Key:
Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread
Blue – Explanation/Exposition
Red – Application
Green – Illustration
Brown – Quotation
Yellow – Sermon Notes

Sola Scriptura (Part 1)

Psalm 119:1–40

As you are being seated, go ahead and take your Bibles with me and turn to Psalm 119 in the Book of Psalms! For most of you if you open your Bibles to the halfway point (or maybe a little to the left of the halfway point) you will find the book of Psalms. It's the largest book of the Bible.[1] There are 150 chapters in the Psalter. And the psalm that we are going to look at today, Psalm 119, is the largest chapter in this book.

For the next four weeks, we are going to be reading and studying, not just the largest chapter in the Psalms, but the largest chapter in the entire Bible. There are 176 verses in this psalm. And if I could summarize those 176 verses for you with one sentence... with one statement... this is the statement I would use: "God's Word is a priceless treasure." Or let me say it this way: "The beauty, and the value, and the worth of God's Word in our lives is incalculable." It's inestimable. God's Word is a priceless treasure.

For the record, we are Messiah *Bible* Church... the Bible is our middle name. And Psalm 119 is an elaborate, expansive, poetic acrostic that expresses the goodness and the power of God's Holy Word.

Now I've entitled this series "*Sola Scriptura*," which if you don't know was a battle cry for the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago. Martin Luther not only emphasized the doctrines of *Solus Christus*, *Sola Fide*, and *Sola Gratia*—the core doctrines of salvation 'by Christ alone,' 'by faith alone,' and 'by grace alone'—but also challenged the church authorities over the basis for authority and instruction in the Christian church.

Luther fought hard for the concept of *Sola Scriptura*, which means in essence that Scripture alone is the authoritative standard in the life of a Christian. In other words, the Bible contains all knowledge necessary for salvation and holiness. That doesn't mean that no other authorities govern Christian life and devotion. But it does mean that all authorities (including the church) are subordinate to and corrected by the written word of God.

This, as many of you know, flew in the face of the church authorities of Luther's day. The church had drifted over time away from *Sola Scriptura* and began to view tradition, papal authority, experience, and other extra-biblical means as authoritative in the Christian life. But Luther and many who subsequently followed him in the Reformation held fast to "by Scripture alone," and thus the Protestant Reformation was born.

Michael Kruger, in his article "Scripture Alone" writes as follows:

> **This conviction of sola Scriptura… provided the fuel needed to ignite the Reformation. Indeed, it was regarded as the "formal cause" of the Reformation (whereas sola fide, or "faith alone," was regarded as the "material cause"). The sentiments of this doctrine are embodied in Martin Luther's famous speech [in 1521]… after he was asked to recant his teachings: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience…. May God help me. Amen."[2]**

Now what's interesting to me is how Luther's attitude corresponds quite closely to a psalmist who wrote centuries before him. In Psalm 119, the author gives essentially the same kind of confession,

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[1] Technically, Psalms is the third largest book (behind Jeremiah and Genesis) if you go by word count. See Jeffrey Kranz, "Word Counts for Every Book of the Bible," OverviewBible, May 29, 2014, https://overviewbible.com/word-counts-books-of-bible/.

[2] Michael Kruger, "Scripture Alone," Ligonier Ministries, November 1, 2012, https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/scripture-alone.

although the tone is a little less combative. We don't know who wrote Psalm 119. Like a third of the Psalms in the Psalter, this psalm is anonymous. Maybe David wrote it; maybe not.[3]

But unlike Luther, the author of Psalm 119 (whoever that is) uses poetry and an elaborate Hebrew acrostic to affirm his utter dependence on God's Word.[4] The poetic technique that he implements, which is called an acrostic, utilizes the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet: *Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, He, Waw, Zayin, Ḥeth, Teth, Yodh, Kaph, Lamedh, Mem, Nun, Samekh, Ayin, Peh, Tsade, Qoph, Resh, Sin/Shin, Taw.* The author uses these Hebrew letters to structure a poem/song that celebrates God's Word and exults in its treasures.[5] Like I said earlier, Psalm 119 is about God's Word, this priceless treasure. It's a poetic *masterpiece* talking about the *masterpiece* of God's Word, this revelation from God![6]

What the author gives us here is a wonderful confession, a wonderful testimony on how life-transforming and life-giving God's Word is. Not only is it authoritative for doctrine and essential for truth about God, it is also glorious. It is also a delight. It is also a comfort and a counsel in the midst of confusion. It is also "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (119:105).

