbr *‘ebed*. The servant depends on God’s mercy (v 124) against his enemies (v 122). Cf Is 65:8–9, 13–15. (TLSB)

**119:122** The only verse in this psalm that does not have either a direct or an indirect (as in vv. 90, 121, 132) reference to God’s word. (CSB)

*the arrogant.* God's pledge of protection is the psalmist's hope against the rebellious and insolent. The psalmist will survive only if God will speak for him. The insolent are well-defined in Pr 21:24. (TLSB)

**119:126** *act.* Either in defense of his servant, or in judgment on the lawbreakers, or both. (CSB)

Psalmist sees the Law's relationship between people and God as broken. The time for action has come. Defend Your people and Your Law! (TLSB)

He prays that God will take action against those who scorn his word and that he will preserve the psalmist in his loyalty to the word. (PBC)

**119:128** *consider.* Hbr *yashar*, also translated "make straight" in Is 40:3. (TLSB)

*I hate every wrong path.* Psalmist has esteemed God's commands to be the only true path; he despises the temptations of falsehood. (TLSB)

## Pe

**Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. 130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. 131 I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments. 132 Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. 133 Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. 134 Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts. 135 Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes. 136 My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.**

The major thought of this section may be summarized thus: God's wonderful testimonies confer many blessings, therefore they are to be faithfully kept. (Leupold)

**119:129** *wonderful* – Usually ascribed to God's redeeming acts—but God's law contains matters just as wonderful (see v. 27). (CSB)

When the writer states that God's testimonies are wonderful he does not specify in what particular respect they are to be thus described, chiefly, perhaps, because the wonders of God's law are so manifold. That characteristic surely offers good reason for keeping them. One of the wonders of the divine Word is that, when its truth is unfolded to men, it brings with it new and deeper insights to all men and particularly to the "simple" who are the ones who keep their heart open to its beneficent influences (v. 130). (Leupold)

**119:130** *unfolding.* Lit. "opening," here meaning (1) the revelation of your words, (2) the interpretation (see "expound," 49:4) of your words, or (3) the entering of your words into the heart. (CSB)

God's Word is a doorway opening to the believer. A welcoming light pours out from these gracious words (cf Lk 15:11–32). (TLSB)

*the simple.* Childlike, those whose understanding and judgment have not yet matured. (CSB)

**119:131** *pant* – Like an exhausted runner, the psalmist gasps for the reviving of God’s Commandments. They are his breath and God’s very breath within him. Luther: “ ‘So,’ he says, ‘I have opened my mouth, that I might not want to offer what is mine, but desire to receive what is Yours’ ” (AE 11:500). Cf Ps 42:1. (TLSB)

**119:132** *turn to me and be gracious to me* – This verse does not contain a word about God’s law. When, however, the prayer of the psalmist is that God would turn unto him and have mercy upon him, we know that God usually does such conferring of His help and mercy through His Word. What makes the psalmist bold to pray thus is the fact that God’s gracious attitude toward men is His customary procedure in dealing with His own. (Leupold)

*as is your way.*† Lit. “as is (your) manner” (the Hebrew for “manner” is *mishpat*); hence an indirect reference to God’s revelation. (CSB)

*to those who love your name* – The second half of the verse which claims this may, however, be translated: as is the right of those who love Thy name,” “right” being used in the sense of a right that guaranteed by His promise and not something that man may presumptuously claim for himself, cf. Deut. 18:3. (Leupold)

**119:133** *your promise* – TLSB Note 119:38 - The promise of this verse, and also vv 41, 50, is the whole counsel of God’s Word and Law along with the certainty of His action (Nu 23:19). (TLSB)

TLSB Note 119:170 – Used frequently and in various ways in Ps 119. Psalmist asks for God’s help in accord with many aspects of God’s Word and character. Generally, this phrase comes at the end of a verse, clinching the request with the certainty of God’s previous promise. He asks according to “Your word” (vv 9, 25, 28, 65, 107, 169, 170), “Your promise” (vv 41, 58, 76, 133, 154), “Your rules” (or “judgments,” v 156), and “Your steadfast love” (vv 124, 149, 159). He also notes that the insolent do not live according to the Law (v 85). According to God’s Word, the psalmist asks for direction in life (v 9), for life itself (vv 25, 107), for strength (v 28), for understanding (v 169), for deliverance (v 170), and he acknowledges God’s blessings (v 65).

