

# The ABC of Psalm 119

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Date: 19 April 2020

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening.

We gather together to worship God. We don't do so physically, but those who come on the telephone and gather together around screens on the internet, we do so with the purpose of worshipping God.

We begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise. We sing from Psalm 119 and from verse 9 to verse 16 of this psalm.

This section, the verse Mark 16, Psalm 119 verses 9 to 16 to God's praise.

By what means shall I own my Lamb, His way to purify?

[ 1 : 44 ] If he according to thy word, there to attentive be.

Unfeignedly thee have I sought with all my soul and heart.

O let me not from the right path of thy commons depart.

Thy word I in my heart have hid, that I offend not thee.

O Lord, thou leavened, blessed art. Thy statutes teach thou me.

[ 2 : 54 ] The judgments of thy mouth each one, my lips declared how.

More joy thy testimony is way, than riches all may give.

I will thy holy precepts make my meditation.

And carefully I'll have respect unto thy ways each one.

Upon thy statutes my delight shall constantly be said.

[ 4 : 06 ] And by thy grace I never will thy holy word forget.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you once more that we have this privilege, we have this opportunity, we have the desire to come together in worship.

And to open your word, to sing it, to read it, and to meditate upon it. And we thank you that you have opened our eyes to see the reality of the fact that your word is your word.

It is the enduring, the living word of God. And we pray that you would impress upon us more and more the value and the worth of being in your word.

We confess that we are people who are easily distracted. Our minds go many places. We are in many different places. Even when we gather together and worship, our minds can stray.

[ 5 : 19 ] Our affections can wander. But we pray that you would help us in this time to meditate upon your word as the psalmist writes of in this psalm.

And we ask that as we do so, Lord, that you would bless us, that you would feed us, that you would guide us, that you would direct us, and that you would work within us in such a way as to bring salvation to those who have not yet received salvation.

And to sanctify, to shape and to mold those of us who are believers. So that we will walk steady, that we will know joy, that we will know contentment, that we will be those who are peaceful in a world which is very much lacking in peace.

And Lord, that we would be made more like Jesus, that we would live holy lives which reflect Jesus more and more. We know that we cannot do that perfectly, but we thank you that the expectation upon us is not that we would do it perfectly.

We trust in the one who has done everything well for us in our place, Jesus. We thank you for his perfect life, that every statute, that every law, that every commandment he kept in this world.

[ 6 : 43 ] He was tempted in every way, as we are, and yet he did not sin. And we thank you that he is the one who lived the life that we could not live.

And we thank you, as we so often say, that he is the one who died the death that we deserve to die. We sin, and the wages of sin are death.

But we thank you that he died, he laid down his life. If it was not taken from him, and he did so that we could be forgiven, that our debt could be paid, and that we could be given that everlasting life that our souls crave.

And so we often think upon the quote, Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee. And we thank you, Lord Jesus, that we are able to come to you and to find that rest for our souls.

You have put eternity in the heart of man and woman and boy and girl. And we pray that we would know that we are headed for an eternity to gain, and not an eternity to shun.

[ 7 : 49 ] And we thank you that it's because of Christ's death and his resurrection and his perfectly lived life, that we can have that hope when we believe in him.

So give us faith, Lord, we pray. Faith is a gift from God. And we ask for that faith, that as the word is heard, that we would take hold of it, and that we would receive the grace and the peace, the salvation that is bought for us in Christ's blood.

We pray for places, Lord, where your word is prohibited, where your word is not available. We know that there are parts of the world still where there is no translation of the Bible.

We pray for those who work tirelessly and translating to bring it to those who do not yet have it in their mother tongue. We ask for perseverance, for stamina, for determination to be given to those who are called to that work.

We pray for those who distribute it, who go to places of great risk to bring your word. We think of organizations like Mission Aviation Fellowship, who seek to cross borders and go dangerous places where there may not be any availability of your word.

[ 9 : 09 ] And we ask that you would guide them, that you would protect them, that you would continue to use them for your glory. We thank you that in this day, when borders may be closed and where governments may make laws to prohibit the movement of your word, that there is means, there is medium, airwaves and internet where the word of God can travel at speed.

