

Psalm 119:1-8  
Introduction part 1

**Introduction:** The psalm is from book five of the Psalms (107-150), which emphasizes praise of the one True God. It is one of the Wisdom Psalms (1, 37, 73, 112, 119, 127).

When people look at Psalm 119, they might think:

- Negatively—it's too long; it's repetitive; it's disconnected; it's burdensome
- Positively—it's about God's Word, it's acrostic; it contains a favorite verse of mine

As someone has said, "It is **personal** (me, my, I, you, your, etc.), but not **propositional** (you should ...). It is **relentless**, but it is not **repetitive**."

Listen carefully to the following repeated statement. "A person *who has listened* opens his heart to the Person who has spoken. A person who has listened *opens his heart* to the Person who has spoken. A person who has listened opens his heart *to the Person who has spoken*." [Powlison, David. *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (p. 15).]

**1) The habitual obedience of faithful believers—119:1-3**

- Apart from these 3 verses and 115, all the other verses are directed to God.
  - These first 3 verses are reminiscent of Psalm 1.
- a) Conformity to God's Word brings happiness—<sup>1</sup> *Blessed/happy are those whose way is complete ([tamiym], characterized by integrity), who are (habitually) walking [halak] according to/in the law ([torah], God's gracious gift that which points the way or directs someone) of Yahweh.*
    - i) Is this possible? Consider Job 1:1.  - b) Knowing God through His Word brings happiness—<sup>2</sup> *Blessed/happy are those who are observing (guarding with fidelity) His testimonies ([edah], things to which God witnesses concerning Himself (His nature, His attributes, His demands)), who carefully seek [darash] Him (not just the Bible for the Bible's sake) with all their heart.*
    - i) There is no place for divided loyalties. While not expecting perfection, we must expect a wholehearted desire and effort to grow in every area of life. (Adams)
    - ii) To seek Yahweh with a whole heart means that they are completely occupied with the discernment of Yahweh's will as revealed in His Word. (Ross)
    - iii) The purpose of knowing the Word of God is to know the God of the Word. (Zemek)  - c) The practicality of obedience
    - i) Negatively—<sup>3</sup> *They also do no unrighteousness* (deviation, perversion);
    - ii) Positively—*they walk [halak] in His ways [derek].*

**2) God's expectation of obedience and the psalmist's recognition of his inability—119:4-6**

- a) <sup>4</sup> **You** (emphatic) *have commanded Your precepts* ([*piqqud*], expected responsibilities from the Master) *to be carefully kept*.
- b) <sup>5</sup> **If** *only my ways were established to keep Your* (permanently engraved, binding) *requirements* [*hoq*].
  - i) <sup>6</sup> **Then** *I would not be ashamed, when I focus on all Your commands* ([*mitsvah*], straight authority).

**3) The desire to praise God for His enabling grace to obey—119:7-8**

- a) Formal worship—<sup>7</sup> **I will praise You** *with an upright heart when I learn Your righteous rules/judgments* ([*mishpat*], what God has decided upon as truth).
  - i) Someone has well said, “Obeying God praises God.”
  - ii) The word for “learn” is the concept of discipleship. No matter how much you have matured, you must always be aware of the fact that you have not arrived. You must keep on learning.
- b) Determined worship—<sup>8</sup> **I will keep** (cf. 119:4-5) **Your** (permanently engraved, binding) **requirements** [*hoq*]; *do not completely abandon me!*
  - i) Someone has said, “The fixed resolution to obey is intimately blended with a consciousness of one’s incapacity to do so, unless aided by God’s grace.”

**4) Things for us to remember:**

- a) Because of the revelation that God’s blessing is with those who are devout, the faithful will commit themselves to obey His Word, anticipating that they will praise Him when He blesses them with His protective care. (Ross)
- b) Love for God receives expression in doing the will of God as found in the Word of God. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15, 23-24; 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:2-3)