

Psalm 119
The All Sufficiency of Jesus Christ



Gene Cunningham
BASIC TRAINING BIBLE MINISTRIES
www.basictraining.org

Abundant Life Church
Uniontown, PA
October 18-21, 2013

The All-Sufficiency of Jesus Christ
A Study of Psalm 119

“And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves ... but our sufficiency is from God.” 2Co 3:4–5

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2Co 12:9

Introduction

Hebrew children of the past—and even of the present—learned their 22-letter alphabet by association of each letter with a picture. The picture, in turn, related to a concept of life. Thus, as they learned the alphabet, they were also learning valuable life lessons. On a recent trip to Israel, Nan and I were delighted to find a poster in which the letters of the alphabet were portrayed in such a manner.

Psalm 119 is an alphabetical acrostic. Each section of eight verses is dedicated to a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with each verse beginning with that letter. Since that letter also represents a picture, and the picture a correlating spiritual concept, the Psalm is a treasure-trove of practical lessons for life. We should also note, in light of Joh 1:1–14, that the devotion and dedication of the author to the written Word of the Lord, in all its designations, becomes for those of us living in the present Church Age, dedication and devotion to Jesus Christ—the Living Word!

It is worthwhile to note also that Psalm 118 is a perfectly fitting introduction to the longest Psalm, the longest chapter, and the longest prayer in the entire Bible—especially as Psalm 118:8 is the central verse of the Bible:

“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.”

Psalm 118 is a Messianic Psalm, which prophetically anticipates the trust of our Lord Jesus Christ in His heavenly Father on the day of the crucifixion. It begins with the call *“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,”* and the refrain repeated four times, *“For His mercy endures forever.”* Our Lord is then seen to express His unwavering trust in the Father (Psa 118:5–9), the hatred of the world against Him (Psa 118:10–14), along with His assurance of ultimate victory by the power and authority of the Father. His victory over the cross and the grave are anticipated in Psa 118:15–18. Finally, in Psa 118:19–22, His Second Advent victory is previewed, as the Psalm concludes with Christ submitting to the cross (Psa 118:23–28), and the opening refrain repeated (Psa 118:29).

We often hear Psa 118:24 quoted—usually out of context and, therefore, largely without the power of its full impact:

“This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

While this can certainly be applied to each of our days as we entrust our lives to the will of the Father, in this context, it is speaking of the day of the crucifixion and the certain victory that will follow. Looked at in this light, it tends to direct us more into the thinking of the Apostle Paul in 1Co 2:2:

“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

Looking at our days in light of the victory of the cross is what truly gives us a joyful and victorious attitude toward all of life, and the ability to:

“... give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Psa 118:1, 29

And not only this, but we gain as well the ability to say with David and with our Lord Jesus Christ ...

“The Lord is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do to me?” Psa 118:6

It was in the light of the truths of this Psalm, which worked so mightily in the life of Paul, that he was enabled to face all of his trials, and to boldly proclaim:

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal 2:20

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ... Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us ...” Rom 8:31, 37

All that David anticipated prophetically, we who have trusted in Christ Jesus have spiritually and practically. Therefore, it is in the spirit of the all-sufficiency of God’s grace through Jesus Christ, and of our certain victory through Him, that the following studies are dedicated.

In each section, we will focus in on a few specific words or phrases that help to convey the topic, or word-picture, in that section. Some key word or words will be given with the verse, or verses, that it dominates. Remember that this Psalm in its entirety is a prayer. It is wise to take one section each day and read, pray, and meditate on the contents as they apply to us in our personal situations. As we move through the Hebrew alphabet, from *Aleph* to *Tau*, may we never forget Jesus’ words:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” Rev 22:13

Study 1: The Never-Ending Supply, Psa 119:1–32 (Aleph to Daleth)

“To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Eph 3:19

In this section, we are introduced to the infinite and abundant supply flowing to us from the grace of God. As we study and reflect on the principles revealed in these passages, we gain an overwhelming sense of the assurance known by David, and expressed in Psa 23:1, “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not [indeed, “cannot”] want [or lack].*” Let us learn to appropriate our birthright, and then, to rest in the abundant supplies of our heavenly Father.

⌘ Aleph—Psa 119:1–8: The Lord is my Wealth

“Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox.” Pro 14:4

The symbol of *Aleph* represents an **ox**. The ox was a picture of prosperity and wealth in the ancient agricultural system of Israel.

Do we lack assurance that the provisions of God are adequate to His purpose for our lives? Careful consideration of these truths will banish all doubts!

1. “*Blessed*” (Psa 119:1–2). The Psalm begins with the same word which Jesus chose to open His public ministry (Mat 5:3ff). The Hebrew word is *asher*, the root for both “blessing” and “a path or way.” I am convinced that the thought here is not that the blessing follows the obedience of the child of God. Rather, we should see the obedience as the product of God’s blessing. Only as the believer first receives God’s grace, through His Word and by His Spirit, will obedience follow. In other words, we first must receive the wealth of God, before we can follow the will and the way of God. Another way of seeing this is that God’s spiritual riches must be taken and utilized, before His material riches can be received.
2. “*Directed*” (Psa 119:3–6). This word from Psa 119:5 is literally “established, arranged, put right,” and is in the passive mood. This affirms the truth made in point one (above), and shows the author crying out to God to do for him what he cannot do. This is very similar to Paul, in Rom 7:24–25, “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” The cry of every honest and earnest soul is from spiritual poverty (Mat 5:3), crying out to our heavenly Benefactor for His merciful supply of all that we lack (2Co 12:9–10; Heb 11:34).
3. “*Uprightness*” (Psa 119:7–8). Here, the word is from the same root as the “*blessed*” that begins the section. When the Word of God is received, digested, and utilized, the result is conformity to Christ (Rom 12:1–2; 2Co 3:18). Note that **learning** must precede **keeping** the Word of God. Note that before Paul said “*I can do all things through Christ,*” he said “*I have learned ... I know how*” (Phi 4:11–13). These are not casual observations, but rather vital distinctions that are too often missed! We hear much today of **obedient lives**

and **bearing fruit**, but there is little of the teaching coming out of those very pulpits to empower lives for fruitfulness.

New Testament Confirmation

1. Every believer in Jesus Christ is already in possession of all the wealth of the heavenly Father, Eph 1:3:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who **has** blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* (emphasis added)

2. These spiritual riches are revealed to us through the diligent study of God’s Word, Eph 3:8.

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Note that *“unsearchable”* does not mean unknowable. Rather, it means “not able to be known or discovered by mere human intellect, apart from divine revelation,” 1Co 2:9–14.

3. All our spiritual riches came to us because Jesus Christ—to whom they rightly belong—was willing to forsake them all, in order to win us for His kingdom, 2Co 8:9:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

4. The true spiritual riches are not made up of things Jesus Christ has, but rather are the essence of who He is, 1Co 1:30 (note what God considers valuable!):

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God —and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

2 Beth—Psa 119:9–16: The Lord is my Home

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psa 23:6

The *Beth* is a picture of a **home**. In fact, in Hebrew, *beth* means “house,” as in Gen 28:17, where Jacob said, *“This is none other than the house of God,”* and therefore *“he called the name of that place Bethel”* (*Beth El*—“house of God,” Gen 28:19).

But to the Hebrew, a house was not just a structure, but a home for family and a place of hospitality and fellowship. The life of parents and children, along with the company of good friends and neighbors, was the truest and greatest wealth of the ancient Hebrew home.

Is your life a home for the Lord Jesus Christ? Are those who trust and belong to Him considered by you to be greater treasures than material possessions? Does your life reflect the presence of

the humble Shepherd-King, and His outreach to others? If not, this section can give vital instruction in the transformation of your life:

1. “*Cleanse*” (Psa 119:9–10). The key element of fellowship is agreement and joint-participation. For us to have fellowship with our Lord, daily cleansing is essential. We see in these verses that cleansing comes from (1) the correction of God’s Word (cf., 2Ti 3:16–17); (2) the seeking of the Lord “*with [the] whole heart*” (cf., Psa 119:2, 34); and (3) the desire and prayer to be kept from wandering (consider the story of the prodigal, Luk15:11–32). Just as we return home from the work of the day and take a shower, so in our spiritual lives we need daily rebuke, confession, correction, and dependence on the Spirit of God to guard our ways.
2. “*Hidden*” (Psa 119:11–14). The word *tsaphan* means to “hoard or reserve.” Our home is where we “hide” or protect our treasures—the things we value. This is why it is so true that “home is where the heart is,” or as Jesus said, “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Mat 6:21). This brief statement shatters all our pretenses, and lays bare our souls. You are “at home” only with that which you treasure. The author treasures the Word of God and, therefore, no matter how “homeless” he may be, he is at home with the Lord. The surest way to be kept from sin is to truly value the riches of God’s eternal Word.
3. “*Delight*” (Psa 119:15–16). The word *sha-ah* is a term of great intimacy and tenderness. It might be translated “caress” to give the right idea. It is spoken like a sigh of fulfillment and satisfaction. It is a one-word summary for all the words like “sought ... rejoiced ... meditate ... contemplate” in this section. We must never forget that the spiritual life is, above all, a relationship between the believer and the Lord. This relationship is initiated and maintained by God’s unconditional love, initiated by the Holy Spirit, and responded to by the believer. While we seek to exploit the doctrines of the Word of God, and to broaden the horizons of our theological world, we must never let Bible knowledge become a substitute for a vital and living daily relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

New Testament Confirmation

1. The Lord Jesus Christ summarized the spiritual life in terms of “being at home” with Him:

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” Joh 15:4

“That Christ may dwell [to settle down, be at home] in your hearts through faith ...” Eph 3:17

2. This is only possible when His Word finds a home in the mind and soul of the believer, Col 3:16:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

It is worth noting that when God’s Word finds a home in the soul of the believer, it brings joy to the believer, benefit to others, and praise to the Lord. The entire family of God is blessed!

3. The perfect picture of being at home with the Lord is the gathering of the disciples in the Upper Room (Joh 13–17). Here Jesus, as Head of the house, washed the disciples’ feet, taught them to depend on the coming ministry of the Holy Spirit, and prayed for them. In this section, we find what I consider to be the greatest of all promises to the believer living today, Joh 14:21, 23:

*“He who has My commandments and keeps them,
it is he who loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father
and I will love him and manifest Myself to him ... If anyone loves Me,
he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and
We will come to him and make Our home with him.”*

(See the poem, “He Giveth More Grace,” at the end.)