These are the themes and the ideas that we are going to soak up and soak in for the next four weeks in our series *"Sola Scriptura."* Let's get started.

The church father, Augustine, said once that Psalm 119 doesn't need an expositor, it just needs a reader and a listener. In fact, he was so enamored and intimidated by this text at one point in his life, that he didn't comment on it, partly because he didn't "think he could do justice to its depth."[7] Well, fools rush in where angels fear to tread. And this pastor is going to rush in where (I guess!) church fathers fear to tread. And in this first of four messages I want to *exposit* verses 1–40 of this psalm for you.

So let's do this. Start here. I'm going to give you five points from the text that correspond to those first five stanzas in the text: *Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, and He.*

So write this down beside *aleph* as a first point from the text:

א) God's Word is a **blessing** to the **blameless** (119:1–8)

Look at **verse 1** with me.

[1] *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the* LORD*!*
[2] *Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,*
[3] *who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!*

So like I said, this psalm is an acrostic utilizing the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And so what that means is that **verses 1–8** all begin with the Hebrew letter *aleph.* And starting in **verse 9**, all of the verses in **verses 9–16** begin with the Hebrew letter *beth,* and so on and so forth. That's the poetic structure of this psalm.

Well the first word in this psalm which begins with the letter *aleph* is the Hebrew word אַשְׁרֵי (*ʾăš·rê*) which means "blessed." The first line starts with אַשְׁרֵי and the second line begins with אַשְׁרֵי.

[1] ***Blessed*** *are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the* LORD*!*
[2] ***Blessed*** *are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,*

Incidentally, this word אַשְׁרֵי is the first word that begins the book of **Psalms** in **Psalm 1**: "***Blessed*** is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of

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[3] Fifty psalms have no named author in their Hebrew superscriptions: Psalms 1–2; 10; 33; 43; 66–67; 71; 91–100; 102; 104–107; 111–121; 123; 125–126; 128–130; 132; 134–137; and 146–150. "Anonymous" here refers specifically to the absence of an author's name in the Hebrew heading; Acts 4:25–26 attributes Psalm 2 to David, and Hebrews 4:7 introduces Psalm 95 as spoken "through David."

[4] Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 858: "The beauty of this psalm lies not only in the recitation of devotion to the law but also in the psalmist's absolute devotion to the Lord. Most likely writing in the postexilic era, the psalmist knows firsthand the oppression of evil. He has been surrounded by wickedness, pursued by the arrogant and proud, and humbled by sorrow and disgrace; yet his refuge is in God. He constantly cries out to God, retreats into his shadow, and finds solace in his strength."

[5] Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 403: "The acrostic form gives a sense of completion and totality, and to be sure, by the end of the psalm, one feels that the poet has indeed fully covered his subject."

[6] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 858: "This is a psalm not only of law but also of love, not only of statute but also of spiritual strength, not only of devotion to precept but also of loyalty to the way of the Lord. The beauty in this psalm resounds from the relationship of the psalmist and his God."

[7] John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 3: Psalms 90–150,* BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 278.

scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (**1:1–2**). Many scholars see **Psalm 119** as a longer and more involved reiteration of **Psalm 1**. The ideas conveyed between those two psalms are very similar.

In **Psalm 119's** case, the idea is that "[those] who walk in the law of the Lord" are blessed. And "[those] who keep [the Lord's] testimonies" are blessed. Those who "do no wrong, but walk in his ways" are אַשְׁרֵי. This is Hebrew poetry at its finest. But it is poetry with a purpose. **The poet doesn't want you to just relish his artistic skill. He is teaching you something important. He wants you to be blessed!**

Look at **verse 4**.

