

# PSALM 119.169-176

psalm  
God's Word 119

T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

Psalm 119.169-176

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## Introduction to Psalm 119.169-176

The final stanza of Psalm 119 reminds us of the essential link between prayer, the Word of God, and the life of obedience. This theme has been present throughout Psalm 119, but it comes into sharper focus here as the psalm wraps up and the psalmist declares his utter dependence on the Lord.

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We hope you find this study of Psalm 119 instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Conversing with God

*Pray Psalm 119.169.*

Let my cry come before YOU, O LORD;  
Give me understanding according to Your word.

*Sing Psalm 119.169, 170.*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Let my cry come up before You, holy, righteous, loving Lord;  
give me understanding so to live according to Your Word.  
Let my prayer rise up before You; by Your Word redeem me, Lord!

*Read Psalm 119.169-176; meditate on verse 169.*

*Preparation*

1. For what did the psalmist cry to the Lord?
2. What standard or guide shaped that prayer?

*Meditation*

Prayer and Scripture reading are often regarded as two separate disciplines. They are not. We can do neither well apart from the other. We need prayer for God to open His Word to us; and we need His Word to guide us in our prayers as in all of life.

We've seen this throughout Psalm 119, but the interdependent nature of these foundational disciplines comes to the fore in this, the  $\Pi$  (*tau*) and final stanza of our psalm. We see it right here in verse 169. The psalmist cries out to the Lord in prayer that he might have understanding according to the Word of God. What does he want to understand? Obviously, the teaching of the Word. But also, how that Word applies to all his ways (since he knows God is watching them, v. 168).

Our time in the Word should be like a conversation in which we listen to God speaking in His Word, respond to Him concerning what we're reading, listen some more in silence as the Spirit stirs in resonance or conviction within us, and then ask questions, express our thoughts, make observations, and listen some more. We should end our time with praise and thanks to God Who deigns to commune with sinful, straying people such as we (v. 176).

When we're reading the Bible, we're not just trying to record thoughts in our mind, to gain more knowledge about what the Bible teaches. Our aim is for the Word of God to enter and transform us, shape and mold us, and make us more like Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18). This is best accomplished not merely as we read what God has written, but as we commune with Him in conversation over His Word.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.*

We have a lovely coffee-table book entitled *American Writers at Home* which offers descriptions and pictures of where each featured writer goes to meet their muse. Paul Tournier wrote a wonderful book called *A Place for You* which speaks of each person's need for a "place" of their own. I can sweetly envision in my mind's eye where our daughters go in their own homes for their morning quiet times with the Lord, and I know where we go each morning for this precious time with the Triune God in our home. Just as writers go to a particular place to write, we all need a special place to meet with the Lord. Jesus offered a sweet suggestion when He said, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matt. 6.6). And please, when we are together, "Give me understanding according to Your word" (Ps. 119.169).

Meeting with the Lord in the fellowship and communion of prayer and Scripture is the best time of the day. Every day. That incredibly special time of reading His Words, listening to Him speak to us there, learning from Him, being convicted of sin, experiencing forgiveness, talking about the upcoming day with Him, and being refreshed in our spirit by the Spirit of God for strength and encouragement before we go out into our Personal Mission Field to do the works prepared for us to do from the beginning (Eph. 2.10). “Give me the common sense You promised” as I do this. (Ps. 119.169 TLB).

“Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints!

For the LORD preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person.

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart,

All you who hope in the LORD” (Ps. 31.23, 24).

Meet Him, fellowship with Him in your special place here and now, and anticipate with joy that new place He is preparing for you there and then (Jn. 14.1-4).

*For reflection*

1. Why does it make sense that prayer and Scripture reading should be practiced together?
2. We pray for understanding of God’s Word. How can you know when understanding has been granted?
3. Do you have a special place where you start your day with the Lord? Do you think this is a good idea? Explain.

*By the word cry he denotes earnestness. I am anxious, as if he had said, above all things, and am chiefly inflamed with this desire, (even as it is just and reasonable,) that the light of understanding by which we excel the lower animals, and approach very near to God, may be preferred by me to all earthly advantages. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.169*

*Pray Psalm 119.174-176.*

Call on the Lord to show you more of His salvation today, to keep you from straying from His path, and to give you mercy and grace to help for all your times of need.

