

PE

PSALM 119:129–136



*“The Word of God is Wonderful”*

PE  
(Psalm 119:129–136)



Letter Name	Early Hebrew	Middle Hebrew	Late Hebrew	Modern Hebrew
PE				

**Pictograph:**

**Meanings:**

**Sound:**

Mouth

Open, Blow, Scatter, Edge

P

129 Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them.

130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

131 I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.

132 Look upon me and be merciful to me, As Your custom *is* toward those who love Your name.

133 Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.

134 Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Your precepts.

135 Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes.

136 Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because *men* do not keep Your law.

I. Believers should love and long for God's wonderful words because they give understanding (Psa 119:129–131)

II. Believers should desire God to establish them in a life of increasing obedience to His Word (by grace) (Psa 119:132–135)

III. Those who love the Word are saddened to see God's Word hated and rejected by people (Psa 119:136)

*“The Word of God is Wonderful”*

The psalmist calls for God to turn to him and establish him through the Word because it is the light for which he longs (Psa 119:129–136).

**I. Believers love and long for God’s wonderful words  
because they give understanding (Psa 119:129–131)**

**Psalm 119:129** Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them.

The psalmist begins this file with the declaration that the testimonies of the LORD are “wonderful” that is, extraordinary or surpassing. Because of their amazing value, he treasures them, meaning that he stores them up for future use.



Testimony עֵדָה ('edah). It is derived from a word that means to testify or witness. The law of God is His testimony because it is His own affirmation relative to His very person and purpose.

The identification of this word with the law is seen clearly in Ps 19 and 119 where it is used as a synonym of the law. In Ps 19:7 the testimony is said to be sure (trustworthy).

Psa 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect,  
converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is  
sure, making wise the simple;

Your testimonies are wonderful -- פֶּלִיאַ (pele')  
wonder.

The word *wonderful* refers to things unusual and beyond human ability to produce.

In Genesis 18:14 Abraham and Sarah are told they will have a son in their old age. This seems so impossible that Sarah laughs. The angel then says, “Is anything too difficult for the LORD?” The word *difficult* is the same as the word *wonderful* in Psalm 119.

As it describes the wonderful works of the LORD, the emphasis is on their being so extraordinary as to be almost incomprehensible (Exod. 34:10; Josh. 3:13; Ps. 78:11). When the LORD is the subject the meaning is always on His doing something truly amazing.

But, the real importance of the wonder not in its miraculous nature, but its evidential nature.

*A wonder* is clear evidence of God's omnipotence, as well as His care for His people. It is essential that the miracle be so abnormal that it cannot be explained in any way except as showing God's character.

The word *wonder* is used over 35 times in the Psalms to refer to the incredible works which God performed for Israel. These works were to be publicly recited. They were not the subject of private meditation; but whenever one thought of them, he was obligated to verbalize them in public.

Psa 9:1 I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; **I will tell** of all Your **marvelous** works.

Psa 26:7 That I may **proclaim with the voice** of thanksgiving, And tell of all Your **wondrous** works.

Psa 40:5 Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your **wonderful** works *which* You have done; And Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; **If I would declare and speak *of them***, They are more than can be numbered.

Psa 71:17 O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this *day* **I declare** Your **wondrous** works.

Psa 78:4 We will not hide *them* from their children, **Telling** to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His **wonderful** works that He has done.

Psa 96:3 **Declare** His glory among the nations, His **wonders** among all peoples.

Psa 98:1 Oh, **sing** to the LORD a new song! For He has done **marvelous** things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

Psa 107:8 (cf. 15, 21, 31) Oh, that *men* would **give thanks** to the LORD *for* His goodness, And *for* His **wonderful** works to the children of men!

Therefore my soul keeps them

my soul -- a deeply emotional periphrasis for the first person singular pronoun “*I*”. Of the 144 times it is used in the Psalms, over 100 of them have the first person suffix, “my soul.” This expression is, therefore, the very strongest way for a person to denominate himself.

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:

keeps them      נָצַר (natsar) watch, guard, keep.

“guarding with fidelity.” It usually centers around observing the covenant or the law of the Lord. The Lord Himself **keeps** loyal covenant love (*chesed*) to thousands of generations (Ex 34:7).

But men are responsible for keeping the covenant (Deut 33:9; Ps 25:10) and the precepts or law of God (Psa 119:2, 22, 33, 34, 56, 69, 100, 115, 129, 145).



