

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) ⁴⁹ **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) ⁵⁰ 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) ⁵¹ 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) ⁵² 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) ⁵³ *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) ⁵⁴ *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) ⁵⁵ *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) ⁵⁶ *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)