



Psalm 119 - Journal

"Every verse but four (v1-3,113) is directed in prayer to God, and the theme of the Psalm is not the law of the LORD in itself, but the psalmists desire to respond wholeheartedly to God's revealed will in a life of prayerful obedience."

"Thus the Psalmist delights in the spoken or written word, not as a thing in itself, but as a communication from a God he knows personally, believes in absolutely, loves deeply, hopes in fervently. The Word of God is a basis for engaging with God, listening to Him, and responding to Him day by day. It is the content of meditation, and the foundation of prayer."

(Psalms 107-150, CSSA)

One of the following words occur in almost every verse of this Psalm. Each of them is a somewhat different aspect of how we are meant to be governed by God. There is a part we play in this and a part that God plays, and this Psalm is super helpful in sorting that out.

Look up this words and find out how they are used elsewhere in the Bible. What aspect of governance do they refer to?

Laws

Testimonies

Precepts

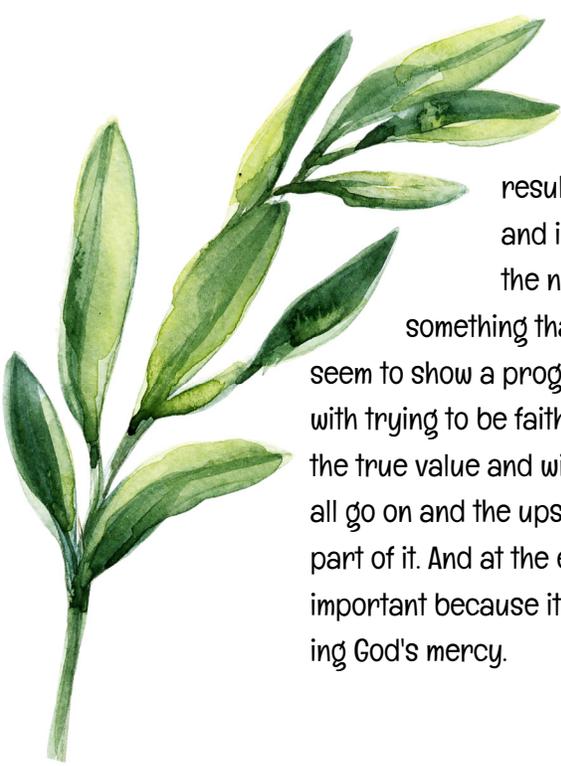
Statutes

Commandments

Judgments

Word





The first section of this Psalm seems to be an introduction outlining the results that God's ways have on the faithful, which is the goal to work towards, and instructions on how to begin - the necessity for desire to be obedient and the necessity for learning. And perhaps at the end, an understanding that this is something that takes time and we need God to be patient with us. The following sections seem to show a progression as the Psalmist tries to be faithful, endures the difficulties that come with trying to be faithful (persecution, temptation, failure, and afflictions), and begins to recognize the true value and wisdom of God's ways and long for the day of salvation. It is a journey that we all go on and the ups and downs, the times of strength and times of weakness, are a continual part of it. And at the end of the Psalm, there seems to be a recognition that all our effort which is important because it is in our turning to God that He turns to us, we are still in a position of needing God's mercy.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
Be wretched and mourn and weep.
Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.
Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.
(James 4:8-10)

For each section of the Psalm, you can take the place of the Psalmist and identify what God does and what you must do in order for God's ways to have any effect on you.

1. Take a coloured pencil or highlighter (blue) and identify all the verbs in this section. If you come across any adverbs, circle them and join them to the verb they are modifying.
2. Take another coloured pencil or highlighter (orange) and find all the nouns or pronouns referring to the Psalmist or the faithful.
3. Take another coloured pencil or highlighter (yellow) and find all the nouns or pronouns referring to God.
4. Draw a line joining the verbs to their subject (the person doing the action).

5. On a separate piece of paper, create a chart noting what actions are God's and what actions are the Psalmists.
6. Choose one or more of the actions attributed to the Psalmist or the faithful to investigate a little more (look up the word in a concordance, check cross-references, consult a commentary). For example, in "Aleph" you may want to look at what the Bible has to say about "walking", or "seeking with the whole heart", or "keeping the testimonies or statutes, or "having respect for the commandments", or "praising with uprightness of heart."
7. Take the action that you have looked into, and ask yourself the following questions: What would this action look like if it was done diligently? What would it look like if done apathetically or neglected? Can you think of any examples from the Bible where this action is carried out or not and the resulting consequences? What steps would you need to take to carry this action out in your life?





8. Choose also one or more of the actions attributed to God and investigate it in the same way. For example, you may want to find out more about what it means to be "blessed", or what the Bible has to say about "forsaking". How does knowing that God is active in this way, help you to be faithful in the things you must do?

9. Some of the sections deal with opposition or evil. Identify what kind of evil the Psalmist is experiencing and how he combats it. Try to equate this to things you have or may experience in your own life, and how you can make use of his methods in your life.