

# Walking in the Word

## The 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm

### The Christian's Responsibility Towards the Word of God

*"Blessed are the undefiled in the way,  
who walk in the law of the LORD."*

*Psalm 119:1*

*A Verse by Verse Study Through the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm*

By Craig Ledbetter

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*Part of the Bible Companion Series of Bible Studies*  
By Craig Ledbetter

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# Psalm 119

## Walking in the Word

### The Christian's Responsibility Towards the Word of God

#### Introduction

**Psalm 119 is obviously the 119th Psalm of the Book of Psalms.** It is the longest chapter of the Bible, and is found in the very centre of all the words that God wrote. Psalm 119 is a song to be sung by God's people, but it is far more than just a song. It describes the beauty of God's Laws and Commandments, and explains the importance of DOING what God has commanded as a way of life instead of just something to believe.

The Psalms were written to be sung either acapella, or played on a variety of instruments:

- The Neginoth – it was a stringed instrument like a small guitar (Psalm 4, 54, 55, 67, 76).
- Neginah – it also was a stringed instrument (Psalm 61).
- Nehiloth – a wind instrument, like a flute (Psalm 5).
- Neginoth upon Sheminith – specifically an 8 stringed instrument (Psalm 6).
- Gittith – a harp (Psalm 8, 81, 84).
- Aijeleth Shahar – a rapid and bright instrument (Psalm 22).
- Shoshannimeduth – the trumpet (Psalm 80).

**This Psalm has several purposes:** First and foremost, to teach God's people about how important God's Law was. It also taught basic Hebrew memorization techniques, shown by utilizing the 22 Hebrew letters as the start of 22 sets of 8 lines. And it made God's words the centre of all worship.

**The human author of this chapter is unknown.** Nowhere does the Bible tell us who actually wrote this long Song in the book of Songs (the Psalms). Most people believe Psalm 119 are the words of king David. And it may be something king David wrote. It reads a lot like David's style of writing. I am not going to be dogmatic, but this Song in Psalms may be the work of another famous Biblical author.

**Here is what we know about the different writers of the Psalms.** Most of the Psalms were written by David during his lifetime from about 1,000 B.C. to 950 B.C. But some of the Psalms were actually written by other men like Moses, and Asaph, etc.

**David** has his name as the writer of the following 54 Psalms: Psalm 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 61, 62, 63, 64, 70, 101, 103, 108, 109, 110, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143 and 144.

**Another writer of Psalms was Asaph**, a singer/songwriter for David (1Chronicles 15:19). He wrote the following 12 Psalms: Psalm 50, and 73-83.

**Heman** the Ezrahite, was a singer/songwriter for David (1Chronicles 15:19) wrote Psalm 88.

**Ethan** the Ezrahite, was also a singer/songwriter for David (1Chronicles 15:19) wrote Psalm 89.

It is interesting that **Moses** wrote at least two Psalms (Besides the song in Deuteronomy 32) that are included in the Book of Psalms: Psalm 90 and Psalm 91.

David could have written Psalm 119. Most people are comfortable with accepting him as its writer under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But David doesn't seem to have the need to organise an entire Psalm based on the Hebrew language like Ezra did. His style was very expressive and emotional, and not systematic like this Psalm is written.

Of all the possible obvious authors of this Psalm, I personally believe it was probably written by Ezra, written at the time that the Jewish Temple had been rebuilt in 516 BC, to teach God's people again to love and honour and obey not just God, but the law of God again.

Ezra was an extremely important person God used to rebuild not only the Temple in Jerusalem, but the nation's relationship with God! Nehemiah rebuilt the walls, but Ezra rebuilt the people's hearts! Ezra would have read David's Psalms over and over and picked up on his way of writing, which can explain why much of Psalm 119 sounds like David. Ezra had a very good reason to write such a Psalm – to TEACH the importance of God's Law to an ignorant Jewish people just returning from captivity in Babylon. By writing Psalm 119, Ezra totally focused God's people on understanding the word of God, and obeying it.

