

Ps. 119:17 GIMEL.

Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word.

18 Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

19 I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me.

20 My soul breaks with longing For Your judgments at all times.

21 You rebuke the proud-- the cursed, Who stray
from Your commandments.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt,
For I have kept Your testimonies.

23 Princes also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on Your statutes.

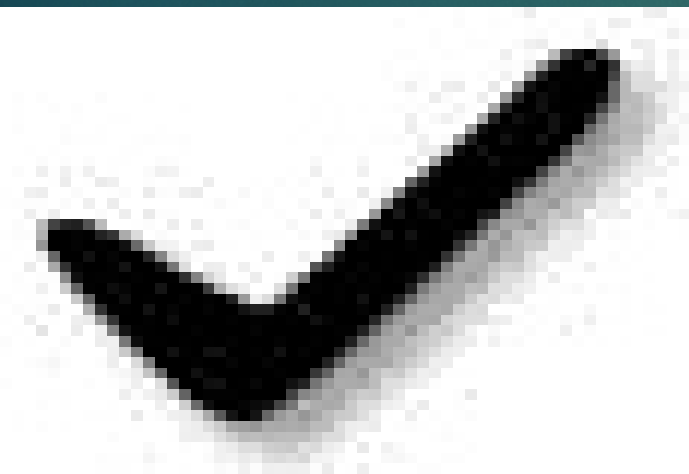
24 Your testimonies also are my delight And my counselors.

Psalm 119:1-2

¹ **Blessed** are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD!

² **Blessed** are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!

GIMEL (17-24)



Letter Name	Early Hebrew	Middle Hebrew	Late Hebrew	Modern Hebrew
GIMEL				

Pictograph:

Meanings:

Sound:

A man bent over

Bend, bow down

G

The psalmist prays for God to show him wonderful things from His Word, things that bring him delight and give him direction, because powerful, wicked people conspire against him and pour contempt upon him.

THEME:

Powerful people sit in judgment and slander the psalmist, but he keeps his mind focused on the Word of God (v. 23).

This ability to focus in the midst of the affliction is found throughout the entire psalm.

Watch for it.

Outline:

- I. The psalmist calls for God to enable him to discover even more wonderful things in His Word so that he might be delivered and live as God intended (17–18).

- II. He desperately needs God to reveal His will and way to him (19–20).

III. Knowing that God curses the arrogant, the psalmist prays for God to remove the reproach of the wicked from him, but in the meantime, he affirms his delight in and direction from God's Word (21–24).

- A. He knows that God curses those who arrogantly refuse His Word (21).
- B. He prays for God to remove their reproach of him now (22).
- C. He affirms that even though he must endure their evil against him, he finds delight and counsel in God's Word (23–24).

In these eight verses we see a new motif: the difficulty of living in a world that is not only opposed to the faith, but conspires against it.

The passage shows us that in spite of this, if you understand and consistently obey the Word of God, it will bring comfort and guidance in the difficulties and distresses of life.

HIS OPENING PRAYER 119:17-19

Prayer that is Positive in Nature: 119:17-18

¹⁷ Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word. ¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

Prayer that is Negative in Nature: 119:19

¹⁹ I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me.

Prayer for God's intervention: 119:17

Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live
and keep Your word.

Deal bountifully לַמַּלְאָכָה (gamal). There is no word for
“bountifully” here. That is supplied by the context.
The word means to deal with, render either good or
evil to someone (Pr 31:12; Ps 13:6; 116:7; Ps 28:4).).

Because of the antagonism against him, which is introduced in this stanza, the psalmist is asking God to intervene for him by ending the reproach and contempt he is suffering at the hands of the proud and powerful.

Your servant

For the first time in this psalm, the writer gives himself a descriptive title—“Your servant.”

Not only is this the first title he gives himself, it is the only title he gives himself (11x). It is used in 119:17, 49, 65, 76, 84, 91, 122, 124, 125, 135, and 140.

That I may live

If God delivers him, then he will live-- meaning live the life that God intended. This is not simply the perpetuation of physical life, but a fulfilled life – one that accomplishes God's purpose. It is a life which experiences that state of blessedness spoken of in verses 1 and 2.

That I may live

Reference to being made alive is found in

Psa119:17, 25, 37, 40, 50, 77, 88, 93, 107, 116, 144,
149, 154, 156, 159, 175.

It is translated *revive* or *live*.

and keep your word. שָׁמַר (*shamar*) to keep, to guard

This is why he wants to live – so that he may diligently obey God’s Word.

PRAYER FOR INSIGHT 119:18

Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

Open my eyes גָּלָה (gala) uncover, remove. Figure of speech: give me understanding.

The verb “open” is an intensive form. It means open my eyes widely—20/20 vision please!

The prayer assumes that human insight is not sufficient to perceive truth clearly. In this intensive form it means “to uncover” something which otherwise is normally concealed.

Thus it means “to open” the eyes to see spiritual truth or wonderful things in the law (Ps 119:18).

that I may see --gaze intently, regard, pay attention to

He desires that God will cause him to see wonderful things from the Word of God. The intent of the prayer is for divine help in understanding regarding the meaning of the text.

