

# The Psalms

## *Psalms 118-119*

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”  
Ps. 119:105

Thursday Bible Study  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

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### Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving

- Psalm 118 is a hymn of thanksgiving for deliverance from enemies.
- The historical basis? Three possibilities:
  - 1) A king is delivered after a hard fought battle (2 Chron. 20:20-28)
  - 2) Israel celebrates her deliverance from Egypt.
  - 3) Postexile celebration of deliverance

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### Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving

- The Psalm is the last of the “Hallel” Psalms (113-118) and may have been the hymn sung by Jesus and His disciples at the conclusion of the Last Supper. (Mt 26:30).
- It was Luther’s favorite Psalm, especially v. 17
- 1-4 – a liturgical call to praise. The refrain was sung by the people.

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### Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving

- 1 – A general call to give thanks to God. His “love” is his “steadfast love” The covenant love God has for His people.
- 2-4 – The same triple repetition we saw in Ps. 115: Israel, Priests, all people.
- 5 - We are not told the problem, but the Psalmist was in anguish.
- The Psalmist here uses “Yah” instead of “Yahweh”, as in “Hallelujah”

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### Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving

- 6 – Because of what God has done in the past, the Psalmist knows God is with him. (Rom. 8:31-39)
- 7 – God is by our side. He defeats all our enemies. (Christ defeated sin, death and Satan for us.)
- 8-9 – In whom do we put our trust?
- 10-11 – He was totally surrounded, but God gave him victory.

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### Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving

- 12 – Concrete illustrations: a swarm of bees surrounding him; a brush fire that dies out quickly.
- 13 – A repeat of v. 5
- 14 – A stand-alone verse. It is not a prayer but a statement of fact.
- 15 – We shout our joy in the victory God has won for us. His “right hand” is the symbol for power. See Heb. 10:12; Eph 1:20

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Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving

- 17-18 – The Psalmist escaped death. A hint at Christ and his resurrection.
- 19-20 – The verse suggests a liturgical procession in which the king approaches the inner court of the temple.
- 21 – Another call to thanksgiving.
- 22-23 – A king held in contempt, but who gained the victory. Jesus applies this verse to himself (Mt. 21:42)

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Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving



Have a day!

- 24 – This verse has two parts: God’s part and our part. The day is God’s gift to us; how we use it is our gift to God.

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Psalm 118 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving

- 25 – A brief prayer for God to save his people.
- 26 – “Who comes in the name of the Lord” – sung as worshipers entered the temple.
- 27-28 – The festal proession
- 29 – A repeat of V. 1

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Psalm 119 – A Psalm of Instruction

- The unknown author was passionately devoted to the Word of God as the word of life. The Psalm is a carefully written exposition on the value of the Torah.
- It was intended to be read, not sung.
- Most of the lines are addressed to God – hence a prayer. But there are also expressions of devotion to the Word of God.
- It reads like it was written to instruct others on the value of the Torah.

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Psalm 119 – A Psalm of Instruction

- The author uses 8 words as synonyms for the Word of God:
  - Torah (law)
  - Statutes (or testimonies or witnesses)
  - Precepts
  - Commands or commandments
  - Ordinances
  - Decrees
  - Word (in the sense of law and in the sense of promise)

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Psalm 119 – A Psalm of Instruction

- About the “Torah”: For the Psalmist, the Torah was his Bible. In the exile, the Torah became central to Jewish worship. They could not sacrifice, so all they had was the Word.
- The word *torah* is usually translated *law* in English, but it is just a law book. It is the story of God’s love in rescuing His people from Egypt, giving them His covenant and giving them the promised land. In response, the people are called upon to obey Him.

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**Psalm 119 – A Psalm of Instruction**

- The Psalm is an alphabet acrostic. Each section begins with the next letter of the alphabet.
- The author had a theme that filled his soul, a theme as big as life, that covered entirely a person’s walk with God. Nothing less than the use of the full power of language would suffice, and of that the alphabet was a most apt symbol.

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**Psalm 119 – A Psalm of Instruction**

- 1 – This is the basic theme of the whole Psalm – a call to walk according to the Torah of the Lord.
- 2 – Emphasizes the point. Those who keep God’s statutes (“testimonies”), who will live according to His will, will enjoy all the blessings of God.
- 3 – If you are able to walk in his ways, you will do nothing wrong.
- 4 – God has commanded us follow His “precepts” – the covenant regulations.

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**Psalm 119 – A Psalm of Instruction**

- 6 – Not be put to shame: If one follows the will of God, you have nothing to be ashamed of.
- 7 – Literally: “The right-rulings” of your righteousness.”
- 8 – Each section has 8 verses.
- 9 – The second section stresses the need to keep the Torah in one’s heart. Students preparing for their Bar Mitzvah were required to memorize the entire psalm.

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**Psalm 119 – A Psalm of Instruction**

- Some other verses that stand out:
- 103 – He “devours” the Word of God. They are sweeter than honey. Ezek. 3:3 and Rev. 10:10 has a similar concept.
- 105 – Probably the most quoted verse of the entire Psalm. V. 104 said that he hates to take a wrong path. This verses tells us how to follow the correct path with the light of God’s Word.

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