

Summer Psalms
PSALM OF THE SCRIPTURES

Monday, July 14
Reading: Psalm 119:1-16

Psalm 119:7 *I will praise You with an upright heart as I learn Your righteous laws.*

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. “This psalm is written in an acrostic (alphabetical) arrangement. In each paragraph (strophe) of eight verses, the first line begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. (The 22 strophes correspond to the 22 letters of the alphabet.) So verses 1-8 each begin with the first Hebrew letter, verses 9-16 each begin with the second letter, and so on.”¹

The entire psalm is about the Word of God. Of its 176 verses, only 5 do not contain a reference to God’s Word. Ten different terms are used to refer to the Scriptures. We are not sure who authored this masterpiece of praise for Scripture. Many writers have been suggested but I lean toward Ezra the scribe as its author for he was a man of the Book.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it,
and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. (NKJV)

The opening two stanzas (*Aleph & Beth*) present many of the principles that will be repeated throughout the psalm:²

1. “Walk” (4 times) – Walking according to the Word pictures a steady consistent following of God’s path.
2. “All my heart” (6 times) – Seeking God’s Word and way takes a full commitment.
3. “Obey” (25 times)³ – We cannot stop at simply reading God’s Word. We must then (like Ezra) do it and share it with others.
4. “Living” (5 times) – We can only follow God by living and breathing God’s Word. When we forget to make God’s Word central in our lives we stray off God’s path.
5. “Teach me” (10 times) – We need the Spirit of God to teach us and help us understand and apply the Word.
6. “Meditate” (11 times) – To meditate is not to empty your mind and chant some mantra (like in Eastern religions and mysticism). It means to fill your mind with God’s Word. Our very thoughts should be bathed in Scripture. That is what it means to “hide God’s Word in our hearts” (119:11).
7. “Delight” (10 times) – Studying God’s Word should not be a chore. As we learn about God and draw closer to Him through His Word we will receive the joy of the Lord in our hearts and lives.

These are but a few of the truths Psalm 119 will teach us. As we begin our journey through this great psalm, be on the lookout for these themes and make notes of other themes you discover. May we all “praise You with an upright heart as [we] learn Your righteous laws” (119:7). May we “not neglect Your word” (119:16)

¹ Allen P. Ross. “Psalms” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 879

² Word count based on the New King James Version

³ The Hebrew words meaning “obey” are usually translated as “keep” in NKJV