



## **A Look at Psalm 119**

### **The Bible's Longest Wisdom-filled Chapter**

**Psalm 119:114 KJV**

Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield:  
I hope in thy word.



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#### **I. INTRODUCTION—CHAPTER SUMMARY**

## Psalm 119—The Bible’s Longest Wisdom-filled Chapter

-Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible—176 verses. It is longer than most of the NT epistles. God is mentioned 176 times. God’s Word is noted 182 times. Prayer is modeled some 70 times by specific phrases. Suffering is evident 66 times. Personal spiritual life is referenced 325 times.

-It contains resolves, prayers, and habits that are very helpful for anyone who wants to develop their spiritual life. If you mark in your Bible, a color code for this chapter: Habits—Orange; Resolves—Yellow & Prayers—Green.

-Psalm 119 has a theology of suffering in it, in fact it is noted 66 times (the following are just a few of the references):

**Psalm 119:50 (KJV)** This is my comfort in my **affliction**: For thy word hath quickened me.

**Psalm 119:67 (KJV)** Before I was **afflicted** I went astray: But now have I kept thy word.

**Psalm 119:71 (KJV)** It is good for me that I have been **afflicted**; That I might learn thy statutes. (Deals with emotional suffering.)

**Psalm 119:75 (KJV)** I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, And *that* thou in faithfulness hast **afflicted** me.

**Psalm 119:92 (KJV)** Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine **affliction**.

**Psalm 119:107 (KJV)** I am **afflicted** very much: Quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

**Psalm 119:153 (KJV)** Consider mine **affliction**, and deliver me: For I do not forget thy law.

-Overall chapter summary:

- How does God want to keep me pure (vv. 9-11)?
- How does God encourage my troubled heart (v. 25)?
- Why does God send so many physical/emotional/spiritual struggles in life? (Note verses speaking to affliction/suffering.)
- How do I deepen my walk with the Lord? (Note the meditation verses.)
- What does the daily life of a servant of the Lord look like?
- What do the prayers of this chapter look like? (Note the “me” verses.)

-But there is even more in this psalm:

- God is mentioned in every single verse.
- It contains 70 prayer requests (this is another reason to pray the Scriptures).
- The writer refers to himself 325 times.

-Comparison to the greatest Psalms:

- **Psalm 1**—The Blessed Ones
- **Psalm 19**—The Power of the Word

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- **Psalm 22**—Jesus on the Cross
- **Psalm 23**—The Good Shepherd
- **Psalm 51**—David’s Confession/Restoration
- **Psalm 119**—The Word of God
- **Psalm 139**—God Sees us Always/Everywhere

-There are forty-eight verses where “me,” “my,” or “mine” is used to show us the different scenarios of life where God can develop our lives. It also will help to see what content we are to pray.

-Preachers and pastors all through the ages have used these verses to inspire and encourage saints and churches.

- Charles Spurgeon in his *Treasury of David* has 349 pages on this psalm.
- Charles Bridges wrote a commentary on this psalm that is 481 pages. His book spends a sermon on each section of eight verses. It was published in 1827 when Bridges was only thirty-three years old.
- Thomas Manton wrote a three-volume work on Psalm 119. Each volume is 500-600 pages in length. It contains more than 190 sermons which is more than one for each verse.

-All of these preachers are now dead and if they were committed to preaching through these passages, modern day preachers should be just as committed to them as well.

**Matthew Henry**—This Psalm is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links.

**Adam Clarke**—Several of the ancients, particularly the Greek fathers, have considered it as an abridgement of David’s life; in which he expresses all the states through which he had passed; the trials, persecutions, supports, and encouragements, he had received. The Latin fathers perceive in it all the morality of the Gospel, and rules for a man’s conduct in every situation of life.

**Martin Luther**—It contains prayers, consolations, doctrines, thanksgivings and repeats all these with a varied fulness. It is given forth with a deep and blessed intent; namely, that by this repetition and fulness, it may invite and exhort us to hear and diligently treasure up the word of God.

**Charles Bridges**—This Psalm may be considered as the journal of one who was deeply taught in the things of God—long practiced in the life and walk of faith. It contains the anatomy of experiential religion—the interior foundations of the family of God. It is given for the use of believers in all ages, as an excellent touchstone of vital godliness.

-Psalm 119 is about the way the Word can work in a person’s life who is willing to completely submit.

## II. IMPACT & INFLUENCE OF EZRA

-Psalm 119—Most likely written by Ezra. Encyclopedia Judaica leans strongly toward Ezra as having been its author. Many Jewish scholars and historians look to Ezra as being a “spiritual giant.” He is second only to Moses.