*Sing Psalm 119.174-176.*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

For Your saving grace we plead, Lord, and Your Law is our delight.

We to live and praise You need, Lord, all Your help by day and night.

Straying sheep, we do not heed, Lord; come and seek us by Your might!

## 2 He Is Able

*Pray Psalm 119.170.*

Let my supplication come before You;  
Deliver me according to Your word.

*Sing Psalm 119.169, 170.*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Let my cry come up before You, holy, righteous, loving Lord;  
give me understanding so to live according to Your Word.  
Let my prayer rise up before You; by Your Word redeem me, Lord!

*Read Psalm 119.169-176; meditate on verse 170.*

*Preparation*

1. What kind of prayer is this?
2. What was the psalmist asking?

*Meditation*

In the previous verse, the psalmist prayed for understanding, both *of* the Word and *by* the Word for every aspect of life. Here the focus of his prayer changes a bit. He is keenly aware of his daily need for deliverance, and so he offers supplications to the Lord to that end.

How comforting and emboldening it is to know that our God can deliver us. I think of Daniel's friends, looking into that fiery furnace, and saying without flinching, "Our God is able to deliver us!" (Dan. 3.17) Ultimately, of course, we rejoice in the knowledge that God will deliver us to Himself. He has addressed our souls to His eternal throne, stamped us with the image of His own Son, and sealed and deposited us into the care of His Spirit to deliver us in His time to our eternal home.

But we're in need of deliverance every day. When temptations arise. When trials befall us. When we're confused or uncertain or need a decision *now*. God is able to deliver us, and He will always do so according to His Word. That is, He will keep His promises. He will bless obedience. He will chasten and discipline when we stray. He will encourage and embolden as we act in faith. All this He has told us plainly in His Word. And this is the deliverance we seek, deliverance according to what God has said, that we might continue on His pathway of blessedness, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

We should at all times pray that God will deliver us; and as we increase in our knowledge of His Word, we will be more confident of His power to deliver and know greater boldness for obedience in all our ways.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

This verse reminds me of Queen Esther's plight, as she contemplated the need to appear before the king to request that she and her people be saved. She knew that unsummoned, any person who appeared in the king's court was usually put to death. But after words of stern encouragement from Mordecai, she decided to proceed before the throne. And happily, for her, she was welcomed by the king into his presence (Esth. 4.10-5.3).

The psalmist was asking of the Lord, "Please let my supplication come before You; and deliver me according to Your word" (Ps. 119.170). And happily, for him, God also welcomed him into His Presence.

We pray the same thing to our heavenly Father and He welcomes us into His Presence to deliver us from evil

according to His Word (Matt. 6.13). “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4.16).

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight” (Prov. 15.8).

“He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer” (Ps. 102.17).

“I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of your servant which I pray before You now, day and night... (Neh. 1.5, 6).

Our confidence is in the Lord our God, and we rejoice to be able to come before Him in prayer. And as we bring our supplications to Him, we can remember many others who, according to His Word, have received help from God: Daniel and his friends, Queen Esther and her people, and Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were going into a battle of two against an entire garrison of Philistines. And Jonathan’s courageous call to action? “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few” (1 Sam. 14.6).

“He is able.” What prevents us from supplicating the Lord for our deliverance according to His Word?

*For reflection*

1. God is able to deliver. Where do you need Him to deliver you today?
2. What is the difference between “supplication” and “intercession”? Do your prayers include both?
3. Why do we “need deliverance every day”?

*His own hands are not sufficient, nor can any creature lend him help; therefore he looks up to God, that the hand that had made him may help him. He had made religion his deliberate choice. There is an eternal salvation all the saints long for, and therefore they pray that God would help their way to it. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.170*

*Pray Psalm 119.172, 173.*

Pray that God will give you an opportunity to speak His Word to someone today – to encourage, to bear witness, to praise and extol. Call on Him to keep His hand on you so that you will know what to say when the opportunity arises.

*Sing Psalm 119.172, 173.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

With our lips we praise You, Jesus, for You teach us, full and free.  
Now Your Word will ever please us; Your commandments true shall be.  
Let Your hand come forth to ease us; we Your Word choose gratefully!