4 You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.
5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

Now let me just stop here and point out something at this point. **Verse 5** signals a transition that will continue all the way till the end of the Psalm. The pronouns switch from third-person plural pronouns ("those" and "their") in **verses 1–3** to primarily first-person singular pronouns ("I" and "my") in **verses 5 to 176**. So from here on out in this psalm, it's no longer "blessed are those" or "blessed are they." It's instead...

*5 Oh that **my** ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!*

It's "***I*** have stored up your word in my heart, that ***I*** might not sin against you" (**119:11**). It's "***I*** will meditate on your precepts and fix ***my*** eyes on your ways" (**119:15**).

And by the way, it's never "we" or "us." I don't think the word "we" or the word "us" shows up one time in **Psalm 119. Some of you might want to fact check me on that.**

And why is that important? It's important because the commitment to God's Word isn't your mama's commitment. It's not your grandpa's commitment... or your husband's commitment... or your sister's commitment. It's not even your church's commitment, as important as that is!

Beyond your church's commitment, this needs to be your personal commitment. "Thy word is a lamp unto ***my*** feet and a light unto ***my*** path."

Look how the transition to first-person singular is initiated in **verse 5**:

*5 Oh that **my** ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!*
*6 Then **I** shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.*
*7 **I** will praise you with an upright heart, when **I** learn your righteous rules.*

Isn't that interesting? Your learning increases your praising! It's almost like having Scripture informs the way that we sing songs!

*8 **I** will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!*

There's a sense here where this psalm is a personal prayer offered before the Lord by the author. Like I said earlier, nobody knows who the author of this psalm was. Maybe David? Maybe Solomon? Maybe Asaph? Some people have suggested Hezekiah or even Daniel. We don't know. It's anonymous.

But there's a sense in which the prayer of the Psalmist needs to become our prayer. In other words, we need to personalize these statements.

*8 **I** will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!*

And for the person who does this, who hears and heeds God's Word, the psalmist says, **"God's Word will be a blessing to you."** It'll bless your life.

I've said this before, but this bears repeating. In my 48 years of life, and in my 40+ years of following Christ, nothing has been more meaningful to me in terms of spiritual growth, discipleship, and a growing relationship with God than daily encounters with God in his Word. Nothing! If I were stranded on a deserted island and could have only one resource, I'd pass on the hatchet. I'd pass on the fishing net. I'd pass on the flare gun. Just give me my Bible! I'd rather die on that island with a Bible in my hand than live without it.

God's Word is a blessing to the blameless. Write this down as a second point from our message:

ב) God's Word is a **delight** to the **disciple** (119:9–16)

Actually before we move on to the second stanza, the *beth* strophe, let me make one clarifying statement about blamelessness. **God's Word is a blessing to the blameless, but blamelessness isn't established by treasuring God's Word. Everyone with me?**

On this side of the cross we know that blamelessness is established by faith in Christ, and by the work of the truly "Blameless One." And that was true for the OT saints as well, although their fear of

God and faith in God were predicated on a future work. For us, on this side of the cross, it's based on a finished work.

And as Bible-believing Christians, we don't just hold to *Sola Scriptura*. We also hold to *Sola Fide* and *Sola Gratia* ("By faith alone" and "by grace alone"). So I want to guard against the idea that "Bible study" and "Bible commitment" are what save you. Those things don't save you; Christ saves you.

But once you have that salvation! Once you realize that your blamelessness is a result of Christ's work not your own, then you can experience fully the blessings of God's Word as he teaches you and instructs you how to walk in accordance with your faith in Christ. Is that clear, church?

The Bible is our source for truth and revelation, but the Bible didn't save us. Christ saved us. We don't worship the Bible. We worship Christ. And part of our worship of Christ is to heed the instructions that he gave us in his Word.

And speaking of Christ, Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" **(Matt 28:19–20a)**. **One of the things that disciple-makers do is teach all that Jesus has given us in his Word. And one of the things that disciples do is learn all the things that Jesus has given us in his Word. And this should never be viewed strictly as a duty, or, God forbid, a drudgery. It should be a delight. God's Word is a delight to the disciple.**

Look at **verse 9** with me. The psalmist begins this second stanza by asking:

[9] How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

"Pastor Tony, do you see what's going on right now? Our society is a mess! All our young people are hooked on porn. People are hooking up indiscriminately. Everyone is having sex before marriage. Adultery is rampant. Homosexuality is rampant. Our society is over-sexed and over-stimulated, and we are drowning in a sea of sensuality. How can a young man possibly keep his way pure? Is that even attainable in today's world?"

