

Psalm 119:1-24: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 00] Psalm 119 verses 1 to 24 Aleph I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous rules.

I will keep your statutes. Do not utterly forsake me. Baith How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

With my whole heart I seek you. Let me not wander from your commandments. I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord. Teach me your statutes.

With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your word. Gimel Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word.

[1 : 31] Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. I am a sojourner on the earth. Hide not your commandments from me. My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.

You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones who wander from your commandments. Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies.

Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. Your testimonies are my delight. They are my counsellors. Psalm 119 is the longest of all of the psalms, 176 verses in length.

It's structured as an alphabetical acrostic. There are 22 sections of 8 verses each. Each section begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in ascending order. As an alphabetical acrostic, it suggests a comprehensive character and invites a certain sort of meditation.

Each of the fundamental springs of language, the letters of the alphabet, are successively and collectively turned to the praise of God and his law. Psalm 119 is an extended meditation upon the law.

[2 : 46] Beyond the acrostic structure, its core literary design is a series of explorations of the term law or instruction, Torah, and seven key synonyms, translated in the ESV as testimonies, precepts, commandments, rules, words, statutes and promise.

A few other terms, ways, paths, faithfulness, are used at a handful of points. Verse 122 stands out as a verse without any of the synonyms or related terms.

Every stanza of the psalm contains at least six of the synonyms. The psalm elevates the law of the Lord, much as we see in places such as Psalm 19, verses 7-11.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

[3 : 49] More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned. In keeping them, there is great reward.

Such meditation upon the law of the Lord is celebrated in the opening psalm of the book, which the blessed man ruminates upon day and night. This psalm should be read as a wisdom psalm, an invitation to place the law of God in the heart through memorization, meditation, insight, delight, willing obedience, and then also in song.

The understanding of the law that emerges from it may surprise many, who have been given to think of the law as a negative and condemning thing. However, the new covenant is about having