And we thank you at this time, especially when so much in our nation and across our world is locked down. We thank you that the gospel is not locked down, but we see it move at pace and penetrate in many areas where we did not see it before.

We thank you that every time we open our phones and look on social media, we see gospel messages. We pray, Lord, that these messages would be blessed and that there would be many who see Jesus and who take hold of Jesus by faith for the first time in these days.

Although the darkness may be thick, we thank you that the light is not overcome by the darkness, but the darkness is overcome by the light. We pray that we would see more and more of that in these days.

We pray on, Lord, for those who struggle. We think of those who are grieving at this time. We see so many deaths reported in the news night by night.

[ 10 : 33 ] And most of these numbers do not have names attached to them for us. But we recognize that there are families all over the world who are grieving and who are sorrowing.

And we pray for your comfort to be granted to those who grieve. We pray, Lord, for your strength to be given to those who are struggling with addictions.

As lockdown continues and as tensions at times can be high in households, as pressures mount, we think of those who struggle with addictions.

And we ask that you would give them strength, your strength, to be able to resist these temptations that may become more strong over these days. As we think of those who struggle with mental health and depression.

And we ask for your protection over them. And we ask that they would know the light and the joy of the gospel in their lives at this time, especially.

[ 11 : 34 ] So hear our prayers. We pray, Lord, that you would help us as we open your word, that we would know the help of the Holy Spirit. That we pray for the youth fellowship as they meet online just in a wee while.

And we ask that those who speak would be given liberty, that they would know that they are speaking your words. And we pray for these young people, that they would trust you and remember you in the days of their youth.

And for those who have believed and who have professed their faith in recent days, we thank you for them. And we pray, Lord, that you would cause them to mature and to grow and to become steady and bright as Christians.

So hear our prayers. Take away our sin. Lead us and guide us, we pray. And enable us to worship you in spirit and in truth. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. We'll read God's word now. We'll read from Psalm 119.

[12:40] And we'll read three sections of the Psalm. We'll look at the whole Psalm in the course of the evening, not in any depth, but we'll look across the span of it all. But we'll read from verses 1 through to verse 16.

And then we'll read one more section of the Psalm from verse 57 down to verse 64, just to give us a flavor of this Psalm.

So Psalm 119. So Psalm 119. We read from verse 1. This is God's word. Blessed are they whose ways are blameless.

Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong.

They walk in his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees. Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

[13:41] I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. I will obey your decrees. Do not utterly forsake me. And you see that's under the heading of Aleph, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

And the second section is headed Beth, the second letter. How can a young man keep his way pure by living according to your word? I seek you with all my heart.

Do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O Lord. Teach me your decrees.

With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

I delight in your decrees. I will not neglect your word. Then if we just look at one more section under the heading Heth, which goes from verse 57.

[14:50] You are my portion, O Lord. I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to your promise.

I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law.

At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws. I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts. The earth is filled with your love, O Lord.

Teach me your decrees. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. And may he enable us and give us understanding as we turn to it just now.

Well, you have the text in front of you just now. And if you can have that in front of you for the period just now, that would be helpful.

[15:56] As we turn to give a few minutes of study to it. Now, you don't have to listen to me tell you this, but we're all very much aware still that the country is in total lockdown.

And it was reported in the news this week that there will be at least another three weeks of this. So most businesses have shut up shop for the moment.

Building sites are closed, as we can see down at the harbour. Cinemas, theatres, football stadiums, everything is shut down.

But some colleges and universities are still open. Assignments are still due. One of our congregation told me through gritted teeth.

So studying for some will still have to be done. And as we look at this psalm, Psalm 119, it puts me in mind initially of the college student or the university student with his or her study cards and bits of paper that are highlighted and underscored and perhaps mind maps and spider diagrams.

[17:13] And whatever we use to try and help us study, there's various techniques that we use to help us to remember things. There's various techniques and methods that we use to help us understand the material that's put before us for study.

And Psalm 119 follows a particular pattern. The psalmist or God, as he takes hold of the psalmist, uses a technique to help the psalmist and the reader understand and to remember the truths within the body of the psalm.

And you'll see even from your Bible notes, so you've got a study Bible, that this psalm follows a particular pattern, has a particular structure.