Is anyone asking these questions? Is anyone worried about their children or their grandchildren and the future generation? I am! And here's the answer.

[9] How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

Listen, hear me on this everyone. The only way that you're going to combat the addictions of worldliness in this life is to fix your eyes on Jesus and take heed according to his Word. You've got to cling to it. You've got to delight in it. You've got to believe that God has something better for you than the pleasurable enticements of this world.

I'm not going to tell you that sin isn't fun. It is fun for a season. But you will reap the whirlwind. And God has something better for you if you will guard your ways according to his Word.

You might say, "Tony, you sound angry." I am angry! I'm angry about families being destroyed by sin. I'm angry at movies and shows that indoctrinate our young people. I'm angry that our government keeps endorsing and promoting sinful behavior. And I'm angry that generations of young people in this country can't keep their way pure, because they won't guard "it" (i.e., "their way") according to God's Word.

Listen, hear me on this, young people in the room especially. I think that probably Psalm 119 was written by an older person who was trying to give advice to younger people.[8] This is a bit of speculation. But I think this is probably speculation.

So here's my advice to you, young people. Take it from a middle-aged man who wants God's best for the next generation of Jesus followers—if you don't get a handle on your passions... if you don't allow God's Word to rule over your sex-drive, your sex-drive will dominate you! It will master you.

[9] How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

I say this as a 48-year-old man who's somewhere between young and old. Maybe more old than young these days! And yet I'm still young enough to be a fellow struggler with you in this battle for purity. But I am old enough to know the heartache that is associated with a lack of purity.

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[8] Longman, Psalms, TOTC, 404: "Wisdom is primarily addressed to the young who are making fundamental life choices, but the issue, of course, remains relevant for all people."

And if you don't have an unwavering commitment to God and his Word, you will get sucked into the vortex of sexual impurity in this world. And you will not come out unscathed. What follows here in verses 10–16 needs to be your prayer!

All of us need to own this and personalize this for ourselves.

10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!
11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

How good is that! **Have you done that? Have you stored up God's word in your heart?**

12 Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!
13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.
14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.
15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Now, let me just climb down off my high horse and say something. Let me balance truth with grace. Can God forgive sexual sin? Yes, he can and he does. Can God forgive, redeem, and restore regardless of what you've done in the past? Yes, he can. And if you've made mistakes, God can replenish the years that the locusts have eaten!

God can purify you. And he will if you'll ask him. He can do that by first saving your soul. God can cleanse you and save you, if you'll ask him. If you will repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You can do that right now.

And if you are saved, I believe that God can sanctify you and purify your conduct in keeping with obedience to Jesus Christ. Ask God to do that right now! Ask God for victory!

And here's what a believer does. Here's what someone who is being sanctified by God's truth does —you open up God's Word and you treasure it. You delight in it. And you realize, "When God says, 'Don't do that,' He means 'Don't hurt yourself.'" "Don't damage this good thing that I've given you."

Write this down as the third point of the message from the *gimel* section.

ג) God's Word is an **aid** to the **afflicted** (119:17–24)

Look at **verse 17** with me.

17 Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word.
18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.
19 I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!

Notice, if you will, the repeated words used to describe Holy Scripture. We have "word" and "law" and "commandments" in these three verses. Previously, we've seen "statutes," "precepts," and "testimonies." These words will be repeated throughout this entire psalm. They are different words that express the quality and the majesty of Scripture. This is part of the poetic masterpiece that is **Psalm 119**.

And this statement in **verse 19** is really quite remarkable.

19 I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!

This is remarkable, because so much of an Israelite's identity was wrapped up in the land. Still is for that matter! And for this Israelite to say, "I am a sojourner on the earth" (i.e., "this world is not my home") is really quite prophetic. This psalmist knows that a future home awaits him, a New Jerusalem if you will, that is free of pain and affliction and temptation, that transcends the world we live in now.

