

Psalm 19:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Analysis

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. This verse begins the psalm's second movement, shifting from general revelation (creation) to special revelation (Scripture). While the heavens declare God's glory, His word reveals His will. The following verses (7-9) present six statements about Scripture using six different terms, six divine attributes, and six transformative effects—a comprehensive celebration of God's revealed word.

"The law of the LORD" (torat Yahweh, תּוֹרַת יְהֻדָּה) uses torah, meaning instruction, teaching, or law. This encompasses not merely legal code but God's entire revealed will—His guidance for life. The divine name Yahweh (LORD) emphasizes covenant relationship: this is instruction from Israel's covenant God, not abstract philosophy.

"Is perfect" (temimah, טְמִימָה) means complete, whole, without defect. Tamim describes sacrificial animals without blemish, persons of integrity (Noah, Job, Abraham), and God Himself. Scripture lacks nothing necessary and contains nothing harmful. It is comprehensive, reliable, and flawless—contrasting with human wisdom that is always incomplete and often flawed.

"Converting the soul" (meshivat naphesh, מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ) describes Scripture's effect. Shuv means to turn, return, restore. The nephesh (soul, life, whole person) is turned back from sin, restored from brokenness, revived from spiritual death. This is conversion in the fullest sense—not merely behavioral modification but

fundamental reorientation of the entire person toward God.

"The testimony of the LORD is sure" (edut Yahweh ne'emanah, עֲדֹת יְהָוָה נְאָמָנָה) uses edut (testimony, witness). God's word testifies to reality; it bears witness to truth. Ne'eman (sure, faithful, trustworthy) means absolutely reliable—God's testimony never misleads or fails. "Making wise the simple" (machkimat peti, מַחְקִימָת פֶּתַי) shows another effect. The peti (simple, naive, gullible) lacks experience and discernment. God's word imparts chokmah (wisdom)—not mere knowledge but skillful living, moral insight, and understanding of reality.

Historical Context

This verse inaugurates what would become Psalm 119's theme: passionate love for God's word. The celebration of Torah was central to Israel's identity. Moses commanded: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2). The Shema declared: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" (Deuteronomy 6:6). God's word was not peripheral but central to covenant life.

The "law" (torah) in David's time would have included the Pentateuch—Genesis through Deuteronomy. Later generations added the prophets and writings. Yet the principle remained constant: God's revealed word possesses unique authority and power to transform. Unlike human philosophies that change with cultural fashion, God's word remains "sure"—generation after generation proves its reliability.

The contrast between general and special revelation in Psalm 19 became foundational for Christian theology. Creation reveals God's existence, power, and divinity (Romans 1:20), but Scripture reveals His character, will, and plan of salvation. Creation leaves humanity without excuse, but Scripture provides the knowledge necessary for salvation. Both are divine communications, but they serve different purposes.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Scripture's 'perfection' differ from human wisdom or philosophy?
2. What does it mean for God's word to 'convert' or 'restore' the soul?
3. Why is God's 'testimony' described as 'sure' or 'trustworthy,' and what difference does this make?
4. How does Scripture make 'wise the simple'—what kind of wisdom does it impart?

Interlinear Text

תְּוֻרָת	יְהִי הָמִמָּה	תְּמִימָה	מִשְׁבְּתָת	בְּפָשָׁע	עַד וְתָ
The law	of the LORD	is perfect	converting	the soul	the testimony
H8451	H3068	H8549	H7725	H5315	H5715
יְהִי הָמִמָּה	מִשְׁבְּתָת	בְּפָשָׁע	פָּתָנִים	מִחְקָקָה	יְמִתָּה
of the LORD	is sure	making wise	the simple	the simple	of the LORD
H3068	H539	H2449	H6612	H5315	H5715

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 119:130 (Word): The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Psalms 111:7 (Word): The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.

Colossians 3:16 (Word): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Proverbs 1:4 (Parallel theme): To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

Psalms 23:3 (Parallel theme): He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Psalms 119:105 (Word): Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

2 Timothy 2:19 (References Lord): Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (Parallel theme): He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Psalms 93:5 (References Lord): Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

Isaiah 8:20 (Word): To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

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