It is called an acrostic psalm. And the method that's used in teaching here is to take a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and use it as a guide to help the reader learn.

Warren Wierspe, the commentator, says the psalm is arranged according to the Hebrew alphabet. The first eight verses all begin with the Hebrew letter Aleph.

[18:27] The next eight verses start with Beth. The next eight verses, Gimel, and so on. And you can see that if you scan through the text here, there's these very clear and ordered sections that follow the Hebrew alphabet.

I think it's Spurgeon that refers to this as the golden alphabet in the psalm. And so, although it's not as obvious for us in the English translation, it's very striking in the Hebrew that this is an acrostic psalm.

And so our first point tonight is simply to note that structure and that form of the psalm. We'll look at the ABC of Psalm 119 this evening.

And the first point, A, is acrostic. And you might say, as you're listening, why bother noting that?

You know, that may have been the structure, that may have been the form at the time that this was written so many thousands of years ago.

But what does that mean for us tonight? What's the significance of that for us tonight? Is there a point in application for me and for you? And I think the answer to that question is yes.

[19:42] This is something that we are to look at and note from the structure that God wants us to know and he wants us to understand.

And he wants us to remember the things that are written in this psalm. So he has given us this particular structure and method of being able to grasp it.

Spurgeon says, The Holy Spirit thus deigned to speak to men in forms which were attractive to the attention and helpful to the memory. So, in a sense, God himself has given us this psalm almost in the form of revision notes.

It's in a carefully ordered format. It's clear. It's structured. It's designed in such a way as to encourage us to learn this, to memorize this, to take these truths and to apply these truths into our lives.

One weekend, perhaps last year, maybe the year before, it was during the time when I was interim moderator over in South Uist.

[20:58] And I went over there to preach. And I preached in Loch Boystale in the morning. And after preaching in the morning, I went for lunch with Callum Murdoch, the minister in the north.

And he was having guests for lunch on that particular day. And there was one little boy who was there with his mom and dad and his brother or his sister.

And I think he was probably about 11 years old. Absolutely mad for football. And he was telling me as we were having our lunch that he'd spent all day Saturday memorizing all the goalkeepers from the premiership.

And I was kind of impressed by that, but I was a bit dubious about that. So, I thought I'd put him to the test. And so, I questioned him about Man City and about Man United and about Liverpool.

And he had all these goalkeepers at his fingertips. Second, I asked him the name of the team. I already came with the goalkeeper's name. So, I paused. I was impressed, but I paused for a wee bit.

[21:57] And then I went back to it. And I asked him about some of the less well-known keepers and teams. Burnley and Norwich City and Watford. And to my amazement, even these lesser-known teams, he had all these names of these goalkeepers locked into his 11-year-old mind.

Now, what great benefit is there in knowing all the goalkeepers of the Premier League? Well, I think probably not much really. But what great benefit is there in knowing and learning and remembering the truth of God's Word?

Well, there's huge benefit. God's Word is of constant relevance. It's of constant blessing for time, for this world, and for eternity.

So, the encouragement that we're given, even in the structure and the ordering of this psalm, is that we would take in God's Word. It wouldn't just stay on the page, but that we'd take it in.

You know, we'd take in the lyrics of songs. We'd hear a tune that we may not have heard for 25 years. And we can instantly recite the lyrics of this song.

[23:10] We'd take in the plot lines of films. We'd see just a snapshot of a film that we'd seen 10 years ago, and it all floods back. We'd remember it. We'd take in facts and figures about cars and

cows and sheep and celebrities and our favourite singers or our favourite sports teams.

And we remember these things. We retain these things. They take up so much of the storage of our minds. We take these kind of things in. You know, I'm talking of the storage of our minds.

I mean, think about mobile phones. We're so accustomed to using these things all the time. When they run slow and start to frustrate us, when they malfunction and start to freeze and start to crash, usually the problem with them is that they're running out of storage.

So what do we do? Well, we're opening up the phone. We're going into the settings, and we start to purge the phone of all the useless stuff. We're stripping away old apps.

We're taking away games and music that we don't need in order to free up space for the useful stuff so the phone will actually run properly. And perhaps we need to go through that exercise spiritually.