Look at **verse 20**.

20 My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.
21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments.
22 Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies.
23 Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes.

Maybe this was an ancient king, and other ancient kings were coming after him!

24 Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

Literally that says there "your testimonies are [the men of my counsel]." In other words, **"I've got a cabinet of advisers... I've got an army of counselors on call 24/7... and their names are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, etc."** On this side of the cross, we would add **Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans**, etc., etc. **These are counselors in times of trouble.**

Listen to this. Here's a gut check for us as a church and as a society:

- **In 2005, the U.S. spent $135 billion on mental health issues. That was roughly 1% of our GDP.**[9] **The Washington Post reported at that time that most of those mental health dollars go toward prescription drugs and outpatient treatment.**[10]
- **A Wall Street Journal report in 2011 shows that 1 in 5 Americans takes at least one psychiatric drug such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anti-anxiety medications.**[11]
- **More recently, a study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* in September 2026 estimated annual spending on mental health and substance use care at $174 billion, based on data from 2021–2023.**[12]
- **According to a CDC report published in June 2026, nearly one in five American adults—19.3%—took prescription medication for their mental health in 2024. And one in seven—14%—received counseling or therapy from a mental health professional during that year.**[13]
- **A study published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* in 2025 estimated that spending on adult outpatient psychotherapy reached $51 billion in 2021, up from $30.8 billion in 2018—a 66% increase after adjusting for inflation.**[14]

The reality is that we are spending more and more money on mental health issues. And at the same time, we as a country are gravitating away from biblical truth and biblical principles. Correlation not causation? I don't know. You be the judge.

Now, if you are here this morning and you receive medical or therapeutic treatment for mental health issues, my goal is not to shame you or get you to stop. But I would ask you to consider this—how might God address the problems of your soul through the power and the efficacy of his Word?

[24] *Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.*

The reality is that most Americans seek counsel from the medical community regarding soul issues, before they would ever consult the Bible. **And let me challenge you in that, church. Before you ever fill a prescription, and before you ever call and make an appointment with a therapist who disregards the truth of the Bible—choose your therapists wisely, by the way—ask yourself this question, *"Have I allowed the testimonies of God to speak into my life?"* Have I submitted myself to the counsel of God's Word, in the same way that I would submit to the counsel of a psychologist or a therapist or a psychiatrist?**

Now don't get me wrong, I don't want to treat the Bible like a medicine cabinet where we just pop verses like we pop pills. But I think there is a sense in which *some* mental health issues are sin issues, not physiological issues. They are matters of the soul, not matters of the body. And you can't medicate soul issues.

When God says "don't" in his Word he means "don't hurt yourself!" When God says, "Do this!" he's saying, "This is the best way to live your life according to the specifications of your creator." If you go against those things, then you go against them to your own detriment. And no amount of therapy or medication can correct that. God's Word is an aid to the afflicted. God's word is an aid to those in mental and physical anguish.

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[9] Tami L. Mark et al., "Changes in US Spending on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment, 1986–2005, and Implications for Policy," *Health Affairs* 30, no. 2 (2011): 284–92, https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2010.0765.

[10] Sarah Kliff, "Seven Facts about America's Mental Health-Care System," *Washington Post*, December 17, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2012/12/17/seven-facts-about-americas-mental-health-care-system/.

[11] Shirley S. Wang, "Psychiatric Drug Use Spreads," *Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 2011, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203503204577040431792673066.

[12] Carlos Blanco et al., "Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Expenditures in the US," *JAMA Psychiatry*, published online September 30, 2026, https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2026.3120.

[13] Elizabeth M. Briones and Maria A. Villarroel, "Mental Health Treatment Among Adults: United States, 2024," *NCHS Data Brief*, no. 564 (June 2026), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db564.htm.

[14] Mark Olfson et al., "Psychotherapy Trends in the United States," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 182, no. 5 (2025): 488, https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.20240492.

God's word is like a surgeon's scalpel. It cuts to heal. It's not like a hatchet that hacks and chops. D.A. Carson said once, **"The Word of God wounds and heals, it sings and stings."**[15] **It's an aid to the afflicted.**

Let's continue. The Psalmist says in **verse 25**:

[25] My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!

