

# David's Kaleidoscope

July 7, 2019 ~ Psalm 119.1-8

## Psalm 119 – Unique Psalm and Chapter

- English alphabet has 26 letters / Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters
- Consists of 22 stanzas corresponding to alphabet
- All eight lines of each stanza start with same letter /  $22 \times 8 = 176$  verses
- This makes it the longest psalm of Bible – as well as the longest chapter
- These are 4 unique aspects of it / There are more but first . . .

## Psalm 119 – Dreaded It in Annual Reading

- First read Bible at 19 – Gospels / Epistles / Proverbs / Gen & Kings / Psalms
- **III: Confession** ~ I've always dreaded this psalm / just want to get "past" it
  - I was amazed to find I was not entirely alone in this – Spurgeon too...!
- **III: Charles Spurgeon** c/writing 6<sup>th</sup> volume of "*Treasury of David*" (1882)
  - **Appearances** ~ "I have been all the longer over this portion of my task because I have been bewildered in the expanse of the 119<sup>th</sup>, which makes up the bulk of this volume. Its dimensions and its depth alike overcame me. It spread itself out before me like a vast, rolling prairie, to which I could see no end, and this alone created a feeling of dismay. Its expanse was unbroken by a bluff or headland, and hence it threatened a monotonous task."
  - Finding this comment by Spurgeon filled me with relief

## Psalm 119 – Appearances can be Deceiving

- **Spurgeon continues** ~ "Those who have never studied it may pronounce it commonplace and complain of its repetitions. .. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind"
- "Those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes."
- This has been my experience exactly . . .
- **III: Human Uniqueness Analogy** – Skin color / Hair color / Eye color
  - Japan or Korea – Height / Weight / Build / Face / Voice / Gait
- **III: Kaleidoscope** – simple tube and bits of colored plastic (**hand out**)

**Xition:** Perspectives on Psalm 119 . . .

## “Is Psalm 119 Helpful Medicine or a Glorious Meal?”

- Augustine ~ “In proportion as this Psalm seems more shallow, so much the more deep does it appear to me; so that I cannot show how deep it is. For in others, which are understood with difficulty, although the sense lies hid in obscurity yet the obscurity itself appears; but in this, not even this is the case; since superficially it seems not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener.”
  - i.e., The psalm appears very simple – but is actually quite sophisticated
- John Ruskin ~ “It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind most repulsive -- the 119th Psalm -- has now become the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God.”
- Armand de Mestral ~ “In order to be able to understand and to enjoy this remarkable Psalm, and that we may not be repelled by its length and by its repetitions, we must have had, in some measure at least, the same experiences as its author, and, like him, have learned to love and practice the sacred word. .. This Psalm is a touchstone for the spiritual life of its readers.”
  - i.e., Appreciation only comes to those that explore its depths

### Psalm 119 – Unique in 5th Way

- Psalm 119 consists of 176 verses – Only 5 don't refer to God's Law Word
  - Verses 84, 90, 121, 122, 132
  - All other verses contain one of these 9 words: “law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, ordinances”

### 3 Types of Statements

1. Statement of fact or truth (**Read v1, v4**) – *most common (over 200)*
  2. Plea or prayer request (**Read v5, v8b**) -- *often worded as command (78)*
    - Every line of 5<sup>th</sup> stanza (HE) contains a plea (read orange phrases)
  3. Conditional statement (**Read v7, v11**) -- *condition and consequence (55)*
- Mixture (**Read v17, v18**) -- *conditional statement with a plea (18)*

### Psalm 119 – Unique in 6th Way

- The word “your” occurs in all but 5 verses
  - Verses 1, 2, 3, 115, 121
- Psalmist is speaking directly to God for all but 4 verses
- III: Psalm 93 – Note talking to “others”, “God”, then “others” again
- Lines differ in two ways – “to whom” is it addressed – and “who” is speaking
  - “to whom” includes God, anyone, righteous, wicked
  - “who” is typically the psalmist or can be God Himself