‡ **Gimel—Psa 119:17–24: The Lord is my Supply**

*“And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted
his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming.” Gen 24:63*

The symbol for the *Gimel* is the **camel**, which was—by means of the caravans—the supply-line of ancient cities. Like our modern trucking lines, the camel trains kept the cities supplied with goods from near and far. Disruption of these channels of supply by war, storms, or diseases, was a serious blow to the local economy. As a believer, we have a supply-line that cannot be disrupted by any condition other than our refusal to receive and utilize the provisions of God. This means that no believer under any circumstances will ever lack super-abundant supply to achieve the plan and purpose of God in that given situation, 1Co 10:13.

1. *“Bountifully”* (Psa 119:17–18). Here the word is *gamal*, from the same root as *gimel*. It is a word that means “to bestow ... do good ... reward” someone. Though the author is under the most extreme difficulties, he knows that God is not hindered from giving him abundant spiritual supply. He asks for—and expects—illumination to see *“wondrous things from Your law.”* It is so true that the soul that is fixated on the material things of life will never have enough, while the soul focused on spiritual and eternal riches will have an abundance at all times.
2. *“Longing”* (Psa 119:19–20). Just as the eyes of the ancient Hebrew women would scan the horizon—looking for the joyful coming of the supply caravan—so our author awaits the sure and certain supply of God’s amazing grace. This is especially true in view of the fact that we are *“a stranger in the earth.”* As such, we face the scorn and mockery of those who make themselves enemies of God.
3. *“Counselors”* (Psa 119:21–24). As children of God, we live in a hostile world. The caravans of old brought not only spices, foods, and goods from afar, they also transported

slaves. Joseph was taken to Egypt by a camel caravan, Gen 37:23–28. Like slaves of the ancient world, we who belong to Christ are looked on with scorn and contempt. How can we hope to answer the taunts of the enemies of the cross? By the endless supply of living water from the Word of God, which becomes our personal and private tutor, and the Holy Spirit as our mentor (Joh 14:17). As we receive God’s Word to meet our own needs, so it becomes our answer to those who challenge the truth of the Good News that is found in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

New Testament Confirmation

1. God has promised to meet every need of His own children, Mat 7:7, 11:
“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you ... If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”
2. God determines our needs according to His plan and purpose for us—not according to our wants. He will never fail to meet the needs of our spiritual life, Phi 4:19:
“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”
3. Because we are *“in the world but not of the world”* (Joh 17:16), our greatest need is for the guiding and teaching ministry of His Holy Spirit, Joh 16:13a:
“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.”
4. If we are spiritually attentive, we will see that God’s supply is always above and beyond what we need, Eph 3:20:
“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us ...”
[God’s Word wielded by God’s Spirit]

7 Daleth—Psa 119:25–32: The Lord is my Guide

“I will give her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.” Hos 2:15

The symbol *Daleth* was seen to represent the **frame of a door**. As such, it speaks of decisions, and of the importance of divine guidance in making them. Far too often we live our lives without seeking God’s guidance, and we suffer the consequences of bad decisions. The best way to have the guiding hand of God on our lives is to live day-by-day in close communion with Him. If we neglect His fellowship over a period of time, it will most likely do no good to cry for guidance in a time of crisis. He has warned that such prayers will not be heard (cf., Pro 1:24–27). I consider the guidance of God to be one of the chief treasures from His storehouse of blessings (Eph 1:3).

1. “*Revive*” (Psa 119:25–26). The beginning of divine guidance is when we are awakened to our true spiritual condition. When our “*soul clings to the dust,*” we need to be able to acknowledge it and “[declare] *my [our] ways.*” Spiritual faintness is not final if we are willing to recover (cf., Heb 12:12–15). Spiritual revival follows acknowledgment of need. Only those who hunger and thirst will be filled (Mat 5:6). It is often not until we admit that we have lost our way that God will meet us with nourishment and direction. So it was for the prophet Elijah (1Ki 19:1–18). Note that revival comes through teaching (Psa 119:26b).
2. “*Strengthen*” (Psa 119:27–28). The word *qum* literally means “to stabilize or establish.” In our decision-making process, we are often tentative, unsure, and hesitant. We need the stability that comes only “*according to Your word.*” How many lives have been spared disappointment and shame because the crossroads encountered were met with prayer and searching of the Scriptures? And how many lives have been plunged into years of misery due to hasty decisions made without benefit of the guidance of God? (See 2Co 12:9–10; Jam 4:8.)
3. “*Chosen*” (Psa 119:29–32). Sooner or later, all of life comes down to decisions. The power to choose is the greatest power given by God to men (cf., Gen 2:16–17; Jos 24:15). Here, the author has chosen the way of truth and of the testimonies of the Lord. It is an axiom of the Bible that wise decisions bring blessed results, and foolish decisions bring harmful and painful results (see the entire book of Proverbs). Thus, we can predicate our future by the kind of decisions we make. Seemingly small and insignificant decisions—on a daily basis—are the building blocks of a life of rich blessing or great misery. The author is able to anticipate his future (Psa 119:32) based on his decision to exalt God’s Word to its rightful place in life.

New Testament Confirmation

1. In various ways, we are repeatedly called on in the New Testament to examine ourselves (1Co 11:31) and acknowledge our need (1Jo 1:9). The only cure for double-mindedness is a single-minded pursuit of the will of God, Jam 4:8–9:

*“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts,
you double-minded ... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,
and He will lift you up.”*
2. Spiritual strength is only bestowed on those who know and acknowledge their weakness and inability, 2Co 12:9–10b:

*“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you,
for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly
I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ
may rest upon me ... for when I am weak, then I am strong.”*
3. Every decision of life, great or small, will be determined before it is even made, by our decision to either seek, study, and keep God’s Word, or to ignore it:

“Then he [Peter] began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly.” Mat 26:74–75

“So he [Samson] awoke from his sleep, and said, ‘I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!’ But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.” Jdg 16:20

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the “*door of hope*” (Hos 2:15), and trusting Him is life’s greatest decision, Joh 10:9:

“I am the door; if anyone enters by Me he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

Study 2: Seeing Life through God’s Eyes, Psa 119:33–64 (He to Heth)

“The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Psa 19:8b

The Bible is God’s “road-map” for life. Using God’s Word as a “telescope,” we can see from where we are far into the future—not only prophetically, but personally. Like Abraham, we look “*for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*” (Heb 11:10). In our first four sections of Psalm 119, we have seen our provisions for the journey. In this section, we will see the road ahead, and find that He has provided a bridge over every chasm.

7 He—Psa 119:33–40: The Lord is my Perspective/Viewpoint

“And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” 2Ki 6:17

The symbol *He* represents the **frame of a window**, just as *daleth* represents a door. We look out of a window to see the world around us, thus it gives us perspective. As we saw in the previous section, our decisions are critically important. But behind the decisions we make are our perspectives, which give us priorities in life. In reality, there are only two perspectives (viewpoints) to life—either divine or human. Divine viewpoint is clearly revealed in God’s Word and is, therefore, simple and unified. Human viewpoint is complex, inconsistent, and contradictory. This is because divine viewpoint is based on objective and absolute truth, while human viewpoint is too often subjective, emotion-driven, and shallow. Since how we view the world determines how we live in the world, it is crucial that we gain God’s perspective.

1. “*Teach me*” (Psa 119:33–34). Here, we see the necessity of spiritual growth for a right perception of the world, which we call a world-view. You will find the cry “*teach me*” running through this entire Psalm. But learning is never an end in itself. See how the author progresses from learning, to understanding, to obedience. This process cannot be

facilitated by human intellect, but only by the Spirit of God, working in the receptive soul. A proper world-view begins with a sound biblical education received in submission to the inner ministry of the Spirit of God.

2. *“Incline”* (Psa 119:35–37). The word *natah*, which is used here, is interesting as it is used for the act of bowing down to worship. Because it is in the causative stem, the writer is asking God to cause a change in his inner life. Repeatedly, we see such a difference in the perspective of this writer with much going on in Christianity today, where even the popular songs are filled with “I will ... I will not” but very little “make me to be.”

We need less of “I” and more of “Christ,” mixed with a humble realization that “I can’t ... but You can.” Note that the heart must be inclined, before the eyes are turned, from worthless things and the soul is revived. *“Revive”* is another of the often repeated words in this Psalm.

3. *“Establish”* (Psa 119:38–40). The idea here is to build something on a firm foundation. It is the same word translated *“strengthen”* in Psa 119:28, but in a different form. The request that God would establish His Word to the writer implies the power of recalling God’s Word. We all remember the story of the wise man who built his house on the solid rock (Mat 7:24–25). How we need not only to saturate our souls with God’s Word, but also to review and recall what we have learned. After all, it is not what you know that makes the difference in a crisis; it is what you can’t forget!

New Testament Confirmation

1. Every believer must learn that service follows—and flows from—the learning of God’s Word. It is never, ever, to take the place of spiritual growth, Luk 10:41–42:

“And Jesus answered and said to her; ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’”

2. We will never acquire divine perspective apart from divine illumination, Eph 1:18:

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

3. The inner transformation that brings about God’s perspective on life is the result of the diminishing of self and the exaltation of Jesus Christ in our lives:

“He must increase, I must decrease.” Joh 3:30

“Not I but Christ ...” Gal 2:20

¶ Waw—Psa 119:41–48: The Lord is my Security

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.” Psa 46:1

*“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psa 91:1*

The letter *Waw* looks like a **peg**, and as such it represents security and stability. In the hot winds and shifting sands of the desert, the tent-peg held the shelter in place. In several places in Scripture, the body or life is likened to a tent (Isa 38:2; Jer 10:20; 2Co 5:10), which is a temporary, moveable shelter. In this life, we are only pilgrims—passing through to our eternal home. But in the midst of life’s insecurities, we need something on which to anchor our souls and our lives. The answer is found in the timeless and eternal Word of God (Mat 24:35), which like a cord binds us to the Rock of our Salvation—the Son of God.

1. *“Mercies”* (Psa 119:41–42). Also translated “lovingkindness,” the word *hesed* is one of the great theological concepts of the Old Testament. It encompasses the full range of ideas like **grace** and **mercy** with the emphasis on the infinite and unfailing love of God for His people. The concept is very well conveyed by Paul in Eph 1:6 when he speaks of the believer being *“accepted in the Beloved.”* The prophet Isaiah captured the idea of the firm foundation of God’s Word in the soul of the believer in Isa 33:6, *“Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of [your] salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure.”* Note Psa 119:42b, *“For I trust in your word.”* Faith lays hold of the very nature of God through His Word!
2. *“Hope”* (Psa 119:43). Here we have *yaqal*, one of the five Hebrew words for faith. It speaks of the healing power of faith when one is wounded by life. In the Bible, *“hope”* is never of the “hope so” or “maybe” variety when the hope rests in God and His Word. Rather, it declares a firm and abiding assurance that *“what He [has] promised He [is] also able to perform,”* Rom 4:21. It is worth noting that the *“hope”* is sure because the *“mercies”* are secure! This word logically follows the word *“trust”* in Psa 119:42, which is *batach*—another Hebrew word for faith, which pictures *“casting your cares on the Lord”* 1Pe 5:7.
3. *“Liberty”* (Psa 119:44–48). The author’s commitment (Psa 119:44), based on his conviction from God’s Word (Psa 119:45), brings courage in the face of hostile world powers (Psa 119:46–48). Daniel and his three friends were living examples of the principles from this section.