# The Word Gives Light and Discernment

**Psalm 119:130** The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

The benefit of God's testimonies is seen in the statement that the opening of God's words gives light, a figure for illumination which is clarified in the second colon of the verse with "giving understanding to the simple."

entrance פֶּתַח (petach) opening, unfolding.

*Entrance* is literally *opening*. To open the Word is to read it, explain and expound it.

God's Word is viewed as a closed book that is then opened, and as a result, light comes forth.

gives light אֹר ( 'or) to be or become light, to shine; to give light, cause to shine.

*Light* is used here as a metaphor for insight, understanding.

gives understanding בִּין (bîn) understand, consider, perceive, regard.

*Understanding* is the ability to make distinctions between things. The verb can be used for perceiving something with the senses—sight, hearing, tasting—(Prov. 7:7; 29:19); understanding with the mind (Dan. 12:8); considering or giving attention to something (Ps. 73:17; Ps. 139:2); or having insight (Jer. 49:7).

The opening of God's Word gives light, which is explained by the second colon, it gives understanding – it gives insight as to what is real, what is true.

simple פְּתִי (peti) simple, foolish. (cf., Ps 19:7: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The noun *simple* means *to be wide, spacious, and open*. It refers to those who are open to all kinds of influence—that is, those who will consider anything. It refers to all who will not narrow their thinking to the confines of God's word.

simple -- The word *naive* captures the idea very well. Proverbs 14:15 speaks of the *simple* as one who *believes everything*.

Pro 14:15 The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps.

The book of Proverbs describes the troubles that the simpleton will encounter if there is no spiritual understanding from the Word; but for the believer who has light, that understanding becomes a life-changing experience.

**Psalm 119:131** I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for  
Your commandments.

Because the word of the LORD is so beneficial, the psalmist desires more (he pants for, or strongly desires and longs for the commandments of the LORD).

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants  
my soul for You, O God. Psa 42:1



Panted שָׁאֵפַת (sha'ap) gasp, pant after, long for.

**pant**, i.e., breathe in a pattern of quick, shallow breaths.  
to desire, long after, — have a positive feeling or attitude toward an object so as to want to associate with or possess it.

This is a figurative extension of being so overheated, thirsty for water, or tired, that one has quick shallow breaths and a dry mouth and longs for a drink.

I longed for your commandments יֵאָבֵב (yā'ab)

long for, desire, i.e., have an intense desire, implying anticipation. Occurs only in Ps 119:131.

**II. Believers should desire God to establish them in a life of increasing obedience to His Word (by grace) (Psa 119:132–135)**

**Psalm 119:132** Look upon me and be merciful to me, As Your custom *is* toward those who love Your name.

Look upon me פָּנָה (panah) turn; “turn to me,” literally.

*And* be merciful to me. חַנּוּן (chanan) be gracious.

This is simply an appeal for God to pay attention to him and deal favorably with him.

This is not a unique petition; it was the LORD’s custom to favor those who love His name, that is, who He is and what He does (Ps. 20:1).

As Your custom *is* toward those who love Your name.

As Your custom *is* מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat) justice, ordinance.

The words *as your custom is* translate a single word that is used as a designation of God's Word.

It is found 23 times in this psalm and is usually translated *judgments*. It usually refers to legal decisions, and in reference to the Word of God, what God has decided is right. Here it has the idea of custom: a behavior which is more or less fixed and accepted as a normal practice. This is still God's decision.

toward those who love Your name.

love Your name -- The name of God signifies the entirety of God in His holiness, His perfections. To love His name is to love God.

So he is saying here, pay attention to me and be gracious to me. That is Your customary attitude toward those who love You.

**Psalm 119:133** Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.

**Direct** כִּוֵּן (kun) establish, prepare, make ready.

The request for God to direct his steps by the word means that God should make his life safe and secure, for when God establishes such things he makes them fixed and firm.

steps פֵּעַם (pa'am) Foot, step, conduct of one's life, i.e., the patterns of behavior as a figurative extension of a foot stepping forward.



# Direct my steps

Psa 40:1-2 I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, *And established* my steps. (Same word as in Psa 119:133)

Jer 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to **direct** his own steps. (Same word as in Psa 119:133)

Direct my steps is not a request for divine guidance in a particular decision. There have been many distortions concerning divine guidance.