[ 24 : 26 ] I think we need to do that often, spiritually. The reality is our minds become clogged up. Our lives become clogged up with much that we don't need.

Things that we, from time to time, have to lose in order to take in God's Word and retain God's Word and remember and learn and be shaped by God's Word.

So the first thing we note here about the psalm, the A of the psalm, is it's acrostic in structure. It has that attractive, striking structure in order that we'll take hold of it and remember it, take it into our lives.

The second point is for us to look at the big picture. So what's the big picture of Psalm 119? Well, you can see, as you glance through the psalm, there are many pictures in Psalm 119.

There's many verses. It's the longest psalm in the Psalter. It's actually the longest chapter in the Bible. And for some of you, you may be terrified as you calculate and estimate how long it's going to take me to work my way through this psalm.

[ 25 : 45 ] But I've got encouraging news for you tonight. I'm too intimidated to work through this psalm verse by verse. This is a psalm that's so huge that it frightens me to spend too much time studying it.

So I'm just going to take one week and glance at this psalm and hopefully come away with the big picture of it. So what's the big picture? Well, the big picture of this psalm, I believe, is to make crystal clear to us the importance of God's Word.

Both through the method, the acrostic structure of the psalm and the main message of the psalm, we are being taught that God's Word, it is worth knowing, it's worth learning, it's worth meditating upon, it's worth memorizing and remembering, it's worth taking in to our minds and our hearts.

In 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17, it says, Now you could say that Psalm 119 is the Old Testament equivalent, it's the extended version of that New Testament text.

The whole of the message of this psalm is to impress upon us that God's Word is precious, it's useful, it's of great value, it's of great worth.

[ 27 : 16 ] You know, sometimes we overlook that, don't we? We tend to spend more time in front of our screens than we do in front of Scripture.

So this is a message that I need, and it's a message I expect that all of us need. Don McSween from Scalpy, one of the elders in the church here, he gave us testimony one night, some of you may remember, and he spoke very honestly about a time in his life that was difficult.

He was fishing, but he had boat problems, and because he had boat problems, and because these boat problems were costing money to fix, he was getting into financial problems, and he was worrying about it, and he was accumulating debt, and he was praying about that.

And one day when he was at sea, he pulled up his net, and along with the catch, he noticed a wee dull bit of wire, it looked like an old bed spring.

So he pulled it out of the net, he handled it, didn't mean much to him, but it was a bit peculiar, and a bit of weight in it, so he threw it to the side, he threw it in an old toolbox, and he forgot about it, carried on fishing.

[ 28 : 38 ] And some months later, one of the crew with him, picked the bit of wire back up, and he took a closer look at it. See, he'd seen something on the Antiques Roadshow, that looked a wee bit similar to this, and he decided he would take it to Edinburgh, to get it checked out.

And to cut a long story short, the experts, when they saw this thing, and when they handled it, they realised that this was certainly not a rusty old bed spring, this was a solid gold torque, that dated back to the Bronze Age.

It was, to quote the experts, in that field, a one in a million find. And it paid all of Donald's debts. It was an answer to prayer.

And it now has pride of place, in the National Museum, in Edinburgh. But the point I want to make, is that what Donald, at first thought, was of no value, and threw aside into an old toolbox, it was actually of immense value.

And that's true of the Bible. Sometimes we can handle it. Donald handled the old spring, what he thought. That actually was a gold torque.

[ 29 : 59 ] Sometimes we can take hold of the Bible, we can handle it, we can open it, and then we can set it aside, not in a toolbox, but on a shelf. And we don't realise, the precious nature, of these words.

We don't realise the worth, of this, for our lives. Psalm 19, described as Psalm 119's younger brother, by some of the commentators.

It's a smaller version, that drives home the same message. Psalm 19, verses 9 and 10, says, says, the decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold. And that's what we've been taught, through Psalm 119, at much greater length.

The psalmist is seeking to show us, how excellent God's word is, and his purpose in doing this, is to motivate us, to search the scriptures. And that's my purpose, this evening, in opening, opening this psalm.

[ 31 : 06 ] I can't preach through it in a week. I couldn't preach through it in a month. I would struggle to preach through it verse by verse, in a year. So I'm not going to attempt to, I'm not going to try to.