They possessed a poise and calm that came from souls deeply immersed in the Word of God. They were able to display great stability, in the midst of life-threatening circumstances, because they were *“rooted and grounded”* in the love of God (Eph 3:17). Therefore, they were “free” from the debilitating effects of fear. While this security belongs to all who believe in Christ, tragically, not all have this assurance. This is because only those who *“keep Your law”* (Psa 119:44), that is, to treasure, guard, and seek to obey the Word, have the inner conviction of His faithfulness, and depend not on their own fallible performance.

New Testament Confirmation

1. Once we become a child of God, He has promised He will never, ever, withdraw His mercy and love for us, Rom 8:35, 39:

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ...
For I am persuaded that [nothing]... shall be able to separate
us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

2. This promise holds true because Jesus Christ has promised that He Himself will never leave or desert us, Heb 13:5b–6:

*“For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor
forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”*

3. This is why it is Christ Jesus Himself who is the anchor and the stability of our soul and of our life, Heb 6:18–20:

*“That by two immutable things [God’s promise and His nature],
in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation,
who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.
This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,
and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the
forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest
forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

Note: Based on the language in the verses above, we are secure in Christ until

- (1) God’s nature changes (which it can’t, because He is immutable);
- (2) His promises fail (which they can’t, because He cannot lie—Tit 1:2); and
- (3) Christ ceases to be High Priest (which He won’t, because His appointment is eternal).

Isn’t it tragic that so many today preach a message of insecurity, rather than one of bold, confident assurance?

† Zayin—Psa 119:49-56: The Lord is my Victory

*“Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O mighty One,
with Your glory and majesty.” Psa 45:3*

The letter or symbol of *Zayin* represents a **sword**, and thus portrays warfare. In our spiritual armament (Eph 6:10–18), we have but one offensive weapon, “*the sword of the Spirit*.” Therefore, the sword is given that we might advance toward victory. It is the Spirit of God that wields the sword. Since the Spirit indwells the believer (Rom 8:9–11; 1Co 6:19), it is our part to receive the Word of God by faith so that the Spirit is able to use it in our lives. This is what Paul means when he says, “*Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Eph 6:17). The word translated “*take*” is *dechomai* which means to “receive and embrace.” It is an aorist imperative, which implies both command and urgency of action. How we need to embrace God’s Word daily!

1. “Remember” (Psa 119: 49, 52, 55). This word dominates this entire section! It is the Hebrew word *zachar*, which begins with the letter *zayin*. When the author tells God to remember the promises He has made, he uses the imperative—which is a command. When is it ever right to command God to do something? Only when the command is based on the absolute assurance that He has promised, and He cannot lie! As far as the means and the timing of His fulfillment, we must leave those things for His wisdom to work out.

For example, a believer who has terminal cancer may pray—in the imperative—that God will work their disease out for His glory and their ultimate good. God has promised—and He will do it—in whatever way He chooses, which could include healing, but also may include the believer’s death. The child of God who prays, “heal me,” in the imperative, has no biblical basis for such a prayer. It is through such ignorance of God’s Word that many “lose faith,” when in reality what they had was not biblically defined faith. You cannot lose what you never had! Here the author is simply demonstrating his trust that God will do what He said He will do, and commits himself to remember God’s Word, and His name (Psa 119:52, 55).

2. “Comfort” (Psa 119:50, 52). The obvious effect of genuine faith in the promises of God is comfort. This word, used twice, is *nacham* and means “to breathe a sigh of relief due to having been avenged.” The writer’s “righteous indignation” (Psa 119:51, 53) will surely be vindicated by God. Our God has said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Deu 32:35; Rom 12:19). When we suffer unjustly, we can be sure He will mete out the justice in His way and time (see 2Th 1:6–12). Meanwhile, he rejoices in that, “Your word has given me life” (Psa 119:50).
3. “Songs” (Psa 119:54). When we remember the promises of God’s Word and receive the comfort that is implied in them, we can face life with a song in our heart. In the ancient world of the Hebrews, songs were not only a means of worship, but also of celebrating victory over their enemies (Exo 15:1–21; 1Sa 18:6–7). We will one day join the ranks of the redeemed before the throne and sing a victory song as an anthem of praise to our mighty Redeemer-King (Rev 5:3–13; Rev 15:3–4). But beyond this, our mighty Savior will also break forth in a song of praise to the Heavenly Father Heb 2:11–12!

New Testament Confirmation

1. The saints will never lack victory as long as they maintain their focus on the victorious finished work of the cross of Jesus Christ, 1Co 2:2:
“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”
2. Effective prayer is always that which prays with an imperative mood—knowing that our prayers are in trust and submission to the written Word of God, 1Jo 5:14–15:

*“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him,
that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask,
we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”*

3. The practical effect of unconditional trust in the Word of God is that the heart is compelled to sing in the assurance of His victory, Col 3:16:

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,
teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns
and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

4. In Christ we have been given the armor of God for victory in every battle of life, Eph 6:17:

*“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,
which is the word of God.”*

¶ Heth—Psa 119:57–64: The Lord is my Inheritance

*“O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You maintain my lot.” Psa 16:5*

In the letter *Heth*, we have the symbol of a **fenced-in area**, which represents one’s allotment or inheritance. In ancient biblical times, inheritance was based on three possible things: First, you must be born into the family (Gen 15:1–4). Secondly, your inheritance may be altered by disobedience (Gen 49:4—Reuben lost the rulership portion of his inheritance to Judah; the priestly portion to Levi; and the double portion of the firstborn to Joseph via Ephraim and Manasseh). Finally, divine intervention may place the second-born above the firstborn, as an act of unmerited grace (Gen 25:19–23; Gen 48:13–20). All of these elements are at work in the eternal inheritance of believers in the Church Age also!

1. *“Portion”* (Psa 119:57). If indeed the author was among the captives taken to Babylon (the ancient rabbis taught that he was Ezra’s father), then he may have remembered the cry of Jeremiah as the captives were led out of the devastated city of Jerusalem. *“‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in Him’”* (Lam 3:24). The root word comes from *chalak*, the smooth stones used for determining the “lot” or allotment. Truly, *“the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord”* (Pro 16:33). You may lose everything in this life; but if you choose Jesus Christ as your choicest portion, you will have the best inheritance.
2. *“Favor”* (Psa 119:58–62). In making the commitment to keep the commands of God, the author wisely seeks the favor (grace) of God with his whole heart. Only a fool would trust in his own strength or goodness to live an obedient life! Just as we are *“saved by grace through faith”* (Eph 2:8), even so are we sanctified and purified. Our natural weakness and frailty (Rom 7:19; Jam 3:2) is a perpetual reminder of our need to humble ourselves and trust in nothing but the grace of God.

3. “*Companion*” (Psa 119:63–64). The word *chaber* comes from a root that means “to be knit together, joined, united.” It is a picture of fellowship based on common faith and commitment to God’s truth. The author chooses to associate with likeminded believers who are dedicated to the will of God. It is a wise believer who exercises caution in choosing his friends. As Paul warns us, “*Do not be deceived: ‘evil company corrupts good habits’*” (1Co 15:33). Today you are free to choose your companions. If you choose foolishly, they will forever affect your eternal reward—or the loss of it (Col 2:8, 18; Rev 3:11).

New Testament Confirmation

1. Every child of God is included in an inheritance which we will receive from the Father in eternity, 1Pe 1:4–5:

“... an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

2. However, the scope and size of each one’s personal inheritance will be determined by their faith and conduct in this life, Heb 6:12–13:

“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

3. The sinful works of the flesh can no more inherit the kingdom of God than can the present sinful body, 1Co 6:9; 1Co 15:50:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Note: The word “*unrighteous*” is the same in the original language as the word “*wrong*” in 1Co 6:8. He is not talking about unbelievers, but about the sinful Corinthians. The issue is **not** loss of salvation—which is entirely unbiblical—but the loss of rewards in the kingdom, as also seen in Gal 5:19–21 and Eph 5:3–5:

“Now this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

As with Reuben (Gen 49:3–4), sinful behavior involves loss of inheritance/reward that was rightfully ours.

4. At the *Bema* (Judgment) Seat of Christ, all works of the Spirit will be rewarded, while all works of the flesh will involve loss of reward, 1Co 3:12–15:

“Now if anyone builds on this foundation [faith in Christ] with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

Study 3: Living Life in the Presence of the Lord, Psa 119:65–96 (Teth to Lamed)

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psa 91:1

The Christian classic book *The Practice of the Presence of God*, written by Brother Lawrence, captures the essence of this section. Having learned of our supply (Psa 119:1–32), and of our perspective and eternal prospects (Psa 119:33–64), we are now ready to begin the journey. As indicated before, the life of faith is a journey from the cross to the crown. The author calls it “*the house of my pilgrimage*” (Psa 119:54). How well we fare along the way is always determined by our conscious communion with the Savior, day-by-day. The word “*affliction*” dominates this section (Psa 119: 67, 71, 75, 92), reminding us that apart from the presence and power of our Lord, we would easily be destroyed.

▮ Teth—Psa 119:65–72; The Lord is my Companion

“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid ... for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” Deu 31:6
(see also 1Ch 28:20; Heb 13:5)

“The Lord is with me as a mighty awesome One.” Jer 20:11a

The *Teth* is a figure of a **hand** that is holding or gripping something valuable. The most valuable thing we ever grip is the hand of another who is precious to us. We saw in Psa 119:63, “*I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.*” Fellowship with God always also involves fellowship with those who love and serve Him. This is why the two greatest commands of the Old Testament both speak of relationship through spiritual love (Mat 22:37–40). Both of these commands are encompassed within the greatest command of the New Testament, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another ... If you love Me keep My commandments*” (Joh 13:34, Joh 14:15).

The concept of “*taking up the cross*” (Luk 9:23) may represent this two-way spiritual relationship—the vertical beam being a symbol of our relation to God, while the horizontal beam represents our relation to those around us. One thing is certain; we can never have right relations with those around us until we make our relationship to Jesus Christ the priority. Note three figures of a growing relationship to Jesus Christ in the following points:

1. “*Your servant*” (Psa 119:65). Here is the relationship of a servant to his master. This is one of the most common figures of spiritual relationship found in the Bible. It speaks of the believers’ responsibility to seek and do the will of the Lord. Both James and Jude—though blood relatives of Jesus Christ—chose to open their epistles by identifying themselves as a “*bondservant of Jesus Christ*” (Jam 1:1; Jud 1:1). It is essential that we lay hold of the mind-set of the humble servant if we are to grow up to spiritual maturity (Mat 5:3, 5; Luk 22:24–30; Phi 2:5–9).