Talk about mental health issues! You might say, **"This guy sounds depressed right here."**

[25] My soul clings to the dust;

If you've read through the Psalter before, you know that there's a fair amount of this in Scripture. There's a lot of what scholars call "lament" in the OT. In fact there's a whole book of laments called **Lamentations**.

In this case, the depression of the author leads him to cry out in grief, "My soul clings to the dust!" In other words, **"I'm feeling terrible; I couldn't feel any worse!" "It's as if I'm on the ground hugging the earth!"**

And who knows what happened to this Psalmist to make him feel this way! Maybe he's going through a conflict with his wife or one of his kids. Maybe he just found out that he has leprosy. Maybe he just found out that the Assyrians are heading for Israel, and they're out for blood this time.

What's he going to do about it? What does he do about it? Call the doctor? Call the ambulance? Call the priest?

No! He doesn't do that. He calls on the Lord. He goes to the Word of God.

Look at **verse 26**.

[26] When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes!
[27] Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
[28] My soul melts away for sorrow;[16]

Literally "my soul ***leaks*** from sorrow." **Do you ever feel that way, Christian? Like your soul is leaking oil? What do you do about it?**

[28] My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!
[29] Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law!
[30] I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me.
[31] I cling to your testimonies, O LORD;

That's the same verb in **verse 31** that we saw in **verse 25**. "My soul ***clings*** to the dust." Now the psalmist says, "I ***cling*** to your testimonies."

[31] I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame!
*[32] I will **run** in the way of your commandments*

The NT puts a lot of emphasis on walking. We walk in Christ (**Col 2:6**). We walk in the light of God's commandments (**1 John 1:7; 2 John 6**). But this psalmist says, **"I'm not just going to walk... I'm going to run in the way of your commandments."**

*[32] I will **run** in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!*

By the way, enlarging the heart—that's a good thing. That's not heart disease. He's saying, **"God, you enlarge my affections for you. You increase the skills of my decision-making faculties (i.e. my heart)!"**

Write this down as a fourth point from our message under *daleth* stanza.

ד) God's Word is a **solace** to the **sorrowful** (119:25–32)

I read a story once about the French philosopher Voltaire who used to say concerning Christ, "Curse the wretch." He also boasted, "In twenty years Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear." Voltaire was proud, confident, cynical. But when he died, he cried in desperation, "I am abandoned by God and man! I give you half of what I am worth if

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[15] D. A. Carson, response in "The SBJT Forum: Profiles of Expository Preaching," Southern Baptist Journal of Theology 3, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 95, https://cdn.sbts.edu/documents/sbjt/sbjt_1999summer8.pdf.

[16] Longman, Psalms, TOTC, 404: "Verse 28 once more registers present pain, and he calls on God to help him on the basis of his word."

you will give me six months' life. Then I shall go to hell; and you will go with me. O Christ! O Jesus Christ!"[17]

That story brings to mind the well-known saying, **"There are no atheists in foxholes." Doug Wilson** said once that **"there are two basic tenets to Atheism: (1) There is no God, and (2) I hate him."**[18] Without God there is no solace for the sorrowful.

Now compare Voltaire's words with the last words of Adoniram Judson, the famous American missionary to Burma who said while suffering immensely on his deathbed, **"I go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school, I feel so strong in Christ."**[19]

I had a professor once who used to tell us that you can't really understand the Psalms until you are about 60 years old. I was kind of put off by that statement. And he said it because he believed that young people were still too self-reliant and confident in their mental and physical strength to really lean on God in the midst of weakness. But once you get older and the disappointments of life stack up, and the brevity of life starts to become clearer, you learn how to lament and how to find solace and comfort in God's Word.

Maybe he's right. Maybe it's easier and more natural for those who are 60+ to do that. But I think that this reality can hit home with a person at any age. I mean, let's face it, we are all just a few missteps away from eternity, and life is incredibly fragile.

And here's the question that all of us have to answer no matter how old we are—Where does one find meaning in the brevity of life? Where does one find solace from the never-ending attacks of the enemy? Where does one find comfort in the midst of tragedy and heartbreak?