*Ezra 7:6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.*

*Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the **law** of the LORD, and to do it, and to **teach** in Israel **statutes** and **judgments**.*

*Ezra 7:11 ... Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the **words** of the **commandments** of the LORD, and of his **statutes** to Israel.*

*Ezra 7:12 ... Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven...*

*Ezra 7:14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the **law** of thy God which is in thine hand*

King Artaxerxes even commanded him to teach the people God's law...

*Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the **law** of the LORD, and to do it, and to **teach** in Israel **statutes** and **judgments**.*

*Ezra 7:25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the **laws** of thy God; and **teach** ye **them** that **know** them **not**.*



Ezra 7:26 *And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.*

**One final thought about Ezra’s authorship of Psalm 119:** 1st and 2nd Chronicles appear to have been written by Ezra as well, and he is generally accepted as the author, even though Ezra is not mentioned as the author. Notice that the closing sentence of 2Chronicles is repeated as the opening of Ezra. These repeated verses are called “catch-lines.” Catch-lines were often placed at the end of a scroll to facilitate the reader’s passing on to the correct next book-scroll after completing the first. This scribal device was employed in works that exceeded the scope of a single scroll and had to be continued on another scroll. It connected 1st and 2nd Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah into one book by a single author – Ezra.

**The theme of the entire Psalm is "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."** To “walk in the law of the Lord” simply means to live in it; to experience it as you go through each day; to obey it and follow its instructions to the very end of life’s journey.

**With 176 verses, the Psalm is the longest Psalm as well as the longest chapter in the Bible.**

Even though it is very long, British Politician William Wilberforce in the early 1800’s would recite the entire Psalm, while walking back from Parliament, through Hyde Park, to his home! Wilberforce was instrumental in the movement to abolish the slave trade in England.

Its 176 verses are divided into 22 stanzas, one for each of the 22 characters that make up the Hebrew alphabet. That means that in the Hebrew text, each of the eight verses of each stanza begins with the same Hebrew letter.

It is actually like an acrostic poem, in which each set of eight verses begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The verses of each stanza begin with words that have the same letter of each of the Hebrew alphabet, such as “Aleph,” “Beth,” “Gimel,” “Daleth”, “He”, “Vau” and so on.

<i>Cheth</i>	<i>Zain</i>	<i>Vau</i>	<i>He</i>	<i>Daleth</i>	<i>Gimel</i>	<i>Beth</i>	<i>Aleph</i>
ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א
<i>Ain</i>	<i>Samech</i>	<i>Nun</i>	<i>Mem</i>	<i>Lamed</i>	<i>Caph</i>	<i>Yod</i>	<i>Teth</i>
ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט
	<i>Tau</i>	<i>Shin</i>	<i>Resh</i>	<i>Koph</i>	<i>Tzade</i>	<i>Pe</i>	
	ת	ש	ר	ק	צ	פ	

