

Psalm 119:49-56  
Godward Memory

**Introduction:** All verses start with *zayin*, the seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Surrounded by cynics and disappointed by the faithless, will the psalmist obey God's Word?

**1) God's Word breeds hope and comfort in the face of misery and humiliation—119:49-50**

- a) God's word breeds **hope** as we serve Him—119:49
  - i) <sup>49</sup> **Remember** [*zakar*] the word [*dabar*] to Your slave, in (upon) which You have made me (expectantly) wait [*yachal*].
  - ii) God cannot forget His Word, but in times of difficulty it may appear that He has.
  - iii) The psalmist longs for God to pay attention and intervene as necessary.
  - iv) This hope is not a pacifying wish of the imagination which drowns out troubles, but rather it is the solid ground of expectation for the righteous. (Paul Gilchrist)
- b) God's Word breeds **comfort** in times of misery and humiliation—119:50
  - i) <sup>50</sup> This (expectant hope) is my comfort [*nehamah*] in my affliction [*oni*], that (or perhaps "because") Your word [*imrah*] has revived [*hiyyat*] me.
  - ii) Comfort from God's Word spurs us on to fresh courage.

**2) God's Word provokes us when we observe the wrong response of others to God's Word—119:51-54**

- a) God's Word enables **undeviating loyalty** to God despite attempts to discredit us—119:51
  - i) <sup>51</sup> The arrogant (self-confident) utterly scoff at me (for my spiritual values), yet I do not turn aside from **Your law** [*torah*].
  - ii) Obedience to God's Word will provoke opposition from others.
- b) The authority of God's Word brings **relief**—119:52
  - i) <sup>52</sup> I have **remembered** [*zakar*] Your judgments [*mishpat*] from of old, O Yahweh, and comfort [*naham*] myself.
  - ii) God's **past** revelation brings **present** tense comfort.
  - iii) The psalmist comforts himself as he ponders God's revelation.
- c) The disobedience of others should spark **moral outrage** within us—119:53

- i) <sup>53</sup> *Burning indignation [zalapah] (more than mere annoyance) has seized me because of the wicked [rasha], who forsake [Qal ptc.] Your law [torah].*
- ii) Any dishonor to the Father should be taken as an insult by His children. (Paraphrase of William MacDonald)
- d) The authority of God's Word brings **joy**, even during periods of loneliness—119:54
  - i) <sup>54</sup> *Your statutes [hoq] have become my songs (of rejoicing) in the house of my sojourning.*
  - ii) These are not dirges, the blues, or sad ballads, but rather songs of rejoicing.

### 3) God's Word breeds joy and stirs obedience—119:55-56

- a) Obedience, even during sleepless times, in light of who God is—119:55
  - i) <sup>55</sup> *I remember [zakar] in the night Your name [shem], O Yahweh, so I keep [shamar] Your law [torah].*
  - ii) Nighttime brings opportunities for us to reflect on God's existence, character, and reputation.
  - iii) The character and attributes of God should stimulate our obedience.
- b) Obedience, even during faithless times, in light of what God has revealed—119:56
  - i) <sup>56</sup> *This (vv. 54-55) has become mine, that (or perhaps "because") I observe [natsar] Your precepts [piqqudim].*
  - ii) God enables our obedience to His Word.

### 4) Things to remember:

- a) This psalm reminds us that following Christ is anything but unbroken triumph.
- b) Allan Harman reminds us: Our confidence does not rest on our own plans but on God's revealed purposes.
- c) In challenging times, the believer must fix his/her mind on revealed truth. Only the Word gives us an accurate view of reality.
  - i) George Zemek reminds us: Without such a biblical perspective real life becomes not only inexplicable but also intolerable.
- d) Armed with the recognition of God's sovereign providence over all the circumstances of our life, both past and present, we can face the uncertainty of the future with a greater degree of confidence. (George Zemek)