

Introduction to Psalm 119

This is the Psalm where the foundational theme of one who “delights in the law of the LORD” (Psalm 1:2) is shone through the prism of the Spirit-inspired author’s experiences and mindset, and thus becomes a kaleidoscopic rainbow of divine wisdom, hope and encouragement. But as you will come to see, this can’t be reduced to bibliolatry, the author also “delights in the LORD of the law.”

Psalm 119 is one of several alphabetic acrostics in holy writ.¹ There are 22 stanzas. Each line of each stanza begins with the letter of the alphabet that begins that stanza. One reason authors wrote this way was as a mnemonic aid, but as one has suggested, at least here it likely goes beyond that. The point seems to be that the author has tried to say that the Scriptures are the “Alpha and the Omega,” they are complete in what they contain.²

Author of 119th Psalm

Many assume David

But the internal evidence and language makes Daniel attractive.

In his youth, his way was cleansed, v 9, Daniel 1:8-14

Verses that seem to indicate Daniel might be a good candidate for the authorship include v 19, 21-23, 36-37, 39, 42; cf. Daniel 1:8; 2:14, 18, 25ff.; 6:1-9.

God’s Word gives insight beyond the “learned,” v 99.

He had received instruction from many teachers, but he maintains that by constant meditation upon God’s testimonies, he has obtained the truest discernment of Torah as the best guide of living.³ This may have reference to Daniel’s education in Babylon, Dan 1:4c, 5.

Problems in Psalm 119

When People Plot Against You

V 23

Not take matters in to your own hands, not threaten to Get even, but ...

Boss, supervisor, someone who can destroy your career or future, they lied to you, lied about you, cost you your job, career

When People Make Fun of You

V 51

God calls on you to not return evil for evil, but to keep obeying God.

¹ These include Pss 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145. Proverbs 31:10-31 and Lamentations 1, 2, 3, 4

² Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God*, pp. 24, 25. See also Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13.

³ Zemek, p. 236.

From a merely human perspective, his response (i.e. v. 51b) to their heinous actions is totally inexplicable. In the pressure cooker of all such persecution, he maintained that he had not detoured from the LORD's road map for life (cf. v. 157).⁴

**Well if you only knew what He did, you'd understand why I did what I did.
Pastor, you should have heard what he said, then you'd understand why I did what I did.**

When People Plant Traps for You

V 61

These "cords" were the "snares" which godless men had placed all around him. The psalmist's enemies were the crafty fowlers; he was the endangered prey. Nevertheless, the man of God did not resort to **retaliation but to revelation**: "Yet (i.e. however, but, etc.) I have not forgotten Your law" (v. 61b).⁵

This has gone from verbal assaults to actual plotting and crafty contriving that would hurt the person

When People Lie About You

V 69

Therefore, of these insolent men he cries out that they "have plastered falsehood over me." The verb ... which substantially contributes to this striking word-picture means to smear, stick, glue, plaster, etc.," and with ... "lie" (cf. Job 13:4), the combination idiomatically signifies that "by their slanderous allegations" (cf. vv. 78, 86) his enemies had given "him a character utterly different from what was his." They had fabricated an ugly façade over an essentially blameless framework. Interestingly, in an attitude which would characterize NT ethics (cf., e.g., Matt 5:11; 1 Pet 2:20; 4:14—16; etc.), the man of God did not sue for defamation of character but rather sanctified himself unreservedly for obedience to God's Word and will (i.e. v. 69b)."⁶

Nothing stings quite like a lie that has been told about you to others.

When Poised Predators are out to Get You

V 95, 110

A resolution to conformity in the presence of apparent inescapable snares, 110

Perched upon his high plateau of stability and sufficiency, the man of God looks back down upon his malevolent persecutors in verse 95. His transcendent perspective, assuring and comforting as it is, does not erase the reality of their commitment to his demise. The vivid terminology he employs confirms his awareness of their intentions and his own precarious situation. First, he labels them "wicked men" calling attention to their documented criminality. Then he portrays them as being poised like predators through his selection of a Piel verb ... "to wait for" or "to lie in wait for." The root of this word exhibits a connection to the concepts of twisting or stretching with a resultant significance of "tenseness" or "eagerness." And finally, as part of his personal experience with attacks from the world, the persecuted pilgrim exposes their unwavering intention which just happens to be his personal extermination.⁷

When Adversity Clings to You

V 143

When Trouble is Closing in On You

V 150, 151

When Your Problems are Many

⁴ Zemek, *Psalm 119*, p. 161.

⁵ Zemek, *Psalm 119*, p. 174

⁶ Zemek, *Psalm 119*, pp 187, 188.

⁷ Zemek, *Psalm 119*, p. 226.

V 156, 157

When You Need to Remember Who You Should Fear Most

V 161

It is sometimes easy to fear what people might do to you, how they might hurt you, how they might end your life or ruin it.

With all these problems, most would say, well, a little depression, some withdrawal, some singing the blues would be expected, but no

Trust in and Obedience to God's Word Brings

Delight, 16, 35, 47

Joy, 111

Peace 165

Freedom, 32, 45

Direction, 105

Hope, 49

Wisdom and Understanding, 98-100

Genuine wealth, 72

You ought to

Study it

Trust it

Obey it

Ask for Insight, 33-35.