*Let no sin rule over me* – Psalmist could easily misstep into the evil that wishes to master him. He pleads for God’s protection and clear direction. Cf Est 9:1; Ec 8:9. (TLSB)

A kindred prayer to that offered in v. 132 appears also in this verse, a prayer for firmness and constancy in walking in the godly way, which is the antithesis to letting “any iniquity have control” over him. What he means by this statement is, perhaps best conveyed by the next verse: any iniquity,” which would then be “man’s oppression.” For to be under such oppression makes it difficult to “keep [God’s] precepts. (Leupold)

**119:134, 154** *Redeem*. Here, as often, a synonym for “deliver.” (CSB)

**119:135-136** The last two verses present an antithesis. The first asks for God’s gracious favor that the psalmist may be taught the divine statutes; the second shows his grief over the reckless way in which men disregard the law of the Lord. Such personal grief, so deeply felt, may well shame all those who feel far less keenly on the subject. (Leupold)

**119:135** *your face shine*. Psalmist echoes the blessing of Aaron (Nu 6:24–26), asking God to allow him to see His face through the Word. He asks that this clear view of God’s face would bless him rather than scorch him. Cf Gn 32:30; Ps 11:7; 17:15. (TLSB)

**119:136** Zeal for God’s law (see vv. 136, 139) awakens righteous anger against those who reject it (see vv. 113, 115, 158), and it brings abhorrence of all that is contrary to it (see vv. 104, 128, 163); but it draws together those who honor it (see v. 63). (CSB)

Rejection of God’s Law saddens the psalmist. One might expect him to rejoice in his enemies’ rejection of the Law and God’s approaching judgment over them (cf Jnh 4). However, he is sorrowful both for the sake of the Law and for those who break it. Eventually, they will be punished and the Law vindicated, but now he is impatient during this time of waiting. His sorrow is paired with the “hot indignation” of v 53. The psalmist has both anger over the wicked and tears over their destruction. (TLSB)

### Tsadhe

**Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules. 138 You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness. 139 My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget your words. 140 Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it. 141 I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts. 142 Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true. 143 Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight. 144 Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live.**

**119:137–144** The Lord and his laws are righteous. (CSB)

This section expresses the psalmist’s indignation against the enemies of the word. (PBC)

**119:137** *Righteous*. Psalmist’s impatience for the keeping of God’s Word is a burning fire, a jealousy for God’s honor. This fire feeds on the careless forgetting of the Word by the wicked. Cf v 53; Jn 2:17. (TLSB)

**119:140** *promises*. Hebrew *imrah*; perhaps better rendered “word” here. (CSB 11).

*tried*. Lit. “refined,” i.e., God’s word contains nothing worthless or useless. (CSB)

Often refers to the smelting of precious metals (66:10; Zec 13:9; cf Ps 119:72, 119, 127). God’s promises are both pure and repeatedly tested. Precious as gold, unbreakable as steel, they are the perfect end of God’s refining. See the parallel thought in v 151. (TLSB)

**119:141** *lowly and despised*. Psalmist appears to be a young man (vv 9, 100), familiar with teachers (v 99), and often persecuted for his zeal (vv 23, 42, 51, 69, 85–87, 95, 110, 150, 157). He contrasts his relatively low position with that of the nobility who plot against him and before whom he will appear (vv 23, 46, 161). Although he knows his own weaknesses (vv 67, 176), he frequently boasts of his keeping of the Law, both as a promise (vv 57, 106) and as what he has already accomplished (vv 112, 121, 129). (TLSB)

**119:142** *Your law is true*. Psalmist is perhaps continuing the theme of God’s promises being tested and refined (v 140), showing the certainty of God’s righteousness and affirming that all of God’s Law is true. (TLSB)

*true*. Hbr *’emeth* can also be translated “faithfulness” or “reliability.” God’s truthfulness. (TLSB)

## Qoph

**With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes. 146 I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies. 147 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words. 148 My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise. 149 Hear my voice according to your steadfast love; O LORD, according to your justice give me life. 150 They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from your law. 151 But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true. 152 Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever.**

**119:145–152** Save me, O Lord, and I will keep your law. As the psalm draws to a close, prayer for deliverance becomes more dominant. (CSB)

**147:147** *I rise before dawn and cry for help.* Psalmist uses the entire day to hear and speak with God. Seven times a day (v 164), he praises, including before the night watches (v 148), at night (v 55), at midnight (v 62), and at dawn (v 147). In this verse, he eagerly anticipates the dawn, pushing back the dark and hurrying the sun with his prayer for help. (Cf 18:6; 22:25.) (TLSB)

We follow Luther's lead in translating these two statements: In the earliest dawn did I cry for help," and: "I wake up early." For that is what is meant.