Here's the answer. Here's what Psalm 119 teaches—God's Word is a solace to the sorrowful!

Write this down as a final point as part of the *he* section. One more point and then an application. Here's the fifth point...

ה) God's Word is **life-giving** to the **listener** (119:33–40)

Look at **verse 33**.

[33] Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.
[34] Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

Now let me ask you a question. Who is the Psalmist speaking to in these verses? Only the Almighty Creator of the universe, right? And yet he is speaking with such audacity and with such impertinence, you wonder if he might get struck dead talking to God like that.

[33] Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;
[34] Give me understanding [O LORD], that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

Wow! Who talks to God like that? With commands? Maybe we should do more of this.

I read several years ago about a man named Peter Cartwright who was a great circuit-riding Methodist preacher in Illinois in the 1800s. Well one Sunday morning when he was scheduled to preach, the deacons of the church came to him and told him that President Andrew Jackson was in the congregation. And these deacons knew that Cartwright was accustomed to saying whatever he wanted, so they warned him not to say anything that would offend the president.

So during the service at the appropriate time Cartwright stood up to preach and said, "I understand President Andrew Jackson is here. I have been requested to be guarded in my remarks. [So let me start by saying this] Andrew Jackson will go to Hell if he does not repent."

Well the church and the deacons were mortified by this, and they were all very concerned at how the president would respond. But after the service President Jackson went right up to Cartwright and said, "Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could whip the world."[20]

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[17] Herbert Lockyer, *Last Words of Saints and Sinners* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1969), 132–3.

[18] Douglas Wilson, "Shrill Relativistic Crusades," Blog & Mablog, July 1, 2005, https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s21-atheism-and-apologetics/shrill-relativistic-crusades.html.

[19] Lockyer, *Last Words of Saints and Sinners*, 70. Quoted in R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway, 1996), 108.

[20] Taken and adapted from Hughes, *Acts,* 64.

Now, with similar impertinence, this Psalmist is not just addressing the President of the United States, he's addressing Almighty Yahweh, the one who created everything *ex nihilo* in six days and could eradicate whole planets with the snap of his fingers. And yet this Psalmist would actually use imperatives before the LORD. He would actually pray commands to the Lord![21]

So we have this string of commands from petitioner to the God who is being petitioned.

[33] ***Teach*** *me, O LORD …*
[34] ***Give*** *me understanding…*
[35] ***Lead*** *me in the path of your commandments…*

Let me read the entirety of this *He* stanza, and discern for yourself what the psalmist is asking for. And see if this is something that the Lord would be offended at the psalmist asking.

[33] ***Teach*** *me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.*
[34] ***Give*** *me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.*
[35] ***Lead*** *me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.*
[36] ***Incline my heart*** *to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!*
[37] ***Turn my eyes*** *from looking at worthless things; and* ***give me*** *life in your ways.*
[38] ***Confirm*** *to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.*
[39] ***Turn away*** *the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good.*
[40] *Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness* ***give me*** *life!*

Now let me just clarify what's going on here. The psalmist is not asking the Lord to do something that is contrary to his nature. He is not asking God to do something that he hasn't promised to do elsewhere. He is actually asking God to do something that God delights to do. The psalmist is manifesting here an insatiable desire to know God and to feast on his truths.[22]

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied" (**Matt 5:6**). That's what this Psalmist is doing here. He hungers and he thirsts for God's word.

Do you want to please the Lord, church? Do you want to put a smile on his face? Then, do this! Hunger for God's life-giving Word. Long for his commandments. Thirst for his principles. Incline your heart toward his testimonies. Listen and obey the life-giving Word of God.

And don't just be a hearer of God's Word. Listening is more than just hearing. Listening is heeding. Listening is doing. You listen and you obey and you drink deeply of God's Word.

