

Walking in the Light
Psalm 119:105–112 |
Nun

Intro: We've been describing Psalm 119 as a pilgrimage into the blessed life, a Bible-shaped life. And one of the things I hope we have learned by now is that the blessed life is not necessarily an easy life.

- The psalmist has experienced affliction.
- He has known disappointment.
- He has faced opposition.
- He has waited for God when God seemed absent. Yet through every stanza, one thing continues to bring him back to the path: the Word of God.

Last week, in *Mem*, we watched what happens when God's Word captures the heart. The psalmist began, "*Oh how I love your law!*"

- He loves the Word,
- meditates upon the Word,
- gains wisdom through the Word,
- walks according to the Word, and
- discovers that the Word is sweeter than honey.

God's Word transforms the person who delights in it.

But *Nun* asks another question. "*What does that transformed person do when he has to get up tomorrow morning and walk back into the real world?*"

Because the real world can be dark.

- The real world includes decisions we do not know how to make.
- It includes circumstances we did not choose.
- It includes affliction.
- It includes people who oppose us.
- It includes snares we do not see coming. And sometimes we simply do not know what lies ahead.

That is where *Nun* begins: "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*"

That may be one of the most familiar verses in Psalm 119, but we shouldn't allow its familiarity to cause us to miss the importance of its imagery.

- The psalmist is a traveler.
- He is walking a darkened path.
- And he needs light.

ILL: An ancient lamp was not a floodlight. It did not illuminate the road half a mile ahead. It provided a relatively small circle of light, enough for the traveler to see where he was putting his feet and enough to recognize the path immediately before him. And I think that distinction matters.

- We often want God to give us a floodlight. God gives us a lamp.
- We want to see the entire journey. God shows us the next step.
- We want to know what is going to happen next month, next year, five years from now. God says, *“Here is enough light to walk faithfully today.”*

ILL – In our staff meeting last Monday, I asked the staff, *“Would it be better for us to know the future or not?”* Jerry, our elder chair, responded, *“God answers that question by not telling you the future.”*

IMP: The Bible does not tell you everything that is going to happen to you. It gives you something better. It tells you how to walk faithfully with the God who already knows everything that is going to happen to you. That is *Nun*.

And here is our **Big Idea**: God’s Word lights the path of the blessed life, enabling us to walk faithfully through every circumstance.

There are three movements to this stanza:

First: God’s Word Lights Our Path (vv. 105–106)

Second: God’s Word Sustains Us on the Path (vv. 107–110)

Third: God’s Word Becomes the Joy of the Journey (vv. 111–112)

First: God’s Word Lights Our Path. Vs 105-106

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
¹⁰⁶ I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.*

- a) Notice the two images. There are my feet, and there is my path.

The Word addresses both.

- It illuminates where I put my feet today, but
- It also establishes the larger direction in which my life should travel.

The word “*path*” refers to a pathway or course upon which someone travels. So, the psalmist is not merely saying, “The Bible helps me make decisions.” He is saying, “*The Word of God determines the direction of my life.*” And that is much bigger.

We often reduce God’s guidance to questions like:

- Should I take this job?

- Should I buy this house?
- Should I move?
- Whom should I marry?
- What should I do about this situation?
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Those are legitimate questions. But God's Word usually doesn't give us specific answers to those kinds of questions.

Instead, Scripture does something much deeper.

- It reveals who God is.
- It tells us what He loves.
- It tells us what He hates.
- It teaches us what is true.
- It exposes what is false.
- It forms our character.
- It shapes our desires.
- It gives us wisdom.
- It shows us what kind of people we should become.

And as Scripture forms us into those kinds of people, we increasingly learn how to make wise and godly decisions.

Bottom line: If you're on the right path, the right person will be walking it too, the right job and house will be providentially built along it, and the situation will or won't change.

IMP: The Word gives light to our feet by shaping the person who is walking.

b) But notice what happens next.

105: "Your word is a lamp and a light."

106: "I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules."

- God provides the light, and
- the psalmist responds by committing himself to walk in it.

HB/ *"I have sworn an oath."* That is strong language. The Hebrew word carries the idea of binding oneself by a solemn promise.

Then he adds, *"and confirmed it."* In other words:

- I have settled this.
- I have made up my mind.
- I have determined the direction of my life.
- God has spoken, and I intend to walk according to what He has said.

IMP: There is an important principle here: Light creates responsibility. Once God has shown us the path, we are responsible to walk in it.

So, the purpose of the Bible is not merely to help us know more. It is to help us walk differently.