### 3 Learning to Praise

*Pray Psalm 119.171.*

My lips shall utter praise,  
For You teach me Your statutes.

*Sing Psalm 119.171-173.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

With our lips we praise You, Jesus, for You teach us, full and free.  
Now Your Word will ever please us; Your commandments true shall be.  
Let Your hand come forth to ease us; we Your Word choose gratefully!

*Read Psalm 119.169-176; meditate on verse 171.*

*Preparation*

1. What kind of prayer is this?
2. What prompted the psalmist to this prayer?

*Meditation*

How can we know when we are really learning God's Word? If we can repeat back what we've heard on an exam or in conversation with a friend? If we see the connections between what we're reading and other parts of God's Word? Or if we manage to work out in our daily walk whatever God has spoken to us from His Word?

These all may indicate that learning is in process, but none of them, nor all of them together, are not yet full expressions of true learning. Paul wrote that the goal of all Christian instruction is love (1 Tim. 1.5), and that love must be directed first to God (Matt. 22.34-40). We have learned God's Word, that is, we can know that God has truly taught us His Word, when our hearts and minds are lifted up in love to Him and we open our mouths to praise Him for what He has shown us of Himself. Praise is the capstone and truest expression that God has taught us His Word and we are learning it as we should.

If we're reading God's Law – and all His Word – as we should, we're seeking not merely to learn doctrines or protocols for spiritual self-help. We're seeking to learn Jesus, as Jesus is the focus of all Scripture and what God the Spirit is working to shape us into (Eph. 4.17-24; Jn. 5.39; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). When we see Jesus in the Word, His beauty, goodness, wisdom, love, compassion, power, meekness, holiness, righteousness, and truth will provoke us to praise. How can we not adore and lavish praise on Him?

And as we praise Him for what we see of Him in His Word, we'll know that God is teaching us as He intends we should be taught.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“My lips shall utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes” (Ps. 119.171).

“I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments” (Ps. 119.7).

“Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments” (Ps. 119.164).

“Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful” (Ps. 147.1).

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“He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.



He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes;  
He casts out His hail like morsels; who can stand before His cold?  
He sends out His word and melts them;  
He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.  
He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel.  
He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them.  
Praise the LORD!" (Ps. 147.15-20)

Indeed, He has not dealt with other people in the same way that He deals with us. He has given us His Law. He has given us His Son. He has given us His judgments, statutes, and all His Word. And which of us can truly stand before His cold, or heat, or winds, or rain, or hurricanes, or tornadoes, or tsunamis, or earthquakes, or any of His powerful creation? And yet, He is also in the "still small voice" (1 Kgs. 19.12). His majestic power and tender love are indescribable (Eph. 3.18, 19).

We are a people most blessed. Unlike those who have not been given His judgments, we have. And in giving us the Law, He also made a way of escape for us from the eternal judgment of that Law by providing Jesus: our beautiful, good, wise, loving, compassionate, powerful, meek, holy, righteous, and truthful Savior! (Rom. 5.8)

We have so much to be thankful and to praise Him for. Really, could seven times a day ever be enough? "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You"! (Ps. 84.4) Forever, to the end.

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus, Love of every love the best;  
'Tis an ocean vast of blessing, 'Tis a haven sweet of rest,  
O the deep, deep love of Jesus, 'Tis a Heav'n of Heav'ns to me;  
And it lifts me up to glory, For it lifts me up to Thee.*  
(Francis/Williams, 1890)

*For reflection*

1. How would you explain to a new believer what's involved in seeking Jesus in God's Word?
2. Why is this so important? How can doing so increase and enhance our praise to God?
3. Why has God given us His Word? What does He expect us to do with it?

*Lord, what I pray for is, what thou hast promised. We have learned nothing to purpose, if we have not learned to praise God.*  
Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.171*

*Pray Psalm 119.169, 170.*

Pray for understanding of God's Word, and that God's Word will lead you to understand how to serve Him today. Seek His mercy and grace for deliverance from trials, temptations, and troubles.

*Sing Psalm 119.169, 170.*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Let my cry come up before You, holy, righteous, loving Lord;  
give me understanding so to live according to Your Word.  
Let my prayer rise up before You; by Your Word redeem me, Lord!