I simply want to spend one evening, encouraging us, to search this psalm for ourselves, to spend some time in this psalm.

And as we spend time in this psalm, this is a psalm that encourages us, to spend time in all of God's word. And certainly, at this point in our lives, we who had little time, for anything before, have all of a sudden, in lockdown, found ourselves with a whole lot of time.

And some of us are wondering, what to do with it. Well, the psalmist's encouragement to us, is to take God's word, off the shelf, and open it, and study it.

And how does he encourage us, to do that? Well, he encourages us, to do that, by telling us, in this psalm, what God's word is. He gives us a flavor, of what we can expect to find, in all of scripture.

[ 32 : 16 ] And there are various words, if you read through the psalm, you'll see that there are various words, which are repeated, over and over again. And they're key words, for us to note, that describe to us, what the Bible is.

So let me just go through, a few of these words, very briefly. The first word, we can note there, it is way. You find the word way, 11 times in the psalm.

Let me give you a couple of examples. Verse 9, how can a young man, keep his way pure? By living according, to your word. Verse 15, I meditate, on your precepts, and consider, your ways. So if you and I, want to know, the way to live, if we want to know, the ways of God, where do we go looking for them?

Well, we find them in this book. The second word, to note, it's 45 times, used in this psalm, is the word law.

[ 33 : 17 ] Verse 1, blessed are they who walk according to the law of the Lord. Open my eyes, verse 18, that I may see wonderful things in your law.

It's just two examples of many. Now, God is sovereign. He is the law maker. We are his subjects, who are required to, and who will only flourish, and find contentment in our lives, when we live according to his law.

So where do we find his law? Well, we find it in this book, the Bible. Third word, statutes. We have it 23 times in the psalm.

Look at verse 2, blessed are they who keep his statutes. Verse 31, another example, I hold fast to your statutes, O Lord. Now, when we talk about something that doesn't move, we describe it as stationary.

A car may break down. It no longer moves forward. It's stationary. Now, God's law, his word, is stationary. It is statute. His word doesn't move.

[ 34 : 29 ] It's always binding. We don't have to look for amendments, and revisions, and appendices, and updates for God's word, because this book, God's word, the Bible, it will never need any.

let's just pause there for a second, because for some perhaps who are listening, just now, for those who are listening, and are hearing these words, God's way, God's law, God's statutes, there may be a reaction to all this already.

There may be that sinful, rebellious spirit rising up within you, and saying, I don't want to be told the way to live. I don't want to be told that there is a sovereign God who is over me, who steers the course of my life, by his laws, and his statutes.

And that's the expression of sin within us, when that is what we hear bubbling up from within our hearts.

But for the believer, when we think about even these first three words, I think we breathe a sigh of relief, as we read this. If we thought we were in control, in these strange days, if we thought we were charged with, with being the ones who marked out the right way ahead, what a burden of responsibility we would feel.

[ 36 : 05 ] So, how thankful we should be to be under the reign of the sovereign God. How thankful we should be that we are charged to look to him, to explore his law, his statutes, to look to him for guidance on his way, the right way ahead, through these uncharted waters that we're living in.

The unbeliever looks at God's law, and his statutes, and his way, as something that's binding and burdensome, on their life. But the believer sees that these are the means, through which we can know God's blessing.

Verse 1 and 2, that comes through clearly. Blessed simply means happy. Happy are those whose ways are blameless.

Happy are those who walk according to the law of the Lord. Happy are they who keep his statutes. Let's move on.

Press play again. Look at just two or three more of these words. Precepts is the next one. Verse 4, you have laid down your, you have laid down precepts.

[ 37 : 24 ] Verse 93, another example. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. Now we go next door to the surgery to pick up our prescription.

We don't just go along to the shelf and pick up the first bag of pills that we see. Some of these pills will do us harm. We only need to take, we must only take the ones that are prescribed for us.

And God has prescribed through his precepts. He has prescribed what we are to believe and what we are not to believe in order to be saved.

He has prescribed how we are to live and how we are not to live if we are to live lives that are pleasing to him and bring contentment to our own souls. So why do we, where do we find God's precepts?

Where do we find God's prescription for our lives? So why do we find it in this book? That's what the psalm is to say. Next word, commands.