2. “*Teach me*” (Psa 119:66). Here is the relation of the teacher and a disciple. From the servant of Christ, we grow into the disciple of the Holy Spirit. In the Upper Room Discourse (Joh 13–17), Jesus’ primary objective was to introduce the disciples to the crucial role of the Holy Spirit following His departure. Three times He speaks of the Spirit of God as “*the Spirit of truth*” (Joh 14:17; Joh 15:26; Joh 16:13). In this way, He places the emphasis on the role of the Spirit as teacher of the Word of God. Only as we hear the “voice of the Spirit” through the Word of God will we be enabled to know and do the will of God.

3. “*Afflicted*” (Psa 119:67, 71). This word suggests the relation of a father and son. The father disciplines the son so that he might become a man. This discipline is always motivated by love (Heb 12:3–11). Note that the discipline of God will increase and intensify according to our failure to respond. In Heb 12:5–6, we find three levels of divine discipline. “Rebuke” comes first, which refers to the reproof of the Word of God itself (2Ti 3:16–17). If we fail to heed God’s Word, then it is necessary for us to undergo “*chastening*.” The word used here in the original means “child-training,” and speaks of using the rod on a disobedient child. Failure to respond to this painful form of discipline constitutes true rebellion, calling for “scourging.” It is intensive, painful, and prolonged punishment, designed to break our hardening condition of heart. Continued willful rebellion may even lead to premature death (Act 5:1–11; 1Co 5:5; 1Jo 5:16). Yet, all these forms of discipline are motivated by love (Heb 12:6a) and are also a proof that we are indeed a child of God (Heb 12:6b, cf., 1Co 11:32). There are many today who have assumed the role of “fruit-inspectors,” using the statement “*You will know them by their fruits*” (Mat 7:16) out of context, to judge the genuineness of others’ salvation. (In the context, Jesus’ words speak of false prophets, not believers.) Yet few have the maturity or discernment to look at divine discipline in the life as an evidence of regeneration!

New Testament Confirmation

It is worth noting that in the three examples above, we see a preview of the believer’s relation to the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit. While the essence of the Triune God is evident in many Old Testament passages (Gen 1:26; Isa 6:3, Isa 42:1, Isa 48:16–17, Isa 61:1), we who live in the Church Age and have New Testament revelation, have a far greater understanding than did any believer in Old Testament times.

1. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has been “*born from above*” by the Heavenly Father and, as His beloved child, is under His constant watch-care and provision (Eph 1:3; Jam 1:17–18; 1Pe 1:3).

2. Each and every child of God is personally indwelt by the Spirit of God, who is to be our Guide and Teacher (Joh 14:16–18, Joh 15:26–27, Joh 16:13–14; Rom 8:9–11; Eph 3:14–16).
3. Each and every believer is a member of the Body of Christ, and will in the future become the Bride of Christ in Heaven (1Co 12:12–25; Eph 5:30–32).
4. The goal of the Christian life is that we “grow up” spiritually, into a life of deep communion and fellowship within the family of God (Eph 4:11–16). As we do this, our understanding and appreciation for the role of the Father, Son, and Spirit in our lives increases, as well as our ability to love and serve those members of the Body of Christ in our own sphere of influence.
5. Conformity to the character of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only means by which we discover our place and fulfill our role within the family of God (Rom 8:29, Rom 12:1–2; 1Co 11:1; 2Co 3:17–18; Gal 4:19).

• **Yod—Psa 119:73-80: The Lord is my Maker**

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Psa 95:6

“The rich and the poor have this in common, the Lord is the maker of them all.” Pro 22:2

The letter *Yod* is shaped like a **cupped hand**. It is representative of the creative work and power of God. It is a failure that we often fall into, that we think of the creative work of God as all in the past. Jesus rebuked this attitude in the people of His day by saying, “*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working*” (Joh 5:17). In reality, God is always involved in the work of creation. This creative power is available to us on a daily basis. When we face great trials or seemingly impossible situations, it is good for us to remember that He who called light out of darkness (Gen 1:3) is able to bring out of our dark times fruit, unto His own glory forever and ever (Psa 51:10; Rom 8:28; 1Pe 4:19).

1. “*Made ... fashioned*” (Psa 119:73–74). The word *asah* (“*made*”) speaks of creating something out of existing material, thus of the role of God through the procreative act of the father and mother. Out of two existing people—husband and wife—comes a new creation—the child. In this way, mankind expresses the “*likeness*” of God (Gen 1:26) in creative power. The word “*fashioned*” is *kuwn* and means “to cause to stand, to prepare, to establish,” speaking of the whole process of physical and spiritual growth. God’s creative work, as Jesus said above, continues on a daily basis involving every aspect of our development. For the child of God, this means that the God who made us is continuing to make us into the image of Christ.
2. “*Faithfulness*” (Psa 119:75). When we consider our Maker, we need to know His character. The word *emunah* is from the same root as *amen*. When we say “amen,” we

are saying in Hebrew, “I believe it” or “It is true.” We can believe only because God is faithful. He always keeps His word, because He cannot lie (Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18). He is the “*LORD God of truth*” (Psa 31:5). Being convinced of His faithfulness gives great confidence when facing doubts and trials. But more than this, it unleashes His creative power in our lives. We are told, “*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed ... because she judged Him faithful who had promised*” (Heb 11:11). God’s Word confirms that faith in a faithful God, in the midst of an “impossible” situation (both barrenness and advanced age) supplied the creative power for Sarah to conceive and give birth to Isaac. So we see that God “continues to work” day-by-day—displaying His creative energy—through those who believe in His faithfulness!

3. “*Tender mercies*” (Psa 119:76–77). The phrase “*merciful kindness*” (Psa 119:76) is from *chesed*, meaning “loyal love or unfailing love.” “*Tender mercies*” (Psa 119:77) is from *racham*, a word that implies a tender, loving embrace. Because we know that, “*The Lord’s mercies ... never fail. They are new every morning*” (Lam 3:22–23), we can rest assured that we are held in His compassionate embrace through every trial and test of life. Read Psalm 136 to see how important the infinite mercy of God was to the psalmist.

It is to build such a faith that the author repeatedly declares his determination to “*delight in*” and “*meditate on*” the promises of God’s Word (Psa 119:77b–80). We cannot trust in that which we do not know. Ignorance of the Word of God is the greatest of all our enemies. It is a true statement that “If your Bible is falling apart through use, you probably are not”!

New Testament Confirmation

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only our Redeemer, He is our Maker, Joh 1:3:
*“All things were made through Him,
and without Him nothing was made that was made.”*
2. In addition to being our Maker and Redeemer, He is our Sustainer, Col 1:16–17:
*“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven
and that are on earth, visible and invisible ... All things were
created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things,
and in Him all things consist [hold together].”*
3. We can be confident in facing life, with all its tests and trials, knowing that as He unfolds His plan and purpose for us, His love toward us will never change:
“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Heb 13:8
“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear ...” 1Jo 4:18

➤ Kaph—Psa 119:81-88: The Lord is my Fulfillment

*“We will rejoice in Your salvation, and in the name of our God we will
set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.”* Psa 20:5

*“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psa 16:11*

In the *Kaph* file, we have the letter and symbol for the **empty hand**. It is a hand held out, waiting to receive what is given. It pictures recognition of need, but combined with an assurance of supply from the Giver of all good and perfect gifts (Jam 1:17). When we are at the end of our strength and supply and when there is nowhere else to turn for help, the Lord is always faithful to supply our need (Phi 4:19), providing that we will come to Him in faith. (How much better it would be if we sought Him before we get to this point!) The hand and heart that reaches out in humble supplication to Him, not doubting (Jam 1:6–8), will never come away empty-handed.

1. “*Faints*” (Psa 119:81–82). The word that begins this file is *kalah*, which begins with the letter *kaph*. This word means “to be consumed, waste away, long for.” The object of the psalmist’s longing is “*Your salvation*.” We should remember that this word is often used for deliverance in time, as well as eternal salvation. This is how it is used here. In the midst of intense persecutions, the author looks for the deliverance only God can give. “*My eyes fail*” (Psa 119:82) is *kalah* again, but here we see it is “*from searching Your word*.” Every provision of God for the believer is first promised in His Word, and to search the Word is to find comfort—knowing that His help will be given, in His time.
2. “*When*” (Psa 119:82b–84). The writer knows that the deliverance of the Lord is coming, the question is “when?” The comfort sought in Psa 119:82b will coincide with God’s judgment on his persecutors. We all find ourselves—somewhere in life—wounded by the words and actions of others. It is essential to remember that vengeance belongs to God (Rom 12:19), and only He can administer it with perfect justice. It is good for us, in these times of injured hurt, to remember that we too have caused pain and sorrow to others. Are we as eager for God to judge us as we are for Him to judge others? Are we just as willing to ask for His mercy on them, as on ourselves? Jesus’ prayer from the cross is instructive to us all, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luk 23:34).
3. “*Revive*” (Psa 119:85–88). This word is used at least nine times in Psalm 119. It is a good study to look up each case. It comes from *hayah*, the word for life. Again, the author prays in the imperative mood, “*preserve my life, revive my soul*.” Assured that God has a plan for him that is incomplete, he “commands” the Lord to fulfill that plan. We need to be careful with such boldness. Remember that this is the inspired Word of God. The author is speaking out of revelation given to him. I have seen far too many believers, diagnosed with terminal illness; convince themselves that God “must raise them up,” only to die from their illness. The desire of the writer is not just prolonged life, but “*that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth*.”

It is a sad but common sight to see believers who have ignored the Word and will of God, suddenly get on fire to do His will when they find their time may be up!

New Testament Confirmation

1. The words “fullness, fulfillment” are used throughout the New Testament to speak of the plan of God for every believer. Paul finely summarizes this thought when he prays for us “*to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*” (Eph 3:19).
2. The key to receiving the riches of God, according to Jesus, is to come to Him in an attitude of spiritual poverty. “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Mat 5:3). The word used here for poverty is the most abject kind. Christ did not come to add to our “almost-full cup.” Rather, He came to give what we have none of, and to enrich our spiritual raggedness with the wealth of His grace.
3. This is why the greatest spiritual virtue is humility, for “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*” (Jam 4:6; 1Pe 5:5b). In essence, humility is the recognition under the enlightenment of spiritual conviction, that we have absolutely nothing to bring to God. All we can do is to come to Him in our wretchedness and helplessness and receive—by faith—of His abundance. “*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace*” (Joh 1:16). The concept conveyed by the word “*revive*” is captured in the New Testament word “*renewed*,” such as “*and be renewed in the spirit of your mind*” (Eph 4:23), and “*and [you] have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*” (Col 3:10). The “*new creation*” (2Co 5:17; Gal 6:15) received at salvation is in constant need—in this dark world—of revival and renewal from the light of the Word of God.

