

Psalms 119:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

Analysis

The longest Psalm opens with Hebrew *ashrei* (blessed/happy), emphasizing the blessedness of those who are *temimei-darekh* (blameless of way). The term *tamim* means complete, whole, without blemish—the same word used for sacrificial animals. This is not sinless perfection but wholehearted integrity. The phrase "walk in the law of the LORD" uses *holkhei b'torat YHWH*, where *torah* means instruction, teaching, direction—not merely legal code but divine revelation for life. Walking (*halakh*) implies continuous, habitual lifestyle rather than occasional observance. This opening verse establishes the Psalm's central theme: true happiness comes through wholehearted devotion to God's revealed will. Reformed theology sees this not as legalism but as the believer's joyful response to grace—we obey because we are saved, not to earn salvation.

Historical Context

Psalm 119 is an acrostic masterpiece, with 22 eight-verse stanzas corresponding to the Hebrew alphabet's 22 letters. Each verse in a stanza begins with that section's letter, creating a comprehensive meditation on God's Word. Written likely during or after the Babylonian exile (6th century BC), when Israel had been disciplined for covenant unfaithfulness, the Psalm reflects renewed appreciation for Torah. The exiles in Babylon had no temple, no sacrifices, no land—only Scripture. This intensified their devotion to God's written Word.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding "blameless" as wholehearted integrity (not perfection) change your approach to obedience?
2. In what ways has God's Word become your primary source of direction and joy?
3. What is the relationship between walking in God's law and experiencing genuine blessedness?

Interlinear Text

אַשֶׁר י	תְּמִימִי	דֶּרֶךְ	הַ, הַלֹּכִים ים	בְּתוֹךְ ת
ALEPH Blessed	are the undefiled	in the way	who walk	in the law
H835	H8549	H1870	H1980	H8451

יְהוָה:
of the LORD
H3068

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 11:20 (Parallel theme): That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Luke 11:28 (Word): But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

James 1:25 (Word): But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Psalms 128:1 (Blessing): Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

John 13:17 (Parallel theme): If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Luke 1:6 (Word): And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Psalms 112:1 (Word): Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

Proverbs 11:20 (References Lord): They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

Acts 24:16 (Parallel theme): And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Psalms 101:2 (Parallel theme): I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.