## 4 Kingdom-Speak

*Pray Psalm 119.172.*

My tongue shall speak of Your word,  
For all Your commandments are righteousness.

*Sing Psalm 119.171-173.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

With our lips we praise You, Jesus, for You teach us, full and free.  
Now Your Word will ever please us; Your commandments true shall be.  
Let Your hand come forth to ease us; we Your Word choose gratefully!

*Read Psalm 119.169-176; meditate on verses 172.*

*Preparation*

1. What did the psalmist resolve to speak?
2. How did he regard the commandments of God?

*Meditation*

Imagine that your employer transfers you to a different country. It's a promotion and holds lots of promise for your future, so you gladly accept.

Of course, you'll have to learn a new language. And you'll need to adapt to the culture of the place, which is far different from that with which you're familiar. But the promises attached to your new calling are so many and so wonderful that you take up the challenge and work at it diligently.

We have been called and conveyed to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12). In His Kingdom, the language we speak is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18). Great satisfaction and fulfillment await us as we learn the language and ways of the Kingdom – encoded in God's Law – and teach them to others (Matt. 5.17-19). The more we read, meditate in, and carry out the teachings of God's Word, the more our words and ways will reflect the Kingdom of God into which Jesus has conveyed us by His life, death, and resurrection.

Read and study the Word and commandments of God to let God's Spirit shape you more into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18). But read and study the Word so that you can speak the Good News of the Kingdom to the people in your Personal Mission Field, encouraging urging them to know righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit by receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord.

We're in the Kingdom now. We need to learn the language and lore of this glorious place, so that the promises of God can flow through us to others by His grace.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

We are in His Kingdom now, and so pleased and excited to be here. We cannot help but speak!

“My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer” (Ps. 45.1).

“My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long...” (Ps. 71.23, 24).

“And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long” (Ps. 35.28).

In the Kingdom we also should speak to others in a better way. There should be a purpose to all our words.

“With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth” (Ps. 119.13).

“My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteous” (Ps. 119.172).

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Eph. 4.29).

And how shall we improve in our words? Through knowing Jesus in His Word.

“The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips” (Prov. 16.23).

“The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly...” (Prov. 15.2).

“The wise in heart will be called prudent, and sweetness of the lips increases learning” (Prov. 16.21).

In this Kingdom the heavens declare the glory of God...and there is nowhere that the voice of creation is not heard...their words have gone out to the end of the world (Ps. 19.1-4). All creation praises the LORD: sea creatures and all the depths, fire and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds, and mountains, hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, kings, princes, judges and all people praise the LORD (Ps. 149.7-11). “Let them praise the name of the LORD, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven” (Ps. 149.13).

“We’re in the Kingdom now.” And as members of this Kingdom the Holy Spirit longs to help us learn the language and the proper ways of living in it here and now, “so that the promises of God can flow through us to others by His grace.”

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19.14).

Kingdom-Speak to Praise the LORD!

*For reflection*

1. Why does it matter so much that our words should reflect our calling to God’s Kingdom?
2. How would you explain the Kingdom of God and what it means for us to a new believer?
3. Whom will you encourage today to give thanks and praise to the Lord?

*Here the Psalmist says, that when he shall have profited in God's law he will also employ himself in teaching it to others. This order is undoubtedly to be observed, That divine truth take root in our hearts before we engage in the work of teaching it to others. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.172*

*Pray Psalm 119.174-176.*

Pray that God will give you an opportunity today to speak the word of salvation to someone in your Personal Mission Field – to encourage a fellow believer or to explain the Gospel to a lost soul.

*Sing Psalm 119.174-176.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

For Your saving grace we plead, Lord, and Your Law is our delight.

We to live and praise You need, Lord, all Your help by day and night.

Straying sheep, we do not heed, Lord; come and seek us by Your might!

## 5 Help and Salvation

*Pray Psalm 119.173, 174.*

Let Your hand become my help,  
For I have chosen Your precepts.  
I long for Your salvation, O LORD,  
And Your law *is* my delight.

*Sing Psalm 119.171-173.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

With our lips we praise You, Jesus, for You teach us, full and free.  
Now Your Word will ever please us; Your commandments true shall be.  
Let Your hand come forth to ease us; we Your Word choose gratefully!