Not everyone who reads God's word has capacity for spiritual understanding (see Matt. 6:22–23; 7:3–5; John 9:39–41).

Wonderful things from Your law. פְּלִאָּה (pala')

The acts of God, designating either miraculous wonders or historical achievements on behalf of Israel. It refers to things that are beyond human capabilities. As such, it causes astonishment in man.

In this context it would probably include revelation concerning the proud and powerful who are accursed and going astray, as well as God's marvelous plans for the righteous.

While there are many wondrous things in God's word, some of them are more relevant to the tension of living in a fallen world; but the psalmist needs to be able to see it all in the Word, and in this way be reassured in his faith.

Prayer that is Negative in Nature 119:19

I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me.

stranger -- refers to people with no inheritance rights— transients, aliens.

Our status as sojourners calls for us to attach ourselves to that which is eternal rather than to that which is temporal and often hostile to God's ways.

See Philippians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 4:18

Do not hide סָתַר (*satar*) hide, conceal

Often we have to put a negative statement into a positive sentence to get the full impact. Don't hide = reveal.

Your commandments from me.

What does it mean for God's commandments to be hidden? The context supplies the answer. It means hidden to one's understanding. The psalmist is asking for enlightenment.

The prayer is for the continued revelation and illumination of God's word—instructions to guide him in his dangerous journey in the world.

HIS PASSIONATE DESIRE 119:20

My soul – That refers to the person, the inner man.

breaks גָּרַשׁ (garas) -- to be crushed, as grain is crushed to make flour. It has the idea here of an intense desire.

with longing תַּעֲבָה (ta'abah) The word *longing* is found three times in the Old Testament, all in Psalm 119:20, 40, 174. This is an intense desire – non-sexual

What does it mean to have a soul crushed with longing?

In English, *being crushed* refers to disappointment. This is not the idea in the Hebrew expression. It refers to intense longing.

The consistency of the longing is expressed by the words **at all times**.

For Your judgments at all times.

His longing is for God's word, but here specifically for the "decisions" or "judgments" in it.

The emphasis is on the need for guidance and hope in this world—what does God want him to do, and what is God going to do?

HIS FAITHFUL PERSISTENCE IN RESISTING HUMAN VIEWPOINT: Psa 119:21-24

²¹ You rebuke the proud-- the cursed, Who stray from Your commandments. ²² Remove from me reproach and contempt, For I have kept Your testimonies. ²³ Princes also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight And my counselors.

Human Viewpoint of the Arrogant -- 119:21-22

You rebuke גָּעַר (ga'ar) rebuke, to speak in such a way that an action is inhibited or forbidden. When God rebukes, He stops the activities of the arrogant.

the proud = “arrogant” זָדִים (zed) those who despise God and regard His ways with contempt. They are described in the Bible as oppressors, liars, and destroyers, people who have no regard for God’s laws.

The proud are referred to in Ps 119:21, 51, 69, 78, 85, 122. The arrogant are described by two participles, “ones being cursed” and “ones who stray.”

Their condition is described by the word *cursed*, and their conduct is described by the word *stray*.

cursed אָרַר (arar) to curse. There are 6 different Hebrews words translated “curse” in English. This is one of the most prevalent and is often given as an antonym of *barak* “to bless”.

If God's blessing is on the obedient, his curse is on those who are disobedient (to be cursed is to be removed from the place of blessing). The majority of "curse" sayings with 'ārar fall into one of three general categories:

- (1) the declaration of punishments (Gen 3:14, 17);
- (2) the utterance of threats (Jer 11:3; 17:5; Mal 1:14);
- (3) the proclamation of laws (Deut 27:15–26; 28:16–19).

All these curse-sayings fall upon those who violate their relationship to God.

To illustrate from Deut 27:15–26: idolatry (v. 15), disrespect for parents (v. 16), deceiving one's neighbor (vv. 17, 24), manipulating the disadvantaged (vv. 18–19), sexual aberrations (vv. 20, 21, 22, 23), bribery (v. 25), and not observing God's law (v. 26) all bring the judgment of a curse.

The curse is divine discipline in time. It is not consignment to the Lake of Fire.

Who stray from Your commandments. This is the same word translated “wander” in verse 10, where he is determined that he will not wander.

But now he is being attacked by those who are wandering from God’s commandments.

Commandments -- refers to all things that God has commanded.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt, For I have kept Your testimonies.

Remove גָּלַל (galal) literally to roll away. This pictures the psalmist under a great burden that needs to be removed. He needs a load taken off his shoulders.

This figure is used for rolling oneself on the Lord and so to trust the Lord

To roll oneself on the Lord is to trust the Lord

Psa 22:8 He **trusted** in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him

Or to entrust one's lifestyle to the Lord.

Psa 37:5 **Commit** your way to the LORD, Trust also in
Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

or remove non-material things such as reproach and
contempt (Ps 119:22).

reproach חֶרְפָּה (kherpah) found 3 times in this psalm. The word *reproach* means *taunt* or to mock.

The word has the specific connotation of casting blame or scorn on someone.