**Xition:** Serious Christians used to memorize Psalm 119 . . .

## Benefits of Memorization

- David Livingstone memorized it at 9 years old – Won Bible reciting it to SS teacher
- Also memorized by William Wilberforce – recited it on walk to Parliament
- Several US Presidents did it – none recently
- **III: Captivity** ~ “*Evidence Not Seen*” – Darlene Rose – missionary in Asia
  - “As a child and young person, I had had a driving compulsion to memorize the written Word. In the cell I was grateful now for those days in Vacation Bible School, when I had memorized many single verses, complete chapters, and Psalms, as well as whole books of the Bible. In the years that followed, I reviewed the Scriptures often. The Lord fed me with the Living Bread that had been stored against the day when a fresh supply was cut off. He brought daily comfort and encouragement—yes, and joy—to my heart through the knowledge of the Word. . . . I had never needed the Scriptures more than in these months on death row, but since so much of His Word was there in my heart, it was not the punishment they’d anticipated when they took my Bible.”
- **III: “Book of Eli”** – Denzel Washington – transporting Bible across country

## Walk Thru Vss 1 to 8

- **Vss 1-3** are spoken to us – the reader – double blessing upon the faithful
  - This describes a virtuous cycle
  - Those that seek God obey Him. Those that obey God walk with Him.
- **v4** ~ Psalmist starts speaking directly to God
  - He’ll deviate only once at **verse 115**
  - “Depart from me, you evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God!”
- Only other verse without as “**your**” is **verse 121**
  - “I have done justice and righteousness; do not leave me to my oppressors.”
- **Vss 5-6** starts with a plea and contains a complex conditional
  - The psalmist pleads with God to “**direct his steps**” to prevent his “**shame**”
- **v7** ~ He then proclaims his praise provided he learns of God’s judgments
- **v8** ~ He ends committed to obedience but pleading with God to be with him

## Beginning and End

- I’ve only touched the tip of the **Psalm 119** iceberg
  - I could go farther, but . . .
  - This was more about teaching you to fish – not providing you the fish
- Let’s end by looking at the first and last verses addressed to God
- **v4** ~ “You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently”
- **v176a** ~ “I have gone astray like a lost sheep;”
- **v176b** ~ “Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments.”

**Xition:** The Psalmists last plea is for God to seek him – but it’s conditional . . .

Our walk with God will falter at times – Yet God promises to strengthen us  
Yet this promise depends on us desiring God and keeping His Word in our heart  
Your walk may falter – but continue to read God’s Word and seek Him  
He promises us we will find Him when we seek Him with all our heart...

**Jude 24-25 ~ "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and  
to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy;  
To God our Savior, Who alone is wise,  
be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."**

# David's Kaleidoscope - Handout

July 7, 2019 ~ Psalm 119.1-8

1. Psalm 119 is unique in several ways. Six of them are as follows:
  - a. Psalm consists of \_\_\_\_ stanzas each corresponding with letter of Hebrew alphabet.
  - b. Each of the \_\_\_\_ lines in each stanza also starts with the same Hebrew letter.
  - c. Psalm 119 is both the longest \_\_\_\_\_ and the longest \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible.
  - d. Nearly every verse of the Psalm refers to God's \_\_\_\_\_ using one of 9 words.
  - e. Nearly every verse of the Psalm addresses \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Psalm 119 was compared to what child's toy? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the 3 types of statements or clauses that occur in Psalm 119?
  - a. Statement of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. A \_\_\_\_\_ to God that also might be described as a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. A \_\_\_\_\_ statement where the outcome depends on something else.
4. What two famous 19<sup>th</sup> century Englishmen memorized Psalm 119?  
William \_\_\_\_\_ and David \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Psalmist deviates only once from speaking directly to God past verse 4. Which verse is it and whom does he address? Verse \_\_\_\_\_ Addressing \_\_\_\_\_
6. Six verses later the Psalmist omits a "your" in addressing God. What is it that he requests of God? \_\_\_\_\_
7. The Psalmist asks God in the last verse to "seek him" as he has "gone astray." What reason does he give as to why God should do this? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_