

This long psalm deserves a long introduction. The author is unnamed; older commentators almost universally said it is a psalm of David, composed throughout his entire life. More modern commentators sometimes conclude that it is post-exilic, coming from the days of Nehemiah or Ezra. It may be that David was the author, but we can't say this with certainty, and it is not necessary to know; if it were important, God would have preserved the name of David to this psalm. No matter who the author was, it was likely written over some period of time and later compiled, because there is not a definite flow of thought from the beginning of the psalm to the end. The sections and verses are not like a chain, where one link is connected to the other, but like a string of pearls where each pearl has equal, but independent value.

Psalm 119 is arranged in an acrostic pattern. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and this psalm contains 22 units of 8 verses each. Each of the 22 sections is given a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each line in that section begins with that letter. The closest parallel to this pattern in Scripture is found in Lamentations 3, which is also divided into 22 sections, and a few other passages in the Hebrew Scriptures use an acrostic pattern.

Since this is a psalm glorifying God and His word, it refers to Scripture over and over again. Psalm 119 is remarkable for how often it refers to God's written revelation, His word. It is referred to in almost every verse. The Masoretes (a group of Jewish scholars between the 6th and 10th centuries AD) said that the word of God is mentioned in every verse except Psalm 119:122. Other people analyze this differently (with disagreement about Psalm 119:84, 90, 121, 132). But Scripture is mentioned in at least 171 of the 176 verses.

In this psalm there are eight basic words used to describe the Scriptures, God's written revelation to us:

- Law (torah, used 25 times in Psalm 119): "Its parent verb means 'teach' or 'direct'; therefore coming from God it means both 'law' and 'revelation.' It can be used of a single command or of a whole body of law." (Derek Kidner)
- Word (dabar, used 24 times): The idea is of the spoken word, God's revealed word to man. "Proceeding from his mouth and revealed by him to us..." (Matthew Poole)
- Judgments (mispatim, used 23 times): "...from shaphat, to judge, determine, regulate, order, and discern, because they judge concerning our words and works; show the rules by which they should be regulated; and cause us to discern what is right and wrong, and decide accordingly." (Adam Clarke)
- Testimonies (edut/edot, used 23 times): This word is related to the word for witness. To obey His testimonies "...signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant made between the Lord and Israel." (Willem VanGemeren)
- Commandments (miswah/miswot, used 22 times): "This word emphasizes the straight authority of what is said...the right to give orders." (Derek Kidner)
- Statutes (huqqim, used 21 times): The noun is derived from the root verb "engrave" or "inscribe"; the idea is the written word of God and the authority of His written word: "...declaring his authority and power of giving us laws." (Matthew Poole)
- Precepts (piqqudim, used 21 times): "This is a word drawn from the sphere of an officer or overseer, a man who is responsible to look closely into a situation and take action.... So the word points to the particular instructions of the Lord, as of one who cares about detail." (Derek Kidner)
- Word (imrah, used 19 times): Imrah is similar in meaning to dabar, yet a different term. "The 'word' may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised." (Willem VanGemeren)

The theme of the glory of Scripture is diligently explored in this psalm, but always in connection with God Himself. Derek Kidner remarks: "This untiring emphasis has led some to accuse the psalmist of worshipping the Word rather than the Lord; but it has been well remarked that every reference here to Scripture, without exception, relates it explicitly to its Author; indeed, every verse from 4 to the end is a prayer for affirmation addressed to Him. This is true piety: a love of God not desiccated by study but refreshed, informed and nourished by it."

"This wonderful psalm, from its great length, helps us to wonder at the immensity of Scripture. From its keeping to one subject it helps us to adore the unity of Scripture; for it is but one. Yet, from the many turns it gives to the same thought, it helps you to see the variety of Scripture.... Some have said that in it there is an absence of variety, but that is merely the observation of those who have not studied it. I have weighed each word, and looked at each syllable with lengthened meditation; and I bear witness that this sacred song has no tautology in it, but is charmingly varied from beginning to end. Its variety is that of a kaleidoscope: from a few objects a boundless variation is produced. In the kaleidoscope you look once, and there is a strangely beautiful form. You shift the glass a very little, and another shape, equally delicate and beautiful, is before your eyes. So it is here." (Charles Spurgeon)

Being such a long psalm – and the longest chapter in the Bible – this psalm has been of great historical interest. There have been many lengthy works written on this psalm; one of them is by Thomas Manton, a Puritan preacher and writer, who wrote a three-volume work on Psalm 119. Each volume is between 500 and 600 pages, with a total of 1,677 pages. There are 190 chapters in his work, more than one chapter for each verse.

"Luther professed that he prized this Psalm so highly, that he would not take the whole world in exchange for one leaf of it." (Charles Bridges) Some great people have memorized this whole psalm and found great blessing in doing so: John Ruskin (19th century British writer), William Wilberforce (19th century British politician who led the movement to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire), Henry Martyn (19th century

pioneer missionary to India), and David Livingstone (19th century pioneer missionary to Africa).

Matthew Henry – the great 18th century Bible commentator – was introduced to Psalm 119 as a child. His father, Philip Henry, told his children to take one verse of Psalm 119 every morning to meditate on, and thereby go through the entire psalm twice in the year. Philip said to his children, “That will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures.” Perhaps that practice was why Matthew Henry loved the Bible so much that he wrote commentary that is used still today.

George Wishart was the Bishop of Edinburgh in the 17th century (not to be confused with another Scot by the same name who was martyred a century earlier). Wishart was condemned to death for his faith. But when he was on the scaffold, he made use of a custom that allowed the condemned person to choose one psalm to be sung, and he chose Psalm 119. Before two-thirds of the psalm had been sung, his pardon arrived and his life was spared.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!

a. Blessed are the undefiled in the way: In beginning to describe man’s blessedness, the psalmist starts with the idea that being undefiled in the way is a blessing.

i. Many people – ancient and modern – think the life lived undefiled in the way is boring at best. The idea is that if there isn’t any defilement in it, then it can’t be any fun. Yet the one who walks in God’s word knows the true blessedness of living and enjoying an undefiled life.

ii. We can simply say that God is blessed; He wants us to share His blessedness. His word shows us the way to share His blessedness, and it is found by being undefiled in the way.

iii. Survey and polling data constantly demonstrate that those who live lives in general conformity to God’s standards are happier, enjoy life more, and are more content. Yet the illusion remains for many that a defiled life is more “fun.”

iv. We need God to show us the way to a happy life, and it is centered on being undefiled in the way. “The reason we are not happy is that we sin, and the main reason we sin as much as we do is that we do not know the Bible well enough. . . . Apart from being instructed by God, human beings do not know how to achieve happiness.” (Boice)

b. Who walk in the law of the LORD: In the mind of the psalmist, there is a strong and definite connection between being undefiled in the way and walking in the law of the LORD. To walk in the law of the LORD is in fact to be undefiled in the way.

i. We wouldn’t know what a pure life was without God telling us. Certainly, some aspects of a pure life are revealed in human conscience and known widely among humanity. Yet there are other aspects of the pure life that we learn only from the word of God.

ii. The law of the LORD: Here the author of Psalm 119 uses, for the first time, a phrase referring to the written revelation of God. The many various ways he referred to God’s written revelation shows us how much he knew, loved, and respected God’s word.

iii. The law of the LORD: The word here used is torah. “Here the great word Torah is used, the word which to the Hebrew stood for the Law, being the word employed to describe the first division of the Bible, that which we call the Pentateuch.” (Morgan)

iv. “To enjoy this beatitude a holy walking must become habitual. This sacred exercise is very different from sluggish piety. ‘Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord.’ A man may sit down in the road without soiling his skin or fouling his apparel, but that is not enough. There must be progress – practical action – in the Christian life; and in order to experience blessedness we must be doing something for the Master.” (Spurgeon)

c. Blessed are those who keep His testimonies: To keep His testimonies is virtually the same as to walk in the law of the LORD. Here is an example of the parallelism common to Hebrew poetry, used for both explanation and emphasis.

i. Keep means doing, not only hearing. “Neither is it enough that we understand or ponder God’s precepts, but we must practise them, if we would be happy.” (Trapp)

ii. “Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in the practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it. In order to keep it well we must get a firm grip of it: we cannot keep in the heart that which we have not heartily embraced by the affections.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “But let me not shrink from the question, do I ‘keep his testimonies’ from constraint, or from love? Surely when I consider my own natural aversion and enmity to the law of God, and the danger of self-deception in the external service of the Lord, I have much need to pray.” (Bridges)

d. Who seek Him with the whole heart: If one will seek God with the whole heart, it must include diligent study of God’s written revelation. There are good and important ways to seek God other than through His word (such as in prayer, worship, fasting, serving, and so forth). Yet if these do

not include seeking God in and through His word, these other practices can be misdirected.

i. With the whole heart: Yet, we do not miss the emphasis on the heart. “God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavour to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The whole heart is vital. God is one; and we will not know Him closely until we seek Him with the whole heart. This is a challenge to the divided heart, not to the broken heart. “Strange to say, in scriptural phraseology, a heart... may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole.” (Spurgeon)

They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways.

a. They also do no iniquity: The idea from Psalm 119:1-2 is repeated; these ones keep His testimonies, they are undefiled in the way, and they also do no iniquity. There is a purity and goodness that marks their lives.

b. They walk in His ways: They have learned His ways from the written revelation; but with His word, God also gives grace and power to walk in His ways.

You have commanded us To keep Your precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your commandments. I will praise You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgments. I will keep Your statutes; Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

a. You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently: The psalmist connects commanded obedience with the blessings to the obedient. He shows that the reason God commanded us to keep His precepts diligently is not only because it honors Him, but also because it is the path to blessing.

i. With the words “You have commanded us,” we see that the psalmist begins to address God in prayer; a position he will hold through most of the psalm. This shows that he was not only a student of Scripture, but also a man of prayer.

ii. “Because it was a hard thing to rightly understand this word in all its parts, and harder to put it in practice, he therefore intermixed many prayers to God for his help therein, thereby directing and encouraging others to take the same course.” (Poole)

iii. To keep Your precepts: “God has not commanded us to be diligent in making precepts, but in keeping them. Some bind yokes upon their own necks, and make bonds and rules for others: but the wise course is to be satisfied with the rules of holy Scripture.” (Spurgeon)

b. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes: This is not only a pious wish; it is also a prayer for the ability to obey God’s word. Apart from His work in us, we lack the ability to keep those commands.

i. Here the psalmist gets personal. This isn’t a theological treatise on written revelation; it is an interaction with the Living God regarding His primary way of showing Himself to us. “It may be considered as the journal of one, who was deeply taught in the things of God, long practiced in the life and walk of faith.” (Bridges)

ii. “We do not get very far into the psalm before we discover that he is very much like ourselves, at least in the respect that he has not yet gotten to be like the happy, blessed ones he is describing. He wants to be, but he is not yet.” (Boice)

iii. “Without thee I can do nothing; my soul is unstable and fickle; and it will continue weak and uncertain till thou strengthen and establish it.” (Clarke)

c. Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments: The psalmist felt the shame that comes when the standard of God’s word is compared to our lives. He prayed for the power to live an unashamed life.

i. “‘Shame’ is the fruit of sin; confidence is the effect of righteousness.” (Horne)

ii. “There is a twofold shame; the shame of a guilty conscience; and the shame of a tender conscience. The one is the merit and fruit of sin; the other is an act of grace.” (Thomas Manton, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. “...unto all thy commandments; so as not to be partial in my obedience, not to allow myself in the practice of any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty.” (Poole)

iv. “Sincerity therefore must be the stamp of my Christian profession. Though utterly unable to render perfect obedience to the least of the commandments, yet my desire and purpose will have respect unto them all.” (Bridges)

d. I will praise You with uprightness of heart: The psalmist found it not only important to praise God, but to do it with uprightness of heart. He did not want to offer God the image of praise or a moment of praise when the rest of his life was not upright.

i. “Be sure that he who prays for holiness will one day praise for happiness. Shame having vanished, silence is broken, and the formerly silent man declares, ‘I will praise thee.’” (Spurgeon)

e. I will keep Your statutes: This was a promise to keep – in the sense of guarding – the statutes (huqqim), the engraved, inscribed, written word of God.

i. We never forget that in a real sense, only Jesus could say I will keep Your statutes. “The many strong expressions of love toward the law, and the repeated resolutions and vows to observe it, will often force us to turn our thoughts to the true David, whose ‘meat and drink it was, to do the will of him that sent him.’” (Horne)

f. Oh, do not forsake me utterly: We sense the note of desperation in the psalmist. He knows and loves God’s word, yet is also very conscious of his inability – apart from the work of God in his life – to live God’s word. If God did forsake him, he would be lost.

i. “Forsaken we may be – but not utterly. David was forsaken, not like Saul. Peter was forsaken, not like Judas, utterly and for ever. . . . Mark his dealings with you. Inquire into their reason. Submit to his dispensation. If he forsakes, beg his return: but trust your forsaking God.” (Bridges)

ii. The heart that sings do not forsake me utterly is a heart that longs to be close to God. “Apparently unconsciously, that is without intention, the song reveals the fact that a man who obeys the will of God as revealed, comes to a personal fellowship with God. From beginning to end, the singer sang as one who had personal knowledge of God and direct dealing with Him.” (Morgan)

Each line of this second section of Psalm 119 begins with the Hebrew letter Beth, which also means “a house.” Some have suggested that this section tells us how to make our heart a home for the word of God.

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

a. How can a young man cleanse his way? This was no less a difficult question in ancient times than in our own. The young man has his own particular challenges in living a pure life.

i. This is a question that some – even some who are numbered among the people of God – never seem to ask for themselves. Sadly, some people never have a concern for moral purity. They echo the prayer of Augustine before his conversion: “Lord, make me chaste – but not yet.”

ii. The world tells us, “Have your good time when you are young; get it all out of your system. When you are older you can settle down and be religious and proper.” Boice comments on this thinking: “God’s answer is quite different. God says, If you are going to live for me, you must begin at the earliest possible moment, without delay, preferably when you are very young.”

iii. Even when one has the desire for moral purity, there are many things that may make it difficult for a young man to cleanse his way.

