

**THE B.I.B.L.E.**  
***(Yes! That's The Book for Me, & You)***  
**Studies in Psalm 119**

**Canonization**

***Bible canon*** means a collection of writings that is considered authoritative Scripture from God to man. The word *canon* comes from the Greek word for *a rule or measuring stick*. When used in determining which ancient manuscripts *measure up* to high and holy standards for acceptance, it refers to what constitutes the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible. For Christians, this means the 66 *books* of Scripture (39 OT & 27 NT) are to be seen as *inspired* by God and thus are inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. ***Closed canon*** (*all new books or writings are not considered for addition to the already accepted canonized Scriptures*) is the term now used almost universally by evangelical Christians regarding the Bible.

For the sake of brevity, the Old Testament canon accepted by Christians matches the Hebrew Bible accepted and endorsed by the Lord Jesus Christ (***Matthew 5:17-18***). Jesus' stamp of approval on the Hebrew Scriptures makes it easy to determine what BC manuscripts to accept as final from God. It is therefore also the primary reason evangelical Christianity rejects the apocryphal books (*a doubtful or spurious origin*) inserted by the Roman Catholic Church. These 14 clearly inferior books, written after the composition of the last OT prophet, Malachi, include *Esdras, Maccabees, Judith, Bel and the Dragon, etc.* and are rejected by evangelicals due to their absence from Hebrew Bible inclusion, obvious lack of spiritual content (*Maccabees*), inherent contradictions with Scripture already found to be acceptable *canon*. Also, there isn't a single passage of the apocrypha quoted or referred to in the New Testament as is typical of other OT books. If Jesus Christ condoned a Hebrew *canon* without apocryphal writings, we follow His leading by rejecting the apocryphal books of the RCC.

In regard to the New Testament books, the current 27 books have been accepted as *canon* since AD 350-400 as *inspired* Scripture. The primary tests for 'canonical inclusion' were:

- 1) Authorship had to be by an apostle, recognized leader of Christianity (*Mark, Luke, James, Jude*);
- 2) Writings could not contradict or in any way disagree with any previously accepted Scripture;
- 3) The writing had to have general consensus by church scholars and leaders that it was a genuine, *God inspired* composition (*various early church councils met for this purpose*).

In summary, we believe that the Bible should be seen as a single, unified, divine composition by God, through 40 *inspired* human authors over about 1,500 years period of time (*Moses/ 1405 BC to Apostle John/ AD 95*). Throughout this historic period, God progressively revealed more and more about Himself, His divine plan and purpose, and His Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Through these *canonized, inspired* Scriptures, God has *illuminated* by His Spirit, humanity in general, and His chosen people in particular, of all that is needed to know '*for life and godliness*' (***2 Peter 1:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:15-17***). God's Word therefore should be read, studied, taught, loved, and applied with awesome respect and thanksgiving (***Revelation 22:18-19***). PtL

***“Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations...” Psalm 119:89***

### **‘The Servant’s Psalm’**

***(The Spiritual Bounty Hunter / ‘gimmel’ – ‘wean-time gift’)***

**Psalm 119:17-24**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> letter of the Hebrew alphabet is ‘gimmel’ (‘g’ sound). ‘Gimmel’ is a *bountiful gift* (v 17) given when a baby is weaned from nursing and is seen as having gone on to the childhood stage. In ‘aleph’ (vs 1-8) the psalmist was a novice observer just getting started in *the Word*. In ‘beth’ he is seen as a *young man* committed to serious study of *the Word*. In ‘gimmel’ he progresses in spiritual growth to a *servant* (vs 17, 23) who needs much more in-depth understanding of *the Word* to cope with his gradual separateness from *the world* due to his growing closeness to God.

### **A Servant’s Growing Spiritual Appetite**

***(Exerting spiritual energy in service requires ‘bountiful’ strength)***

***“Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word.”*** (17)

***“Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your Law.”*** (18)

***“I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide your commandments from me.”*** (19)

***“My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times.”*** (20)

- Have you found that ‘serving’ elevates your craving for deeper insight into God’s Word?
- In light of this, discuss **1 Corinthians 1:9-12** and why some believers crave to know God more than others. If v 18 is ‘*the bountiful blessing*’ the psalmist is requesting in v 17, talk about the connection between knowing God’s Word well and truly knowing God.
- How well will you know Him without the Bible?
- Assuming that God has granted the request of v 18, how has it changed the way this psalmist now feels in v 19?
- Talk about how true spiritual growth does make you feel more alien to the world. Is this increased feeling of being a stranger in the world a good or bad thing? Why?
- A further result of deeper understanding of God’s Word, is that it creates more hunger and thirst for a greater righteousness in one’s own life all the time, not just periodically. Do you agree? Explain,

### **A Servant’s Growing Spiritual Adversity**

***(Enduring character assassination in ministry builds discipline)***

***“You rebuke the proud – the cursed; who stray from Your commandments.”*** (21)

***“Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept Your testimonies.”*** (22)

***“Princes also sit and speak against me, but Your servant meditates on Your statutes.”*** (23)

***“Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.”*** (24)

- In how many different ways in these verses has the ‘servant’ (23) believer been attacked unfairly by adversaries? In spiritual maturity through biblical growth, how does he handle the character assassination differently than he might have back when he was unsaved or just saved?
- What does he do instead of defending himself or fighting back? Does his way show growth in grace?
- Discuss how that last line expresses his growing feeling toward the Bible. Do you feel this way?