

# “Give Me Life . . . According to Your Word”: How God’s Law Leads to Gospel Life

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There is a way of thinking today that says life and liberty are found by rejecting or rewriting the law. Personal expression is all that matters: “Just be yourself . . . Be authentically you!” And if any rules or laws—be they religious or otherwise—get in the way, just reject or rewrite those restrictions.

Importantly, Scripture is not silent on this matter. And it teaches the opposite. Instead of rejecting the law as a place of life and freedom, it actually says that life is found in keeping the law. Or to be more specific, life is enjoyed as one seeks to obey the law. Yes, Paul says that the law does not have power to make alive (Romans 8:3), but that is not all he says about the law (see Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:13–14).

Moreover, Psalm 119 demonstrates what a heart cries, when it has been circumcised by the law. In other words, whereas mere obedience cannot earn life; those who have been made alive by God will hunger and thirst for life *in the law*. Obedience to the law is not antithetical to life; it is the very essence of life under the Lord.

So let us consider how Psalm 119 cries out for life *in the Word of God*.

## Finding Life . . . in the Word of God

Nine times in 176 verses, the Psalmist cries for life. And every time, that life is not found in rejection of the law. Always life is found *in the Law*.

### 1. Life is found in God’s Word, not in circumstances.

My soul clings to the dust;  
give me life according to your word! (119:25)

### 2. Life is found in repentance, not through indulgence.

Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;  
and give me life in your ways. (119:37)

### 3. Life is found in righteousness, not in wickedness.

Behold, I long for your precepts;  
in your righteousness give me life! (119:40)

### 4. Life is found in God’s love and kept in obedience to God’s personal word.

In your steadfast love give me life,  
that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth. (119:88)

**5. Life is found in God's Word, not in the absence of affliction.**

I am severely afflicted;  
give me life, O Lord, according to your word! (119:107)

**6. Life is found in God's justice, not in his disregard for justice.**

Hear my voice according to your steadfast love;  
O Lord, according to your justice give me life. (119:149)

**7. Life is found in God's promise, not in our performance.**

Plead my cause and redeem me;  
give me life according to your promise! (119:154)

**8. Life is found in the mercy of God, which does not the rules of God.**

Great is your mercy, O Lord;  
give me life according to your rules. (119:156)

**9. Life is amplified when in response to God's love, we love the precepts of God.**

Consider how I love your precepts!  
Give me life according to your steadfast love. (119:159)

## **Receiving Life and Keeping the Law**

Admittedly, these axioms depend on other verses and other parts of Scripture. But this is the point—life is not found in denying the law and doing whatever we please according to our own standards. That's called *antinomianism* (= against the law). Antinomianism is a misapplication of God's grace and misunderstanding of God's law.

For Christians, God has given us life through his perfectly obedient son (see Romans 5:18–19). By his death, he paid the penalty for our sin. By his resurrection, he raises us to life to live in love with him and in love with his law. This is what we find reflected in Psalm 119.

Life is something we seek in the Lord, in his love, and in his law. To complete the picture, we do not earn our life or our righteousness by keeping the law (Galatians 2:16). But justified by faith in Christ—something the law teaches us to do (1 Timothy 1:8–11)—we walk in righteousness as we keep the law of God—believing the gospel and seeking to live by the Word of the One died in our place.

It is right, therefore, to seek life in his law, as Psalm 119 models. Such a pursuit is not at odds with the gospel of grace; it is the fruit of that gospel and a primary way we come to know and understand God personally. For only someone who struggles to keep the law knows experientially what Christ accomplished for his people.

Therefore, let us seek to know the Word of God, to keep the law of God, and find our sole confidence in the promise of God. In this way, grace is not trampled. Rather, it abounds in pardon and in power. For the God who justified us freely through grace is the same God who calls us to walk in obedience with the life he has given us in Christ, or as we learn from Ephesians 2:8–9 and Ephesians 2:10, the God who saves us by grace through faith also gives us life in Christ to do good works.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith.  
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,  
not a result of works, so that no one may boast.  
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus  
for good works, which God prepared beforehand,  
that we should walk in them.*

**— Ephesians 2:8–10 —**

Soli Deo Gloria, ds

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