- Youthful energy and a sense of carelessness.
- The lack of life wisdom.
- The desire for and gaining of independence.
- Physical and sexual maturity that may run ahead of spiritual and moral maturity.
- Money and the freedom that it brings.
- Young women who may – knowingly or unknowingly – encourage moral impurity.
- The spirit of the age that both expects and promotes moral uncleanness for young men.
- The desire to be accepted by peers who face the same challenges.

iv. “Why is the young man so especially called to cleanse his way? Because God justly claims the first and the best.” (Bridges)

v. God wants to spare the young man (and the older man) the bondage of sin. Experience has the power to shape our habits. Surrender to any temptation; transfer it from the realm of mental contemplation to life experience, and that temptation instantly becomes much more difficult to resist in the future. Each successive experience of surrender to temptation builds a habit, reinforced not only spiritually, but also by brain chemistry. Such ingrained habits are more and more difficult to break the more they are experienced; and it is almost impossible to break such habits without replacing them with another habit.

vi. Significantly, the words his way come from the Hebrew word orach. “Orach, which we translate way here, signifies a track, a rut, such as is made by the wheel of a cart or chariot.” (Clarke) A young man determines the tracks for the rest of his life.

vii. Of course, it is not only the young man who has these challenges; older men and women of every age have their own challenges in living pure

lives. Yet these are often more severely felt in the life of the young man.

viii. "From the heartfelt prayers of the surrounding verses it would seem that the young man is the psalmist himself in the first place. He is praying rather than preaching." (Kidner)

b. By taking heed: A life of moral purity does not happen accidentally. If one does not take heed, the natural path is toward impurity and degeneration. One must take heed in order to be pure.

c. According to Your word: This is how one takes heed. The foundation for a morally pure life is found in God's word.

- God's word shows us the standard of purity, so we know what is right and what is wrong.
- God's word shows us the reasons for purity, so we understand the wisdom and goodness of God's commands.
- God's word shows us the difficulty of purity, and reminds us to be on guard.
- God's word shows us the blessings of purity, and gives us an incentive to make the necessary sacrifices.
- God's word shows us how to be born again – converted, so our inner man may be transformed after the pattern of ultimate purity, Jesus Christ.
- God's word shows us the way to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, so that we have the spiritual resources to be pure.
- God's word is a refuge against temptation, giving us a way of escape in the season of enticement.
- God's word is a light that clears away the deceptive fog of seduction and temptation.
- God's word is a mirror that helps us see our spiritual and moral condition, and thus walk in purity.
- God's word gives us wise and simple commands, such as to "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22).
- God's word washes us from impurity, and actually cleanses our life in a spiritual sense (Ephesians 5:26, John 15:3).
- God's word is the key to the renewing of our minds, which in turn is the key to personal, moral, and spiritual transformation (Romans 12:1-2).
- God's word gives a refuge against condemnation when we have been impure, and shows us how to repent and come back to a pure life.
- God's word shows us how to conduct our lives so that we are an encouragement to others in purity.

i. Jesus spoke specifically of the power of His word to cleanse and keep us pure: You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3). Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (John 17:17).

ii. The impact is clear: if you want to cleanse your way, then you must also take heed according to God's word.

iii. "Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it." (Spurgeon)

iv. This idea is communicated in Proverbs 2:10-12: When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things.

v. We remind ourselves that Jesus answered temptation with the word of God (Matthew 4:1-10). "He who became man for our salvation, passed through this state of youth, undefiled, that he might, as it were, reclaim and consecrate it anew to God." (Horne)

With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

a. With my whole heart I have sought You: Here the psalmist declares his dedication to God, and at the same time recognizes his weakness in being able to maintain such a dedication (Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments).

i. With my whole heart I have sought You reminds us that Scripture was no mere textbook to the psalmist; it was how he sought and met with God. "His heart had gone after God himself: he had not only desired to obey his laws, but to commune with his person." (Spurgeon)

ii. Let me not wander helps us put in perspective the many claims to purity and devotion in this psalm (and others). They are understood in the light of dependence upon God, not in the sense of self-righteous pride.

iii. "The path of purity is that of caution conditioned by the Word of God. This caution is further manifested in the distrust of self, and earnest seeking to be kept in the way of God's commandments." (Morgan)

- iv. “When the soul is thus conscious of ‘following the Lord fully,’ there is a peculiar dread of wandering. In a careless or half-hearted state, wanderings are not watched, so long as they do not lead to any open declension.” (Bridges)
- b. Your word I have hidden in my heart: The psalmist knew the value of taking God’s word and hiding it in his heart. It is hidden in the sense that it is on the inside, where no one can see it, and it is safe so that no one can take it away.
  - i. We can be assured that before this word was hidden in his heart, it was received in his mind. The psalmist heard and read the word of God, and thought about it continually, until it became ingrained in both his mind and his heart.
  - ii. “Memorizing is precisely what is called for, since it is only when the Word of God is readily available in our minds that we are able to recall it in moments of need and profit by it.” (Boice)
  - iii. “If God’s word be only in his Bible, and not also in his heart, he may soon and easily be surprised into his besetting sin.” (Clarke)
- c. That I might not sin against You: Here the psalmist states one benefit from having God’s word hidden in his heart. It is a defense against sin, for all the reasons discussed above and more.
  - i. “The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: ‘With my whole heart have I sought thee.’ Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was after holiness: ‘That I might not sin against thee.’” (Spurgeon)

Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes.

- a. Blessed are You, O LORD: The psalmist seems to interrupt his thoughts on the connection between God’s word and a pure life with this expression of praise. The greatness of these ideas and the reality of them in his life has made this praise necessary.
- b. Teach me Your statutes: This demonstrates the humility of the psalmist. Though filled with God’s word and a desire for purity, he sensed his constant need for instruction by God. He didn’t simply need to read God’s statutes; he pleaded with God to teach him.
  - i. This saying is written in the front of some Bibles: “This book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book.” The psalmist understood this principle, and longed for God to be his teacher, and to keep him in God’s great book.
  - ii. “We need to be disciples or learners – ‘teach me;’ but what an honour to have God himself for a teacher: how bold is [the psalmist] to beg the blessed God to teach him!” (Spurgeon)

With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

- a. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth: The psalmist understood the importance of not only silently reading or hearing the word of God, but also the importance in saying it. To declare God’s word (all the judgments of Your mouth) with his lips was another part of his relationship with and love for God.
  - i. We may confidently conclude that there is not enough – never enough – of this among the people of God. God’s people should have His word not only in their minds and hearts, but also upon their lips. Saying it is powerful and must not be neglected.
  - ii. “When we make the Scriptures the subject of our conversation, we glorify God, we edify our neighbours, and we improve ourselves.” (Horne)
- b. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches: The psalmist understood the true value of God’s word; it gave him as much joy as all riches might.
  - i. It could be fairly asked of every Christian: “For what amount would you deny yourself to ever hear or read God’s word again?” It is to be feared that many, like Esau, would sell this birthright treasure for the equivalent of a bowl of stew.
  - ii. “We may also observe here an evidence of adoption. Obedience is not a burden, but a delight. The servant may perform the statutes of God, but it is only the son who ‘delights in them.’” (Bridges)
- c. I will meditate...and contemplate...I will delight...I will not forget Your word: The greatness of God’s word has led the psalmist to great resolution for his life. His life will be filled with God’s word, in his mind (meditate...contemplate), in his heart (delight), and in his habits (not forget).
  - i. “Meditation is recalling what we have committed to memory and then turning it over and over in our minds to see the fullest implications and applications of the truth.” (Boice)
  - ii. I will delight: “The word is very emphatical: *evetvaeshtaasha*, I will skip about and jump for joy.” (Clarke)
  - iii. This giving of the fullness of life to God’s word – in mind, heart, and habits – is a good description of what the psalmist meant by taking heed in

Psalm 119:9. The young man will cleanse his way, and enjoy the fullness of such a God-honoring life.

iv. We can almost hear a challenge from the psalmist: “You live your compromising, impure life that thinks it knows pleasure and satisfaction; I will cleanse my way and give the fullness of my life to God and His word, and we will see who will be more blessed, more happy, and more filled with life.”

Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word.

a. Deal bountifully with Your servant: This is a wonderful request: boldly asking for blessing (deal bountifully), while at the same time coming humbly before God (Your servant). The servant properly depends upon the master for his bounty.

i. In saying, Deal bountifully, the psalmist was asking for a lot, not just a little. “The believer, like [the psalmist], is a man of large expectations.... We may, indeed, be too bold in our manner of approach to God; but we cannot be too bold in our expectations from him” (Bridges)

ii. “He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed, ‘O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn.’” (Spurgeon)

b. That I may live and keep Your word: This is why the psalmist asked for God’s blessing. It was not for personal indulgence or even comfort, but so that God’s word might be lived and kept. This is a wonderful, God-honoring prayer that is heard in heaven.

i. As the rest of this section will demonstrate, the psalmist prayed this because of great problems and pressures that had beset him. This section of the psalm shows us that the author was a man who had suffered deeply. He had known persecution (Psalm 119:22-23), deprivation and fear for his life (Psalm 119:17), seasons when he seemed to get nothing from God’s word (Psalm 119:18), and loneliness, rejection, and a sense of abandonment (Psalm 119:19-20).

ii. In the midst of these trials, he wanted to live – not only surviving, but also a better quality of life, especially in regard to God.

iii. That I may live: “[This] is the first of many such prayers.... While some of them could refer simply to surviving an illness or an attack, others are clearly qualitative, speaking of life that is worthy of the name, or in our terms, spiritual life, found in fellowship with God.” (Kidner)

Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

a. Open my eyes, that I may see: The psalmist recognized that without God’s enlightenment, he could not see what he could and should from God’s word.

i. “The verb ‘open’ in Psalm 119:18 is used in the Balaam story where the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes so he could see the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. It has to do with removing a veil, or covering.” (Boice)

ii. This reminds us that it isn’t the word of God that needs changing, as if it were obscure; we are the ones who are veiled and can’t understand the word of God apart from the work of the Spirit. Paul’s eyes were unveiled when he was converted (Acts 9:18); it was as if scales had dropped from his eyes.

iii. “In order to keep God’s word, must we not pray to understand it? What then is this prayer? Not – give me a plainer Bible – but open my eyes to know my Bible. Not – show me some new revelations beside the law – but make me behold the wonders of the law.” (Bridges)

iv. The psalmist didn’t need new revelation; he needed to see the revelation that was already given. He didn’t need new eyes; he needed to see more clearly with the eyes he already had.

b. Wondrous things from Your law: There are wondrous things in Scripture; but they can only be seen when the eyes are opened by God. This means that prayer is an important (and often neglected) part of Bible study.

i. Not everyone sees the wondrous things in God’s word, but when he does see them, he should regard it as evidence of God’s blessing and favor.

ii. Jesus rejoiced that God revealed His wisdom this way: At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.” (Matthew 11:25)

iii. God has given man a sense of wonder, and there are certain things that prompt it. The new and unexpected can cause wonder, the beautiful and great can cause wonder, and the mysterious and unknown can cause wonder. God has provided for this sense of wonder by giving us His word. The Holy Spirit can make us alive to the Bible, and helps us constantly see things that are new and unexpected, things that are great and beautiful, and things that are mysterious and unknown. It is a shame that many Christians look for their sense of wonder to be satisfied without looking to the word of God.





and consulted on those trivial occasions of every day, when, unconscious of our need of Divine direction, we are too often inclined to lean to our own counsel.” (Bridges)

iii. In this section the psalmist saw many things that hindered his reception of the word of God and his fellowship with God, and he prayed to be protected from them.

- He saw the danger of a dead soul and a cold heart; therefore he prayed, “Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word.”
- He saw the danger of darkened understanding; therefore he prayed, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.”
- He saw the danger of living as a stranger in a strange land; therefore he prayed, “Do not hide Your commandments from me.”
- He saw his own weakness and instability; therefore he prayed, “My soul breaks with longing.”
- He saw the danger of pride, evident in those who attacked him; therefore he recognized that the proud are “the cursed, who stray for Your commandments.”
- He saw the reproach and contempt that came upon him, and how those could shake his standing; therefore he prayed, “Remove from me reproach and contempt.”
- He saw rulers plotting against him; therefore he prayed, “Your testimonies are my delight.”

iv. “He rises superior to these sorrowful circumstances by keeping the testimonies, meditating on the statutes, and so finding delight therein.” (Morgan)

My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.

a. My soul clings to the dust: The psalmist used a strong image to say that he felt near death in his current crisis; dust was the place of death, the place of mourning, and the place of humiliation.

i. “Whatever was the cause of his complaint, it was no surface evil, but an affair of his inmost spirit; his soul cleaved to the dust; and it was not a casual and accidental falling into the dust, but a continuous and powerful tendency, or cleaving to the earth.” (Spurgeon)

b. Revive me according to Your word: From this low place, the prayer for revival came. The psalmist asked for life and vitality to be restored, and he asked that it happen according to Your word.

i. Revival comes from a sense of spiritual need and lowliness. True revival – in the Biblical and historical sense – is marked by a shamed awareness of sin and an urgency to confess and make things right (mentioned in Psalm 119:26).

ii. The psalmist knew what he needed. “One would have thought that he would have asked for comfort or upraising, but he knew that these would come out of increased life, and therefore he sought that blessing which is the root of the rest. When a person is depressed in spirit, weak, and bent towards the ground, the main thing is to increase his stamina and put more life into him; then his spirit revives.” (Spurgeon)

iii. According to Your word shows us that God uses His word in bringing revival. Works that claim to be revival can be measured according to His word.