*Read Psalm 119.169-176; meditate on verses 173, 174.*

*Preparation*

1. What was the psalmist seeking from the Lord?
2. Where did he expect to find this?

*Meditation*

The writer of Hebrews explains that we who believe in Jesus have received “so great a salvation” (Heb. 2.3). Salvation is a work of God’s grace by which He makes all things new in our life – how we think, what we desire, our priorities, conversation, work, relationships, cultural involvement – everything! We don’t experience all this right off the bat, of course; we must “work out” our salvation in fear and trembling, knowing that, as we do, God will be at work within us, making us willing and able to do that which meets with His pleasure (Phil. 2.12, 13). This is what the psalmist has in focus here.

He wants “help” for the day ahead while he continues to long for more of God’s salvation. And he knows where to find each of these: in the precepts and laws of God’s Word. We see a classic Hebrew parallelism here:

A “help”  
B “precepts”  
A<sup>1</sup> “salvation”  
B<sup>1</sup> “law”

As is clear here, throughout Psalm 119, and in all the Scriptures, no contradiction or opposition exists between the salvation of God and His Law. To desire God’s salvation is to delight in His Law. All who are saved, therefore, will delight in God’s Law and look to His Word for help in all their daily needs. By daily obedience to the Law, we unpack the wonders and power of our great salvation in love for God and neighbors. Conversely, to neglect the Law is to reject God’s help and to despise His great salvation.

So as we pray and read God’s Word, let us eagerly seek mercy and grace for all our daily times of need and, at the same time, long for God to grant us even more of our great salvation.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“A present is a precious stone in the eyes of its possessor;  
wherever he turns, he prospers” (Prov. 17.8).

What a gift! God’s loving hand reaches out to help us, and He offers us salvation. We are filled with delight

when we receive and possess His precepts and laws (Ps. 119.173, 174).

Faced with the knowledge that the payment for our sins is death, we gladly receive this gift, this precious stone, from God which “is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”. This salvation is by God’s grace through faith, and even that is not by or through us, it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2.8)

No matter how diligently we might shop the biggest store or the most complete catalog, we could never come up with a present so grand. Only God can supply something that gives eternal gratification and success. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (Jms. 1.17).

There is no other gift that we desire, so our response then is “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart” (Ps. 40.8).

Cherishing this precious stone we dare never turn from its Giver, “once enlightened”, and having “tasted the heavenly gift” (Heb. 6.4). We must never find ourselves in the same situation King Saul did. God had sent him on a specific and detailed mission which Saul chose to do his own way, and not God’s way. And the question was put to him, “Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD?” (1 Sam. 15.19) Could the same question be put to us? Hopefully no, not if we are meditating in God’s law day and night (Ps. 1.2), learning to obey His voice.

Lord, hold my hand, lead me. I have chosen to follow You and all Your law. This is my greatest possession and delight. I love You and Your salvation. My life is wrapped up in You. Forever, to the very end (Ps. 119.173, 174, 112).

*For reflection*

1. What is the appropriate response to the gift of such a great salvation?
2. Why do we need God’s Word to understand the whole scope of this great salvation?
3. Whom will you encourage today to seek more of our great salvation?

*His own hands are not sufficient, nor can any creature lend him help; therefore he looks up to God, that the hand that had made him may help him. He had made religion his deliberate choice. There is an eternal salvation all the saints long for, and therefore they pray that God would help their way to it. Let thy judgments help me; let all ordinances and all providences, (both are God’s judgments,) further me in glorifying God; let them help me for that work. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.173, 174**

*Pray Psalm 119.174-176.*

Pray that God will grant you a greater measure of His great salvation today, and that He will help you in all you do to glorify Him and bless others.

*Sing Psalm 119.174-176.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

For Your saving grace we plead, Lord, and Your Law is our delight.  
We to live and praise You need, Lord, all Your help by day and night.  
Straying sheep, we do not heed, Lord; come and seek us by Your might!

## 6 To Praise and Serve

*Pray Psalm 119.175, 176.*

Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;  
And let Your judgments help me.  
I have gone astray like a lost sheep;  
Seek Your servant,  
For I do not forget Your commandments.