↳ Lamed—Psa 119:89–96: The Lord is my Motivation

“The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well driven nails, given by one Shepherd.” Ecc 12:11

The letter *Lamed* pictures an **ox-goad**, used to get the reluctant animal to bend to its work. Our souls are so often like the ox or the donkey—resisting the work that must be done. This is why we are commanded to “*study [be diligent] to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2Ti 2:15). If we will only approach God’s Word with spiritual hunger and a sense of need, it will ignite a fire in our souls to do His will. God says, “*Is not My word like a fire? ... and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*” (Jer 23:29). How we need our hardened hearts to be broken, and our dry and withered souls lit aflame with a spiritual passion to do His will!

(See the poem, “The Anvil,” at the end.)

1. “*Settled*” (Psa 119:89–91). The word *natzabh* in the passive voice means “to cause to stand, to make secure.” God’s Word has been established in Heaven, and when earth passes away, it will still stand. The word that begins Psa 119:89 is *leolam*, which means “forever, time without end, Amen”! If we believe that God in His very essence is faithful, that He cannot lie, that His Word cannot be broken; if—in other words—we have biblical

faith, we cannot fail to overcome all tests and trials—however much we may stumble in attaining this mountaintop.

2. “*Delight*” (Psa 119:92–94). We have seen the word *sha-ah* previously (Psa 119:16). It is a word of great tenderness, intimacy, and passion. This writer is in love with the Word of God, for through it he receives and responds to the love of God. It is tragic, in our twisted and perverted world, that many are shocked by such words being used to define what our relationship with our Lord should be. Yet Paul reminds us that the most godly marital relationship—with all its intimacy and passion—is but a shadow to what we will one day know in our Lord’s presence (Eph 5:31–32). It is the love of the Lord—to which the writer clings—that has sustained him in all his sorrows and afflictions. Love makes the most painful of circumstances bearable!
3. “*Consider*” (Psa 119:95–96). Here our word is from *biyn* which means “to distinguish, mark out, separate, understand.” It is equivalent to the idea of discernment, the ability to evaluate based on spiritual enlightenment. In the midst of great peril, the author’s concern is to “*rightly divide the word of truth*” (2Ti 2:15). This is because life can be seen rightly only through the lens of God’s Word. A right understanding of God’s Word gives clear perception of the world around us. We are enabled to “*discern both good and evil*” (Heb 5:14), because our spiritual faculties are refined through exercise. The reason given for such consideration of the testimonies of God is that “*Your commandment is exceedingly broad*” (Psa 119:96). The word “*broad*” is *rahab*, which speaks of the breadth and scope of life and its circumstances that is embraced by even simple scriptural statements. Consider the wealth of knowledge contained in Jesus’ simple statement, “*For one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things [one] possesses*” (Luk 12:15b).

New Testament Confirmation

1. Jesus declared to the people of His generation, “*the Scripture cannot be broken,*” Joh 10:35b.
2. In another passage, He said, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will be no means pass away,*” Mat 24:35.
3. John, the disciple Jesus loved, tells us, “*and the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever,*” 1Jo 2:17. If these words do not provide motivation—an ox-goad as it were—what will it take to overcome our spiritual sluggishness?
4. One of the reasons God’s Word does not have this effect on many souls is that they do not recognize that Christ—the Living Word—speaks to us through His written Word:
“*Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away ... See that you do not refuse Him who speaks ...*” Heb 2:1; Heb 12:25

5. Although often used as an invitation to the unbeliever, Rev 3:20 is actually addressed to the carnal and sluggish believer:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

This is nothing more than the fulfillment of Jesus’ greatest promise to us for life:

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” Joh 14:21

Study 4: Moving on to Victory, Psa 119:97–128 (Mem to Avin)

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” 1Jo 5:4–5

All spiritual growth is directed toward a goal. It involves movement from where we are to where we need to be. We need to set immediate, intermediate, and ultimate goals in our quest of spiritual maturity and Christ-conformity. Spiritual victory is measured in the attainment of these goals, however small the gains might be. As long as we live, there is more to achieve in our personal communion with Christ. Far too many believers try to live in the light of their past faith in Jesus Christ and, in doing so, neglect the necessity of the daily exercise of faith in His Word. Thus, while they possess the assurance of eternal life, they do not experience the joy of victory day-by-day. The next four sections of Psalm 119 will move us in the direction of the biblical ideal *“from faith to faith”* (Rom 1:17).

🔗 Mem—Psa 119:97–104: The Lord is my Refreshment

“He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul ...” Psa 23:2–3

In the letter *Mem*, we have a symbol for **water**. Only a desert-dwelling people can fully appreciate the value of water. To come out of the hot burning desert into a cool oasis is a picture of leaving behind our trials when we enter into the presence of the Lord in prayer. How often we struggle along in the pursuit of the mirage of self-will and self-sufficiency, only to come weary and exhausted at last into the oasis of the Word of God and prayer. “All our efforts have failed, all we can do now is pray” is a common expression that reveals how backward we are in our faith!

1. *“Meditation/understanding”* (Psa 119:97–100). Note the interplay of these words, each appearing twice in these verses. The relationship between the two should not be missed. All too often, we lack understanding in life because we fail to meditate on God’s Word. The word *siyach* means “to ponder, muse, converse with oneself.” True Bible study is a process involving five steps:
 - a. prayer (for spiritual illumination),
 - b. reading (the text in its context),

- c. analysis (taking the text apart),
- d. synthesis (putting the conclusions together), and
- e. meditation (this is spiritual digestion).

It is by meditation that we work out the implications and applications of what we have learned in regard to our life. The word “*understanding*” is *sakal* and speaks of the skill of implementing what we know. It is because we fail in this regard that we are not “*wiser than [our] enemies*” (Psa 119:98).

2. “*Restrained*” (Psa 119:101–102). True biblical understanding always leads to life-application. The word *kala* speaks of the act of “holding back, of imposing a personal prohibition.” Here we see the application of the understanding gained in Psa 119:99–100. The evidence of true spiritual wisdom and biblical understanding is most often expressed by saying “no” to self, so as to say “yes” to the Lord and His will.
3. “*Sweet*” (Psa 119:103–104). A Marine at Khe Sanh (L/Cpl Edwin L. “Tim” Craft) inscribed on a C-ration can, “*For those that will fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected shall never know.*” The same may be said regarding the truth of God’s Word to those believers willing to fight for the living reality of it in their lives! When we battle for God’s truth to be realized in our experience, the victory once attained is incredibly sweet. Many Christians wonder why the Bible seems dry and dusty in their mouths. The reason is that they have never digested it, and lived it out through their mouths, hands, and feet. Because of the curse on sin, it is only “*in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,*” (Gen 3:19). And in the spiritual arena, it is only through conflict and victory that the Word of God attains sweetness.

New Testament Confirmation

1. Jesus said, “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*” (Joh 7:37–38). Only His Word can meet the need of the soul that is thirsting.
2. To the woman at the well, He said, “*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life*” (Joh 4:13–14).
3. Is it any wonder that false teachers are described as “*wells without water*” (2Pe 2:17) and “*clouds without water*” (Jud 1:12)?
4. Because of the matchless grace of God, the invitation remains open to a world that is choking in the dust of evil, “*Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely*” (Rev 22:17).

1 Nun—Psa 119:105–112: The Lord is my Focus

“*The Lord is my light and my salvation ...*” Psa 27:1a

The *Nun* is a symbol of a **fish standing on its tail**. It is meant to represent focus and concentration. In the spiritual life, we could compare it to the North Star in relation to navigation. It presents the principle of keeping one’s eyes focused on Jesus Christ. In the language of the marksman, it is the equivalent to “front sight focus.” It might be illustrated as a spiritual preoccupation with our Lord. Every word and verse in the written Word is a window through which we gaze upon Christ—the Living Word. This is why the Bible is often compared to a mirror, in which we see the reflection of Jesus Christ (2Co 3:18; Jam 1:23–25). The more we look with concentration at the person of Jesus Christ, the more we come to reflect Him.

1. “*Lamp ... light*” (Psa 119:105–106). Only the Word of God is able to illumine the soul so that we see the world around us in its true light. The Bible is clear that the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring light to our understanding (Psa 19:8; Eph 1:17–18). Though this world is dark and our path is often difficult, the light of God’s Word provides guidance and comfort. Not only this, but our life becomes a beacon, calling those who are lost in the darkness to the light of the Good News of who Christ is and what He has done for us through His crucifixion and resurrection.
2. “*Snare ... strayed*” (Psa 119:107–110). The author describes his experience in dreadful terms. He is afflicted, threatened, and persecuted. When he says “*my life is continually in my hand*” (Psa 119:109), he uses a phrase that conveys a precarious existence (Job 13:14). Like a fugitive, whose only possession is held in his hand, the writer is passing through a hostile world, barely clinging to his life. Yet because of the light imparted by God’s Word, he has avoided the enemy’s snares, because he has not strayed from obedience to God’s Word. It is a harsh spiritual reality that our mortal enemy, the devil, surrounds our lives with pitfalls, into which we fall when we depart from the revealed Word of God. Consider the following passages which address this topic: Psa 91:3, Psa 106:36; Pro 7:23, Pro 22:25; 1Ti 3:7, 1Ti 6:9; 2Ti 2:26.
3. “*Heritage*” (Psa 119:111–112). The verb *nachal* means “to possess through inheritance.” In the culture of ancient Israel, inheritance was a birthright. Because you were born into the family, you came into the possession of some of your father’s wealth. The amount and value of your inheritance depended on three things: the amount of your father’s wealth, your place in the family, and the effect of your conduct on the family name and reputation.

Every believer is treated as the “*firstborn*” of the heavenly Father (Eph 1:6). Therefore we have an eternal inheritance reserved for us in Heaven (1Pe 1:4–5). However, the size and scope of this inheritance will depend on our conduct while here on earth (Heb 6:12; 1Pe 3:9; Rev 21:7). All believers are heirs of God, but for those willing to suffer for Christ’s sake, there is a joint inheritance in glory (Rom 8:17; 2Ti 2:12; Rev 2:26; Rev 3:21).