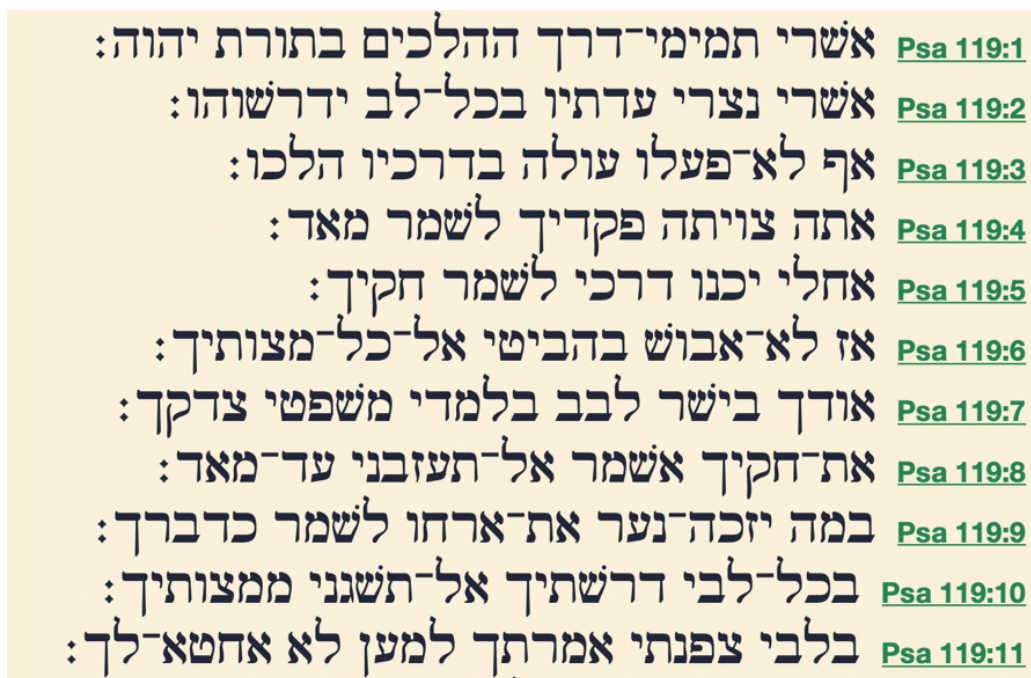


Notice that Hebrew is kind of like the English alphabet, with letters like our A B C D E F and so on. The Greek uses letters like, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, etc.

Guess what TWO languages God spoke HIS words into? Hebrew and Greek! So, when we merge ('Alpha'-Greek) with ('Beth'-Hebrew) and you get the compound word... Alphabet! So now you know that our language is a gift from God – see Genesis 10 – and is meant to be used to praise God.

Psalm 119 is written like a classroom lesson for children and adults who needed to relearn their Hebrew language. Imagine sitting in a class in Jerusalem, learning the 22 letters of the Alphabet (Hebrew alphabet), and several words that begin with each letter, reviewing these great truths about the words of God! This would help the students memorize these Scriptures, and relearn their Hebrew language.

This is what the first few lines of Psalm 119 looks like in a Hebrew Bible...



**Each line of the first eight verses (Psalm 119:1-8) begins with the letter Aleph**

vs 1 ash'rey	Blessed
vs 2 ash'rey	Blessed
vs 3 af	Also
vs 4 aTah	Thou
vs 5 achalay	O that
vs 6 az	Then
vs 7 od'kha	Praise
vs 8 et-chuQeykha	I will

The next 8 verses all begin with the Hebrew letter **Beth** (Psalm 119:9-16). All the first words in front of the next 8 verses start with the letter **Beth**.

lêb - heart (begin verses 9 and 10)  
be-me - How?  
be-kal - In me  
bârak - Blessed  
besaphathi - In my lips  
bderek - In the way of...  
bepiqqûd - In your Precepts  
bechûqqâh - In your Statutes

Then, the next 8 verses start with the Hebrew letter **Gimal** (Psalm 119:17-24) – and so on.

In the end, the Hebrew speaking student will have learned their alphabet, a wide assortment of Hebrew words, and especially, truths about the Laws of God, and the importance of what God has said in His written words, the Bible.

There is no secret message in the text of the Psalm. It is just a simple rehearsal of the alphabet, and reverence towards the word of God.

**The overall message of Psalm 119 focuses on the truth of God’s Word. It honours the word of God in almost every way possible!**

Every one of the 176 verses (except three) mentions God’s Word in some way...

1. It calls it, **The Law** - God’s definition of right and wrong (vs 1). The Torah
2. And also God’s **Testimonies** - a record of what God thinks (vs 2)
3. And God’s **Ways** - a record of how God works (vs 3)
4. God’s **Precepts** - Truths that apply to life - principles (vs 4)
5. God’s **Statutes** - fixed truths of God (5)
6. God’s **Commandments** - clear commands and instructions (6)
7. God’s **Judgments** - God’s conclusions about various subjects (vs 7).
8. **The Words of God** - the very words of God (vs 9)
9. And the **Ordinances** of God (vs 91) – orders and commands given by God.

