



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## Treasuring God's Word Psalm 119 JANUARY 14, 2009

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*We rightfully treasure the founding documents of our nation. The Declaration of Independence by which our country was founded and the constitutions by which our nation and state are governed are highly valued and esteemed. Students memorize their content. Scholars study and teach their meaning. Attorneys pour over potential legislation to assure its agreement. Judges interpret and apply their principles to our current affairs and situations. These documents are vitally important to the history and current life of our nation.*

*The Bible is also a document that has been highly treasured in our nation's history. While our founding documents are indeed vital to the governing of our country, God's Word has even greater importance for each of us as it reveals the very nature of God and what is required of those who would be right with Him. The vital importance of God's Word is the main reason we seek to hold regular Bible studies in the Capitol. This year we will be considering a passage of Scripture that clearly shares the infinite value of God's Word – Psalm 119. This chapter, the longest in the Bible, is wholly dedicated to the Word of God and its vital role in the believer's life. The Puritan pastor, Thomas Manton (1620-1677) compiled 190 messages on this Psalm. We will only have nine studies during the session to consider this passage. Even so, as we study this marvelous chapter, let us learn together to treasure God's Word as we should.*

### PSALM 119:1-8

⌘

Alph

<sup>1</sup>How blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
Who walk in the law of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup>How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,  
Who seek Him with all their heart.

<sup>3</sup>They also do no unrighteousness;  
They walk in His ways.

<sup>4</sup>You have ordained Your precepts,  
That we should keep them diligently.

<sup>5</sup>Oh that my ways may be established  
To keep Your statutes!

<sup>6</sup>Then I shall not be ashamed  
When I look upon all Your commandments.

<sup>7</sup>I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart,  
When I learn Your righteous judgments.

<sup>8</sup>I shall keep Your statutes;  
Do not forsake me utterly!

### UNIQUE FEATURES OF THIS PSALM

There are several unique features which stand out when we begin to study this Psalm. First, at 176 verses, it is the longest chapter in the Bible. Next, we notice the entire Psalm has but one theme – The Word of God. One of eight different terms for Scripture is used in nearly every verse: **law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, and ordinances.** Most striking is the structure and organization of this Psalm. From the section written above and your own reading in your Bible, you will notice this chapter is divided into sections of eight verses each, with each section labeled by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. While it does not show up in our English Bibles, if you read the original Hebrew you find that each verse in each section begins with the corresponding letter of the alphabet. This forms something of an acrostic used by the author to draw attention to its important content of and perhaps to aid in the memorization and presentation of this Psalm. This is one form of Hebrew poetry used elsewhere in the Psalms. There are some important lessons we can learn from the unique features of this amazing Psalm.

The unique format demonstrates the **importance and value of God's Word.** That the longest chapter in the Bible is dedicated to Word of God itself is testimony to its importance and value.

The unusual arrangement points to the **multifaceted nature of the Scriptures.** The variety of synonyms used for the Scriptures point to different aspects of its power and nature. While a cursory reading might lead one to think the Psalm repetitive. Deeper study of the Psalm reveals the seeming infinite depths found in the holy writings. Amazingly, the writer of this Psalm would largely be referring to the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible available to him at the time. The Scriptures are a revelation of the person, nature, and character of God. The Bible is also effective and powerful to change our lives in a variety of ways.

The alphabetical arrangement of the Psalm is primarily a device to attract attention and aid in memory and presentation. However I believe this unique feature also points to **the sufficiency of Scripture** for our spiritual lives. God and Jesus Christ are both referred to in Revelation as the “alpha and omega” (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet). In Christ and in His Word, God has given us everything we need “from A to Z”. As Peter shared, God has “**granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.**” (1 Peter 1:3) It is primarily in His Word that we find this knowledge of Him.

### BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDIES: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON, TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)**  
LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAYS 8:00 A.M., SENATE PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE ROOM (M219)**

## Treasuring God's Word Psalm 119

### MARVELOUS CONTENT OF THIS PSALM

Not only do the unique features of this Psalm point to the great value and power of the Scriptures, its message and content serve to plead with us to treasure the Bible as the writer does. As we read through this Psalm we find its verses fall under three categories: words of praise describing the character and accomplishments of the Word of God; proclamations concerning the writer's desire to hear, read, learn, understand and obey the Scriptures; and prayers for God's help to understand, apply, and live out God's will as revealed in the sacred writings. We will briefly look at each of these categories and consider examples from the Psalm for each. I invite you to open your Bible to Psalm 119 and read these verses as you proceed through the study. Better still, take some time to read this chapter and consider the categories as you thoughtfully review each verse.

### PRAISES DESCRIBING GOD'S WORD

Many of the verses in Psalm 119 are statements of praise for both the nature and the fruit of God's Word. They describe the writer's thoughts about and attitudes towards the Scriptures. The writer praises God's Word as "Good" (:39) and God's law as "better than gold or silver" (72, 127). He describes the Word of the Lord as "forever settled in heaven" (89) and "everlasting" (160). God's Word is "pure" (140). He extols the Word as that which would keep him from sin (9, 11).

Here we must point out that our attitude towards God's Word will be determined by our attitude towards God. A high and lofty view of Scripture only begins with a high and lofty view of God Himself. If we value Him as we should, then we will indeed value His Word. We do not worship the Bible; we worship the God Who gave us the Bible. Notice some key verses: "How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, **who seek Him with all their heart**" (vs. 2). "**With all my heart I have sought You;** do not let me wander from Your commandments" (vs. 10). (Emphasis mine) It is only our loving and seeking after God Himself that leads us to treasure His Word.

### PROCLAMATIONS CONCERNING GOD'S WORD

Many of the verses are proclamations of the author's attitude towards God's Word or of his intent to read, learn, understand, and apply the Scriptures to his life. The writer uses vivid language to describe his attitude towards the Scriptures: "Love" is used 12 times (47, 97, 127). "Seek" or "sought" is used 7 times (45, 94). "Long for" is used six times

(20, 40, 82). "Delight" is used nine times.(16, 24, 35). He boldly proclaims his intent to keep God's laws (8, 44, 106). He expresses his purpose to meditate regularly and continually upon the Scriptures (15, 23, 148).

### PRAYERS SEEKING HELP TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY GOD'S WORD

We also find many of the verses in Psalm 119 are prayers to God for help in learning, understanding, and faithfully applying it to everyday life. There are prayers for God to teach him (12, 26, 33). There are petitions for the Lord's help in keeping, and walking in the Word (17, 35, 88). Perhaps most important are the prayers for God help to understand His Word (27, 34, 125). To truly understand the Word of God requires a work of God in the heart and mind. In writing to the church at Corinth Paul taught that, "**...A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**" (1 Corinthians 2:14) He boldly reminded the Corinthian believers that the "**word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**" (1 Cor. 1:18). Psalm 119 reflects the desires of one whose heart and mind have been changed by the glorious grace of God. A careless reading might lead one to believe that he was saved by keeping of God's commandments. A more carefully consideration of this Psalm, as well as a look at the rest of Scripture will remind us that salvation cannot come by the keeping of the law. Why? Because NO ONE can keep it perfectly! In this Psalm the writer often laments his failure to keep God's commands as he should. (vs. 28; 37; 67; 71; 120; 136; 176). He oft speaks of seeking God's salvation (41, 81, 123, 166, 174). For the Psalmist, there were sacrifices available to atone for the sins and failures to keep God's law. For us we look to Christ and His work on the cross for the forgiveness of our sin. It is through repentance and faith in Him we have our sins forgiven and we begin to treasure the Word of God.

### CONCLUSION

- **WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORD OF GOD?**
- **DURING THE BUSY TIME OF THE SESSION, WILL YOU SPEND TIME READING AND STUDYING GOD'S WORD?**
- **ARE YOU ACTIVELY SEEKING TO APPLY GOD'S WORD BOTH TO YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND TO YOUR WORK AS A LEGISLATOR OR LEADER?**