New Testament Confirmation

1. The only way to have fellowship with Christ in our journey through life is to stay in the light of His Word:
“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1Jo 1:7
2. Like Peter walking on the water, when we take our eyes off of our Lord, we always begin to sink, Mat 14:30:
“But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’”
3. It is possible to be a student of the Bible, yet fail to grasp its true meaning, because we do not see Jesus Christ through His Word:
“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?’” Mar 12:24

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” Joh 5:39
4. When we choose to live by the truths of the Bible, we are said to *“lay hold on eternal life”* (1Ti 6:11–12), which is another way of saying we will receive great eternal reward.
5. Whatever we may say, however we may profess love for the Lord, the true evidence of love for Christ is demonstrated in a love for His Word—both in study and in conduct:
“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” Joh 14:21

▢ Samek—Psa 119:113–120: The Lord is my Power

“The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid.” Psa 27:1b

Archimedes said that with a fulcrum and a long enough lever he could move the world from its course. In *Samek*, we have a picture of a **fulcrum and lever**. The lever alone has little power, but when combined with the fulcrum it has tremendous power. Our faith is the lever and God’s Word is the fulcrum. Often people try to “work up” strong faith, just by trying to believe more strongly. Such people have faith in their faith, and it always proves weak and powerless. But when we build our faith by focusing it on the promises of God, we develop powerful faith. It is imperative that we understand the maxim, “One’s faith is only as strong as the object of that faith.” Like the disciples, we might pray, *“Lord, increase our faith!”* (Luk 17:5). His response was to teach them, for faith can only increase as the object of faith—that which we believe—increases also.

1. *“Double-minded”* (Psa 119:113–115). This word comes from *sa-aph*, meaning “to divide.” It is used in the same way as we find in Jam 1:6, *“a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”* This speaks of the “fair weather” believer who talks a good fight, but compromises when the going gets tough. This is the opposite of true spiritual power, which is willing to pay the price of standing on conviction. There is a popular opinion current today that all anger and all hatred is wrong. In reality, a true love of Christ will always respond to evil (which in its worst form comes cloaked as good, and is the counterfeit of true good) with righteous indignation and hatred. Real spiritual power is the fruit of unwavering devotion to truth which will not tolerate playing games with eternal realities. To the serious believer, God’s inspired and eternal Word is a *“hiding place”* and a *“shield”* against the wiles of the devil (Psa 119:114–115).

2. *“Uphold ... hold”* (Psa 119:116–117). The word *samak* means “to lean upon, to support and sustain.” The author looks to the Lord to be his stability and security. Again, in the story of Peter walking on the water, when he began to sink he had only one hope. He cried out to the Lord, who took his hand and lifted him bodily out of the waves (Mat 14:31). How often we count on earthly forms of security, only to find that they are a foundation of sand (Mat 7:26–27). Yet, however many times we fail, He remains faithful and will sustain us, as He promised in Isa 41:10, *“I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”*

3. *“Fear”* (Psa 119:118–120). As with the concepts of hatred and anger in point one, so it is with fear. Not all fear is wrong. In fact, there is a fear that is commanded in God’s Word. Here the author expresses *bona fide* fear of God. In the Old Testament, *“the fear of the Lord”* is synonymous with the idea of “faith in the Lord.” It is not a slavish fear, but a reverence and awesome respect. My father was a very strict man, and I truly feared him—for to disobey brought painful consequences. However, it was a fear mingled with love and respect.

The reproach which the psalmist dreads may have been the conscience of having often failed and offended the holiness of God. Therefore, he cries out for mercy, and asks for spiritual revival, that he might be enabled to obey God’s commands. Such is the nature of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians (and by extension, for us) found in Eph 3:14–19, which carries with it the assurance that God will empower all who entrust themselves to Him (Psa 119:20–21).

New Testament Confirmation

1. The opposite of double-mindedness is obviously single-mindedness. This speaks of a mind unadulterated by doubts and second thoughts. Jesus spoke of it in Mat 5:8:

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” Jam 1:6–7

The word *katharos* speaks of that which has been washed, cleansed, and therefore free of any competing loyalties. It compares to what Jesus spoke of when He talked about the eye being “single” (“good”) in Mat 6:22. It is an uncompromising focus on the Lord through His Word.

2. Paul tells us that there is only one sure foundation for our faith, and that is Christ Himself:

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1Co 3:15

Our faith has power because He is the source of all power. Any so-called “faith” in anything else, while it may soothe the conscience of one holding it, is ultimately powerless in regard to eternal things. Only He who is eternal can offer eternal life. To trust in anything else for one’s eternal destiny is to trust in vain.

3. Faith in Christ ties our soul to an unshakeable hope, and one that can not be disappointed. As the author of Hebrews says:

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Heb 6:19–20

The security of the believer in Christ is as certain as the eternal priesthood of our Savior! The single-minded heart rests in this assurance, while the double-minded lives in doubts, misgivings, fear, and instability. May you know the rest enjoyed by those who receive God’s Word in faith, Heb 4:3, 9, 11.

☛ **Ayin—Psa 119:121–128: The Lord is my Life**

“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psa 16:11

In a desert world, nothing so represents life as water. In the *Ayin* we have a symbol for a **fountain** springing up from the depths of the earth. Just as it is difficult for us—in modern times—to appreciate the value of simple water to a desert-dwelling folk, so it is difficult in our modern and materialistic world to appreciate how desperate is our need for a vital relationship with the living God. All too often, we do not value precious things until we lose them. Even so, the author—being persecuted and tried by many afflictions—has come to a sense of his greatest lack, the assurance of the presence and power of the Lord, sustaining and supplying the needs of

his soul. Not until we come to true spiritual priorities can we be assured that we are on the path to victory in the battles of our spiritual pilgrimage.

1. “*Surety*” (Psa 119:121–122). The verb *arab* speaks of a guarantee given in return for a pledge. The pledge is “*I have done justice and righteousness*” (Psa 119:121). What can we offer to God as evidence of our faith, when we have nothing to give? The prophet Micah declares that the greatest offerings to God come from the heart:

*“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does
the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.”* Mic 6:8

Though the grace of God can never be earned or deserved, God has declared that He will often deal with us as we have done to others. To be just and merciful with others is not only an evidence of our faith, it is grounds for assurance that our life will be pleasing to God, and that “*He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (Heb 11:6).

2. “*Salvation*” (Psa 119:123–125). All too often we think of salvation only in the eternal sense. Yet in the Scriptures, as often as not, it is used for temporal deliverance. The word “*salvation*” here is *Yeshua*, which is the Hebrew of “Joshua” or “Jesus.” The longing of the author goes beyond a change of circumstances. He is craving the author of all salvation—both eternal and temporal. Just as we were delivered from an eternal hell by simple faith in Christ, so Jesus Christ also “saves” us from daily sins and afflictions, as we seek Him and find Him through His Word. Because of this, “*salvation*” should be a daily experience of His power at work in our lives.
3. “*Understanding*” (Psa 119:125–128). The word here implies not only understanding, but also discernment (*biyn*). The causative *hiphil* stem implies a partnership in which God supplies spiritual illumination, and the believer acts on it to first establish right spiritual priorities, but also then to act upon them. Right thinking leads to right conduct! Thus the importance of the “*renewing of the mind*” (Rom 12:2). The author cries out for God to act, by granting insight and wisdom, to enlighten the gloom of his experience. The result anticipated is to value the Word of God “*more than ... fine gold,*” and thus to choose the right and reject the false in life. This section began with *Mem*, a picture of water, and ends with *Ayin*, a symbol of a fountain. Nothing will lead us to victory in our lives but an ever increasing thirst for “*the water of the word.*”

New Testament Confirmation

1. Jesus often spoke of the spiritual life of faith in terms of water. To the woman at the well, He said:

*“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him
will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will
become in him a fountain of water springing up
into everlasting life.”* Joh 4:14

Again, in Joh 7:38, He speaks of the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, saying:

*“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said,
out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”*

The Spirit of God, called by Jesus *“the Spirit of truth”* (Joh 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), always works in conjunction with the Word of God to meet the needs of His people.

2. James wrote concerning the need of believers finding daily deliverance (temporal salvation) for their temptations and trials, *“So then, my beloved brethren ... lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”* Jam 1:19a, 21. Of the five uses of the word *“save”* in the epistle, not one is referring to eternal salvation. It is due to a failure to see this that the book is so often misunderstood and misapplied. How we need to recognize our need for the deliverance of our Savior (*Yeshua*—“the salvation of Jehovah”) on a daily basis!
3. Faith in our Savior will inevitably lead to a sense of assurance and security. The *“surety”* sought by the author of Psalm 119 is ours through the sure and certain promises of God. As Paul declares, *“we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe”* (1Ti 4:10b). While the cross of Christ has made provision for all men, only those who trust Him enjoy His salvation. And it is just as true that among those who belong to Christ, only those who *“live by faith”* (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) will know the assurance and security of His promises.

Study 5: Reaping the Rewards of Growth, Psa 119:129–160 (Pe to Resh)

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead ... I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Phi 3:10, 14

In the passage cited above, Paul is not expressing any doubt about his future resurrection. Rather, he is setting goals that he might experience *“the power of His resurrection”* in this present life. He was determined to *“take up the cross”* (Luk 9:23) and *“die daily”* to self (1Co 15:31), in order that the boast *“Christ lives in me”* might be a daily reality (Gal 2:20). There are, in fact, many more “rewards” for the believer than just eternal salvation. In reality, *“God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Heb 11:6) not just for eternity, but also for blessings and rewards in time, as well as eternity. We are assured that confidence in God’s Word *“has great reward”* (Heb 10:35), and we have been called to a life of faith that we *“may inherit a blessing”* (1Pe 3:9). These rewards and blessings come as a result of persistent growth and victories in the arena of faith.

▫ Pe—Psa 119:129–136: The Lord is my Satisfaction

“How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.” Psa 36:7–8

In the letter *Pe* we see the figure of an **open mouth**, ready to receive food or drink. In God’s inspired Word, we find a banquet for our souls, even in the midst of our trials. As David said, *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”* (Psa 23:5). The world will never understand the poise of the soul that rests in the unseen yet endless supply of God’s tender mercies. We have the promise of God that the receptive soul will never lack His abundant supply:

“I am the Lord your God ... Open your mouth wide; and I will fill it.” Psa 81:10

The tragedy is that we often do not receive, because we do not ask (Jam 4:2b).