[ 38 : 28 ] Precepts we find 21 times in the psalm. Commands we find 22 times in the psalm. Verse 6 and verse 35 for two examples. I consider all your commands.

Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Now let's note here that this word here is not suggestions that God has given us, but commands.

He's given us things that we are to do. He has given us things that we are to do, which are by design for his glory and for our good, for our delight.

And note the psalmist, he says, I consider all your commands. He doesn't do a pick and mix.

Remember in Woolworths and Stornoway, back in the day, the big pick and mix, you could have a few of this and a few of that.

You took the ones you liked, you left the ones you didn't. People do that with God's law today, but that's not what we're to do. It's not what we're taught to do. The psalmist says, I consider all your commands.

[ 39 : 34 ] He doesn't choose the ones he likes and take hold of them and set aside the ones he doesn't like. He says, I consider all your commands. So where do we find these commands?

Well, we find them in this book. Next word is right or righteous. It's used 13 times in the psalm. Verse seven, I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

Verse 144, your statutes are forever right. Give me understanding that I may live. For you and I to know the way of wrong and the way of right, we don't look to self.

We don't look to others. We don't look to committees. We don't look to our culture because all these things change and they shift and they're not reliable.

We look to God. He's the one who teaches his righteous ways to us. And where do we find that teaching?

[ 40 : 41 ] Well, we find it in this book. And finally, we note here the word, word. It's used 30 times in the psalm.

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. verse 105, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

We use words to speak our minds. People can't read our minds by telepathy. We have to use words to articulate what's in our minds. And the eternal God, he has spoken his mind through his word.

I can remember being at General Assemblies in the past where people said on various issues, what would Jesus say? What would God say if he was standing here in this hall with us? And then they would try and put their words in God's mouth.

But actually, the reverse must prevail. Jesus has spoken. God has spoken. He used people like the psalmist who were inspired by God, the Holy Spirit.

[ 41 : 48 ] But he has spoken his word. And where can we find his word recorded? Well, we find his word recorded in his book, the Bible.

And I could go on. These are just seven. But there are a number more that we could highlight.

These are just some of the words which the psalmist uses repeatedly to get us to see how excellent, how precious, at how valuable this book, God's holy word, the Bible is.

There's a quote which I came across from Tim Keller. He says, The same mind running the universe expresses itself in the Bible. So there is no limit to the perfect trustworthiness and truth of Scripture.

It is therefore the only solid foundation on which to build a life. human cultures, philosophies, and trends of progress rise up, but within a generation or two become obsolete and forgotten.

But through all generations, your word, Lord, is eternal. And that's what we have in our hands here. It's what we have before us this evening.

[ 43 : 11 ] So what are we to do in response? in response? What's the application here? Well, there's challenge and there's comfort. Well, we have application.

We have the A, B, C. The A is to note the acrostic structure, encourages us to take hold of, to remember God's word. The B is the big picture.

And that, again, is to impress upon us the value and the worth of God's word. And the challenge and the comfort by way of application is what we come to in conclusion.

So what challenge are we to take from this psalm? Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out what the challenge will be. The challenge is simply to read it and to learn it and to meditate upon it and to memorize it and to obey it and to live by it.

God's word. We're not to throw it aside on the old toolbox. We're not to leave it on the shelf. But as the psalmist says, we're to be in it.

[ 44 : 19 ] The psalmist was certainly in God's word. During the day, he was in God's word. At night, he was in God's word. Look at verse 97.

Oh, how I love your law. I meditate on it all day long. How can the psalmist do that? I mean, is he carrying a scroll around with him or on the hill as he tends to the sheep or on the battlefield when he is in battle?

Well, no, he's not doing that. He can't do that. He has God's word memorized. Verse 11, he says, I have hidden your word in my heart.

And because he's hidden God's word in his heart, he is able during the day as he goes from place to place, task to task, he's able to chew over.

And he does that to keep him from sinning, to keep him close to God. One of the commentators, I think it was Keller again, says that Jesus was the preeminent example of this.

[ 45 : 30 ] In his darkest moments, when he has been forsaken, betrayed, and killed, he quotes scripture. His heart was so shaped by scripture that it came to mind whenever he was in need or difficulty.