I have declared my ways, and You answered me; Teach me Your statutes. Make me understand the way of Your precepts; So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.

a. I have declared my ways...teach me Your statutes: The idea behind I have declared my ways is that the psalmist told God everything about himself and his life. He confessed fully and freely before God.

i. “Can each one of us now say, in this sense, ‘I have declared my ways’ to the Lord? For this should be done, not only at our first coming to him, but continually throughout the whole of our life. We should look over each day, and sum up the errors of the day, and say, ‘I have declared my ways,’ – my naughty ways, my wicked ways, my wandering ways, my backsliding ways, my cold, indifferent ways, my proud ways.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The psalmist had a wonderful liberty in conversation; he spoke to God as a dear friend. “How often do we treat our Almighty Friend as if we were weary of dealing with him!” (Bridges)

b. Make me understand the way of Your precepts: The psalmist understood that he needed more than knowledge; he also needed understanding. With both he would meditate on God’s wonderful works.

i. Make me understand: “It is concerned with a deep understanding, one that goes beyond a mere understanding of the words to a profound understanding of what they reveal about the nature of God, the gospel, and God’s ways.” (Boice)

ii. “‘Teach me thy statutes.’ I think the psalmist means this, ‘My Lord, I have told thee all; now, wilt thou tell me all? I have declared to thee my ways; now, wilt thou teach me thy ways? I have confessed to thee how I have broken thy statutes; wilt thou not give me thy statutes back again?’” (Spurgeon)

My soul melts from heaviness; Strengthen me according to Your word.

a. My soul melts from heaviness: The problems surrounding the psalmist (as seen in Psalm 119:17-24) made his soul heavy, as if it would melt. He felt that he had no strength or stability within.

b. Strengthen me according to Your word: Therefore, he prayed for strength, and that this strength would come both from and according to God’s word.

i. “The singer is bowed down, overwhelmed. He sorely needs succour and strength. How does he seek it? Not by asking for pity, but by a determined application to the law of his God.” (Morgan)

ii. “This melting heaviness has not wrought its work, until it has bowed us before the throne of grace with the pleading cry of faith – Strengthen thou me!” (Bridges)

Remove from me the way of lying, And grant me Your law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me.

a. Remove from me the way of lying... I have chosen the way of truth: The psalmist sensed the common temptation to lie; yet he determined to choose the way of truth.

i. Remove me from the way of lying: “...a sin that David, through diffidence, fell into frequently. See 1 Samuel 21:2,8, where he roundly telleth three or four lies; and the like he did, 1 Samuel 27:8,10; this evil he saw by himself, and here prayeth against it.” (Trapp)

ii. Grant me Your law graciously: The verb translated graciously “...actually has the sense of ‘graciously teach,’ a single word. The full thought is, If we are to be kept from sin, it must be by the grace of God exercised through the teaching of his Word.” (Boice)

b. Your judgments I have laid before me: This is how the psalmist was able to choose the way of truth: He was in close relationship with the word of God.

i. “Men do not drop into the right way by chance; they must choose it, and continue to choose it, or they will soon wander from it.” (Spurgeon)

I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame! I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart.

a. I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame: The psalmist understood that if he were to give himself entirely to God – to cling to His word as a shipwrecked man clings to a floating plank in the sea – then he could trust that God would not allow him to be put...to shame. This was well-placed confidence.

i. In the beginning of the section, he is clinging to the dust (Psalm 119:25); by the end he is clinging to God’s word. In the beginning he is laid low; now he is joyfully running with all his strength in the race God’s word sets before him.

ii. The clinging of this verse connects well with the choosing of the previous verse. “Having once chosen our road, it remains that we persevere in it; since better had it been for us never to have known the way of truth, than to forsake it, when known.” (Horne)

b. I will run the course of Your commandments: After beginning low in the dust, now the psalmist is running. He has moved in a beautiful progression, from confessing to choosing to clinging to running.

c. For You shall enlarge my heart: The psalmist comes back to a familiar theme, not only of the greatness of God’s word, but also of his acute sense of weakness and dependence upon God. He must have his heart enlarged: made bigger, stronger, better, and more steadfast. His confidence is that God would do this through His word.

i. “The remedy therefore is in that enlargement, which embraces a wider expanse of light, and a more full confidence of love... He does not say – I will make no efforts, unless thou work for me; but if thou wilt enlarge – I will run. Weakness is not the plea for indolence, but for quickening grace.... The secret of Christian energy and success is a heart enlarged in the love of God.” (Bridges)

He is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and it is used at the beginning of verbs to make them causative. Therefore, the prayers in this section have the meaning, "Cause me to learn," "Cause me to understand," "Cause me to walk" and so forth.

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it.

- a. Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end: The psalmist here stresses his great desire to keep the way and word of God. If God would teach him, he would persevere and keep the way to the end.
  - i. "The general desire expressed in this division is that for guidance. It is not an appeal for direction in some special case of difficulty, but rather for the clear manifestation of the meaning of the will of God." (Morgan)
  - ii. Only a God-changed heart can pray this. Left to himself, man is unable to keep the way and word of God (much less keep it to the end). Philippians 2:13 tells us that it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Here the psalmist prays as one who has received the will, and now prays for the doing of it.
  - iii. We should have the expectation of following God and His word to the end. "The end of our keeping the law will come only when we cease to breathe; no good man will think of marking a date and saying, 'It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men.'" (Spurgeon)
- b. Give me understanding. . . I shall observe it with my whole heart: Without this understanding, the psalmist could not follow the desire of his transformed heart. We need understanding to persevere in the faith.
  - i. "The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before his supreme will." (Spurgeon)
  - ii. The psalmist had no doubt that God had given His word to us; his only fear was that he would not understand it (or be distracted from it). Yet he was utterly confident that God had spoken and that it could be understood rightly by the prayerful heart and mind.
  - iii. "'To the end' means without time limit, and 'with all my heart' means without reservation." (Boice)
- c. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it: Despite his delight and desire for God's word, the psalmist knows he cannot walk in God's path without God's empowering.
  - i. "We need no instruction in the way of sin. . . . But for a child of God, this is a prayer for constant use." (Bridges)
  - ii. "This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run." (Spurgeon)

Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way.

- a. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness: The psalmist rightly understood that covetousness was a threat to walking in God's way. A heart inclined toward God's word would help him be satisfied in what God provides.
  - i. "He is asking God to turn his heart toward the Bible rather than allowing him to pursue selfish gain. For the first time he is confessing a potentially divided mind." (Boice)
  - ii. The Bible tells us how covetousness has ruined many people.
    - Balaam sold out God's people and his own soul because he coveted (Numbers 22, 2 Peter 2:14-16).
    - Ahab murdered because he coveted (1 Kings 21:1-13).
    - David committed adultery and murder because he coveted (2 Samuel 11:2-17).
    - Achan stole and brought Israel to defeat because he coveted (Joshua 7:21).
    - Judas stole from his fellow disciples and betrayed Jesus because he coveted (John 12:6 and Matthew 26:14-16).
    - Gehazi lied because he coveted (2 Kings 5:20-27).
    - Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit because he coveted (Acts 5:1-6).
  - iii. "It is a handmaid of all sins; for there is no sin which a covetous man will not serve for his gain." (William Cowper, cited in Spurgeon)

b. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things: The psalmist rightly understood that some things, comparatively speaking, are worthless things. They are of no value for eternity and little value for the present age. He prayed that God would empower and enable him to turn away his eyes and attention from such things.

i. Many lives are wasted because people find themselves unwilling or unable to turn away their eyes from worthless things. The modern world with its media and entertainment technology brings before us an endless river of worthless things to occupy not only our eyes and time, but also our heart and minds.

ii. Some things are clearly worthless; some things are thought by many to be worthy, but are in fact worthless:

- worthless because they do no good.
- worthless because they do not last.
- worthless because they help no one else.
- worthless because they build no faith, hope, or love.
- worthless because they distract from things that are truly worthy.
- worthless because they have nothing to do with Jesus.

iii. The psalmist understood that he had a natural tendency toward worthless things, so he prayed for that natural tendency to be counter-acted. "Keeping the eye is a grand means of 'keeping the heart' (Numbers 15:39, Job 31:1)." (Bridges)

iv. Yet the eyes are so powerful that the psalmist had to pray – to pray for power outside himself to turn his eyes from worthless things. Does the psalmist have no eyelids or no muscles in his neck to turn the head? We all sympathize with this prayer; the eyes are so small – yet they can lead the whole person, and often lead to destruction. This is because the eyes lead the heart, lead the mind, and can lead the whole person. He prayed this, "...lest looking cause liking and lusting." (Trapp)

v. He did not gouge out his own eyes or pray God to do it; instead he wanted to look another way, a better way. The best way to look away from sin is to look at something else. "The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as 'turned away,' for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects." (Spurgeon)

c. And revive me in Your way: This is another prayer for revival – this time, to be made alive again in the way (or path) of God. The psalmist wanted to walk in God's way, and to do it with a revived heart. He prayed for deadness in one direction – toward worthless things – and for life in another direction – toward God's way.

i. "As I desire that I may be dull and dead in affections to worldly vanities; so, Lord, make me lively, and vigorous, and fervent in thy work and service." (Poole)

ii. "He goes at once to him in whom were all his fresh springs. Life is the peculiar sphere of God: he is the Lord and Giver of life. No man ever received spiritual life, or the renewal of it, from any other source but the living God. Beloved, this is worth recollecting, for we are very apt when we feel ourselves declining to look anywhere but to the Lord. We, too, often look within." (Spurgeon)

iii. God has many ways to revive us. Spurgeon listed some:

- God's word: "There are promises in God's word of such effectual restorative power, that, if they be but fed upon...they will make a dwarf into a giant in the twinkling of an eye."
- Affliction: "It is wonderful how a little touch of the spur will quicken our sluggish natures."
- Great mercies: "A man may be stirred up to diligence by a sense of gratitude to God for great mercies."
- Christian example: "I believe the reading of holy biographies has been exceedingly blessed of God."
- Warm-hearted ministry: "We should select not that which tickles the ear most, but that which most enlivens the heart."

Establish Your word to Your servant, Who is devoted to fearing You. Turn away my reproach which I dread, For Your judgments are good. Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me in Your righteousness.

a. Establish Your word to Your servant: This is not a prayer for God to change His word in some way; indeed, the word of the LORD is established forever (Isaiah 40:8). This is a prayer for a change in the heart and mind of the servant of God, so that the word of the LORD would be established in him

i. Establish Your word to Your servant is much the same idea as what Mary said to Gabriel regarding the word of the Lord that he brought to her: Let it be to me according to your word (Luke 1:38).

b. Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your judgments are good: While declaring the goodness of God's judgments, the psalmist also prayed that his disgrace (reproach) would be turned away by the merciful God.

i. There is some reproach [disgrace] that we face as faithful followers of Jesus. Paul suffered these kind of reproaches (1 Timothy 4:10) and indeed even took pleasure in them (2 Corinthians 12:10). We expect and receive reproach as followers of Jesus (Hebrews 13:13, 1 Peter 4:14).

ii. "The Lord's grace to him will remove disgrace and will promote the fear of God." (VanGemeren)

c. I long for Your precepts; revive me in Your righteousness: Again the psalmist prays for revival. The prayer comes from a heart that loves God's word (Your precepts), asking to be made alive in the righteousness of God.

"This commences a new portion of the Psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter Vau, or v. There are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence in each of the verses in this section the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction – vau." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD— Your salvation according to Your word. So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word.

a. Let Your mercies come... Your salvation according to Your word: Here the psalmist acknowledged that mercy and salvation come from God to man through the word of God. The word of God doesn't merely point us toward mercy and salvation, as if it were a self-help book. It actually brings mercy and salvation to us.

i. The psalmist rightly said mercies, in the plural. God's gracious mercy to us is so great that it can only be described in the plural, with mercy piled on top of mercy.

ii. "He desires mercy as well as teaching, for he was guilty as well as ignorant." (Spurgeon)

· He needed mercy, not only teaching.

· He needed many mercies, so the request is in the plural.

· He needed mercy from God more than from man, so the request is made to God.

iii. The ancient Hebrew word here translated mercies is hesed. For centuries it was translated with words like mercy, kindness, and love. But in 1927, a scholar named Nelson Glueck (among others) argued that the real idea behind hesed was "covenant loyalty" and not so much love or mercy. Many disagreed and there is no good reason for changing the long-held understanding of hesed and taking it as a word that mainly emphasizes covenant loyalty (see R. Laird Harris on hesed in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament).

iv. "It must come to me; or I shall never come to it." (Bridges)

b. So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word: Trust in God's word provides an answer to those who reproach us. The disapproving voices we often hear can be answered by our abiding trust in the approval that we believers find in God.

i. When we believe who God is and what He has done for us in Jesus Christ, the disapproval of this world is answered.

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I have hoped in Your ordinances. So shall I keep Your law continually, Forever and ever.

a. Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth: This request is rooted in the understanding that it is only by the goodness and grace of God that His word does dwell with us. Therefore the prayer comes that it may continue so.

i. This is true for humanity in general; hypothetically, God might have created man yet never communicated with him by His word.

ii. Yet it is also true for the individual who is awakened and attentive to God's word – because of the work of God in him – so it is wise and worthy to pray that it would remain so.

iii. It is true most of all for those who proclaim the word of God. "He who has once preached the gospel from his heart is filled with horror at the idea of being put out of the ministry; he will crave to be allowed a little share in the holy testimony, and will reckon his silent Sabbaths to be days of banishment and punishment." (Spurgeon)

b. For I have hoped in Your ordinances: His past hope is the ground for his future expectation. He has hoped in the word of God (ordinances) in the past, and he has not been disappointed.

c. So shall I keep Your law continually: The psalmist wanted God's word to remain in his mouth so that he could keep God's law. This was to glorify God through obedience to His word, not for any self-serving purpose.