Sometimes we keep asking God for guidance when He has already given us guidance.

“Lord, show me what to do.” And sometimes the answer is: “I already have.”

- Love God.
 - Love your neighbor.
 - Forgive.
 - Tell the truth.
 - Love your enemy.
 - Be faithful to your spouse.
 - Flee sexual immorality.
 - Do not gossip.
 - Seek unity.
 - Seek first His kingdom.
 - Be generous.
 - Be humble.
 - Do justice.
 - Show mercy.
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- Sometimes the problem is not that the path is dark.
 - Sometimes the problem is that we do not like the path God has illuminated.

APP: Where are you asking God for more light when He has already shown you the next faithful step?

- c) There is also wisdom in making some decisions before the moment of temptation arrives.

That is what the psalmist has done in verse 106. He has decided ahead of time: *“I will keep your righteous rules.”* He does not wait until the road becomes difficult to decide whether God is trustworthy.

And that is good, because the road is about to become very difficult.

Second: God’s Word Sustains Us on the Path. 107–110

I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word!

¹⁰⁸ *Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your rules.*

¹⁰⁹ *I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.*

¹¹⁰ *The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.*

Look at the sudden change in verse 107 - *“I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word!”*

Do you see what just happened?

Verse 105: God shows him the path.

Verse 106: He commits himself to the path.

Verse 107: He suffers on the path.

What? That corrects a dangerous misunderstanding of the Christian life. Walking in God’s will does not mean the road will be easy.

Sometimes we unconsciously assume:

- If I obey God, things should work out.
- If I make the right decision, things should get easier.
- If I am faithful, God should remove the difficulty.

But the psalmist is walking in the light of God’s Word and says, *“I am severely afflicted.”*

Faithfulness and affliction are not opposites. Sometimes the path God illuminates goes directly through suffering.

Think about these dear friends –

- Joseph, Genesis 39. Joseph refuses sexual sin with Potiphar's wife precisely because he will not *“sin against God”* (Gen. 39:9). His faithfulness doesn’t lead immediately to blessing. It leads to false accusation and prison. He is on God's path, and that path goes through a prison cell.
- Daniel, Daniel 6. Daniel knows Darius’ decree has been signed, but continues praying to God just as he had done before. His obedience takes him directly to the lions' den. God eventually delivers him, but faithfulness doesn’t keep him out of the den.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel 3. They refuse to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image because they belong to God. Their obedience takes them straight toward the fiery furnace. Their remarkable confession is essentially: God can deliver us, but even if He doesn’t, we still will not bow (Dan. 3:17–18).
- Paul and Silas, Acts 16:16–34. They are serving Christ faithfully in Philippi when they’re beaten with rods and thrown into prison. And what are they doing at midnight? *“Praying and singing hymns to God”* (v. 25).

- Jesus. This is ultimately the supreme example. No one ever walked more perfectly in the Father's will, yet His path led through Gethsemane to Calvary. The cross forever destroys the idea that suffering necessarily means we have stepped outside God's will.

The word “*afflicted*” describes being brought low, bowed down, humbled, oppressed. And the psalmist intensifies it: “*I am severely afflicted.*” You have to love the honesty of that. He doesn’t pretend. He doesn’t minimize his pain. Biblical faith never requires us to pretend that suffering doesn’t hurt. But faith knows where to take the hurt.

107b - “Give me life, O LORD, according to your word!”

We have encountered that prayer repeatedly in Psalm 119.

- “*Give me life.*”
- Revive me.
- Renew me.
- Restore me.
- Strengthen me.

The psalmist recognizes something we sometimes resist admitting. I don’t have within myself everything I need to keep walking. God must give me life. And notice it is, “*according to your word.*”

The same Word that lights the path now sustains him on the path. That is why the Bible matters so much when you suffer. When suffering comes, your circumstances begin speaking to you. Your circumstances say:

- God has forgotten you.
- God is not good.
- Nothing is going to change.
- You cannot continue.
- There is no reason to hope.

And the psalmist responds, “*Give me life according to your Word.*” (107b)

- Not according to what I feel.
- Not according to what I see.
- Not according to what I fear.
- According to what You have said.

Then verse 108 - “*Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your rules.*”

This is a remarkable disposition. He is severely afflicted, and he praises God.

The expression “*freewill offerings*” comes from the language of worship. But the psalmist isn’t placing an animal on an altar. He is offering the praise of his mouth. That’s his worship.

And remember, nothing tells us that his circumstances have changed. He praises God in the affliction. That is biblical worship.