- **Moses**—Egyptian language influence
- **David-Isaiah**—Phoenician language influence
- **Ezra**—Hebrew language influence—God used Ezra as the tool to write the modern Hebrew language that was used in his time.

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-The importance of Ezra can be seen in Jewish society with the impact of his incredible life ongoing:

- Launched the Jewish synagogues
- Designed the schedule of the practice in the synagogues and still is mostly followed today
- Organized the work of the scribes
- Updated the Old Testament into modern Hebrew (formerly in Paleo-Hebrew or Phoenician until the time of Ezra)
- Most likely author of Psalm 119. Possibly author of 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah
- Launched the OT as we know it now

-Ezra responsible for the Masoretic Text. This is the authoritative Hebrew/Aramaic text of the OT written between the 7-10<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. Ezra had a great impact on the scribes especially in their emphasis on personal holiness as they worked to preserve the text. OT = Law, Prophets & Writings (wisdom literature). By knowing this, it can be very helpful in understanding the Bible.

-Ezra had a very worldly congregation who had been taken out of Babylon. There were 42,360 who had to be moved in their thoughts and lifestyle out of the distraction of a seventy-year captivity (Ezra 2:64-65). His huge challenge was to get them out of their distracted, worldly, secular, humanistic mindset and move them to a place of godly thinking.

-We can look at our world who have become glued to their smart phones, media access, cultural influence. Just think about how much the worldly influence is forcing itself into our lives like a tidal wave. How can God speak to us or move in our life in such a state of mind?

-Babylon is greatly symbolic of the distracted world. Ezra had left Babylon and he is now with 50,000 people who had been immersed for a generation in this place.

- How do you reach people who live immersed in distractions?
- How do you keep from getting distracted yourself?
- How do you keep from losing your focus on God when most of the people around you have?

-That is the challenge that Ezra faced. But Ezra chose the Word to protect him in three ways:

**Ezra 7:10 (KJV)** For Ezra had **prepared his heart** <sup>1</sup>*to seek the law of the LORD*, and <sup>2</sup>*to do it*, and <sup>3</sup>*to teach in Israel statutes and judgments*.

-It takes great discipline to focus on the Word.

### III. PSALM 119—THE INSPIRED COMMENTARY ON THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

-There are several synonyms for the Word in Psalm 119.

- **Psalm 119:1—Law**—God’s will for his people
- **Psalm 119:2—Testimonies**—God’s witness about the truth
- **Psalm 119:3—Ways**—God’s pattern of life for his people
- **Psalm 119:4—Precepts**—God’s directions for our life
- **Psalm 119:5—Statutes**—God’s plans for our lives
- **Psalm 119:6—Commandments**—God’s absolutes for our lives
- **Psalm 119:7—Judgments**—God’s unchanging decisions for life
- **Psalm 119:9—Word**—God’s voice he wants us to hear

## A. God’s Summary of the Bible in Psalm 119

**Way—DEREK**—to tread with the feet, denotes the act of walking. It is used in reference to a man who is on a lengthy journey. Found 13 times (vv. 1, 3, 5, 14, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37, 59, 168).

**Law—TORAH**—to project or to issue. To point out, to show, to instruct, to teach, to guide in the straight path of righteousness. The TORAH contains God’s instructions to his people, pointing to the will of God. Found 25 times and always in the singular (vv. 1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174).

**Testimonies—EDUTH**—to turn back again, to reiterate, to testify. A testimony is the truth of God’s actions in the life of man. Found 23 times (vv. 2, 14, 22, 24, 31, 36, 46, 59, 79, 88, 95, 99, 111, 119, 125, 129, 138, 140, 144, 152, 157, 167, 169).

**Precepts—PIQQUDIM**—to take oversight or charge of. This means they are mandates that are enjoined with others. They declare and direct the duties of a righteous man. Found 21 times (vv. 4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 150, 168, 173).

**Statutes—HUKKA**—to hew, to cut in, engrave, inscribe, to decree, to ordain. The fixed principles of God that mark, ordain, and trace out the right path of holiness. Found 22 times (vv. 5, 8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171).

**Commandments—MIZVAH**—to set up, to constitute, meaning constitutional commands. These are the laws of authority to show what we are to do, what should be left undone, and call for our obedience. Found 22 times (vv. 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 148, 151, 166, 172, 176).

**Judgment—MISHPAT**—to set upright, to erect, to judge. Helps the righteous man to discern between what is right and wrong. Declaring judgment on unrighteousness. Found 23 times (vv. 7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 91, 102, 106, 108, 120, 121, 132, 137, 149, 156, 160, 164, 175).

**Word—IMRAH**—to bring forth light, to say an utterance. This is the declaration of the words of God. Found 18 times (vv. 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 158, 162, 170, 172)

**Word—God’s voice (written)—DABAR**—to arrange in a row, to set forth in a speech. Found 24 times (vv. 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42 (2), 43, 49, 57, 65, 71, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, 169).