And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts. I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, And will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in Your commandments, Which I love. My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, Which I love, And I will meditate on Your statutes.

a. And I will walk at liberty: Having just spoken of the obedience that comes from having God's word within, the psalmist now testifies that this obedience brings a life of liberty. Freedom comes through obedience and submission to God.

i. It is proven in many lives, in both the positive and the negative: Obedience and the pursuit of God's word and wisdom lead to liberty. Disobedience, rejection of God's word, and reliance upon one's own wisdom lead to bondage.

ii. "Saints find no bondage in sanctity. The Spirit of holiness is a free spirit; he sets men at liberty and enables them to resist every effort to bring them under subjection. The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King's highway for freemen." (Spurgeon)

b. I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed: This is an example of the liberty just mentioned. To have the boldness and ability to speak freely of God and His great word before kings and the great men of this earth shows true liberty.

i. "This is part of his liberty; he is free from fear of the greatest, proudest, and most tyrannical of men." (Spurgeon)

c. And I will delight myself in Your commandments: That he set this in an I will statement shows that delighting in God's word is a choice, a matter of the will. The psalmist didn't wait for a feeling of delight to overcome him; he simply said, I will delight myself in Your commandments.

i. In Psalm 119:44, the psalmist proclaimed: So shall I keep Your law continually. In the verses following he lists at least three things that come from this life of obedience: liberty, confidence (will not be ashamed), and delight. These are blessings of the obedient life – blessings not earned by our obedience, but simply enjoyed by those of us who will keep His law continually.

d. Which I love...which I love: The strength and the depth of the psalmist's love for God's word are impressive. That love is manifested not only in the feeling of delight, but also in an act of honor (My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments), and time and energy spent with God's word (I will meditate).

i. We may say that all true love has these three components: feeling, the giving of honor, and the desire to spend time and energy in knowing the beloved. This is a good measure of our love for God's word.

ii. My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments: "A bold expression of yearning for God's revelation in Scripture." (Kidner)

iii. "O shame to Christians who feel so little affection to the Gospel of Christ, when we see such cordial, conscientious, and inviolate attachment in a Jew to the laws and ordinances of Moses, that did not afford a thousandth part of the privileges!" (Clarke)

iv. "Why then is the Bible read only – not meditated on? Because it is not loved. We do not go to it, as the hungry man to his food, as the miser to his treasure. The loss is incalculable." (Bridges)

Remember the word to Your servant, Upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life.

a. Remember the word to Your servant: The psalmist understood that God could never forget His word. Speaking in the manner of men, this was a plea for God to fulfill the promises stated in His word. God wants His people to plead His stated promises back to Him in prayer.

i. "When we hear any promise in the word of God, let us turn it into a prayer. God's promises are his bonds. Sue him on his bond. He loves that we should wrestle with him by his promises." (Sibbes, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. Spurgeon said that he often carried with him a small book of God's promises (Clarke's Precious Promises), and he turned to specific promises to help him at needful times. "But God – let us speak with reverence – when he gives a promise, binds himself with cords of his own making. He binds himself down to such and such a course when he says that such and such a thing shall be. Hence, when you grasp the promise, you get a hold on God." (Spurgeon)

iii. To Your servant: "If God's word to us as his servants is so precious, what shall we say of his word to us as his sons?" (Spurgeon)

b. Upon which You have caused me to hope: Again the psalmist understood that his trust and hope in God's word should not be credited to his own spiritual greatness or genius. It came because God worked in him to hope in His word.

i. This also demonstrates that the word of God is worthy of such hope. "It is an irrevocable word. Man has to eat his words, sometimes, and unsay his say. He would perform his engagement, but he cannot. It is not that he is unfaithful, but that he is unable. Now this is never so with God. His word never returns to him void. Go, find ye the snowflakes winging their way like white doves back to heaven! Go, find the drops of rain rising upward like diamonds flung up from the hand of a mighty man to find a lodging-place in the cloud from which they fell! Until the snow and the rain return to heaven, and mock the ground which they promised to bless, the word of God shall never return to him void." (Spurgeon)

c. This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life: When the psalmist recalled how faithfully and powerfully God's word had brought him life in the past, he then found comfort in his present affliction.

i. "It would seem as though this section expressed the feelings of one in the midst of affliction. It does not sing the song of deliverance therefrom. The word is distinctly, 'This is my comfort in my affliction.'" (Morgan)

ii. In this stanza there is no specific prayer for help. Instead, there are "...statements by the writer that he trusts what God has written in his law and will continue to love it and obey its teachings. It is a way of acknowledging that suffering is common to human beings." (Boice)

iii. In the midst of affliction, the psalmist proclaims his comfort: this is my comfort. "The worldling clutches his money-bag, and says, 'this is my comfort'; the spendthrift points to his gaiety and shouts, 'this is my comfort'; the drunkard lifts his glass and sings, 'this is my comfort'; but the man whose hope comes from God feels the life-giving power of the word of the Lord, and he testifies, 'this is my comfort.'" (Spurgeon)

iv. My comfort...my affliction: In the midst of an affliction suited to the individual, the believer can also enjoy a comfort specifically suited to him. It is my affliction, and it is my comfort.

d. Your word has given me life: All should remember (especially preachers) that the word of God gives life; the preacher does not give it life. It isn't as if the poor, dead word of God lay lifeless until the wonderful preacher came and breathed life into it. Instead, the word of God gives life – especially to dead preachers.

The proud have me in great derision, Yet I do not turn aside from Your law. I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, And have comforted myself.

a. The proud have me in great derision: In this section as well as the previous, the idea is that the psalmist is mocked and reproached for his love and trust in God's word. These proud mockers look at the psalmist and his dedication to the word of God, and they hold him in great derision.

i. And so it has ever been: those who love and trust God's word – especially with the depth and passion reflected by the psalmist in this mighty psalm – are mocked by the proud who want nothing to do with God and His word.

b. Yet I do not turn aside from Your law: We almost sense a note of defiance in the psalmist. No matter how great the derision that comes from the proud, he will hold faithful to God and His word.

i. Great harm has been done to the cause of God when believers find themselves unable to endure this great derision, and they begin to downgrade their view of God's word and its inerrant character. Hoping to appease or impress the proud, they lead themselves and others to trust and love God's word less. Such ones should instead find their strength and comfort in these very passages and declare, "Yet I do not turn aside from Your law."

ii. "Christian! Be satisfied with the approbation of your God. Has he not adopted you by his Spirit, sealed you for his kingdom? And is not this 'honour that cometh from God only' enough – far more than enough – to counterbalance the derision of the proud?" (Bridges)

c. I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself: When challenged to lessen his confidence and trust in God's word by the proud mockers, the psalmist wisely responded by increasing his confidence in God's word! Therein he comforted himself.

i. The proud who hold the simple believer in great derision enjoy the applause and honor of some in this world; but they can never know the comfort that the psalmist wrote of here.

ii. There was specific comfort in remembering Your judgments of old, O LORD. In a similar way, we are comforted and strengthened in hope as we remember how God has dealt with men and circumstances in the past. "The grinning of the proud will not trouble us when we remember how the Lord dealt with his people (Spurgeon) in bygone periods; he destroyed them at the deluge, he confounded them at Babel, he drowned them at the Red Sea, he drove them out of Canaan: he has in all ages bared his arm against the haughty, and broken them as potters' vessels." (Spurgeon)

iii. "When we see no present display of the divine power it is wise to fall back upon the records of former ages, since they are just as available as if the tranon t

word in great derision – it made him indignant. He recognized their great sin: who forsake Your law.

i. Those who deny or depreciate God's word do just this – they forsake the word of God. Worse yet, they often lead others to do the same. Jesus graphically described the penalty for those who lead others astray (Luke 17:1-2).

b. Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage: God's word (Your statutes) makes him sing with joy and confidence. Those who know the power of singing God's word have great comfort in the house of their pilgrimage.

i. Even as Paul and Silas could sing in the midst of suffering (Acts 16:25), so could the psalmist. Even as a pilgrim, not yet home and afflicted, he could sing unto his God.

ii. "A pilgrim is a person who is travelling through one country to another... We are hurrying through this world as through a foreign land. We are in this country, not as residents, but only as visitors, who take this country en route for glory." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Since our songs are so very different from those of the proud, we may expect to join a very different choir at the last, and sing in a place far removed from their abode." (Spurgeon)

c. I remember Your name in the night, O LORD: This is true both literally and figuratively. In the dark of night when fears and anxieties often rush in upon us, the psalmist finds comfort in the name of the LORD, revealed to him by God's word. Yet this comfort is also real in the figurative night that believers may face.

i. The words following – And I keep Your law – remind us that the remembrance of God in the night made for an obedient life with God in the daytime. "The good effect of hours thus secretly passed in holy exercises, will appear openly in our lives and conversations." (Home)

ii. "If we have no memory for the name of Jehovah we are not likely to remember his commandments: if we do not think of him secretly we shall not obey him openly." (Spurgeon)

d. This has become mine: This is a glorious, triumphant statement from the psalmist. The power, goodness, comfort, and strength of God's word are not only ideas or theories to him. By faith – faith that has come by God's word (Romans 10:17) – he can rightly say, This has become mine!

i. "... 'this' being the cheer and comfort so tellingly described in Psalm 119:54f. Although obedience does not earn these blessings, it turns us around to receive them." (Kidner)

ii. "We are not rewarded for our works, but there is a reward in them." (Spurgeon)

e. Because I kept Your precepts: The psalmist enjoys this triumph not only because he knows the word of God, but also because he obeys them (I kept Your precepts). It isn't that the psalmist claims perfect obedience (as shown in the next verses, Psalm 119:57-58), but a life generally lived in faithfulness to the word of God.

You are my portion, O LORD; I have said that I would keep Your words. I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; Be merciful to me according to Your word.

a. You are my portion, O LORD: These are the words of a satisfied soul. The psalmist is satisfied with the portion received, and that portion is the LORD Himself.

i. Spurgeon observed that this was "... a broken sentence. The translators have mended it by insertions, but perhaps it had been better to have left it alone, and then it would have appeared as an exclamation, – 'My portion, O Lord!'"

ii. "The psalmist is saying that, like the Levites, he wants his portion of divine blessing to be God himself since nothing is better and nothing will ever fully satisfy his or anyone else's heart but God himself. To possess God is truly to have everything." (Boice)

iii. We understand this in the broader context of this psalm. The LORD Himself is satisfaction to the psalmist because God has come to him through His word. It isn't as if the word of God is in one place, and the psalmist must go to another place for experience of and satisfaction in God. He can say, "You are my portion, O LORD, and I receive that portion as You meet me in Your word and I live it out."

iv. Thomas Brooks – quoted in Spurgeon – said that we could answer every temptation with the reply, "The Lord is my portion." If He truly is our portion, we don't need to look for satisfaction in fleshly pursuits.

v. "He is an exceedingly covetous fellow to whom God is not sufficient; and he is an exceeding fool to whom the world is sufficient. For God is an inexhaustible treasury of all riches, sufficing innumerable men; while the world has mere trifles and fascinations to offer, and leads the soul into deep and sorrowful poverty." (Thomas Le Blanc, cited in Spurgeon)

b. I have said that I would keep Your words: This promise would be an empty vow without the empowering of God in our lives. When we have a close connection with God and receive and enjoy Him as our portion, we also receive strength to keep His words.



i. "But if we take the Lord as our portion, we must take him as our king. . . . Here is the Christian complete – taking the Lord as his portion, and his word as his rule." (Bridges)

ii. He was public in this statement of his intentions. "I have said; I have not only purposed it in my own heart, but have professed and owned it before others, and I do not repent of it." (Poole)

c. I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word: Here the psalmist understood both the urgency to seek and please God, and the inability to completely do so.

i. The words translated Your favor are literally, "Your face." To enjoy the face of God is to experience His favor. The psalmist here declares that he has sought the face of God.

ii. He sought the face of God with a sense of urgency, reflected in the words entreated and whole heart. The psalmist understood how important it was to seek the favor of God and to please Him with his life.

iii. He sought the face of God with a sense of inability, shown in the request be merciful to me. No matter how diligently the psalmist would seek after God and seek to please Him, he would always remain in need of mercy.

d. Be merciful to me according to Your word: This is a blessed and glorious apparent contradiction. The request for mercy is not based on it being a right, or that he deserves it. The psalmist speaks as one who expects mercy according to the promise of God's word.

i. While we have no natural right to mercy, there is a spiritual right to mercy for all who ask according to His promise.

I thought about my ways, And turned my feet to Your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay To keep Your commandments.

a. I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies: Time spent in God's word has given the psalmist sober reflection about his ways. This gave the insight necessary to turn in the right direction.

i. "While studying the word he was led to study his own life, and this caused a mighty revolution. He came to the word, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his father." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Blaise Pascal, the brilliant French philosopher and devout Christian, loved Psalm 119. He is another person who had memorized it, and he called verse 59 'the turning point of man's character and destiny.' He meant that it is vital for every person to consider his or her ways, understand that our ways are destructive and will lead us to destruction, and then make an about-face and determine to go in God's ways instead." (Boice)

iii. I thought about my ways: "How many, on the other hand, seem to pass through the world into eternity without a serious thought on their ways! Multitudes live for the world – forget God and die! This is their history." (Bridges)

b. I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments: Once on the right path (with the feet having been turned), the psalmist can now speed his way in the course of obedience.

i. It is dangerous to make haste on a wrong path; it is glorious to make haste on the right way. We can also say that making haste to God is a sign of revival. When God is moving in power, people make haste to get right with him.

ii. "Speed in repentance and speed in obedience are two excellent things. We are too often in haste to sin; O that we may be in a greater hurry to obey." (Spurgeon)

iii. Did not delay: "The original word, which we translate delayed not, is amazingly emphatical. . . . I did not stand what-what-what; or, as we used to express the same sentiment, shilly-shallying with myself: I was determined, and so set out. The Hebrew word, as well as the English, strongly marks indecision of mind, positive action being suspended, because the mind is so unfixed as not to be able to make a choice." (Clarke)

iv. "Delay is the word used of Lot as he 'lingered', reluctant to leave Sodom [Genesis 19:16]." (Kidner)

The cords of the wicked have bound me, But I have not forgotten Your law. At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, Because of Your righteous judgments.

a. The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law: The psalmist was attacked and afflicted by adversaries; but they could not make him forget or forsake the law of God.

b. At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You: The heart and the mind of the psalmist are so filled with thanks and appreciation toward God that he finds his sleep interrupted by these high thoughts.

i. I will rise: "The Psalmist observed posture; he did not lie in bed and praise. There is not much in the position of the body, but there is something, and that something is to be observed whenever it is helpful to devotion and expressive of our diligence or humility." (Spurgeon)

ii. Thomas Manton (cited in Spurgeon) listed several notable lessons to be drawn from the psalmist's midnight devotion:

- His devotion was earnest and passionate; the daylight hours did not give him enough time to thank God.
- His devotion to God was sincere, shown by its secrecy. He was willing to thank God when no one else could see him or be impressed by his devotion.
- He regarded time as precious; he even used the hours normally given to sleep for devotion to God.
- He regarded devotion to God as more important than natural refuges

- i. Good judgment: "...Hebrew, the goodness of taste, an experimental sense and relish of divine things." (Poole)
  - ii. "Judgment, here, is literally 'taste', not in our sense of artistic judgment, but of spiritual discrimination: 'for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food' (Job 34:3). Cf. Hebrews 5:14." (Kidner)
  - iii. We far too easily forget our great need to learn good judgment and knowledge, and are far too ready to trust our own heart and conscience. "The faculty of conscience partakes, with every other power of man, of the injury of the fall; and therefore, with all its intelligence, honesty, and power, it is liable to misconception. ... Conscience, therefore, must not be trusted without the light of the word of God; and most important is the prayer – Teach me good judgment and knowledge." (Bridges)
  - iv. "No school, but the school of Christ – no teaching, but the teaching of the Spirit – can ever give this good judgment and knowledge." (Bridges)
- c. For I believe Your commandments: He wanted God to teach him because he really did believe the commands and words of God. If we really do believe His word, then we should want Him to teach us to live wisely and obediently.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. You are good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.