Worship doesn't deny pain. Worship declares that pain does not have the authority to determine what is true about God or my circumstances.

- God is still good.
- God is still sovereign.
- God is still faithful.
- God is still worthy.
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Then he says: *"teach me your rules" (108b)*

I find that fascinating. He is hurting, but he remains teachable.

- Suffering can make us bitter.
- It can make us defensive.
- It can make us tell God what He ought to be doing.

But the psalmist says: *"I hurt. Give me life. I praise You. And teach me."*

What if one of the great prayers of your suffering became, *"Father, I want You to change this, but while I am here, teach me."*

Then verse 109 intensifies the danger with the words, *"I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law." (109).*

To carry your life in your hand is to live with danger. We use similar language today: *"He took his life into his own hands."*

But look again at the contrast: *"My life is in danger, but I do not forget your law."*

That might be easy to do in stressful moments. We are tempted to do our own thing, go our own way, rely on our own thinking or strength.

And he says in verse 110 - *"The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts."*

Verse 109: There is danger, but I don't forget.

Verse 110: There are snares, but I don't stray. 9815 South Sheridan Road

Circumstances are unstable. The Word is not.

The word *"snare"* describes a trap laid for an animal or bird. A snare is dangerous precisely because it is concealed. And the psalmist says wicked people are intentionally trying to trap him.

IMP: People may determine where the snares are placed, but they will not determine where he walks. God's Word will determine that. That has enormous application for us.

One of the greatest dangers when someone sins against you is not merely what they may do to you. It is what their sin may tempt you to become.

- Someone gossips about you. You are tempted to gossip about them.
- Someone misrepresents your motives. You are tempted to assume the worst about theirs.
- Someone embarrasses you publicly. You are tempted to embarrass them publicly.
- Someone refuses to apologize. You decide you have the right to withhold forgiveness.
- Someone excludes you. You are tempted to make sure they know what exclusion feels like.
- Someone criticizes you unfairly. You become defensive and refuse to hear anything they might say that is true.
- Someone betrays your confidence. You are tempted to expose something you know about them.
- Someone refuses to listen to you. You decide you no longer have to listen to them.
- Someone becomes angry with you. You allow their anger to determine your attitude toward them.
- Someone wounds you deeply. You begin rehearsing the wound until hurt becomes resentment and resentment becomes bitterness.

And suddenly *their sin* has become the snare that *pulled you* off the path.

IMP: Another person's disobedience never gives you permission to disobey God.

The psalmist says: “You can put the snare there, but I am not leaving the path.”

- That does not mean we never confront wrongdoing.
- It does not mean Christians ignore injustice.
- It does not mean we cannot establish appropriate boundaries.
- It means that even when we confront sin, we do it while remaining on God's path.

Or, as Paul says in *Romans 12:21*, “*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*”

In other words: Do not let someone else's evil determine who you become.

Third: And Here is Where the Gospel Meets Us.

No one was ever treated more unjustly than Jesus.

- He was betrayed.
- Falsely accused.
- Mocked.
- Beaten.

- Spat upon.
- Rejected.
- Crucified.

But not one sin committed against Him caused Him to sin in response. He remained perfectly on the Father's path toward Calvary.

Peter says it like this. *"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return" (I Peter 2:23).*

- Jesus walked the path we have repeatedly wandered from.
- And at the cross He bore both the sins we committed the sins committed against us and the sinful ways we have responded to them.
- Then He rose from the dead.
- And now, by His Spirit, He gives us the life we need to keep walking in righteousness.

The Christian life is not, *"Try harder to stay on the path."*

It is, *"Look to Christ, depend upon His Spirit, listen to His Word, and keep walking."*

Which brings us to the final movement.

Fourth: God's Word Becomes the Joy of the Journey. 111-112.

Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

¹¹² I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

What a remarkable statement after the severe affliction, danger, and snares of verses 107–110.

- And now: joy.
- How? Because his deepest joy was never rooted in his circumstances.
- Your deepest joy is never rooted in your circumstances.

a) "Your testimonies are my heritage forever." (111)

ILL: The word "heritage" means inheritance. For an Israelite, the land was Israel's inheritance. Families received property that was passed from generation to generation. An inheritance represented wealth, security, identity, belonging, and future.

And the psalmist says: *"My inheritance is what God has spoken."*

Think about that. Everything else can be lost.

- Money can disappear.
- Property can disappear.
- Health can disappear.
- Opportunities can disappear.
- Relationships can change.

- Circumstances can collapse.