1. *“My mouth”* (Psa 119:129–131). Here the figure of the *pe* finds expression in spiritual hunger. In a time of trial and darkness, *“the entrance of Your words gives light”* (Psa 119:130). The figure of *“panting”* (Psa 119:131) speaks of great spiritual longing (see also Psa 42:1). When will we recognize that God often sends or allows tests and trials to spur our sluggish nature, and to create a hunger for His truth for our lives? Every fear in life is an invitation to faith. Every lack is designed to lead us to the source of endless supply!
2. *“My steps”* (Psa 119:132–134). What we receive with the mouth will surely work out in our feet. The study of the Bible is preparatory for the correcting of our life. How can God direct us according to His will when we refuse to hear His Word? We are dominated by our iniquities (Psa 119:133b) when we refuse to submit to the *“Spirit of truth”* (Joh 14:17). Someone has said, “He who chooses the path also chooses where it leads.” To reject the truth of God’s Word is to choose darkness, difficulty, and defeat: *“the oppression of man”* (Psa 119:134). How many souls are oppressed today because they will not be liberated?
3. *“My eyes”* (Psa 119:135–136). The opening of the eyes by the light of the Word brings not only light (Psa 119:130), but also often grief. We see the world around us in a new way, and the corruption and evil, the abuse and torment, bring us to tears. We learn something of the heart of the Good Shepherd when we are able to *“weep with those who weep”* (Rom 12:15). This is the paradox of rejoicing and mourning in a broken world. The author cries, *“Make Your face shine upon Your servant”* (Psa 119:135). It is when we are dwelling in the joy of His presence that we have the greatest sense of the wreckage of the world around us.

New Testament Confirmation

1. Jesus bids us as His disciples to enter into His compassion for the brokenness of society around us:

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” Mat 9:36–38

2. It is only as we find our satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ that we will be able to appeal to, and meet the needs of, those around us:

“Come, see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” Joh 4:29

3. The faithful and eager reception of God’s Word is crucial to the ongoing transformation of the believer into the likeness of Jesus Christ:

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Rom 10:17

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Rom 12:2

4. When we find satisfaction by walking in the light of His Word (1Jo 1:7), we will find that this includes *“the fellowship of His sufferings”* (Phi 3:10), and an abiding sorrow over the world’s rejection of Him and all He offers.

✚ Tsadde—Psa 119:137–144: The Lord is my Keeper (Husbandman)

*“He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.”* Psa 121:3

The *Tsadde* is likened to a **reaping hook**. It indicates a spiritual harvest, in which the chaff is separated from the grain. It can be both a symbol of judgment and of blessing. The Lord is the husbandman of our life. He is constantly at work sifting the precious from the worthless in our lives (Jer 15:19; Eze 22:26), and so to draw us closer into conformity to Himself.

1. *“Upright”* (Psa 119:137–138). The word *yashar* means “to go straight” and—in agricultural terms—“to plow a straight row.” Because God is righteous, and with Him *“there is no shadow of turning”* (Jam 1:17). His nature is reflected in His Word. With Him, *“Yea means yea, and nay means nay”* (Mat 5:37). His Word is straightforward and clear, though we often have difficulty seeing this due to our own natural crookedness. God’s Word never contradicts itself. This is why it is so distressing when people are told things like, *“believe in the Lord Jesus and you will have eternal life”* (Act 16:31), and then are told, *“But if you sin, you will lose your salvation.”* Such teaching not only

contradicts itself, it contradicts Scripture and coherent thought. God's Word is "straight" and only leads in straight ways (Psa 5:8).

2. "Zeal ... pure" (Psa 119:139–141). These words are connected by the pictures they portray. "Zeal" speaks of a fiery passion and was displayed by Jesus when He cleansed the temple (Joh 2:13–17, with Psa 69:9). It is His zeal for holiness, which the author of this Psalm has come to share. Such zeal is the product of the "pure" Word of God, a word meaning "to purify or refine through fire." Interestingly, both words begin with the *Tsadde*, as they begin their respective verses in the Hebrew. In Psa 12:6, we read, "the words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." The habit of daily feasting on God's Word cannot help but produce in us a like zeal for His will to be done.
3. "Delight" (Psa 119:142–144). In the midst of "trouble and anguish," the author is able to speak of a source of deep spiritual delight. The word *shashua* is from the love-language of the ancient Hebrews. It means "to gaze upon ... to embrace ... to fondle," and implies great affection. Such is the love conveyed to the hungry soul by the Lord of Glory through His Word. While the Bible is a word of warning to this world, it is at the same time a "love letter" to the believer, conveying the deep and infinite love of our Redeemer to those who have embraced His work on the cross through faith.

New Testament Confirmation

1. The Church is seen in the New Testament as the Bride of Christ, being prepared for the marriage to the royal husbandman:
"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." Eph 5:25–26
2. Just as the author of Psa 119 was moved to "zeal" by the "pure" Word of God, so we are to be refined through our trials as gold is purified in the furnace:
"That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1Pe 1:7
3. The child of God, who learns to dwell on the beauty and majesty of our Lord, will be richly rewarded by a growing intimacy with His purpose and power:
"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things." Phi 4:8

7 Qoph—Psa 119:145–152: The Lord is my Reflection

“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” Lam 3:21–23

The *Qoph* pictures the **back of the head**, representing reflection and remembrance. It speaks of mental review and concentration on that which is important. For this reason, the *Qoph* and the *Resh* files are closely related—the first being reflection, the second meditation. The first relates to the ability to remember, to call to mind, what we have learned. The second is our ability to hold a given truth before the eyes of the soul for careful evaluation and application.

1. *“I cry out”* (Psa 119:145–146). Nothing can so cause us to seek the face of the Lord like affliction. The word *“cry”* is from *qara*, and is repeated because of the intensity of the need. We call on the Lord, and find deliverance (Joe 2:32), because we remember His promises.
2. *“I rise”* (Psa 119:147–149). So great is the author’s need that he rises before the dawn and, even in the night watches, is reviewing and reflecting on the Word of God. When we are in great sorrow or adversity, we do not find it difficult to do this. Rather, our plight compels us to seek the presence of our Lord through His Word. How often in the dark of night, in the gloom of deep sorrow, I have found comfort through His Word. Note that the cry for help is met by the *“hope in Your word,”* by which the author is *“revived.”*
3. *“You are near”* (Psa 119:150–152). Though those who are far from God’s Word (in their motives and practice) are drawing near, our Lord is nearer, *“a very present help in trouble”* (Psa 46:1). It is a great comfort, when we are assaulted by vicious tongues and malicious slander, to have that sense of the abiding presence of our Lord. Strengthened in the night season by His merciful presence, we can be bold to face the enemies of the coming day.

New Testament Confirmation

1. The apostle Paul is a great example of one who faced a multitude of dangers and found—through it all—that God is faithful. Consider this passage concerning the *“thorn in the flesh”* he was called to endure:
“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect through weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2Co 12:8–9
2. One of the blessings of consistent spiritual growth is stability in times of trial. This steadfastness and poise under pressure has promise of great reward. This is because stability is the fruit of abiding in Christ:

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Jam 1:12

3. As we learn to trust in and act upon the promises of God, we find great peace, power, and purpose in our sufferings. As we grow in our faith day-by-day, we come to the conviction that He is always near:

“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I shall not fear. What can man do to me?’” Heb 13:5–6

7 **Resh—Psa 119:153–160: The Lord is my Meditation**

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” Psa 19:14

The *Resh* is again related to the *Qoph*, in that it depicts the **front of the head** and, therefore, the focal power of the mind. As we mentally review what we know of God and His Word, we have the ability to “*consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ*” (Heb 3:1). The verb “*consider*” is the imperative of *katanoeo*, and means “to bear down with the mind.” This command reminds us that every truth, every passage of Scripture, is pointing us to look to the Lord Jesus Christ. The interplay in this file between the author and the Lord is most interesting.

1. “*I do not forget*” (Psa 119:153–156). The opposite of forgetting is remembrance. His mind is riveted on the promises, principles, and doctrines of God’s Word. The inner discipline of meditation brings the outward strength to face his persecutors. He asks that the Lord will “*consider*” (Psa 119:153, 159) both his afflictions, and his steadfast love of the truths of God. The word is *ra-ah*, and it is a cry for God to “*look upon*” his loyalty under intense provocation, and to act in his behalf.
2. “*I do not turn*” (Psa 119:157). In the face of many persecutions, the author refuses to be distracted or deflected from his spiritual course. The verb *natah* suggests a spiritual change of course due to pressure or opposition. For the zealous believer, nothing short of conformity to Jesus Christ is acceptable. To this end, we must develop a passion, and a pursuit, that cannot be quenched or altered. In light of this, he prays “*revive me*” (Psa 119:154, 156, 159), for he knows his own strength will never carry him to the goal.
3. “*I ... am disgusted*” (Psa 119:158–160). The verb *quwt*, means “to detest” so much as “to cut off.” We are reminded of Jesus’ words, “*and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you*” (Mat 5:30). The cause of the author’s disgust comes from “*the treacherous,*” those who not only do not obey God’s Word, but who go beyond and twist and distort it. Consider the warning of Jude, “*For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Jud

1:4). In the presence of such men the writer declares, “*the entirety of Your word is truth*” (Psa 119:160).

New Testament Confirmation

One single passage written by the Apostle Paul captures the essence of this section of Psalm 119. It is good for us to “meditate” deeply on the heroic conviction portrayed in it:

“But we have this treasure [the knowledge of Christ in the Gospel] in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” 2Co 4:7–10

We live in a time of increasing instability and turbulence. Hostility to Jesus Christ in American society has never been greater. Can we face the dark days ahead with the boldness and conviction of the great apostle? There is no question that it is God’s will that we do so. It will all depend on how tied we have become to this world, and how genuine is our love for the truths and precepts of the Word of God. It is past time for us to become true disciples of our Lord!

(See the poem, “The Touch of the Master’s Hand,” at the end.)

Study 6: Abiding with the Lord, Psa 119:161–176 (Shin to Tau)

*“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness
and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and
I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psa 23:5–6*

A life of fellowship with the Lord is often pictured in the Bible as a shared feast. What has come to be known as “breaking bread together” and “table fellowship” finds its roots in the figures of the Scriptures where the sharing of a meal was considered a sacred privilege. In the figure of Jesus knocking at the door (Rev 3:20), what we find is not a call to salvation, but rather an invitation to each believer to “*dine with Me.*” It is an extension of the promise Jesus gave in Joh 14:23, where both Father and Son are made welcome in the believer’s life through obedience to His Word. This is what is meant by “*abiding in Christ*” (Joh 15:4–9). In these two final files of Psalm 119, we see our Lord portrayed as both “Host” and “Shepherd.” Interestingly, both figures are found in Psalm 23, and it may be that Psalm 119 is but an extended version of that Psalm.