Contempt בִּזְוִי (buz) to despise, regard as insignificant. This is the opposite of “praise.”

Sometimes it is translated by the word “scorn.”

Contempt is characteristic of the wicked (Prov 18:3) and is often directed at the righteous (Ps 31:18), who then cry for God’s mercy and intervention (Ps 123:3–4; cf. Ps 119:22)

The reproach and contempt spoken of here is persecution from those who detest God's truth. We live in Satan's world, and to assert the truth of God's Word is to ensure that one will be ridiculed in many different ways.

He was being taunted because he kept God's testimonies. He needs wisdom to deal with this. So he asks that the Lord to remove the mocking and the contempt in light of the fact that he has been faithful.

For I have kept Your testimonies. Testimonies is derived from a word that means to testify or witness. This is God's covenant law.

So he is living in obedience to the written Word of God. He has been obedient, and the reproach is therefore because of his faith.

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He could cause the affliction to go away if he would stop talking about God's truth. However, he chose to put principle above comfort.

Holding to God's Word is never comfortable and easy. It may bring ridicule and scorn

HUMAN VIEWPOINT OF THE CRITICS 119:23

Powerful people were conspiring against the psalmist, but he finds comfort and counsel in the word.

These last two verses were intended to be looked at together because they both begin with the same particle, translated “also” in verses 23 and 24.

Princes also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on Your statutes. ²⁴ Your testimonies also are my delight And my counselors.

Princes שַׂר (sar) refers to officials, rulers, leaders, and dignitaries of all sorts.

They naturally have authority, but they are a problem because they are arrogant;

The psalmist, on the other hand, is a servant of the LORD (here and in v. 17).

sit יָשַׁב (yasab) denotes an official gathering, special situations such as the sitting of judges in judgment (Ps 9:4; Isa 10:13; Ex 18:14) and of kings on their thrones (I Kgs 1:35, 46).

The psalmist's proclamation of God's Word was so forceful that his opponents found it necessary to call a formal session to discuss him!

Speak against me – means they deliberate or talk with each other (it has a reciprocal nuance).

Even if they conspire against him, he will meditate on God's statutes—this is what the faithful always do.

But Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Again, we see his attitude of being a servant of God. This is humility, yielding to the Lord.

While this slanderous talk was going on, what did God's servant do? He occupied himself with God's Word—he ignored the opposition. They were not even allowed a place in his thoughts.

Meditate שִׁיחַ (siakh) The basic meaning of this verb is to “rehearse, go over a matter in one’s mind.” This meditation or contemplation may be done either inwardly or outwardly.

Inwardly, it is used of silent reflection on God’s works (Ps 77:8; 9:12), and God’s word (Ps 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148).

Outwardly, it is used of rehearsing aloud God’s works (I Chr 16:9; Ps 105:2; 145:5)

I will **extol** You, my God, O King; And I will **ble**ss**** Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will **ble**ss**** You, And I will **pr**aise**** Your name forever and ever. 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable. 4 One generation shall **pr**aise**** Your works to another, And shall **de**clare**** Your mighty acts. 5 I will **meditate** on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works. 6 Men shall **spe**ak**** of the might of Your awesome acts, And I will **de**clare**** Your greatness. (Ps. 145:1-6 NKJ)

Powerful people have taken counsel against him, they mock and ridicule him. But he meditates, he declares the Word of God. This takes courage, courage that only comes from having confidence that the Word of God is truth and that God is sovereign. It also comes from humility in being willing to accept the will of God for your life -- even if it includes persecution.

PERSISTENCE IN EMBRACING DIVINE VIEWPOINT

119:24

24 Your testimonies also are my delight And my counselors.

Delight (plural) שֵׂשׂוּעִים (sha'ashim) an object in which one finds happiness or joy (Ps 119:24, 77, 92, 143, 174); a state of joy or happiness, often as it relates to an object (Pr 8:30, 31; Isa 5:7; Jer 31:20).

God's Word is the psalmist's delight. This word is used five times in Psalm 119. In each case it serves as a buffer against pressure and affliction. See it in 119:24, 77, 92, 143, and 174.

And my counselors

Over against the princes gathered in counsel against him stands his “staff of advisors” called “my counselors,” or literally “the men of my counsel.”

Message and Application

The Gimel file (vv. 17–24) stresses the importance of God's Word in the difficulties and distresses of this life. It describes the experience of the psalmist, but what is described is universal; so the psalmist speaks on behalf of us all.

The tension he unveils here is that arrogant powerful leaders are conspiring against him, bringing reproach and scorn on him. His recourse is the Word of the LORD, in which he delights and to which he looks for counsel. He desires that God will enable him to understand it more as he awaits God's will in resolving the difficulty of living in this world.

The tension was real; it still is. The only way to find comfort and guidance in dealing with it is to discover more and greater things in God's Word concerning His provisions and His promises.

SUMMARY

When faced with reproach and contempt from arrogant mockers, the faithful find comfort and counsel as they learn to live by His Word.

Believers then should be instructed by this to meditate in God's word, seeking greater understanding of it and looking deeper into it for God's provisions.