**119:148** *watches of the night.* As in v 147 (which begins with the same Hbr verb), the psalmist shows eagerness to ponder God's promises. The slow passage of the night watch allows him to meditate on God's Word in a lingering way. Cf 63:6. Luth: "You have promised Christ and His grace ... but no matter how unworthy I am, You are truthful, who made the promise.... Your mercy, as of the One promising, has made me bold to pray before merits and out of season" (AE 11:511). (TLSB)

*Meditate* – Translates Hbr *hagah* and *siach*, terms about speaking. A person holds his attention by uttering words of Scripture or prayers to focus his thoughts. The Israelites meditated on God's Word by reciting it. The believer explores God's Word, since "there is always something left over to understand and to do. Therefore you must never be proud, as if you were already full" (Luth, AE 11:434). Chem: "Each person, in whatever station or calling he has, may meditate on the law of the Lord and speak of His testimonies" (*LTh* 2:380). Luther suggests that this verb recalls the singing of the birds, "so the church continuously fills its mouth with preaching in joy and gladness like that of the little birds" (AE 11:437, n 23). (TLSB)

**119:150** *those who...schemes are near* – Same Hbr verb, *qarab*. Although the enemies come closer, they remain distant from God. However, the psalmist draws near to God through the Law. (TLSB)

In the particular situation in which the psalmist finds himself a large part of the difficulty seems to have been caused by "men who followed after evil designs," who in a spirit of fierce hostility were closing in on this poor man. He knows their character: they are not merely personal enemies; they are men who "are far from [God's] law. (Leupold)

This God who is near has at the same time made known His will in His commandments which are absolutely reliable and a safe norm to steer a safe course by. (Leupold)

**119:151** *are true*. “deceitful ways”. (CSB) – Ways that seem right but lead to death (see Pr 14:12)—in contrast to the ways prescribed by God’s law, which are trustworthy (see vv. 86, 138) and true (see vv. 142, 151, 160). (CSB)

### Resh

**Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law. 154 Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise! 155 Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes. 156 Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life according to your rules. 157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies. 158 I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commands. 159 Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love. 160 The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.**

**119:154** *Plead my cause and redeem me*. In Hbr, this verse begins with two similar words, the verb *rib* (“plead” or “contend, strive”) followed by the noun *ribi* (“cause” or “strife, dispute”). “Strive for my strife,” the psalmist is asking. Cf 35:1; 43:1; 74:22. (TLSB)

*give me life according to Your promise!* Here and in v 156, the psalmist sees the Word with its promises and rules as a fountain of life. One remembers Jesus’ promise in Jn 10:10. (TLSB)

**119:155–58** Psalmist’s enemies are the “wicked” (vv 53, 61, 95, 110, 119, 155), “persecutors” (vv 157, 150), “adversaries” (v 157), and the “faithless” (v 158). Other enemies noted earlier included the “insolent” (vv 51, 69, 78, 85, 122); “evildoers” (v 115); and “oppressors” (v 121). Just as there are several words used to describe the different facets of the Law, so these seven words describe the different aspects of rebellion against God and His Word. His enemies drive the psalmist nearer to God’s Word as his one refuge and dependable hope. (TLSB)

**119:155** *the wicked*. “the arrogant”. (CSB)

**119:156** *your laws*. While there are many enemies listed in v 157, there are equal saving multitudes of mercies in God’s rules. Augustine: “Even our seeking out Your righteousness, then, comes of Your mercies” (*NPNF* 1 8:585–86). (TLSB)

**119:159** *Give me life according to Your steadfast love*. Psalmist does not exchange his love for God’s love, thereby expecting a reward of life. He loves—and lives—because of God’s loving Word and action, which come first. Cf 1Jn 4:10, 19. (TLSB)

**119:160** *sum*. Hbr *ro’sh*, “head,” “top,” “chief.” (TLSB)

### Sin and Shin

**Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words. 162 I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. 163 I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law. 164 Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules. 165 Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. 166 I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments. 167 My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly. 168 I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you.**

Despite opposition from princes and kings, the psalmist fears only God. Cf v 46. (TLSB)

*Stands in awe* – Hbr *pachad*, “dread,” “thrill,” “fear.” Cf 27:1; Is 60:5. (TLSB)