God's Word is a **blessing** to the **blameless** (119:1–8)
God's Word is a **delight** to the **disciple** (119:9–16)
God's Word is an **aid** to the **afflicted** (119:17–24)
God's Word is a **solace** to the **sorrowful** (119:25–32)
God's Word is **life-giving** to the **listener** (119:33–40)

I'll close with this. I want to close with a challenge. I want to close with a super practical application for all of us as a church. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." **Psalm 119:11 says,** "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." **Those are probably the two most famous verses in this chapter.**

But what does it mean to "store up [God's] Word" **in our hearts? Well the Hebrew word for "**store up**" in that verse is the Hebrew word** צָפַן (*ṣā·pān*) **which means to "**hide**" or to "**save up**" or to "**treasure**."**

How do you "hide**" God's Word in your heart? You memorize! You memorize it!**

Here's my challenge to you, church. I challenge you to memorize one of the stanzas from Psalm 119. It can be the *aleph* stanza. It could be the *beth* stanza. It could be the *he* stanza that we just worked through with all of the imperative statements before the Lord:

[33] ***Teach*** *me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;*
[34] ***Give*** *me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.*

I challenge you to memorize one of those 8-verse sections. Maybe you can split up this assignment with some of the members of your small group and memorize the whole chapter together… that would be fantastic!

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[21] Some of this is a byproduct of the acrostic. Because each of these words in the *He* strophe has to begin with the letter *He*. And so the poet uses seven Hifil stem verbs (the Hifil stem in Hebrew begins with *He*) and uses the imperative mood of those verbs.

[22] Longman, Psalms, TOTC, 405: "He delights in God's law, but needs God's guidance as to how to obey it."

I challenge you all to memorize one of those 8-verse sections. And do this too—recite it prayerfully each day before you begin your daily devotions.

If you say, "I believe God's Word is a blessing to the blameless, Pastor Tony," and "I believe in the power of God's Word," then I say, "Prove it!" Hide God's Word in your heart.

For some of you, I know you could knock that out in a week or two, no problem. For some of you it'll take a month or two or maybe to the end of the year. Whatever the case, whatever your abilities are to memorize, I challenge you to hide God's Word in your heart. Let's do that together. Let's challenge each other with this. Pray with me!

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[23] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 859: "The word "law" has both a broad and a narrow meaning. In the broad sense it refers to any "instruction" flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action. In the narrow sense it denotes the Torah of Moses, whether the Pentateuch, the priestly law, or the Deuteronomic law."

[24] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 859: "'Word' (*dābār*, GK 1821) occurs twenty-four times. Any word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord is *dābār*, whether it pertains to the Decalogue (Dt 4:13), the law of Moses (Dt 4:2, 10), or the word revealed through the prophets. It is a most general designation for divine revelation, whether of expectation or promise."

[25] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 859: The word *ʿēdût* is derived from *ʿwd* ("witness," "testify") and is used idiomatically in "the two tablets of the Testimony" (Ex 31:18) and "the ark of the Testimony" (Ex 25:22). The tablets and the ark were symbols of the covenantal relationship; hence "testimony" is often synonymous with "covenant" (cf. 25:10; 132:12). The observance of the "statutes" of the Lord signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant made between the Lord and Israel (cf. 99:7; Dt 4:45; 6:17, 20)."

[26] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 859–60: ""Decrees" (*ḥuqqîm*, GK 2976) occurs twenty-one times. The noun is derived from the root *ḥqq* ("engrave," "inscribe"). God, being the Author of his decrees, reveals his royal sovereignty by establishing his divine will in nature (148:6) and in the covenantal community (50:16; 105:10; cf. Dt 4:1)."

[27] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 861: "To walk in God's ways (v. 3) requires steadfastness, regularity, and discipline rather than a haphazard response."

[28] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 862: "The psalmist's 'delight' is not only in knowing the 'ways,' 'decrees' (ḥuqqîm), and 'word' (dābār) of the Lord, but also in their careful practice (vv. 15–16)."

[29] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 864: "Though the opposition of the community and its 'rulers' may be great, the psalmist receives joy ('delight,' v. 24; cf. v. 16), comfort, and guidance from God's 'statutes' (ʿēdôt), which serve as his 'counselors.'"

[30] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 865: "The word of God has the power to comfort ('strengthen') those overwhelmed with sorrow."

[31] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 866: "In these petitions a tone of humility and dependence comes through."