- a. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word: The psalmist speaks here of lessons learned the hard way. There was a time when he was far more likely to go astray from God's word and the wise life revealed in it. Yet, under a season of affliction, he was now devoted to the word of God.
  - i. This principle has been demonstrated in nearly everyone who has pursued God. This is one reason why God appoints affliction for His people (1 Thessalonians 3:3).
  - ii. "Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray." (Spurgeon)
  - iii. Bridges relates an old church prayer: In all time of our wealth – Good Lord, deliver us! "A time of wealth is indeed a time of special need. It is hard to restrain the flesh, when so many are the baits for its indulgence." (Bridges)
  - iv. "As the scourging and beating of the garment with a stick beateth out the moths and dust, so do afflictions [beat out] corruptions from the heart." (Trapp)
  - v. "Many have been humbled under affliction, and taught to know themselves and humble themselves before God, that probably without this could never have been saved; after this, they have been serious and faithful. Affliction sanctified is a great blessing; unsanctified, it is an additional curse." (Clarke)
  - vi. "We gain solace here by remembering what the Bible says even of Jesus, 'Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered' (Hebrews 5:8)." (Boice)
- b. You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes: This important and precious line follows the recognition of affliction and the good it has done in life. The psalmist did not become bitter or resentful toward God for the affliction that brought him to greater obedience.
  - i. Despite the affliction – which we should regard as genuine – he proclaimed, "You are good, and do good." In fact, he even wanted more instruction from God, saying "Teach me Your statutes." This is said with the implicit understanding that this teaching might require more affliction; yet it was the psalmist's desire. This shows how confident he was in the goodness of God.
  - ii. "Affliction is not the most frequently mentioned matter. ... The most prominent word in these verses is 'good.' This is the teth stanza. Teth is the first letter of the Hebrew word 'good' (tov), so it was a natural thought for the composer of the psalm to use 'good' at the beginning of these verses." (Boice)
  - iii. In the most basic sense, this is praise for who God is (You are good), and praise for what God does (and do good). These are always two wonderful reasons for praise.

The proud have forged a lie against me, But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease, But I delight in Your law.

- a. The proud have forged a lie against me: In reading of the godly and humble character of the psalmist, it is almost shocking to hear that he has enemies who carefully forged a lie against him. Yet he explains how this is possible: they are the proud, who are no doubt convicted in conscience and spiteful of his humble, obedient, teachable life before God.
  - i. "If the Lord does us good, we must expect Satan to do us evil. ... he readily puts it into the hearts of his children to forge lies against the children of God!" (Bridges)
  - ii. "To such slanders and calumnies, a good life is the best answer. When a friend once told Plato, what scandalous stories his enemies had

propagated concerning him, – I will live so, replied the great Philosopher, that nobody shall believe them.” (Horne)

b. But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart: The lies of the proud did not distract or overly discourage the psalmist. Instead, he dedicated himself to greater obedience and honor of God, pledging to obey Him with his whole heart.

i. “If the mud which is thrown at us does not blind our eyes or bruise our integrity it will do us little harm. If we keep the precepts, the precepts will keep us in the day of [insults] and slander.” (Spurgeon)

c. Their heart is as fat as grease, but I delight in Your law: Their fat heart was not good for their physical or spiritual health. It meant that their hearts were dull, insensitive, and drowning in luxury and excess. In contrast, the psalmist found delight in the word of God.

i. “The tremendous blow of almighty justice has benumbed his heart.... ‘seared with a hot iron’ (1 Timothy 4:2), and therefore without tenderness; ‘past feeling’ (Ephesians 4:19); unsoftened by the power of the word.” (Bridges)

ii. “There is and always ought to be a vivid contrast between the believer and the sensualist, and that contrast is as much seen in the affections of the heart as in the actions of the life: their heart is as fat as grease, and our heart is delighted with the law of the Lord.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “As if he should say, My heart is a lean heart, a hungry heart, my soul loveth and rejoiceth in thy word. I have nothing else to fill it but thy word, and the comforts I have from it; but their hearts are fat hearts; fat with the world, fat with lust; they hate the word. As a full stomach loatheth meat and cannot digest it; so wicked men hate the word, it will not go down with them, it will not gratify their lusts.” (William Fenner, cited in Spurgeon)

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

a. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes: The psalmist repeats the idea from earlier in this section (Psalm 119:67). This repetition is an effective way to communicate emphasis. Affliction, brought under the wisdom and guidance of God’s word, did genuine good in his life.

i. “I, for my part, owe more, I think, to the anvil and to the hammer, to the fire and to the file, than to anything else. I bless the Lord for the correctives of his providence by which, if he has blessed me on the one hand with sweets, he has blessed me on the other hand with bitters.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “‘I never’ – said Luther – ‘knew the meaning of God’s word, until I came into affliction. I have always found it one of my best schoolmasters.’” (Bridges)

iii. Yet we must guard against the misunderstanding that seasons of affliction automatically make one better or godlier. Sadly, there are many who are worse from their affliction – because they fail to turn to God’s word for wisdom and life-guidance in such times. The worst affliction of all is a wasted affliction, wasted because we did not turn to God and gained nothing from it.

iv. This also shows how valuable the learning of God’s word was to the psalmist. It was entirely worth it for him to endure affliction, if only he could learn the statutes of God in the process. This made a time of painful affliction worthwhile.

v. “Very little is to be learned without affliction. If we would be scholars we must be sufferers... God’s commands are best read by eyes wet with tears.” (Spurgeon)

vi. “By affliction God separates the sin which he hates from the soul which he loves.” (John Mason, cited in Spurgeon)

b. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver: This is a logical extension of the thought in the previous verse. If the psalmist understands that even trouble can be good if it teaches him the word of God – if it is more valuable than his comfort – then it is also possible to say that it is more valuable than riches.

i. This great estimation of the word of God came from a life that had known affliction. It was love and appreciation from the field of battle, not the palaces of ease and comfort.

ii. “Herbert Lockyer recounts a story concerning the largest Bible in the world, a Hebrew manuscript weighing 320 pounds in the Vatican library. Long ago a group of Italian Jews asked to see this Bible and when they had seen it they told their friends in Venice about it. As a result a syndicate of Russian Jews tried to buy it, offering the church the weight of the book in gold. Julius the Second was Pope at that time, and he refused the offer, even though the value of such a large amount of gold was enormous.... Today we pay little to possess multiple copies of God’s Word. But do we value it? In many cases, I am afraid not.” (Boice)

iii. “Who can say this? Who prefers the law of his God, the Christ that bought him, and the heaven to which he hopes to go, when he can live no longer upon earth, to thousands of gold and silver? Yea, how many are there who, like Judas, sell their Saviour even for thirty pieces of silver? Hear this, ye lovers of the world and of money!” (Clarke)

iv. “The word of God must be nearer to us than our friends, dearer to us than our lives, sweeter to us than our liberty, and pleasanter to us than all earthly comforts.” (John Mason, cited in Spurgeon)

The yod stanza represents the small Hebrew letter Jesus referred to as a “jot” in Matthew 5:18: Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.

a. Your hands have made me: Here the psalmist proclaimed God as Creator, and understood certain obligations to God because he was fashioned by the hands of God.

i. Fashioned me: “The reference to God forming him is a deliberate echo of Genesis 2, which says God ‘formed man from the dust of the ground’ (Genesis 2:7).” (Boice)

ii. The modern age, with its widespread denial of a Creator God, has a much lower sense of obligation to God as Creator. Despite the deeply seated rejection of God as Creator, man’s obligation to his Maker remains. The psalmist understood what many today forget or deny.

iii. To say that God is our Creator is to recognize:

- That we are obligated to Him as the One who gives us life.
- That we respect Him as One who is greater and smarter than we are.
- That He, as our designer, knows what is best for us.
- That since our beginning is connected to the invisible world, so our end will be also.

iv. “The consideration, that God made us, is here urged as an argument why he should not forsake and reject us, since every artist hath a value for his own work, proportioned to its excellence. It is, at the same time, and acknowledgement of the service we owe him, founded on the relation which a creature beareth to his Creator.” (Horne)

v. “If God had roughly made us, and had not also elaborately fashioned us, this argument would lose much of its force; but surely from the delicate art and marvellous skill which the Lord has shown in the formation of the human body, we may infer that he is prepared to take equal pains with the soul till it shall perfectly bear his image.” (Spurgeon)

vi. Your hands: “‘Oh look upon the wounds of thine hands, and forget not the work of thine hands,’ as Queen Elizabeth prayed.” (Trapp)

b. Give me understanding: In his thoughts of God as Creator, the psalmist prayed for understanding. He recognized that this was something often misunderstood, and one could ask for and expect help in understanding both how God created us and what our obligations are to our Maker.

i. We gain much understanding by considering God as Creator, and especially as the Creator of man. “Every part of creation bears the impress of God. Man – man alone – bears his image, his likeness. Everywhere we see his track – his footsteps. Here we behold his face.” (Bridges)

c. That I may learn Your commandments: The understanding of God and man as Creator and creature should lead to this humble relationship in which man admits his need to learn: to learn God’s word (commandments) and receive His word as commands from a wise, loving, and righteous Creator.

Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, Because I have hoped in Your word.

a. Those who fear You will be glad when they see me: The psalmist considered that his righteous life would be an encouragement to others who also feared God. This was an additional reason to hear and obey God.

i. “When a man of God obtains grace for himself he becomes a blessing to others.... There are professors whose presence scatters sadness, and the godly quietly steal out of their company: may this never be the case with us.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “They who ‘fear God’ are naturally ‘glad when they see’ and converse with one like themselves; but more especially so, when it is one whose faith and patience have carried him through troubles, and rendered him victorious over temptations; one who hath ‘hoped in God’s word,’ and hath not been disappointed.” (Horne)

b. Because I have hoped in Your word: His life could give encouragement and gladness to other righteous people because his hope and attention were put upon the word of God. Without this hope, his righteous life would be impossible.

I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me. Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my

comfort, According to Your word to Your servant. Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; For Your law is my delight.

a. Your judgments are right...in faithfulness You have afflicted me: His attention upon God's word has given the psalmist a wise and godly perspective even in seasons of suffering. He can proclaim the rightness of God's judgments even when he is afflicted.

i. It is one thing to say, "God has the right to do with me as He pleases." It is a greater thing to say that His judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

ii. This was the place Job eventually came to through his long and desperate struggle through the Book of Job. He came to know that the judgments of the LORD were right, and even understood God's faithfulness in affliction. Eli, David, and the Shunammite mother had similar moments of understanding.

· Job could say in his affliction, Blessed be the name of the LORD (Job 1:21).

· Eli could say in his affliction, It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him (1 Samuel 3:18).

· David could say in his affliction, Let him alone, and let him curse, for so the LORD has ordered him (2 Samuel 16:11).

· The Shunammite mother could say in her affliction, It is well (2 Kings 4:26).

b. Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your word: The psalmist prayed on solid ground, asking on the basis of promises made in God's word. With such promises, he asked for merciful kindness in his affliction.

i. According to Your word: "Our prayers are according to the mind of God when they are according to the word of God." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Lord, these promises were given to be made good to some, and why not to me? I hunger; I need; I thirst; I wait. Here is thy hand-writing in thy word.... I am resolved to be as importunate [persistent to the point of annoyance] till I have obtained, and as thankful afterwards, as by thy grace I shall be enabled.... Thy promises are the discoveries of thy purposes, and vouchsafed [graciously given] as materials for our prayers; and in my supplications I am resolved every day to present and tender them back to thee." (Prayer of Monica, the mother of Augustine; cited in Bridges)

c. Your word to Your servant: The psalmist rightly received the word of God as something personal to himself. It was not only a word to mankind in general, or even the covenant people; it was something personal to the psalmist himself (Your servant).

d. Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for Your law is my delight: The psalmist prayed with the understanding that God's tender mercies came to him through the word (law) of God. By staying close to God's word and letting it fill his life, he also received God's tender mercies.

i. "The mercies of God are 'tender mercies,' they are the mercies of a father to his children, nay, tender as the compassion of a mother over the son of her womb. They 'come unto' us, when we are not able to go to them." (Horne)

ii. Without the gift of these tender mercies, we find ourselves lost and discouraged. "All the candles in the world, in the absence of the sun, can never make the day. The whole earth, in its brightest visions of fancy, destitute of the Lord's love, can never cheer nor revive the soul." (Bridges)

iii. "Yet we have no just apprehension of these tender mercies, unless they come unto us. In the midst of the wide distribution, let me claim my interest. Let them come unto me." (Bridges)

Let the proud be ashamed, For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; But I will meditate on Your precepts. Let those who fear You turn to me, Those who know Your testimonies. Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes, That I may not be ashamed.

a. Let the proud be ashamed: The psalmist said this not only out of a sense of God's righteousness, but also out of a sense of being personally wronged. These proud ones had treated him wrongfully with falsehood; therefore they should be put to shame.

