

An Exposition of Psalm 119

Introduction to Psalm 119

1. Psalm 119 is a feast on and in the Word of God.
2. Psalm type
3. Structure
4. Purpose
5. Words for the Word in Psalm 119
 - "The Law" (*Torah*)
 - "The Word" (*Dabar*)
 - "The Testimonies" (*ʿduṯ*)
 - "The Commands/ments" (*miswa*)
 - "Judgments" (*Mishpot*)
 - "The Decrees" (*Huqqim*)
 - "The Precepts" (*Piqqudim*)
 - "The Word" or "Promise" (*ʿimra*)

Authorship

1. The authorship of this Psalm is important for interpreting a number of the sections (strophes). Although determining authorship is not ultimately important, it does add some significant interpretations and applications of the Psalm.
2. There is no superscription identifying the author in Psa 119. It is anonymous.
3. A few considerations make Daniel a good candidate.
4. Internal Evidence
 - Psa. 119:1-2 cf. Dan. 1:8-9
 - Psa. 119:9, 11, 30, 101 cf. Dan. 1:8
 - Psa. 119:19 cf. Dan. 1:3-4
 - Psa. 119:23, 78, 85, 86, 95, 110, 157, 161 cf. Dan. 3:8; 6:4-5
 - Psa 119:46 cf. Dan. 2:27-28
6. The "feel" of Daniel in Psalm 119
 - Examples: Psa. 119:17 cf. Dan. 1:12-16;

Psa 119:29 cf. Dan. 1:4;
Psa 119:36-37 cf Dan 2:48; 5:16;
Psa 119:63 cf. Dan 3:17-18;
Psa 119:87 cf Dan. 6:10, 16;
Psa. 119:98-100 cf Dan. 1:4, 17-20; 2:24;
Psa 119:119 cf Dan 6:24;
Psa. 119:136 cf Dan 9:5-6;
Psa 119:18, 27, 169 cf Dan. 9:1-3

7. Conclusion
The internal evidence seems to me to point *most consistently* to Daniel.

Themes of Psalm 119

1. Attributes of the Word
2. Benefits of the Word
3. Response to the Word
4. Is the Psalmist's attitude toward God's Law the same as Paul's?
Psa. 119:98 [25, 37, 40, 50, 88, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159]
Cf. Rom. 7:9-10; 2 Cor. 3:5-9; Gal. 3:21 (not to mention, Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).
Points to remember:
 1. The Psalmists have in view a broader view of Law than Paul does.
 2. The Psalmist rejoices in the Law's power to convict him of sin and turn him to God's mercy (Psa. 119:176). Paul rejoices in the same reality (Rom. 7:12, 22).
 3. The Psalmist rejoices in God's Law as a regenerate person. He sees that grace comes before and empowers obedience (E.g., Psa. 119:10, 32, 36, 37, 88). There is no legalism in his approach to God's Law.

So everything the Psalmist says, we should be able to say.

Brief bibliography

See all the standard commentaries on the Psalms.

Charles Bridges, *Psalm 119*

Charles Spurgeon, *The Golden Alphabet*

John Calvin, *Sermons on Psalm 119*

Hwyel Jones, *Psalm 119 for Life*

James Boice, *Living by the Book*

George Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God:*

Exegetical, Theological and Homiletical Reflections on Psalm 119 (knowledge of Hebrew is helpful).

Exposition of Psalm 119
Aleph (a) Stanza (1-8)
The Christian's Cry and Commitment

Introduction

I. The Blessedness of Obedience (1-3)

- A. Blessed are those

- B. Whose way is blameless/Who walk in the Law of the LORD
Blameless (cf. Gen. 17:1; Job 1:1; Prov. 11:20; 13:6)

- C. Who keep His testimonies/Seek Him with the whole heart
"His whole heart is engaged to know and love more and more" (Charles
Bridges, 4)

- D. Do no wrong/Walk in His ways

II. The Authority of the Word (4)

- A. You have ordained Your precepts

- B. That they be kept diligently

III. A Sincere Plea and Commitment (5-8)

- A. Oh that my ways may be established (5)

"This passionate exclamation pulsates with conviction, strong desire, and
an acute awareness of dependence" (Zemek, 74).