In the English Bible (KJV), the most used important word in this Psalm is ‘**WORD**’ (42 times), **Law** shows up 25 times, **Testimonies** is mentioned 23 times, **Statutes** is 22 times, **Commandments** is 22, **Judgments** is 22, **Precepts** is 21, **Ways** is 16 times, and **Ordinances** is 1 time.

This singular Psalm encourages people through every generation to stay focused on what God has SAID no matter what swirls around us in this world. Living in the freedom and knowledge of God’s ways, obeying His law above all else, and keeping in step with His commandments is the only way to truly live wise, strong lives.

God’s Word is powerful, living, and active. It never changes, because the Author never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So His words never change either! His words are breathed straight from His heart to us. Not some an old-fashioned, outdated book with no relevance for today, but a love-letter for life.

God's Word is sharper than any two-edged sword. It is historical – records history, not all history, but all the important history that is connected with ISRAEL, not Egypt, or China, or England, etc. God's words pierce our hearts and minds in the present - at this very moment. And it is prophetic – speaks of things way out in the future!

All in one Book!

### **Psalm 119 also greatly honours the AUTHOR of God's word**

It reminds us that God's very character is reflected through His Word. It will constantly remind us that He is Righteous, He is Faithful, He is Unchanging, He is True. And therefore His WORDS reflect those things, and are the same!

**Psalm 119 tells us what OUR responsibilities are towards God's word.** This Bible is not for the passive. It will NOT benefit anyone who just possesses it. It is NOT a good luck charm.

1. To love them (119:97,159) - How much do YOU love the Bible? You will not love it passively – it does not happen naturally. You must taste and see and feel and hear and trust every word to find out just how amazing it is! THAT is what faith is!
2. Treasure them (119:72,127) as you would appreciate infinite treasure!
3. Memorize them (119:11) - learn God's words as He wrote them.
4. Meditate on them (119:15,23,48,78) - understand each word!
5. Study them (119:12,18,26,27) - See 2Tim 2:15!
6. Trust them (119:42) Faith comes by hearing this Bible (Romans 10:17)
7. Obey them (119:8) - See James 1:22! Live this Bible every day!
8. And Declare them (119:13) - tell others of God's word on life!

### **And it tells us all the blessings that come with obeying it!**

The opening two verses remind us, that we are "blessed" as we walk in His Truth, and seek him with our whole heart. "*Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the **law** of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his **testimonies**, and that seek him with the whole heart.*" v. 1-2

Happy, honoured, encouraged, benefited, is every man woman and child that lives IN this Book!

Jesus also promises blessings on those who read all the way to the end of the Bible... Revelation 1:3 *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the **words** of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

### **Some popular Scripture verses from Psalm 119:**

*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy **word**.* Psalm 119:9

*Thy **word** have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* Psalm 119:11

*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* Psalm 119:18  
*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.* Psalm 119:32  
*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* Psalm 119:105  
*Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.* Psalm 119:160  
*Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.* Psalm 119:165  
*Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.* Psalm 119:67  
*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.* Psalm 119:71  
*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.* Psalm 119:75  
*Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.* Psalm 119:92

## Aleph (Psalm 119:1-8) - The first letter – like our ‘A’

There are great blessings in living by the word of God



**Psalm 119:1** *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the **law** of the LORD.*

Psalm 119 starts off just like Psalm 1 does... with a revelation that the doer of God’s words is blessed by the Author of God’s words.

### Psalm 1:1,2

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

### Psalm 119:1

*Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.*

So, God blesses, and honours, and benefits the person who walks (lives) according to the actual words and instructions of God to mankind.

This first verse promises God’s blessing on people who:

1. Are Undefiled – it means, clean, kept clean, or at least cleansed after being dirty, sinful. Someone who is upright has separated himself/herself from the ungodly, the sinners, and the scornful, and decided to walk in the instructions of God’s words.
2. And those who WALK in the law – Who live by them and IN them - in the absolute commandments of God.
3. There is no blessing for a hypocrite who doesn’t care about being real enough to change and become godly by obeying God’s word.

‘*In the way*’ refers to “along the journey of a person’s life” – the way a person lives.