*Sing Psalm 119.174-176.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

For Your saving grace we plead, Lord, and Your Law is our delight.  
We to live and praise You need, Lord, all Your help by day and night.  
Straying sheep, we do not heed, Lord; come and seek us by Your might!

*Psalm 119.169-176; meditate on verses 175, 176.*

*Preparation*

1. How did the psalmist describe himself in these verses?
2. What did he want God to do for him?

*Meditation*

The soul is that spiritual aspect of the human life which animates and directs everything we do. It consists of three immaterial and overlapping components: the heart (affections, feelings), the mind (thoughts and thinking), and the conscience (values, priorities). The overarching purpose of the soul is twofold, to lead us to praise God and to deploy us for His service. Our psalmist understood this very well.

The Word of God tunes our soul for its proper work. Apart from the Word we will neither praise the Lord nor serve Him. Instead, our souls will turn inward, seeking only our own interests, and we will stray from God's purpose and path. Hence the burden of all of Psalm 119, that we might read, study, delight in, learn, obey, proclaim, and do the Law and Word of God always.

At the end of this glorious and beautiful psalm, the psalmist reminds us of four things: We are sinners, prone to stray from the Lord. "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love!" Yet, second, we remain God's servants because of His gift of salvation. Because we are saved, we cannot forget His Word, but we will always long to be restored in it. Therefore, third, though we may stray, yet God will not allow us to be lost. He will seek us and He will restore us, so that, fourth, we may praise and serve Him yet again.

Our soul is most alive when, fed by and focused on the Word, we praise and serve Him in all we do.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

At first glance it almost seems as if Psalm 119 ends in defeat: gone badly astray and totally lost. But after meditating on it, we see that it has ended in love, joy and victory. It is a good thing, not bad, that allows God to show us our humanity and His careful, tender, loving care for us His sheep.

We are His sheep, regardless of where we might be on any given day. We are His very own possession to be tended to, cared for, fed, protected, watered, walked, and rested. He is our Shepherd. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (Jn. 10.11).

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on

Him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53.6).

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.  
He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name’s sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil; for You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Ps. 23.1-4).

Jesus spoke this parable about His dear sheep: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’” (Lk. 15.4-6) That’s us!

We are the ones He came to earth to save. We are His very own needy sheep, requiring His continual oversight and guidance. Our souls, helped by Him, will truly live; but only in Him. “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever” (Rom. 11.36). As St. Augustine wrote, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.”

Jesus, as our great Shepherd, “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Pet. 2.24, 25).

“Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments” (Ps. 119.176). Nor will I ever forget You, O Keeper of my soul, Lover of my life, Shepherd and Guide of my way, and perfect Judge of all the earth. Let my soul live for one reason only: To “Praise and Serve” You forever, to the very end. (Ps. 119.112)

*For reflection*

1. We are going to stray from time to time. What should we do then?
2. God has called us to be His servants. What does that require of us?
3. What are you doing to make sure you will not forget the Word of God?

*Let this psalm be a touchstone by which to try our hearts, and our lives. Do our hearts, cleansed in Christ’s blood, make these prayers, resolutions and confessions our own? Is God’s word the standard of our faith, and the law of our practice? Do we use it as pleas with Christ for what we need? Happy those who live in such delightful exercises. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.175, 176*

*Pray Psalm 119.171-173.*

Spend an extended time in praise to God for His Word, His salvation, your life, and all His many blessings. Call on Him to help you throughout this day and to keep you from straying from His love.

*Sing Psalm 119.171-173.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

With our lips we praise You, Jesus, for You teach us, full and free.  
Now Your Word will ever please us; Your commandments true shall be.  
Let Your hand come forth to ease us; we Your Word choose gratefully!

## 7 Choices

*Pray Psalm 119.171-173.*

My lips shall utter praise,  
For You teach me Your statutes.  
My tongue shall speak of Your word,  
For all Your commandments are righteousness.  
Let Your hand become my help,  
For I have chosen Your precepts.

*Sing Psalm 119.171-173.*

*(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)*

With our lips we praise You, Jesus, for You teach us, full and free.  
Now Your Word will ever please us; Your commandments true shall be.  
Let Your hand come forth to ease us; we Your Word choose gratefully!