- B. Then I shall not be ashamed (6)

- C. The I shall praise You with an honest heart/
As I keep learning Your righteous judgments (7)

- D. I will/Do not (8)

"Firm in his purpose, but distrustful of his strength" (Bridges, 14-15).

1. What are our priorities and desires?
2. “The first attempt to render spiritual obedience will quickly convince us of our utter helplessness. We might as soon create a world, as create in our hearts one pulse of spiritual life” (Bridges, 9).

Ezek. 36:27

Bridges, “He who commands our duty, perfectly knows our weakness, and he who feels his own weakness if fully encouraged to depend upon the power of the Savior” (10).

Exposition of Psalm 119
Beth (b) Stanza (9-16)
The Believer's Path to Purity

Introduction:

“All the basics of personal sanctification are variously integrated into the curriculum of real life: God, the gracious Teacher; the psalmist, the dependent disciple; and the Textbook, the sufficient Word” (Zemek).

I. The Question and Answer Framework (9)

- A. How can a young man keep his way pure?

- B. By keeping it according to Your Word

II. Seek the Lord (10)

- A. With all my heart I seek you

- B. Do not let me wander from Your commandments

“The man of God exerts himself, but he does not trust himself. His heart is in his walking with God; but he knows that even his whole strength is not enough to keep him right unless his King shall be his keeper, and he who made the commands shall make him constant in obeying them” (CHS).

III. Treasure and Store His Word (11)

- A. Your Word I have treasured in my heart

Store up – Prov. 2:7; 10:14
Treasure – Prov. 2:1; 7:1

- B. That I might not sin against You

IV. Worship and learn (12)

A. Blessed are You Yahweh

B. Teach me Your statutes

V. Proclaim what is learned (13)

A. With my lips I have told of all the ordinances

B. of Your mouth

VI. Rejoice in the Word Lifestyle (14)

A. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies
NET, *I rejoice in the lifestyle prescribed by your rules as if they were riches of all kinds.*

B. As much as in all riches
Dan. 2:46-48
Dan. 5:16-17, 29

VII. Meditate on the Word (15)

A. I will meditate on Your precepts

B. And fix my eyes on Your ways

VIII. Delight in the Word (16)

A. I will delight myself in Your statutes

B. I do not forget Your Word

Application

Exposition of Psalm 119
Gimmel (g) Stanza (17-24)
Dealing with Hostility and Pressure

Introduction

“The suppliant prays this whole prayer presupposing pressure and harassment”
(Goldingay, 389).

I. Petition for God’s Abundant Supply (17)

- A. Petition: deal bountifully with Your servant

- B. Results
 - 1. That I may live

 - 2. And keep Your Word

II. Petition for Illumination from the Word (18-20)

- A. Open my eyes (18)

- B. I am exile in the land (19)

- C. Do not conceal

“But now I must ask myself whether I am so guided by my own principles that I might not even notice if God withdrew His living commandment from me one day” (Bonhoeffer).

- D. Desperation (20)

III. How God Deals with the Arrogant (21)

- A. God rebukes the arrogant the accursed ones
Who wander from Your commands

- B. If this is an exile (Daniel) then he is talking about fellow Jews.
Dan 9:7

IV. Prayer for Deliverance from Hostile Opponents (22-23)

- A. Take away scorn and contempt from me

- B. For I observe your testimonies (decrees/rules).
Boice, “What is unique about these specific trials is that they seem to have come to the Psalmist because of his determination to adhere to God’s Word” (33).

- C. Princes plot and speak against me
Cf. 161
The princes are the policy-makers of the foreign land.
Dan. 6:3-6

- D. Your servant meditates on Your statutes

“(Meditation) is the digestive faculty of the soul, which converts the word into real and proper nourishment: so that this revolving of a single verse in our minds is often better than the mere reading of whole chapters.”
Bridges

V. Declaration of Confidence in the Word (24)

- A. Your testimonies are my delight

- B. They are my counselors

Application