**Psalm 119:2** *Blessed are they that keep his **testimonies**, and that seek him with the whole heart.*

Notice the double statements – the two things stated in almost every verse:

1. People who are undefiled, and who walk in the law.
2. And here, people “that keep his testimonies, and seek him with the whole heart”

You will find this commendation throughout this Psalm.

The double truths are written to show different angles on the same truth.

Notice again the word, ‘blessed’ – it means that every man, woman and child that lives IN this Book are happy, honoured, encouraged, and benefited by it!

‘Keeping’ means obeying – like when someone says they are “keeping the ten commandments”

‘**Testimonies**’ are what people think about God - His honour – the idea is that we are His people, and therefore we should be loyal to keeping HIS honour upheld in the world

Notice the effort of the Bible obeyer... they “*seek HIM with the WHOLE heart*”

We are supposed to Love God with all our heart. But we are also supposed to DILIGENTLY seek HIM through knowing, loving and obeying His words, His laws. This is not a passive activity, but hard work.

We are commanded to... *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman...*

(2Timothy 2:15). Hebrews 11:6 says, *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Jeremiah 29:13 also says, *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

**Psalm 119:3** *They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.*

These are Characteristics of a blessed person - someone who loves God:

1. They do no sin (no iniquity) – they don’t do the wrong things.
2. They walk in God’s ways – obedience is not a sporadic event in their life, but a lifestyle!
3. And they love God’s words (see verses 4,5).

**Psalm 119:4** *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy **precepts** diligently.*

Obeying God’s laws and words is a commandment, not a suggestion.

‘**Precepts**’ are... Truths that apply to life – principles of life beyond the normal.

There is that word, ‘diligently’ again! It means, Steady in application to business; constant in effort or exertion to accomplish what is undertaken; assiduous; attentive; industrious; not idle or negligent.

Philippians 3:13,14 ...*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

**Psalm 119:5** *O that my ways were directed to keep thy **statutes**!*

The author is exasperated – see the exclamation point? He is frustrated at himself.

The author is showing honesty – that he by nature does NOT keep God’s commandments.

He admits that “My ways are not normally the right ways.”

And he admits that “I can tell because they (my habits) do not line up with God’s ways.”

He has the proper yearning and desires though.

**Statutes** are fixed, absolute truths about God about what is right and wrong.

They are a **Law** that extends its binding force to all the citizens or subjects of God's kingdom, as distinguished from an act which extends only to an individual. Statutes may command or prohibit something, or it may be a positive **law**, encouraging something to be done. **Statutes** are distinguished from common **law** which is based upon the consent of a nation. **Statutes** are a command or declaration by the supreme authority of God.

How does a person get their ways, habits, way of life redirected in the right way?

By changing their mind, and their way of thinking first about what they are doing.

By developing respect for God's **laws**.

By learning the **laws**, what they are for, their value, and how to apply them.

**Psalm 119:6** *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy **commandments**.*

The fruit/results of a redirected way of life is encouragement – no more shame.

Changing our way of living requires us having a deep respect for ALL God's **commandments** – they ALL have value and application, even today!

**Psalm 119:7** *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous **judgments**.*

Another fruit or result of learning and living by God's righteous **judgments** is, joy and praise for God from an upright, and unashamed heart!

**Psalm 119:8** *I will keep thy **statutes**: O forsake me not utterly.*

So the author writes, I have decided to keep God's **laws**.

And he begs God to be patient with him as he learns how to!

**Conclusion...**

Aleph encourages the believer that there is a great blessing in living by the **word** of God.

That was the first of the 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet. There are 21 more!

Summary of what the Bible believer needs to be doing (all are actions we need to take)...

*walk in the **law** of the LORD  
keep his **testimonies**  
seek him with the whole heart  
do no iniquity  
walk in his ways  
keep thy **precepts** diligently  
have respect unto all thy **commandments**  
learn thy righteous **judgments**  
keep thy **statutes***



*There are great blessings in living by the word of God*

As he strives to do all that, Ezra asks God to be patient with him and to “*forsake me not utterly.*”