Pr 3:5–6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Direct my steps by Your word is a request that his path be established, not that God would give him specific directions for each step. He wants stability.

There is a sense of confidence which results from being under God's Hand. If our heart is fixed on God (Psa 112:7; etc.) then we may be sure that He will establish ways (Psa 37:23; Psa 90:17; Prov 16:9).

Apart from this kind of confidence, a person's ways are temporary and shaky.

How will God direct or establish your steps?

by Your word

Again we see that it is the Word of God that is the basis for stability and consistency in life.

And let no iniquity have dominion over me.

The path is fraught with danger, however. The danger is called *iniquity*. Does this mean iniquity done *by* him or iniquity done *to* him? The context indicates that it is iniquity done to him. Opposition is seen as a potential danger to his obedience.

This is indicated by remote context (Psa 119:115 -- Depart from me, you evildoers) and by nearer context (Psa 119:134 -- Redeem me from the oppression of man).

The request is that the Lord will rescue him from his oppressors: “*and let no iniquity gain dominion over me.*”

He will have to deal with iniquity as it comes against him, but if the Lord establishes his ways, then iniquity will not gain dominion over him.

We face the danger of trying to overcome evil with evil. We often respond to evil perpetrated against us with a sinful response. Then iniquity has dominion over us.

<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

<sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

<sup>19</sup> Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17–21)

**Psalm 119:134** Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Your precepts.

Redeem פָּדָה (*padah*) ransom, rescue, deliver.

The word took on special significance by the Exodus when God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt.

“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you ... ”  
(Deut 15:15; 24:18).



Redemption is the action of God taken toward the nation of Israel. Here the psalmist anticipates that God will do for him personally what He had done for Israel nationally.

He is probably looking back to the delivery from Egypt and making application of that great delivery to his present and personal condition.

His prayer is that the LORD redeem him from the oppression of man so that he might keep God's precepts -- meaning give full attention to keeping them without being opposed and oppressed.

Oppressors might easily gain dominion over him and change his focus on the Word to focus on them.

The experience of facing opposition is an opportunity for growth; but you must rely on God's grace to redeem.

Keep your focus. Remember why you are here. It is to glorify the Lord. When suffering comes, remember that God has a purpose for it (1 Pet 1:3–7).

**Psalm 119:135** Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes.

*Shine* is literally *let your face become light*. What does it mean for God's face to become light? A shining face is an idiom for being pleased with something and to act favorably as a result.

See Numbers 6:24–26

The prayer was for God to be gracious to him (Psa 119:132); and that is now reiterated figuratively with “Make your face shine on your servant.”

The word for “shine” is the same verb used earlier for giving him light through the Word (Psa 119:130), thereby linking the two lines:

If God is gracious to him (causes His face to shine on him), then He will teach the psalmist His statutes, which will give him spiritual illumination for his path, in spite of the presence of oppression.

**III. Those who love the Word are saddened to see  
God's Word hated and rejected by people (Psa 119:136)**

**Psalm 119:136** Rivers of water run down from my  
eyes, Because *men* do not keep Your law.

The psalmist hates unrighteousness and those who deny God's word, but he also has a burden for their salvation and restoration.

Notice, however that the burden is not *because they are lost*, but rather *because they do not keep Thy law*. The honor and reputation of God is always the center of concern. It is the glory of God, not the glory of man that is important.

There are people who oppress the righteous. This is troubling for the believer, not simply because they must endure it, but because it means that God's Word is being disobeyed.

When you see sin in the world, does it trouble you? Why?  
Because it makes your life uncomfortable?  
Or because it is an offence to your God?



This meditation closes with the psalmist's confession that he weeps, poetically expressed in hyperbolic language, that rivers of water run down from his eyes because these oppressors do not keep the law.

For someone who loves the Word of God, lives obediently by it, and finds hope in its promises, to see the world mistreat it and reject it is very painful.

Their attitude to the Word is completely the opposite of the faithful believers who have found so much delight and benefit in it that they desire more from the LORD.

*Those who love God's word are saddened to see it rejected by the world; they desire God to sustain them in an increasing obedience to his word.*

*Like the Old Testament, the New Testament tells believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of the word, for through it we will learn how to discern all things, especially how to live in a wicked world (1 Tim. 4:5; Heb. 4:12).*

*These are the ones whom the LORD establishes in the faith, of whom it will be said that they kept His Word (Rev. 3:8).*