❧ Shin—Psa 119:161–168: The Lord is my Feast

“He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast” Pro 15:15

The *Shin* is a figure likened to an **open mouth with a tooth**. In this, it is similar to the *Pe*, but representing a different use of the mouth. The *Pe* we used to picture spiritual hunger. Here the

Shin is of a spiritual feast supplied by the Lord. Even in time of physical hunger, the soul can feast on the banquet of God's Word, and be filled. Our problem today is that we want "fast food," both physically and spiritually. We do not want to take time to prepare, ingest, and digest the Word of God. We live in a time of "sermonettes for Christianettes". We have lost the art of "feeding on the Word" with an emphasis on substance, accuracy, and depth. Lacking these ingredients, it is no wonder that present-day Christianity is weak and poorly nourished in the doctrines of the faith.

1. "Treasure" (Psa 119:161–163). The word *shalal* speaks of the spoils of battle. The author is in a spiritual battle with his persecutors, who are "princes," and therefore have great power. Yet, his fear is not of his enemies, but "my heart stands in awe of Your word." The word "awe" here is from *pachad*, which can be used either for dread or reverence of God. How true it is that "He who fears God will fear no man."

Confidence in God produces courage before men! This reverence produces great joy due to his insights into the Word of God, brought about in part by his persecutors.

2. "Great peace" (Psa 119:164–165). The word "peace" in Hebrew is *shalom* and "great" is from *rabah* which God uses of Himself in His promise to Abraham, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Gen 15:1). This is the "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, [which] will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi 4:7). Note that this great peace is the result of his love for God's law (the Torah) and his devotions "seven times a day." It is for those committed to the daily disciplines of the spiritual life that it may be said, "nothing causes them to stumble." Stability and strength are not born in a vacuum!
3. "Hope" (Psa 119:166–168). The word "hope" means to "wait expectantly" (*shabar*). It indicates the conviction that God's Word cannot fail, therefore in time of darkness, a looking for the dawn we are sure is coming (Psa 30:5; Lam 3:23). Again, the "salvation" for which he longs is temporal—not eternal. God's deliverance for the believer is generally through—not from—the trials encountered (1Co 10:13). Consider Paul's reference to all his trials (2Ti 3:10–11) and his conclusion, "and out of them all the Lord delivered me." This "deliverance" included quite a litany of sufferings (2Co 11:23–28).

New Testament Confirmation

1. The spiritual wealth of the Church-Age believer is so much greater than anything known or anticipated by the author of Psalm 119. We have:
 - a. The assurance of the finished work of Christ, 1Co 15:3–4
 - b. The personal and permanent indwelling of His Spirit, Joh 14:16–17
 - c. The completed Canon of Scripture, 1Co 13:10; Heb 1:1–3
 - d. Personal adoption into the Royal Family of God, with full assets, Eph 1:3–5
 - e. A personal royal inheritance reserved in Heaven, 1Pe 1:4–5

2. The “*peace*” of which the author speaks is surpassed by that which we possess:
 - a. “*Peace with God*” (Rom 5:1) due to our justification by faith
 - b. “*Peace of God*” (Phi 4:7) resulting from the prayer of faith
 - c. “*Peace from God*” (Eph 1:2; Col 1:2) sent to us in every epistle, coming directly “*from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”
 - d. And above all, “*the God of peace*” (Phi 4:9), who will be with all who love and obey Him.

3. In regard to “*hope*,” once again the Church-Age believer excels in provision:
 - a. First, we “*are saved by hope*” (Rom 8:24; Tit 1:2) in the promise of eternal life.
 - b. Next, we have a “*living hope*” through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1Pe 1:3).
 - c. Third, we have a “*purifying hope*” in anticipation of our own resurrection (1Jo 3:3).
 - d. Finally, we have the “*blessed hope*” of the return of our Lord Jesus for us (Joh 14:3; Tit 2:13).

¶ **Tau—Psa 119:169–176: The Lord is my Shepherd**

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Psa 23:1

The *Tau* is a **signature**, as in the signing off of a letter. The last figure used in Psalm 119 by the author is of his Lord as a shepherd seeking a lost sheep (Psa 119:176). Jesus is declared to be “*the Alpha and the Omega*” four times in Revelation: Rev 1:8, 11; Rev 21:6; Rev 22:13. In this Psalm, He is “*the Aleph and the Tau,*” and everything in between. These are much more than literary devices used to portray His glory. They are to be taken literally of His all-sufficiency toward all who trust in Him. My prayer is that through this study you—the student—has discovered to a greater degree His fullness and sufficiency for all your needs.

1. “*Give me*” (Psa 119:169). Hear the author’s cry for the grace provisions of God! Note six things he asks for:
 - a. A hearing (Psa 119:169a, 170a), “*Let my cry come before You ...*”
 - b. Understanding (Psa 119:169b), “*Give me understanding according to Your word.*”
 - c. Deliverance (Psa 119:170b), “*Deliver me according to Your word [promises].*”
 - d. Help (Psa 119:173), “*Let Your hand become my help.*”
 - e. Life (Psa 119:175), “*Let my soul live.*”
 - f. Recovery (Psa 119:176), “*I have gone astray ... Seek your servant.*”

2. “*Teach me*” (Psa 119:170–172). This is not a request, but a statement. He is a true disciple, learning from his Lord how to live in this world. He is able to praise only because of the things he has learned, both in the Word and in the laboratory of life. The life of a disciple is that of a student, always learning and applying the lessons of God’s Word to life. To Mary, Jesus was ever “*the Teacher*” (Joh 11:28).

3. “*Seek me*” (Psa 119:173–176). We have come to a true level of wisdom when we recognize our own weakness! One of the great spiritual strides in the growth of the Apostle Paul was when he learned the value of his own frailty. Through the “*thorn in the flesh*” incident, Jesus Christ taught him, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength*

is made perfect in weakness” (2Co 12:9). For the child of God who goes astray (and who doesn’t?), how comforting it is to know that our Shepherd will not fail to seek and find us, for “*the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luk 19:10).

(See the poem, “The Hidden Line,” at the end.)

New Testament Confirmation

For this final summation, I would like to focus on the single figure of our Lord as Shepherd. In examining and expounding Psalm 119, our focus has been to discover something of the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. To learn this lesson is one of the great strides in our spiritual growth. As Paul says, “*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*” (2Co 3:5). Let us, therefore, consider our Shepherd in all His sufficiency.

1. He is the Good Shepherd:

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Joh 10:11.

Here we see Christ in the role of Shepherd-Savior. In seeking to rescue those who have strayed, He lays down His life to redeem us. By His great sacrifice on the cross, we have the debt paid for all our sins, and the price of all our blessings. The “Good Shepherd Psalm” is Psalm 22, which begins with Jesus’ cry on the cross, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” If we read this Psalm from the standpoint of Christ on the cross, it will open up many valuable insights.

2. He is the Great Shepherd:

“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” Heb 13:20–21

Here we see not Christ crucified, but Christ resurrected and ascended to the Father’s right hand. From His place of exaltation, He works through His Spirit and His Word to bring us to completion in the plan of God. Having trusted in the “Good Shepherd,” we are now under the care of the “Great Shepherd,” from whom all protection, provision, and purpose for life come. The “Good Shepherd” Psalm is Psalm 23, where the Shepherd meets our every need. It is wise in our spiritual journey to often look back to the cross, as the means of all our blessings. But we must also learn to “*Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*” (Col 3:1).

3. He is the Chief Shepherd:

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” 1Pe 5:4

Jesus Christ is not just the “Good Shepherd” who gave Himself on the cross. Nor is He only the “Great Shepherd” who was raised again, and supplies all our needs. He is the “Chief Shepherd,” who is coming again to reward those who have served Him.

Although the context here is addressing those who shepherd the flock of God (pastors), yet the principle holds true for each of us as a believer in Jesus Christ. He is coming again (soon!), and we will all give an account of our service to Him. It is not without reason that He says, “*And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work*” (Rev 22:12). It is Psalm 24 that is the “Chief Shepherd” Psalm, where Christ, the “*King of glory,*” is coming again. We ought to daily consider how we will respond when faced with the question: “What have you done with what I gave you?”

Conclusion

In Psalm 119, we have seen the all-sufficiency of our Lord. We have gone from *Aleph* to *Tau* to explore the bounties of His grace. This same figure is found in Rev 22:13, where He says, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.*” He is truly the “*Author and finisher of our faith*” (Heb 12:2).

May we all learn to seek and find in Him the supply for our every need!

Poems

He Giveth More Grace

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limit; His grace has no measure;
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

~ Annie Johnson Flint, 1866–1932

The Anvil

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

*"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."*

And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone.

~ Attributed to John Clifford, 1900–1983

The Touch of the Master's Hand

'Twas battered and scarred and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile.

*"What am I bid, good folk?" he cried.
"Who'll start the bidding for me?
A dollar, a dollar ... now two ... only two ...
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"*

*"Three dollars once, three dollars twice,
Going for three" ... but no!*
From the room far back a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow.

Then wiping the dust from the old violin
And tightening up the strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet,
As sweet as an angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said, *"What am I bid for the old violin?"*
As he held it up with the bow.

*“A thousand dollars ... and who’ll make it two?
Two ... two thousand, and who’ll make it three?
Three thousand once and three thousand twice ...
Three thousand and gone!”* said he.

The people cheered, but some exclaimed
*“We do not quite understand ...
What changed its worth?”* and the answer came:
“’Twas the touch of the master’s hand.”

And many a man with soul out of tune
And battered and scarred by sin
Is auctioned cheap by the thoughtless crowd
Just like the old violin.

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul, and the change that is wrought
By the touch of the Master’s hand.

O Master! I am the tuneless one
Lay, lay Thy hand on me,
Transform me now, put a song in my heart
Of melody, Lord, to Thee!

~ written by Myra Brooks Welch, 1877–1959

The Hidden Line (The Destiny of Men)

There is a time, we know not when,
A point we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory or despair.

There is a line by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God’s patience and His wrath.

To pass that limit is to die—
To die as if by stealth;
It does not quench the beaming eye
Or pale the glow of health.

The conscience may be still at ease,
The spirit lithe and gay;
That which pleases still may please,
And care be thrust away.

But on that forehead God has set,
Indelibly a mark
Unseen by men, for men as yet
Are blind and in the dark.

And yet doomed man's path below
May bloom as Eden bloomed;
He did not, does not, will not know,
Or feel that he is doomed.

He knows, he feels that all is well,
And every fear is calmed;
He lives, he dies, he wakes in hell,
Not only doomed, but damned.

Oh, where is this mysterious bourn
By which our path is crossed;
Beyond which God himself hath sworn,
That he who goes is lost.

How far may we go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begin
The confines of despair?

An answer from the skies is sent,
*"Ye that from God depart,
While it is called today, repent,
And harden not your heart."*

~ Joseph Addison Alexander, 1809–1860