i. "Shame is for the proud, for it is a shameful thing to be proud. Shame is not for the holy, for there is nothing in holiness to be ashamed of." (Spurgeon)

ii. If the proud ones who opposed the psalmist knew he was praying against them, they had good reason to be afraid. David's prayers made failure and doom for Ahithophel. Hezekiah's prayer meant failure and doom for the Assyrian army. The fasting of Esther and the Jews brought failure and doom for Haman. God knows how to defend His own who cry to Him.

iii. Yet even the prayer that the proud be ashamed is a prayer for their good. It is as the prayer of Asaph: Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD (Psalm 83:16).

b. But I will meditate on Your precepts: In contrast to the proud who loved lies, the psalmist loved and meditated on God's word.

i. "He would study the law of God and not the law of retaliation. The proud are not worth a thought. The worst injury they can do us is to take us away from our devotions; let us baffle them by keeping all the closer to our God when they are most malicious in their onslaughts." (Spurgeon)

ii. I will meditate: “Truths lie hid in the heart without efficacy or power, till improved by deep, serious, and pressing thoughts. . . . A sudden carrying a candle through a room, giveth us not so full a survey of the object, as when you stand a while beholding it. A steady contemplation is a great advantage.” (Thomas Manton, cited in Spurgeon)

c. Let those who fear You turn to me: The psalmist recognized the presence of proud enemies, but he did not believe that all were against himself or God. There were others who feared God, and he could find companionship with them. They had much in common – they both were those who knew God’s word (Those who know Your testimonies).

i. Those who fear. . . those who know: “David has two descriptions for the saints, they are God-fearing and God-knowing. They possess both devotion and instruction; they have both the spirit and the science of true religion.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Turn to me: “As the believer finds trouble from the world, he prays that he may find help from the Lord’s people. . . . It is painful therefore to see Christians often walking aloof from each other, and suffering coldness, distance, differences and distrust to divide them from their brethren.” (Bridges)

iii. “Either, 1. Turn their eyes to me as a spectacle of God’s wonderful mercy; or rather, 2. Turn their hearts and affections to me, which have been alienated from me.” (Poole)

d. Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes: As the psalmist compared himself with the proud who spoke lies, he still recognized his need for greater obedience to God. He asked God, and depended on Him, for an obedient (blameless) heart and life.

i. The New Testament has many examples of hearts that were not blameless: Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, Alexander, and Demas (Matthew 26:14-16; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 4:10). Such examples should make us pray according to Psalm 139:23: Search me, O God, and know my heart.

ii. “Examine your settled judgment, your deliberate choice, your outgoing affections, your habitual, allowed practice; apply to every detection of unsoundness the blood of Christ, as the sovereign remedy for the diseases of ‘a deceitful and desperately wicked heart.’” (Bridges)

iii. “Let it be perfect – all given up to thee, and all possessed by thee.” (Clarke)

e. That I may not be ashamed: This is a valid desire. The psalmist wanted a life lived unashamed. The desire was for a sense of no inward shame because he was right with God, and had no public shame in the eyes of others. His obedient life (Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes) would lead to this unashamed life.

i. In this section we are taught by the repetition of the plea, “Let. . . .” Taken together, these make for a healthy life with God.

- Let me be comforted by Your kindness.
- Let me live by Your mercies.
- Let me be vindicated by God.
- Let me be in the presence of those who fear You.
- Let my heart be blameless.

“Some writers. . . pointed out that for the ancients there was often significance in the shape of the Hebrew letters. Such is the case here. This is the kaph stanza. Kaph is a curved letter, similar to a half circle, and it was often thought of as a hand held out to receive some gift or blessing. . . . He holds out his hand toward God as a suppliant.” (Boice)

My soul faints for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word. My eyes fail from searching Your word, Saying, “When will You comfort me?”

a. My soul faints for Your salvation: The psalmist gives a sense of desperation. His soul aches for God, so much that it faints in waiting for the salvation he needs. Yet he has hope in God’s word.

i. Faints has the idea of “coming to the end.” (Kidner) This same verb in a slightly different form is used in verse 87: They almost made an end of me. Fainting is a loss of strength; a collapse. Here the psalmist felt that his soul was so weak, so empty of strength, that it was unable to stand.

ii. This place of desperate yet not despairing is known to the followers of God. The Apostle Paul related something of this in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9: We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. . . . In it all, Paul could say, . . . we have the same spirit of faith (2 Corinthians 4:13).

iii. Your salvation: What he wanted was God’s salvation. “He wished for no deliverance but that which came from God, his one desire was for ‘thy salvation.’ But for that divine deliverance he was eager to the last degree.” (Spurgeon)

b. But I hope in Your word: In contrast to the sense of weakness and failing, the psalmist found hope and strength in God's word. 1 Thessalonians speaks of the endurance (patience) of hope (1 Thessalonians 1:3), and refers to the hope of salvation as a protecting helmet (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

i. "Saul, under protracted trial, resorted to the devil for relief (1 Samuel 28:6-7)... Even a good man, under a few hours' trial, murmurs against God – nay, even defends his murmuring (Jonah 4:7-9). How did this man behave? When his soul was fainting, his hope in the word kept him from



The proud have dug pits for me, Which is not according to Your law. All Your commandments are faithful; They persecute me wrongfully; Help me!

a. The proud have dug pits for me, which is not according to Your law: The traps set for the psalmist were in fact directly against the law of God. Exodus 21:33-34 gives the principle that a man is responsible for damage when he digs a pit.

i. The idea is that they hunted him as if he were a wild animal. "The manner of taking wild beasts was by 'digging pits,' and covering the pits with turf, upon which when the beast trod, he fell into the pit, and was there confined and taken." (Horne)

ii. "Neither the men nor their pits were according to the divine law: they were cruel and crafty deceivers, and their pits were contrary to the Levitical law, and contrary to the command which bids us love our neighbour." (Spurgeon)

b. All Your commandments are faithful; they persecute me wrongfully: The psalmist found faithfulness and refuge in the commandments of God; this was strong contrast to the persecution he found from his enemies. In such times, he prayed the logical prayer: Help me!

i. "Many a time have these words been groaned out by troubled saints, for they are such as suit a thousand conditions of need, pain, distress, weakness, and sin. 'Help, Lord,' will be a fitting prayer for youth and age, for labour and suffering, for life and death. No other help is sufficient, but God's help is all-sufficient and we cast ourselves upon it without fear." (Spurgeon)

They almost made an end of me on earth, But I did not forsake Your precepts. Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.

a. They almost made an end of me on earth, but I did not forsake Your precepts: The point is emphasized through repetition. Nothing would make the psalmist forsake God's word. He would cling to it in good times and in bad times.

i. There are many things that may cause a person to forsake the word of God in one way or another.

- Sinful compromise.
- Intellectual arrogance.
- Mocking and persecution.
- Coldness of heart.
- Worldly distractions.
- Love of material things.
- Chosen or allowed busyness.

ii. Here, the psalmist was almost dead (they almost made an end of me on earth), yet he would not forsake the word of God.

iii. There is gold in that word "almost." It reminds us that though our foes (especially our spiritual adversaries) may press for our complete destruction, God will preserve us. He allows us to be attacked, yet at the same time He sets a limit to the success of the attackers. Almost is a word of hope and of God's gracious protection.

b. Revive me according to Your lovingkindness: The psalmist looked to God for new life, for revival. Yet he did not

proposed that we should argue with them: it is of no avail to argue with dead people. It is proposed that we should bring out another book of Christian evidences: it is small benefit to provide glasses for those who have no eyes. What is wanted is more spiritual life; for as the truth quickens men, they love the quickening word, but dead men care little about that which is to them a dead letter.” (Spurgeon)

d. The testimony of Your mouth: The psalmist rightly understood that the word of God actually came from the mouth of God. God used human authors, and those human authors expressed their personality through the inspired writings, yet God so directed those human authors that what they wrote could accurately be called words from the mouth of God.

i. If the Bible gives us words from the mouth of God, we can confidently say that the Bible is infallible; that is, that in its original, autograph documents (of which we have extremely reliable copies), it is absolutely without error.

ii. Since the mouth communicates words, we also insist that the words of the Bible are infallible, and not merely the ideas. “To me there is no explanation of those words except that which involves verbal and infallible inspiration. The testimony of God’s mouth must be given in words: God’s heart has thoughts, but God’s mouth has words; and words from the omniscient and true God must be infallible.” (Spurgeon)

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, For all are Your servants.

a. Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven: The psalmist here meditated on the unchanging nature of God’s word. Because it is settled in heaven, it will not change on earth.

i. The word is settled in heaven, not merely settled in the heart or mind of the psalmist. It is objectively settled in heaven, whether the psalmist or anyone else believes it to be or not to be. If someone were to say to the psalmist, “That’s your opinion – that is good for you,” he would object most strongly that God’s word is settled in heaven quite apart from any opinion of man.

ii. It’s not settled at Tübingen. It’s not settled at Harvard. It’s not settled at Heidelberg. It’s not settled at Oxford. It’s not settled at Paris. There is quite a debate at the seminaries these days! We care not for any of that when we know, Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

iii. “If I can prove a word to have been spoken by God, I must no more question it than his own Being. It may seem to fail on earth; but it is for ever settled in heaven.” (Bridges)

iv. “After tossing about on a sea of trouble the Psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock. Jehovah’s word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man’s teachings change so often that there is never time for them to be settled; but the Lord’s word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally.” (Spurgeon)

v. “Sentiments fluctuate so constantly in this nineteenth century that I suppose we shall soon require to have barometers to show us the variations of doctrine as well as the prospects of the weather. We shall have to consult quarterly reviews, to see what style of religious thought is predominant, and then we shall have to accommodate our sermons to the dictum of the last wise man who has chosen to make a special fool of himself. As for myself, I shall continue to be unfashionable, and abide where I am. ‘Sticking in the mud,’ says somebody. ‘Standing on the Rock,’ say I.” (Spurgeon)

b. Settled in heaven: The psalmist also declared his belief that the word of God was exactly that – not the words of man, but the very words of God. He believed that the Scriptures come from heaven and not earth, from the LORD and not man.

i. The psalmist believed what the Apostle Paul wrote hundreds of years later in 2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

ii. This means something more than saying that God inspired the men who wrote Scripture, though we believe that He did; God also inspired the very words they wrote. We notice it doesn’t say, “All Scripture writers are inspired by God,” even though that is true. Yet that statement doesn’t go far enough. The words they wrote were breathed by God; Your word is settled in heaven.

iii. It isn’t that God breathed into the human authors. That is true, but not what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16. He says that from heaven, God breathed out of them His holy word.

iv. We remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:18, ...one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. The jot refers to yod ( ), the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet; it looks like half a letter. The tittle is a small mark in a Hebrew letter, somewhat like the crossing of a “t” or the tail on a “y.”

· The difference between bet ( ) and kaf ( ) is a tittle.

· The difference between dalet ( ) and resh ( ) is a tittle.

· The difference between vav ( ) and zayin ( ) is a tittle.

v. These are small, tiny, almost insignificant differences – yet Jesus said that even these smallest differences would not pass away from God’s word. He said that heaven and earth would sooner pass away than a yod or a tittle from the word of God. Truly, Your word is settled in heaven.

vi. Every preacher should especially be able to say, Your word is settled in heaven. Charles Spurgeon knew of some preachers who could not say that. “They say that they are thinking out their doctrines. I would be greatly sorry to have to think out the road to heaven without the guiding star of heaven’s grace or the map of the word. Not gospel-preachers but gospel-makers these men aspire to be, and their message comes forth, not as the gospel of the grace of God, but as the gospel of the imagination of men; a gospel concocted in their own kitchen, not taught them by the Holy Spirit. It is the reverse of being ‘settled in heaven,’ it is not even settled in the mind of its inventor.”

c. Your faithfulness endures to all generations: The psalmist believed that the settled word of God was a demonstration of the faithfulness of God, and that faithfulness extends across all generations.

i. We recognize the truth of this when we look at generations past. We trace the line of the amazing faithfulness of God to each generation, despite the worst impulses and works of man.

ii. We recognize the truth of this when we consider generations present and future. The present and future often look gloomy; we wonder where the great men and women of God are who were seen in previous generations. Yet we should not fear; Your faithfulness endures to all generations.

iii. We recognize the truth of this when we consider how God has preserved His word through the generations. There are many great works of ancient literature that are lost; one author or another makes mention of them, but we have no text that has survived to our day. The Bible not only survives; it thrives.

iv. “Throughout much of this time, the Bible was an object of extreme hatred by many in authority. They tried to stamp it out, but the text survived. In the early days of the church, Celsus, Porphyry, and Lucien tried to destroy it by their arguments. Later the emperors Diocletian and Julian tried to destroy it by force. In some periods of history it was a capital offense to possess a copy of the Bible. Yet the text survived.” (Boice)

d. You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances: The word of God itself (Your ordinances) is what established the earth and caused it to abide. The earth and all of creation began with a word from God (Genesis 1); it is no surprise that they are also sustained and endure according to the word of God.

i. This gives new understanding to two wonderful statements of Scripture:

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away (Matthew 24:35).

ii. These passages put the word of God outside the created world and indicate that the word of God is more permanent and enduring than creation itself. Since the created world came into being by God’s word and is sustained by His word, this makes perfect sense.

iii. “He establishes the world and it abideth. Let us be confident then. Whenever God means to break his word and change his ordinances we may expect to find this earth go steaming into the sun, or else it will rush far off into space, nobody knows where. But while it keeps its place, what have you and I to worry about? Is it not the sign that the Lord will keep us also?” (Spurgeon)

e. For all are Your servants: The psalmist looked at the created order and understood that all creation ultimately serves God and His purpose. The earth, which He established and which abides, obeys His word.

i. “There is constancy and order in all of creation, reflecting the ‘faithfulness’ of the Lord.” (VanGemeren)

ii. “A striking feature of these verses is the coupling of God’s creative, world-sustaining word with His law for man. Both are the product of the same ordering mind; and not only men but ‘all things’ are His ‘servants.’” (Kidner)

Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction. I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have given me life.

a. Unless Your law had been my delight: The psalmist rejoiced that the word of God had been his delight. Reading and studying and meditating on God’s word were not burdensome; they were a delight.

i. We can speculate that one reason this was so was because God met him in His word. When we have fellowship with God in and through His word, it makes our time in His law delightful.

b. I would then have perished in my affliction: The psalmist knew that without his relationship with God and His word, he would not have been sustained in his season of affliction.

i. Again, it should be stressed that this delight goes beyond mere Bible knowledge. It is the relationship with God in and through His word that gives strength and spiritual nourishment.

ii. “What got him through his afflictions was his lifelong habit of reading, marking, learning, meditating upon, spiritually digesting, and above all

obeying God's Law." (Boice)

iii. "Thy law...my delights...in mine affliction.' I happened to be standing in a grocer's shop one day in a large manufacturing town in the west of Scotland, when a poor, old, frail widow came in to make a few purchases. There never was, perhaps, in that town a more severe time of distress. Nearly every loom was stopped. Decent and respectable tradesmen who had seen better days, were obliged to subsist on public charity. So much money per day (but a trifle at most) was allowed to the really poor and deserving. The poor widow had received her daily pittance, and she had now come into the shop of the grocer to lay it out to the best advantage. She had but a few coppers in her withered hands. Carefully did she expend her little stock – a pennyworth of this and the other necessary of life nearly exhausted all she had. She came to the last penny, and with a singular expression of heroic contentment and cheerful resignation on her wrinkled face, she said, 'Now I must buy oil with this, that I may see to read my Bible during these long dark nights, for it is my only comfort now when every other comfort has gone away.'" (Alexander Wallace, cited in Spurgeon)

c. I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life: The psalmist remembered the life-giving power and character of God's word. It was this life that strengthened him in the season of affliction.

i. God's word brings life because it is alive. "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me. The Bible is not antique or modern. It is eternal." (Luther, cited in Boice)

I am Yours, save me; For I have sought Your precepts. The wicked wait for me to destroy me, But I will consider Your testimonies.

a. I am Yours, save me: This speaks of the wonderful relationship between the psalmist and His God, flowing from the word of God.

