

MSB269

MORE Seed and Bread

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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PSALM 119: THE LOVE OF THE LAW OF GOD

By M.B. Hammond

Psalm 119, a particular psalm regarding God's wonderful Word, confirms that the Word of God *is* His Word of Truth. The writer is believed to be Judah's King Hezekiah (727-697 BC), who also wrote Psalms 120-125. It was most likely written in the days when he was a prince, before his father Ahaz died. Hezekiah eventually succeeded his father to the throne (see 2 Kings 16 and 18). According to J.B. Rotherham, this Psalm (song) shows first, the will of God for His people Israel and second, the will of God for those today who truly love Him. Psalm 119:96 says: "**I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceedingly broad.**" Since this Psalm has 10 different English words for "the Law;" we see that the Law and commandments encompass the entire Word that God has given. Various synonyms (listed below) appear in all but one of the 176 verses of this chapter. Hence, the importance of these particular words of God is established. He delights in finding men who possess a genuine love for His *commandments, Judgments, laws, ordinances, precepts, righteousness, statutes, testimonies, ways, and words.*

1) COMMANDMENTS (Heb.-*mitsvah*). Meaning *commands, precepts, laws, ordinances, dues*. It has to do with the terms of a covenant, as in the first statement of the 10 commandments (Exod. 20:1-17).

2) JUDGMENTS (Heb.-*mishpai*). Meaning *verdicts, sentences, decrees, justice, rights, privileges, ordinances, causes, suits, crimes, guilt, customs*. We think in terms of God's righteous order.

3) LAW (Heb.-*torah*). Meaning *instruction, doctrine, regulation direction, precept, statute*. We think in terms of divine law or collective laws. The Torah (first five books of the Bible) was Jehovah's instructions to His people, pointing out the divine will for them.

4) ORDINANCES (Heb.-*mishpat*). See "Judgments."

5) PRECEPTS (Heb.-*piqqud*). Meaning *appointments, allocations, commandments, orders, statutes*. We think in terms of what is mandated by God.

6) RIGHTEOUSNESS (Heb.-*zedek*). Meaning *rectitude, justice* (human and divine), *right, rightness, a claim, justness, faithfulness, virtue, piety*. We think of obedience to His righteous order as abiding by His standards. As will be found in God's ledger, Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. So is faith in Jesus Christ today.

7) STATUTES (Heb.-*choq*). Meaning *regulations, laws, customs, decrees, shares, tasks, terms, limits, boundaries, rules*. We think in terms of the ordaining or decreeing of legal rights among peoples and individuals.

8) TESTIMONIES (Heb.-*edah*). Meaning *witnesses, attestations, prescriptions, precepts*. We think in terms of the witness and prescriptions of God for the directing of men in their lives.

9) WAYS (Heb.-*derek*). Meaning *goings, walks, journeys, paths, roads, modes, courses, ways in life, lots in life, worship*. We think in terms of actions or behavior on the part of God imparting directions to men.

9a) WAY (Heb.-*orach*). Meaning *well-trodden road, path, manner, race, rank/marching, traveler/journeying, troop/treading with feet*. We think in terms of God's well-defined decrees and directions for His people.

10) WORDS (Heb.-*dabar*). Meaning *sayings, speeches, news, commands, promises, things, incidents, occurrences, causes, questions, lawsuits*. We think in terms of the words of God that give men direction and growth.. This word occurs over 1,400 times in the Old Testament, and is translated by 85 different English words.

10a) WORD (Heb.-*imrah*). Meaning *speech, utterance, promise, declaration, song*. We think in terms of the utterances and promises of God that fill and energize men to God and His work..

These words, most frequently repeated in this Psalm, provide the important basis for understanding this Psalm, which is not only the longest chapter in the Psalms, but also the longest chapter in the entire Bible. It is fitting that this Psalm should so eloquently praise the love of the words of God and honor the man who finds his delight in the Law of the Lord.

This is an acrostic Psalm, which is written in 22 sections corresponding with letters of the Hebrew alphabet of eight verses each. That is, each line of the first eight verses begins with *aleph*, and the lines of the second eight verses with *beth*, etc., continuing through the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (8 x 22 = 176). The verses each contain at least one of the identified synonyms listed, with the exception of verse 122. An interesting note is that the 10 words correspond numerically to the 10 commandments, which might symbolize the importance of the covenant God made with Israel and Moses at Mount Sinai.

The love of the words of God is shown in the following verses: 47-48 (commandments), 113 (law), 119 (testimonies), 127 (commandments), 132 (Thy name), 140 (word), 159 (precepts), 163 (law), 165 (law), and 167 (testimonies). Verse 132 says, "As Thou usest to do," and refers to His ordinances which reflect on God's judgments which favor those who love His character or name (an appeal for His mercy). Thus, to love the words of God is also to love His commandments, His witnesses (testimonies), His precepts and His laws. The Jews assume that the Torah (which includes the Law of Moses) and the books of the Prophets consist of the whole Bible, but we note that the words of Christ in the New Testament are just as much a part of it. Christ says in Matthew 5:17-18: **Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.** Thus, the new interpretations He gave the Jews in Matthew 5-7 represent not a new law, but a God-given interpretation that represents the righteous order of the premillennial Kingdom (named "the Law of Christ" for simplicity in referring to it).

In concert with the law, we should note that in verse 43 of this Psalm, the writer implores God not to take the word of truth out of his mouth. In verse 142 he says, "**Thy law is truth,**" and in verse 151 he says, "**All Thy commandments are truth,**" and lastly he says in verse 160, "**Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth forever** (perpetually)."

The psalmist expresses the idea that the words of God are to be revered and loved by every follower of God, because it is the only expression of absolute truth and justice he will ever know. Thus, if you know the words of God, you know the truth of God. There is no other way to know the truth but by knowing and understanding His words. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10 Paul, talking about the vengeance of Christ on all who were Satan's followers in the Tribulation, gives the reason for their destruction when he says, "**... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**" Clearly, the hundreds of years of the Kingdom are a time in which all men are given the opportunity to learn about God, including His words, ways, laws, precepts, commandments, judgments, and ordinances. Some examples are "**My soul hath kept Thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly**" (v. 167); "**I Have longed for Thy salvation, O LORD; and Thy law is my delight**" (v. 174). Also Psalm 119:160, which says, "**Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy judgments endureth forever,**" indicates the direction for people to follow in any dispensation. This even includes Paul's inspired words in Galatians 6:2 where he implores the Acts Period believers in Galatia to ". . . **bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.**"

In conclusion, the message this Psalm conveys is for all people. Those who say that the New Testament is for Christians and the Old Testament is for Jews have completely missed the mark of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15: "**Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**" The study of the whole Bible is referred to in that statement. It is also imparted in 2 Tim. 3:16-17, which says, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine** (teaching), **for reproof** (enlightenment), **for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect** (mature/righteous), **thoroughly furnished** (equipped) **unto all good works.**"

Some favorite verses of most Christians in this Psalm include verse 11: **"Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee,"** and verse 105: **"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my way."** Even so, the writer of this Psalm expresses the truth that God will always have people in this world who want to know Him, love His Word, and learn more about Him. John 17:3 has a very succinct statement of this, as it says, **And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and (even) Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.** Jesus said in John 8:31-32: **If ye continue in My Word, then ye are My disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.**

These words of Christ show us how precious Psalm 119 is to every believer, since Jesus said in John 4:24: **God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit,** (heart-felt intelligence) **and in truth** (that knowledge only derived from the Word of God).

END

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