**119:162** *great spoil*. God’s Word is the hidden treasure, the fortune reserved both on earth and in heaven. Cf Mt 6:19–20; 13:44–46. Augustine: “Many spoils were found, when, admiring the endurance of the Martyrs, even the persecutors believed” (*NPNF* 1 8:587). (TLSB)

**119:163** *falsehood*. Or “that which is (ways that are) deceitful.” (CSB)

**119:164** *Seven*. Psalmist regularly praises God, regardless of the outcome of each hour and day. Augustine notes that the number seven suggests completion, as in the number of days in the week (*NPNF* 1 8:587). This verse, Luther notes, is foundational for the practice of seven worship services in a day: Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, and Compline (AE 11:525). (TLSB)

**119:165** *Great peace*. Complete security and well-being. (CSB)

Augustine: “He who loves the law of God, honors in it even what he does not understand; and what seems to him to sound absurd, he judges rather that he does not understand, and that there is some great meaning hidden: thus the law of God is not an offense to him” (*NPNF* 1 8:587). (TLSB)

**119:168** *my ways are known before you* – Psalmist keeps God’s commands, because every turn in his life is known before God. Cf 139:1–16; Eph 1:4–5. (TLSB)

## Taw

**Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word! 170 Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word. 171 My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes. 172 My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right. 173 Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. 174 I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight. 175 Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me. 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.**

**119:170** *according to*. Used frequently and in various ways in Ps 119. Psalmist asks for God’s help in accord with many aspects of God’s Word and character. Generally, this phrase comes at the end of a verse, clinching the request with the certainty of God’s previous promise. He asks according to “Your word” (vv 9, 25, 28, 65, 107, 169, 170), “Your promise” (vv 41, 58, 76, 133, 154), “Your rules” (or “judgments,” v 156), and “Your steadfast love” (vv 124, 149, 159). He also notes that the insolent do not live according to the Law (v 85). According to God’s Word, the psalmist asks for direction in life (v 9), for life itself (vv 25, 107), for strength (v 28), for understanding (v 169), for deliverance (v 170), and he acknowledges God’s blessings (v 65). (TLSB)

**119:171** *pour forth praise*. Because you have delivered me. (CSB)

Though he loves and cherishes the word, he never loses sight of the purpose of the word which is to put us into contact with the living God. (PBC)

**119:174–176** The conclusion to the psalm. (CSB)

**119:174** *Your law is my delight.* Psalmist finds joy in the Lord’s teaching. Cf vv 16, 47, 70, 77. (TLSB)

**119:176** *I have gone astray.* See Isa 53:6; the clearest expression of the author’s acknowledgment that, for all his devotion to God’s law, he has again and again wandered into other (deceitful) ways and, like a lost sheep, must be brought back by his heavenly Shepherd. For one who has made God’s law the guide and dearest treasure of his life, the last word can only be such a confession—and such a prayer. (CSB)

**119:176** Psalmist modestly acknowledges his errors but depends on God’s gracious search as his Shepherd. The final verse contrasts with the blessings promised to those whose way is blameless (v 1). However, God’s Word brings blessings by grace for those who have faltered. While the psalm repeatedly urges a close devotion to the Word, blessings come according to the Word and not according to the righteousness of the believer’s life. Luther: “Thus this verse is extremely emotional and full of tears, for truly we are all thus going astray, so that we must pray to be visited, sought, and carried over by the most godly Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God blessed forever. Amen” (AE 11:534). (TLSB)

**Ps 119** God’s Word is our beloved guide to life. It reveals God’s trustworthy promises and eternal mercy. The psalm’s length presents God’s Word like a diamond with 22 facets, each displaying a distinct light. By exhausting every letter of the alphabet, the psalmist demonstrates the breadth of the Word and his own boundless dedication to it. Luther spoke of the making of a theologian on the basis of Ps 119. A theologian, he held, came from three actions: prayer (*oratio*), reading or study (*meditatio*), and affliction (*tentatio*). Ps 119 is an excellent expression of all three. The Gospel radiates through the psalm as the psalmist describes God’s promises, which save His people (e.g., vv 41, 58). God’s Word is loved because of its message of steadfast love (e.g., vv 76, 88, 159). God is merciful, and this mercy brings life (e.g., v 156). • Lord, give us the spirit of Ps 119. Teach us to love Your Word. Show us Your steadfast mercy in every verse. Give us the faith to believe that all You have said is true and that all Your promises will be fulfilled in Christ. Let us seek You with our whole heart and find You in Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)