- He recognized that God was his God.
- He recognized that salvation was not in Himself.
- He recognized that God hears and answers prayer.
- He recognized that God would indeed save him.

i. "We are the Lord's by creation, election, redemption, surrender, and acceptance; and hence our firm hope and assured belief that he will save us. A man will surely save his own child: Lord, save me." (Spurgeon)

ii. "But what a powerful plea for mercy may we draw from the Lord's interest in us! Will not a man be careful of his children, his treasure, his jewels? 'Such am I. Thy sovereign love hath bought me – made me thine – I am thine; save me'." (Bridges)

b. For I have sought Your precepts: The basis of this confidence was a relationship built upon the word of God (Your precepts). This was not a relationship built upon feelings or subjective experiences, but upon the solid foundation of God's word.

i. "But then let it be remembered, that no man can say to God with good conscience, 'I am thine,' unless he can also go on, and say, 'I have sought thy precepts.'" (Horne)

c. The wicked wait for me to destroy me, but I will consider Your testimonies: The psalmist speaks of his enemies in an almost causal way. While they do their worst against him – they wait for him to destroy him – he will not panic, but find refuge in the word of God.

i. "If the enemy cannot cause us to withdraw our thoughts from holy study, or our feet from holy walking, or our hearts from holy aspirations, he has met with poor success in his assaults." (Spurgeon)

I have seen the consummation of all perfection, But Your commandment is exceedingly broad.

a. I have seen the consummation of all perfection: The psalmist considered the excellent things he had seen in this world. Perhaps he thought of the things of great natural beauty...the small things of intricate creation...the beauty of human love and care. Yet, all these things have a consummation – in the sense of a limit or a barrier. The best things of this world only go so far.

i. "He has considered all the perfections of things other than Jehovah Himself, that is, of created things; and has discovered their limits." (Morgan)

ii. "Of 'all perfection' in this world, whether of beauty, wit, learning, pleasure, honour, or riches, experience will soon show us the 'end.' But where is the end or boundary of the word of God?" (Horne)

b. But Your commandment is exceedingly broad: Despite all the great and beautiful things of this world, something is greater still – the commandment of God, His revealed word to us. His word is not limited as the things, even the great things, of this earth are.

- His word is before creation.
- His word is the sustainer of creation.

· His word will endure beyond all creation.

i. “He has found that stretching out beyond them, and enwrapping them all is the commandment of God.” (Morgan)

ii. “This verse could well be a summary of Ecclesiastes, where every earthly enterprise has its day and comes to nothing, and where only in God and His commandments do we get beyond these frustrating limits.” (Kidner)

iii. “Broad, or large, both for extent and for continuance; it is useful to all persons in all times and conditions, and for all purposes to inform, direct, quicken, comfort, sanctify, and save men; it is of everlasting truth and efficacy; it will never deceive or forsake those who trust it, as all worldly things will, but will make men happy both here and for ever.” (Poole)

iv. Strangely, many today think that the Bible is narrow. They think of themselves as exceedingly broad-minded people; yet they show little tolerance for those who disagree with them. God’s word is indeed exceedingly broad, and it will make us broad-minded, broad-hearted, and tolerant in the best sense, if we read and obey it. God’s word will prevent us from being tyrants over others and will teach us to tolerate and love others even when their lives and thinking are decidedly against God and His word.

v. This broad place is a firm and safe foundation for us. “Give me the plenary, verbal theory of biblical inspiration with all its difficulties, rather than the doubt. I accept the difficulties and I humbly wait for their solution. But while I wait, I am standing on rock.” (J.C. Ryle, Anglican Bishop cited in Boice)

“This is a pure song of praise. It contains no single petition, but is just one glad outpouring of the heart.” (Morgan)

Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

a. Oh, how I love Your law: Twice before in this psalm, the writer has declared his love for the word of God (Psalm 119:47-48). Yet here, the phrasing is more passionate. His devotion to God and His word has built a love-relationship between the psalmist and God’s word.

i. It isn’t “I used to love Your law,” or “One day I will love Your law.” He describes how he feels about the word of God right now. He also speaks for himself; the psalmist isn’t saying how others should feel, but about how he feels.

ii. We also notice that he says, “Oh, how I love Your law!” The word how describes a comparison; the psalmist loves the word of God more than other things. “It is a word of admiration, or a note of comparison; so is it taken in divers other places... it noteth a kind of excess or excellency, even such as cannot be well expressed. The prophet seemeth to speak with a kind of sighing, as being so ravished with love towards the law of God, that he was even sick of love.” (Thomas Stoughton, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. “The Order of the Divine mind, embodied in the Divine Law, is beautiful. ... It is the language of a man ravished by moral beauty. If we cannot at all share his experience, we shall be the losers.” (C.S. Lewis from Reflections on the Psalms, cited in Boice)

iv. The superficial Christian may read and understand and even, in an outward sense, obey the word of God. But only the spiritual man loves it; he lives as if he could not live without the word of God. To the superficial Christian it is a duty to satisfy the conscience; to the believer it is food and medicine, light and comfort – the word of God is life.

v. If you desire to, you can increase your love for God’s word. You can’t make yourself love something or someone; but you can cultivate love toward someone or something.

· Give it your time; set it before you constantly.

· Give it your attention and care; look after the word of God (it is my meditation all the day).

· Give it a truly listening ear.

· Give it your honor and your obedience.

· Give it your appreciation; value it for all the good it has done for you and be thankful for all that good.

· Give it your dependence and trust; let it care for you.

· Give it your praise; speak highly of it before others.

vi. When we truly love someone, we don’t wish to change him. “You cannot bend the Bible to your mind; how much better it would be for you to bend your mind to the Bible, and to say, ‘O how I love thy law, – the doctrines of it, the precepts of it, the promise of it, the ordinances it enjoins upon me, the warnings it sets before me, the exhortations it gives me!’ Love the whole Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, and be prepared even to die rather than to give up half a verse of it.” (Spurgeon)

vii. “I beseech you to let your Bibles be everything to you. Carry this matchless treasure with you continually, and read it, and read it, and read it

again and again. Turn to its pages by day and by night. Let its narratives mingle with your dreams; let its precepts color your lives; let its promises cheer your darkness, let its divine illumination make glad your life. As you love God, love this Book which is the Book of God, and the God of books, as it has rightly been called.” (Spurgeon)

b. It is my meditation all the day: Because the psalmist loved God’s word, it was natural and expected that he would think about it often. A lover finds it easy to think about, to meditate upon, the one he loves.

i. “My meditations; the matter of my constant and most diligent study...” (Poole)

ii. “He meditated in God’s word because he loved it, and then loved it the more because he meditated in it.” (Spurgeon)

iii. When we love the Bible, we find much to meditate on.

- The Bible is a letter from our distant Father.
- The Bible is a picture of our best and most faithful Friend.
- The Bible is the certificate of our adoption into the family of God.
- The Bible is the declaration of our liberty, our freedom from slavery.
- The Bible is the description of our heavenly inheritance.
- The Bible is the evidence of our nobility, for we are made kings and priests by God.
- The Bible is the instruction manual for wise and blessed living.
- The Bible is both a statement of our account, and a checkbook for what belongs to us by the promises of God.
- The Bible is a telescope where we see the heavenly city that is our destination.

You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.

a. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies: The psalmist had many enemies, some of them evil and some proud. Perhaps the proud ones boasted that they were wiser or more educated than the writer of the psalm. Yet the writer was confident that God’s word had given him greater wisdom.

i. The psalmist is wiser and has more understanding than his enemies (Psalm 119:98), his teachers (Psalm 119:99), and the ancients (Psalm 119:100). “The comparison is not a prideful assertion of superiority, but a form of exultation in the Lord himself, whose wisdom is more direct and superior.” (VanGemeren)

b. For they are ever with me: The psalmist was real about the abiding presence of his enemies. They were with him ever, and he had to gain enough spiritual strength and enough strength of character to survive and even thrive with them with him.

i. “Neither grace received, nor experience attained, nor engagements regarded, will secure me for one moment without continual teaching from thyself.” (Bridges)

c. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation: Here the psalmist explained why he was wiser than his enemies. He even had more understanding than all his teachers (who, we hope were not the same as his previously mentioned enemies) because of his serious study and meditation on God’s word.

i. This verse teaches us that it is vitally important to have understanding, even great understanding. We know this because of the value the psalmist places on having more understanding.

ii. This verse teaches us that it is not wrong or bad to have teachers, because the psalmist indeed had (either now or in the past) teachers who taught him about life and God’s word. This verse is not a renunciation of those teachers.

iii. This verse teaches us that our understanding of God’s word and ways is not limited to what we receive from our teachers. We can learn from our own study and meditation; teachers are often helpful but not absolutely necessary. Understanding is necessary; teachers may or may not be.

iv. This verse teaches us that this understanding does not come easily; true meditation involves some element of work. It requires the ability to stay focused and the necessary tools for Biblical understanding and analysis.

v. This principle has been proven in the lives of God’s servants again and again. The Bible tells us of men who were not educated by the world’s standards (such as the disciples, as in Acts 4:13) yet they had great understanding and were effective in serving God.

vi. This principle has also been proven in the lives of God’s servants since Bible times. Notable examples of men greatly used without the accepted

educational credentials of their day include Charles Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, William Carey, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Hudson Taylor.

vii. God has also used many who were greatly educated. Moses, Daniel, and Paul are all Biblical examples. Augustine, Martin Luther, and Billy Graham are just a few historical examples. It's just as wrong to think that formal education disqualifies someone for effective service as it is to think that it automatically qualifies someone for effective service.

viii. "We may hear the wisest teachers and remain fools, but if we meditate upon the sacred word we must become wise. There is more wisdom in the testimonies of the Lord than in all the teachings of men if they were all gathered into one vast library. The one book outweighs all the rest." (Spurgeon)

ix. "It is no reflection upon my teachers, but rather an honour to them, for me to improve so as to excel them, and no longer to need them." (Matthew Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

d. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep your precepts: The psalmist was even more bold than just saying that God's word had given him an education greater than his teachers. Now he says "I understand more than the ancients."

i. "He understands more than the aged, that is, the direct keeping of the Divine precepts is of more value than the advice of others, even though they have had long experience." (Morgan)

ii. This is particularly meaningful when we realize how highly regarded the wisdom of the ancients was in that day and culture. In the modern world it is all too common to disregard the wisdom and understanding of the ancients, but not in the psalmist's time.

iii. This also tells us that while we should in general respect the understanding and wisdom of the ancients (which the psalmist surely did, in general), we are not slaves to their wisdom and understanding. Our rule for faith and doctrine and living is the Bible itself, not the understanding or interpretation of it from even the great men of history.

iv. "The ancients are held in high repute, but what did they all know compared with that which we perceive in the divine precepts? 'The old is better' says one: but the oldest of all is the best of all, and what is that but the word of the Ancient of days." (Spurgeon)

v. James Montgomery Boice told a story about the life of Harry Ironside, the pastor, author, and Bible commentator. Ironside went to visit a man near death, who was suffering from tuberculosis. The man was almost dead and could barely speak. As Ironside spoke to him he asked, "Young man, you are trying to preach Christ, are you not?" Ironside said that he was, and the man replied: "Well, sit down a little, and let us talk together about the Word of God." Then the man opened his Bible and spoke with Ironside until his strength was gone; he shared insights from the Bible that Ironside had not appreciated or even seen before. Ironside was stunned, and he asked the man: "Where did you get these things? Can you tell me where I can find a book that will open them up to me? Did you get them in seminary or college?" The old man replied: "My dear young man, I learned these things on my knees on the mud floor of a little sod cottage in the north of Ireland. There with my open Bible before me, I used to kneel for hours at a time and ask the Spirit of God to reveal Christ to my soul and to open the Word to my heart. He taught me more on my knees on that mud floor than I ever could have learned in all the seminaries or colleges in the world."

I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me.

a. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word: The psalmist understood that restraining himself from evil would also help him understand God's word better. He could better keep God's word by staying away from every evil way.

i. "There is no treasuring up the holy word unless there is a casting out of all unholiness: if we keep the good word we must let go the evil." (Spurgeon)

b. I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me: The personal connection the psalmist had with God through His word encouraged a faithful walk.

i. This also demonstrates that God can teach the believer through His word in a direct sense – You Yourself have taught me. This does not mean that everything one comes to through self-study is correct or from God, and it does not eliminate the need for Bible teachers. Yet it does fulfill what Jesus later said in John 16:13: ...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.

ii. You Yourself have taught me: "The word thou [You] is emphatic. Here is the guarantor of biblical truth, and the One who alone opens the disciple's eyes to see it." (Kidner)

How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

a. How sweet are Your words to my taste: The psalmist felt the word of God was as pleasant to him as sweet things – even sweeter than honey! Time spent in God's word was not an unpleasant duty; it was a sweet experience to be thankful for.