But the psalmist has discovered a treasure that suffering cannot take from him. *“Your testimonies are my heritage forever.”*

And then, *“for they are the joy of my heart” (111b).*

Notice the progression from last week into this week.

- In *Mem*: *“Oh how I love your law!”*
- Now in *Nun*: *“They are the joy of my heart.”*

God is doing something to this man. The Word is moving deeper and deeper into him. He does not merely obey it. He treasures it. And he treasures the Word because through the Word he knows the God who speaks.

IMP: God’s goal is not to produce people who grudgingly follow biblical rules. The goal is people who see the beauty of God in His Word, love Him, and increasingly become like the One they love.

That is the kind of spiritual formation that transforms us into Jesus’ likeness. And that explains *verse 112*, which reads, *“I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.”*

Notice where *Nun* began and where it ends.

Verse 105: feet.

Verse 112: heart.

- God begins by lighting the path beneath his feet.
- He ends by inclining the heart of the person walking it.

Wow. That is what God's Word does.

- It does not merely change our direction.
- It changes our desires.

The word *“incline”* means to bend or turn something in a particular direction.

Earlier in Psalm 119, the psalmist prayed, *“Incline my heart to your testimonies” (v. 36)*. There, God inclines the heart.

Here: *“I incline my heart.”* Which is it?

Both. That is the beautiful relationship between grace and effort in sanctification.

- God works in us, and, as a result, we work.

- God inclines our hearts, and we incline our hearts.
- God gives us life, and we walk.
- Grace does not make us passive.
- Grace makes obedience possible.

Paul says it this way in *Philippians 2:12–13*, “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you.*”

You work because God works.

And what is the psalmist's goal? “*Forever, to the end.*”

- Not, I want to obey God this week.
- Not, I want to have a good spiritual season.
- Not, I want to be faithful while life is working.

“*Forever, to the end.*” That’s the call of God on your life.

The goal of the blessed life is not a few spectacular moments of faithfulness. It is a lifetime of ordinary steps taken in the light of God's Word until we reach home.

Conclusion: And that takes us back to the lamp. I said at the beginning that most of us would prefer a floodlight.

Maybe an even better comparison is this. We want a map. God gives us a lamp.

- A map allows us to examine the whole journey before we begin.
- We can study every turn.
- Calculate the distance.
- Identify the obstacles.
- Decide whether we like the route.

A lamp requires trust.

It says,

- Take this step.
- And then this one.
- And then another.
- And trust the One who knows where the path leads and walks alongside you.

Some of you are walking roads right now that you would never have chosen. You cannot see very far ahead. You want answers God has not given you. You want to know how this is going to turn out. Maybe God has not shown you that. But He has given you His Word.

And perhaps the question today is not, *“God, will You show me the whole road?”*
 Maybe it is, *“Father, what is the next faithful step?”*

And then take it.

- When the path becomes difficult, ask Him for life.
- When you are afflicted, praise Him and remain teachable.
- When danger surrounds you, remember His Word.
- When others lay snares, refuse to leave His path.
- When temporary treasures disappear, remember your inheritance.
- And every day, incline your heart toward Him again.
- Forever.
- To the end.

That friends, is the blessed life. It is -

- It is not a life without dark roads.
- It is a life with constant light.

And ultimately, Jesus does more than show us the way. Jesus says, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).*

The Word of God ultimately leads us to the Son of God.