*Read Psalm 119.169-176; meditate on verses 171-173.*

*Preparation*

1. What did the psalmist choose?
2. What did that choice entail?

*Meditation*

Life is a series of choices. What to eat? What to wear? Which occupation to pursue? Whom to love? What to do next? Every choice we make entails a raft of specific actions designed to help us accomplish our choices. Even when bad things happen to us, we must choose how we will respond and what next steps we'll take.

How much more is this true of the life of faith, the gift of salvation, and our approach to God's Word! Every choice we might make – even down to the most everyday activities – has the potential to glorify God as Christ lives His life through us (1 Cor. 10.31; Gal. 2.20). As we have seen, Psalm 119 catalogs the actions that derive from having made the choice to learn the precepts of God's Law. Reading, meditating, learning, obeying, repenting, clinging to God's Word, praising, proclaiming, testifying, and more.

Why would someone make such a choice? Because those precepts – all God's Word – are true, reliable, and wise. How can we know when we are learning them? As we delight in and love the Word of God and live out its teachings. Wouldn't it be easier *not* to choose God's Word? Then we wouldn't have to deal with such things as conviction of sin, opposition from those who hate God and His Word, repeated lapses into disobedience, and all that time and effort required to learn so much.

But unless we make that choice, we will never know the full scope of our great salvation. We will always be vulnerable to temptation and likely to stray into sin. And the great delight and joy of knowing God in His Word will elude us, reducing our "faith" to little more than external practices.

Every choice we make defines the path we take in life, whether we will go with the flow of the world and our flesh, or walk the pilgrim journey to eternal glory, the eyes of our heart set squarely on Jesus and the precepts of His Word. Consider the many choices you will make today.

Choose wisely.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

"He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is careless of his ways will die" (Prov. 19.16).



Jesus affirmed the positive result of obedience to God's law by saying, "...do this and you will live" (Lk. 10.28). He added that, in the same way, we prove our love for Him: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14.15).

God said, "You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD" (Lev. 18.4, 5).

The psalmist's last line to God and us is: "I do not forget Your commandments" (Ps. 119.176), which reiterates his commitment, "I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end" (Ps. 119.112).

Moses stated the same: "Set your hearts on...all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life..." (Deut. 32.46, 47).

And Joshua threw down a similar gauntlet to the people of Israel and to us: "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24.15).

Psalm 119 began with glorious promises realized by following God's laws: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways" (Ps. 119.1-3).

The truth is this: real growth is not easily come by; it takes dedicated hard work and obedience: "The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them" (Ps. 111.2).

We must decide for ourselves: Whom we want to follow, what we want to become, and where this truth will be found. Do we want to be careless with our ways and lives? Or do we want to keep our souls close to God by obeying His commandments?

When we daily study the Word of God, praying and meditating therein; and are diligent to present ourselves approved to God, workers who do not need to be ashamed, but rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2.15), then we will know, most assuredly, that we have chosen wisely!

*For reflection*

1. Does it really matter whether our choices line up with the teaching of God's Word? Explain.
2. What can you do to make sure you will never forget the Word of God when it's time to make a choice?
3. How would you explain to a new believer that "real growth is not easily come by"?

*There is an eternal salvation all the saints long for, and therefore they pray that God would help their way to it. Let thy judgments help me; let all ordinances and all providences, (both are God's judgments,) further me in glorifying God; let them help me for that work. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.169-176*

*Pray Psalm 119.169, 170, 174-176.*

Give thanks to God for Psalm 119 and how it guides us to learn, love, and live the Word of God.

*Sing Psalm 119.169, 170, 174-176.*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Let my cry come up before You, holy, righteous, loving Lord;  
give me understanding so to live according to Your Word.

Let my prayer rise up before You; by Your Word redeem me, Lord!

*Psalm 119.169-176*

For Your saving grace we plead, Lord, and Your Law is our delight.  
We to live and praise You need, Lord, all Your help by day and night.  
Straying sheep, we do not heed, Lord; come and seek us by Your might!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Why should we keep prayer and studying God's Word together as one discipline?
2. What makes the gift of salvation so "great"?
3. What are some of the actions that follow from choosing God's Word?
4. Why can we take such comfort in knowing that God is our Shepherd?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this part of our study of Psalm 119?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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