The word of God should also dwell richly in us, Colossians 3.16. Does it? Asks Keller.

And that's the question that the psalmist is asking as well. Is God's word during the day dwelling richly within us? Because during the day, the psalmist is in God's word.

He's taking this challenge. And at night, he's in God's word. Look at verse 148. My eyes stay open through the watches of the night that I may meditate on your promises.

His heart is so full that he can't actually wait until the morning to get back to God's word. He's up for a midnight feast. You know what that's like. You wake up sometimes at one o'clock in the morning and there's a wee bit of an appetite in you.

[ 46 : 35 ] So you're in the fridge hoping nobody will wake up. We midnight feast. Well, here's the psalmist and spiritually speaking, he's up in the night and he's feasting upon the promises of God's word.

So the challenge for us in that location is to be like the psalmist, to be in God's word and the comfort to finish.

What comfort will we receive when we are in God's word? Well, we will receive the comfort of knowing that we are on the right track both for time and for eternity.

I remember being on holiday in Sicily, just Mary and I. And we hired a car to go from the airport to the place that we were staying and that was a huge mistake because the roads were absolutely crazy.

The drivers were were were crazy. There's no other word for it. It was like wacky races and we got to the place we stayed at. Parted the car up but didn't go near it for a week.

[ 47 : 42 ] And when we were due to go back to the airport, we were slightly tight in time on the day that we were heading back. We were on the main road and then all of a sudden there was a diversion that took us off the main road that we were supposed to be on for the airport.

It took us off into wee back roads and it seemed like for mile after mile after mile there were no signs and there was no indication that we were on the right track and the more we drove and the more time passed on the more nervous we were getting.

The more we were asking each other are we heading in the right direction and eventually we were taken back on to the main road and we saw the sign for the airport and that sign it brought such comfort.

Now sin makes us lost but God has given us his words that we can know assuredly how we can be saved and so that we can know with assurance how we can live God's way and there's great comfort in that.

God hasn't left us in the dark to try to work out for ourselves how we can be saved and how we're to live a life that's pleasing to him. He's given us his word and there's great comfort in knowing what God is saying to us through his word but the greatest comfort of all is that through this book the Bible we can know God himself.

[ 49 : 21 ] We can know Jesus the one who is described in John's Gospel as the word made flesh. Jesus in John 6 he said these are the very scriptures that testify about me.

so if you and I want to know Jesus if we want to know and to be in a saving sanctifying relationship with the invisible God we don't need to go on a pilgrimage to the holy land we don't need to do a PhD in some obscure area of theology we don't need to have some far eastern mystical experience we simply need to read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to give us understanding as you'll note in the psalm the psalmist keeps doing as the psalm progresses we simply need to read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to give us understanding so that we may see and hear and meet with and come to know Jesus so there's the ABC of Psalm 119 it's across the construction to help us learn it and remember it the big picture of the psalm is to teach us the importance the value of God's word and the challenge for us is to open it to be in the word of knowing

God and we'll pray our heavenly father again we thank you for your word we thank you for this psalm and we ask that as we go back to whatever it is we are doing that we would take the challenge that we would know the comfort that the psalmist testifies to help us in the day to be meditating upon your word help us at night to be to be hungering for your promises shape us mold us Lord through your word help us not to go our own way but to go your way and we thank you that through this word we can know Jesus who said I am the way the truth and the life help us we pray to be those who come to the father by faith through Christ the son and we ask all these things in Jesus name Amen we'll conclude by saying the hymn speak

O Lord as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word speak O Lord as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word take your truth plant it deep in us shape and fashion us in your

likeness that the light of Christ might be seen today in our acts of love and our deeds of faith speak  
O Lord and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory glory teach us  
Lord full obedience holy reverence true humility test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance  
of your purity cause our faith to rise cause our eyes to see your majestic love and authority words  
words of power that can never fail let their truth prevail over unbelief speak speak O Lord and  
renew our minds help us grasp the heights of your plans for us truths unchanged from the dawn of  
time that will echo down through eternity and by grace we'll stand on your promises and by faith  
we'll walk as you walk with us speak

[ 54 : 57 ] O Lord till your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory that are Lisaastic And  
now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of  
God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forevermore.

Amen.