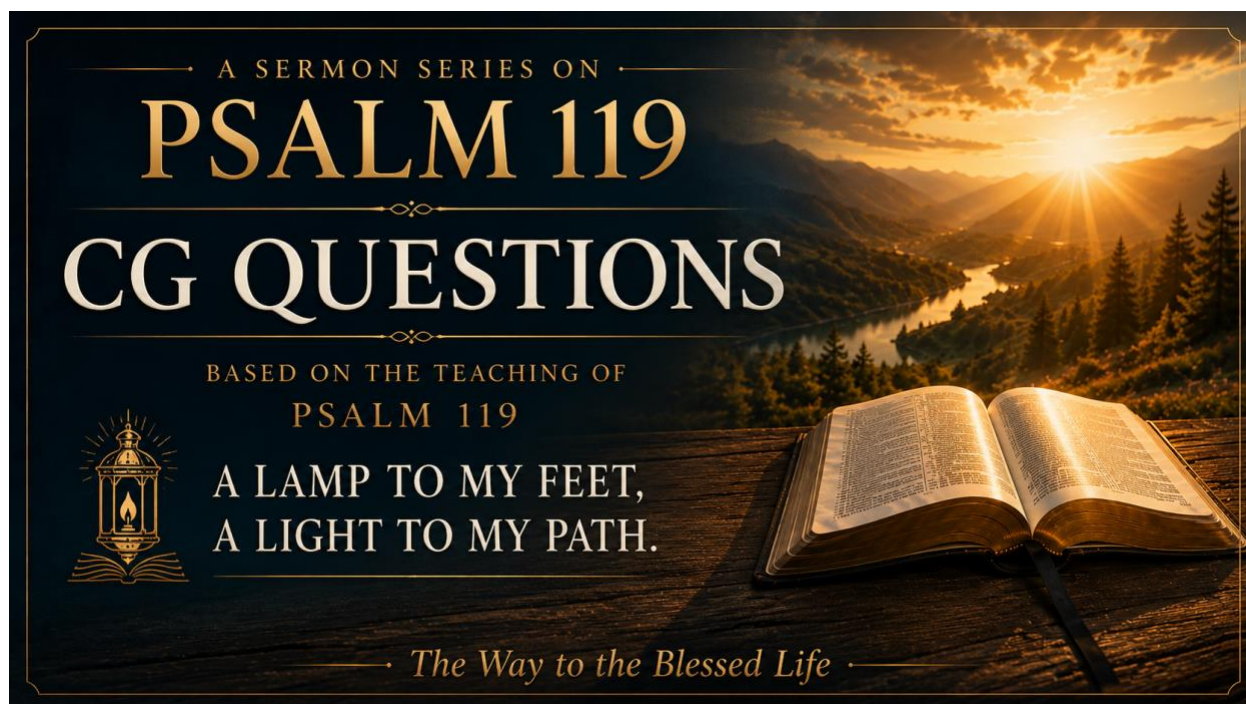
- Jesus walked the Father's path perfectly.
- He walked through temptation.
- Through rejection.
- Through suffering.
- Through Gethsemane.
- Through the cross.
- And He walked it faithfully to the end.
- Then He rose.

So, you, my friend, are not walking toward an uncertain destination. It ends at home with Jesus.

So take the next step.
 And then the next.
 And then the next.

Why? Because God's Word lights the path of the blessed life, enabling us to walk faithfully through every circumstance.

- You don't need enough light to see the entire road.
- You need enough light to take the next faithful step.
- And God has given you that light.



Observation - What does the text say?

1. Read Psalm 119:105–112. What words or phrases describe the difficulties the psalmist encounters as he walks the path God has illuminated?
2. Compare verses 105–107. What progression do you see between God showing the psalmist the path, the psalmist committing himself to that path, and what happens next?
3. In verses 109–110, what two dangers does the psalmist face, and what two things does he refuse to do?

Interpretation – What does the text mean?

4. What does the image, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path,” teach us about how God ordinarily guides His people? Why might God give us enough light for the next step rather than showing us the entire journey?
5. The sermon says, “Faithfulness and affliction are not opposites. Sometimes the path God illuminates goes directly through suffering.” How do Joseph, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Paul and Silas, and ultimately Jesus demonstrate that truth?
6. Verse 110 says, “The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.” How can someone else's sin against us become a “snare” that tempts us to leave God's path?

Correlation – Where else in the Bible can I see this text?

7. Read Romans 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” How does Paul's command help explain the psalmist's determination not to stray when others mistreat him?

8. Read 1 Peter 2:23. How does Jesus demonstrate perfectly what Psalm 119:110 describes? What does His response to unjust treatment teach us about responding when others sin against us?
9. Compare Psalm 119:36 with Psalm 119:112. In verse 36, the psalmist asks God to incline his heart. In verse 112, he says, "I incline my heart." How does Philippians 2:12–13 help us understand the relationship between God's grace and our effort in sanctification?

Application – How can God use this text in my life?

10. Where in your life are you asking God to show you the whole road when He may already have given you enough light to take the next faithful step? What is that step?
11. Has someone's treatment of you tempted you toward anger, retaliation, gossip, bitterness, unforgiveness, or some other response that would pull you from God's path? What would it look like to remain on the path without ignoring or excusing what happened?
12. The psalmist ends by saying God's testimonies are "the joy of my heart" and committing himself to obedience "forever, to the end." What would need to change for God's Word to become not merely something you obey, but something you increasingly treasure and enjoy?
13. The sermon concludes, "You don't need enough light to see the entire road. You need enough light to take the next faithful step." What is one faithful step God is calling you to take this week?