## B. Applying the Directives of Psalm 119

-If we take all of these words and look at the context, there are some observations to make:

- The path God wants us to walk—**His way**—13x
- The teaching God wants us to learn—**His Law**—25x
- The witness God wants us to trust—**His testimonies**—23x
- The directions God wants us to follow—**His precepts**—21x
- The plans God wants us to use—**His statutes**—22x
- The absolutes God wants us to obey—**His commandments**—22x
- The unchanging decisions God wants us to know—**His judgments**—23x
- The voice God wants us to hear—**His Word**—43x

## Psalm 119—The Bible’s Longest Wisdom-filled Chapter

-God has a desire for my life to be filled with biblical responses—“I have” or “have I” (KJV) is the phrase to look for. He wanted the Lord (v. 10) and he wanted the Word (v. 11).

**Psalm 119:10–11 (KJV)** <sup>10</sup> With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. <sup>11</sup> Thy word have I hid in mine heart, That I might not sin against thee.

-God has a desire for my life to be filled with biblical resolves—“I will.” Some are found in vv. 7, 8, 15, 16, 32, 45, 46, 47, 48. In v. 48 it is literally “in my hands, I will carry your word.”

-God has a desire for my life to be filled with biblical choices. Ezra wanted God to change his life, so he allowed the Word to transform his life with little choices one at a time.

- **Psalm 119:59**, “turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” Like a person who hears something, sees something, that stops them, and they turn in that direction. Ezra examines his life, looks at the Word, and then goes in the way of the Lord.
- **Psalm 119:101**, “refrained my feet from every evil way.” What do we restrain ourselves from? Most entertainment and gaming features nudity, immorality, violence, bloodshed, and the occult. All of these things distance us from God.
- **Psalm 119:112**, “inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always.” What do we lean toward? Things of righteousness, holiness, and the Word, or is it the Babylonian influences of the world?

-The great secret of Ezra’s life was that he invited God into every part of his life. This is reflected in Ezra’s progress. There are some 48 quick cries that he has to God. . . the key words are me, my, or mine. . .

- Don’t let me wander—v. 10
- Teach me—vv. 12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135,
- Deliver me—vv. 134, 153, 154, 170
- Open my eyes—v. 18
- Turn away my reproach—vv. 22, 39

-Look at verses 68, 88, 107, 108 and key on the action and then look at “me.” Notice that prayer is not always for material things but instead spiritual matters.

-The best way to really get all of the wisdom out of Psalm 119 is to write these things down in a spiritual journal so you will be able to see what the Lord is showing you.

- **Psalm 119:1**—Life with God is a blessing.
- **Psalm 119:1-8**—God uses Ezra to show us eight synonyms for God’s truth that he has given to us: way, law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgment, and word.
- **Psalm 119:1-8**—Ezra was only asking God to teach him to walk in his ways. Key words; v. 1—walk; v. 2—keep and seek; vv. 3-4—walk and keep; v. 5—directed; v. 6—respect unto; v. 8—keep
- **Psalm 119:9-16**—Ezra explains cleansing. Key words; v. 9—taking heed; v. 10—not wander (whole heart); v. 11—word hidden leads to not sinning; v. 12—teach me; v. 14—rejoice in God’s way=better than riches; vv. 15-16—delight=meditate, contemplate, not forgetting.
- **Psalm 119:15**—Ezra speaks of meditating on the precepts of God. There are by-products of meditation in vv. 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, & 148.
- **Psalm 119:17-24**—God wants to open my eyes to the wonders of His Word (vv. 17-18).

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- **Psalm 119:50**—Ezra explains affliction using seven verses: v. 50—emotional suffering pushes me to his Word; v. 67—physical suffering pushes us back into God’s path; v. 71—physical suffering puts God’s word in our lives (chisels it in); v. 75—physical suffering teaches us that God is faithful; v. 92—emotional suffering keeps me focused on the teacher; v. 107—physical suffering forces us to test God’s promises; v. 153—emotional suffering brings God up close and personal to our lives.

### IV. CONCLUSION—LIFE CHOICES AND PSALM 119

**Psalm 119:59 (KJV)** <sup>59</sup>I thought on my ways, And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

-Ezra explains some life choices he made in Psalm 119 showing how little choices can bring big changes to the spiritual walk.

- **v. 59**—I want to turn my life toward God
- **v. 101**—I want to turn away from evil
- **v. 112**—I want to learn God’s way
- **v. 114**—I want to set my hope upon the Lord
- **v. 131**—I want to cultivate a spiritual appetite
- **v. 147**—I want to build spiritual disciplines

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