- i. How sweet: “He expresses the fact of their sweetness, but as he cannot express the degree of their sweetness he cries, ‘How sweet!’” (Spurgeon)
- ii. “The study and obedience of thy words yields me more satisfaction and delight than any worldly men find in their sensual pleasures.” (Poole)
- iii. The psalmist had very little of God’s word – perhaps just the five books of Moses and a few books more. We have so much more riches and sweetness in the word of God than he did; yet most of us seem to value it less.
- iv. The Bible is filled with passage after passage that anyone with spiritual sensitivity would find sweet. Passages like Psalm 23:1-3, Psalm 8:1, John 3:16, Romans 8:28, or Revelation 22:20 are just a sample. “If you can’t find anything beautiful or sweet in these verses, your taste buds are terribly dulled and your eyes horribly glazed by the tawdry glitz of our culture.” (Boice)
- v. “For what argument could ever persuade us that honey is bitter, at the moment we are tasting its sweetness?” (Bridges)
- vi. “If the word of God be not very sweet to me, have I an appetite? Solomon says, ‘The full soul loatheth a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet’ [Proverbs 27:7]. Ah, when a soul is full of itself, and of the world, and of the pleasures of sin, I do not wonder that it sees no sweetness in Christ, for it has no appetite!” (Spurgeon)
- vi. “It is a blessed sign of grace in the heart when God’s words are sweet to us as a whole, – when we love the truth, not cast into a system or a shape, but as we find it in God’s word. I believe that no man who has yet lived has ever proposed a system of theology which comprises all the truth of God’s word. If such a system had been possible, the discovery of it would have been made for us by God himself: – certainly it would if it had been desirable and useful for our profit and holiness. But it has not pleased God to give us a body of divinity; let us receive it as he has given it, each truth in its own proportion, – each doctrine in harmony with its fellow, – each precept carefully carried out into practice, and each promise to be believed, and by-and-by received. Let the truth, and the whole truth, be sweet to our taste.” (Spurgeon)
- b. Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way: The understanding gained by the psalmist gave him discernment and the power to persevere and hate every false way.
- i. Notably, the psalmist began this section with love; he ends it with hate. “The Christian life is not all sweetness.... It has its sweet moments, and there is incomparable beauty in God. But we still live in a sour, ugly world, and it is equally important to learn to hate evil as well as love the good.” (Boice)

Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

- a. Your word is a lamp to my feet: The psalmist walked the road of life, the word of God made his steps clear. He would not know where to step without the guidance of God’s word.
- i. It is possible to walk the path of life without knowing where our steps will fall. We don’t know if our foot will step on good ground or dangerous ground; we are not self-aware. God’s word can be a lamp to our feet.
- ii. Simply said, the Bible should help us walk the way God wants us to walk. Think of all the different words we use to clarify walking: stroll, saunter, amble, trudge, plod, dawdle, hike, tramp, tromp, slog, stomp, march, stride, sashay, glide, troop, patrol, wander, ramble, tread, prowl, promenade, roam, traipse, mosey, and perambulate. The different words show that there are many different ways to walk, and each of them says something.
- iii. How are Christians to walk?
- Worthy (Ephesians 4:1).
  - Uprightly (Isaiah 57:2).
  - In the light (1 John 1:7).
  - Humbly (Micah 6:8).

None of these are possible without the word of God lighting our way.

- iv. The picture of a lamp says something. “Thus is our passage in a dark and perilous way irradiated by the lamp and light of the word. But except the lamp be lighted – except the teaching of the Spirit accompany the word, all is darkness – thick darkness. Let us not be content to read the word without obtaining some light from it in our understanding.” (Bridges)
- b. A light to my path: The word of God not only showed the psalmist where his feet stepped, but also the path he should remain upon. It showed him the next few steps to take.
- i. We need the Bible to teach us right from wrong. We certainly do have some inner sense of this in our conscience; but our conscience can be



weak, ignorant, or damaged. The word of God is higher even than our conscience, and it teaches our conscience.

ii. "This is not convenient guidance for one's career, but truth for moral choices; see, for example, the kind of 'snare' and 'straying' that are implied in Psalm 119:110." (Kidner)

iii. "One of the most practical benefits of Holy Writ is guidance in the acts of daily life." (Spurgeon)

c. Your word is a lamp...and a light: These pictures show us that the word of God is light and brings light; it doesn't make things darker or harder to understand. It is a light book, not a dark book.

i. "This stanza emphasizes the clarity of Scripture, the attribute of the Bible that meant so much to the Protestant Reformers, who also called it perspicuity. What they meant by clarity of perspicuity is that the Bible is basically comprehensible to any open-minded person who reads it." (Boice)

ii. Not all parts of Scripture are equally clear or easy to understand; it is helpful to have wisdom from others in what they have seen in the Scriptures. Yet at its core, the Bible can be understood, and Christians do understand it. Think of all the common ground Christians, even of greatly different denominations, have together:

- The truth of a Triune God.
- The truth of the full deity and full humanity of Jesus.
- The truth of our sin.
- The truth of Jesus' death for us to save us from sin and death.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in leading us to faith.
- The establishment of the church, the community of believers.
- The return of Jesus Christ.
- The resurrection of the dead.

Taken together, these are a lot! In general, Christians do agree in their understanding of the Bible.

iii. This doesn't mean that someone's opinion on the meaning of a Bible passage is just as good as everyone else's opinion. It is really just the opposite; the Bible is clear enough to be understood, and this means that some so-called understandings are wrong.

I have sworn and confirmed That I will keep Your righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word. Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, And teach me Your judgments.

a. I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments: The psalmist showed a determination of life to obey the word of God. It was a double-decision, both sworn and confirmed.

i. I have sworn and confirmed: Bridges tells of a man named Pearce, who read a book titled Rise and Progress of Religion. From it, he decided that he would live a more dedicated and obedient life. He wrote out a covenant with God, and in a very serious and solemn way, he even signed it with his own blood. It wasn't long until he started failing in his commitment to the covenant – first in small ways and then more and more. This plunged him into deep distress, almost to total despair. Then he considered that the arrangement he had made with God was actually legalistic and pharisaical, especially in the way that it relied on the power of his own vows and resolutions. So he took the covenant to the top of his house, tore it into small pieces, and threw it to the wind. He did not feel himself free from the promises themselves, only now he was of a mind to not rely on himself or his own vows, but only on the blood of Jesus Christ and the indwelling power of His Spirit. This led to a much better result, and he was close to the source of comfort and restoration when he did fail.

b. I am afflicted very much; revive me, O LORD, according to Your word: His determination to be obedient came from a season of affliction, not comfort and ease. Despite his many problems and pains, he looked to God's word for a reviving of life, and for this to happen according to His word.

i. "The faithful servants of God may be 'afflicted'; they may be 'very much' and grievously afflicted; but let them consider, that, by afflictions, their corruptions are purged away, their faith is tried, their patience is perfected, their brethren are edified, and their Master is glorified." (Horne)

c. Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth: The psalmist presented these words to the LORD as if they were a sacrifice brought to an altar. They were freewill offerings meant to show his love and devotion to God.

i. "God's revenues are not derived from forced taxation, but from freewill donation. There can be no acceptance where there is no willingness; there is no work of free grace where there is no fruit of free will." (Spurgeon)

d. And teach me Your judgments: It is very easy for us to have a sinful confidence in our own judgment – to simply “follow my heart.” Yet Spurgeon wrote well: “These repeated cries for teaching show the humility of the man of God, and also discover to us our own need of similar instruction. Our judgment needs educating till it knows, agrees with, and acts upon, the judgments of the Lord.”

My life is continually in my hand, Yet I do not forget Your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, Yet I have not strayed from Your precepts.

a. My life is continually in my hand, yet I do not forget Your law: The psalmist’s life was often in danger, yet his connection to the word of God stayed strong.

b. The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not strayed from Your precepts: The dangers came from determined enemies, who were wicked people. Yet he would not forsake the precepts of God.

i. “From this verse let us learn to be on our guard, for we, too, have enemies both crafty and wicked. Hunters set their traps in the animals’ usual runs, and our worst snares are laid in our own ways. By keeping to the ways of the Lord we shall escape the snares of our adversaries, for his ways are safe and free from treachery.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “Whenever we find the psalms talking about danger, we usually think of physical danger. . . . But the psalms also speak of spiritual dangers like falling into sin or forgetting God.” (Boice)

Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, For they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, to the very end.

a. Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart: The psalmist rejoiced in God’s word with a deep heart-felt joy. Therefore, the testimonies became his heritage forever.

i. “What is the psalmist’s spiritual heritage, that is, what is he looking toward and working for? Some heavenly reward? A word of praise from God? Surprisingly, he says that his heritage is what he has been speaking about all along: God’s Word itself.” (Boice)

ii. How do the testimonies of God belong to us? “How did he claim an interest in them? Not by purchase, or by merit, it was his heritage. . . . Man looks at his heritage. ‘This land – this estate – or this kingdom is mine.’ The child of God looks round on the universe – on both worlds – on God himself with his infinite perfections – and says, ‘All things are mine.’ My title is more sure than to any earthly heritage.” (Bridges)

iii. “I take possession of my heritage, I live on it, I live in it, it is my treasure, my portion. If a man is known by his heritage, let me be known by mine.” (Bridges)

iv. “Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage. To these he was heir; he had inherited them from his fathers, and he was determined to leave them to his family for ever. If a man can leave nothing to his child but a Bible, in that he bequeaths him the greatest treasure in the universe.” (Clarke)

b. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end: The theme is once again emphasized. The psalmist would never forsake God’s word – never stop reading, learning, meditating, and especially obeying it.

i. “Observe where he begins his work – not with the eye – the ear – the tongue – but with the heart.” (Bridges)

ii. “The whole movement ends with a declaration which must be read in the light of the opening affirmation, and the following experience and need. It is that of complete abandonment to the will of God. . . . even unto the end.” (Morgan)

iii. The believer feels that every step is dangerous; this is why he cried out for the lamp to his feet and the light to his path. With every step dangerous, how can he ever hope to endure forever, to the very end? He can, because the same God who lights and sustains him for one step can do it for every step, to the very end.

The fifteenth letter, Samek, denotes a prop or pillar, and this agrees well with the subject matter of the strophe, in which God is twice implored to uphold his servant (119:116-117). (Neal and Littledale, cited in Spurgeon)

I hate the double-minded, But I love Your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.

a. I hate the double-minded, but I love Your law: The psalmist knew the frustration of dealing with those who were double-minded. They were uncertain and uncommitted in their lives. In contrast, the law of God is sure and certain.

i. “Double-minded is akin to the word in Elijah’s taunt at those who hobbled ‘first on one leg and then on the other’ (1 Kings 18:21, Jerusalem Bible).” (Kidner)

ii. “Double-minded people are people who know about God but are not fully determined to worship and serve him only. They are those who want both God and the world. They want the benefits of true religion, but they want their sin too. . . . The Psalmist hates this double-mindedness; he also hates it in himself.” (Boice)

iii. But I love Your law: “When we love the law it becomes a law of love, and we cling to it with our whole heart.” (Spurgeon)

b. You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word: The God the psalmist knew so well through His word became a refuge in troubled times. The hope he had in the word of God was not initiated by mere academic or intellectual knowledge; it was founded on a relationship with and security in God Himself (my hiding place and my shield).

i. A good hiding place has strength, height, concealment, and reliability. Jesus is our safe-room or panic-room.

ii. “There is a time in which I may be called to suffer in secret; then thou hidest me. There may be a time in which thou callest me to fight; then thou art my Shield and Protector.” (Clarke)

iii. “This is an experiential verse, and it testifies to that which the writer knew of his own personal knowledge: he could not fight with his own thoughts, or escape from them, till he flew to his God, and then he found deliverance. Observe that he does not speak of God’s word as being his double defence, but he ascribes that to God himself.” (Spurgeon)

Depart from me, you evildoers, For I will keep the commandments of my God!

a. Depart from me, you evildoers: In a rare departure in his ongoing conversation with God about His word, the psalmist here addressed the evildoers that brought him such trouble. He knew that the best remedy was to put space between him and these evildoers, so he boldly told them, “Depart from me.”

i. The psalmist was careful in the choosing of his friends. As it has been said, “Show me your friends, and I will show you your future.”

ii. “Every man will insensibly contract the good or bad qualities of the company which he keeps; and should, therefore, be careful to keep such as will make him wiser and better, and fit him for the goodly fellowship of saints and angels.” (Horne)

iii. “Not that we would indulge morose or ascetic seclusion. We are expressly enjoined to courtesy and kindness (1 Peter 3:8); to that wise and considerate ‘walk towards them that are without’ (Colossians 4:5), which ‘adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour’ (Titus 2:10), and indeed in some instances has been more powerful even than the word itself (Compare 1 Peter 3:1,2), to ‘win souls to Christ.’ But when they would tempt us to a devious or backsliding step – when our connexion with them entices us to a single act of conformity to their standard, dishonourable to God, and inconsistent with our profession – then we must take a bold and unflinching stand.” (Bridges)

b. For I will keep the commandments of my God: This is why he wanted space between him and the evildoers. He was committed to obedience, to keeping the commandments of God.

i. The second line of this verse very much connects with the first line. “Since he found it hard to keep the commandments in the company of the ungodly, he gave them their marching orders. He must keep the commandments, but he did not need to keep their company.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Jesus demonstrated the same spirit when He steadfastly resisted the devil while being tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4). He told the devil to go away (Matthew 4:10) and repeatedly relied on the word of God (Matthew 4:4,7,10).

iii. “The word God only occurs in this one place in all this lengthened Psalm, and then it is attended by the personal word ‘my’ – ‘my God.’” (Spurgeon)

Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Hold me up, and I shall be safe, And I shall observe Your statutes continually.

a. Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live: The psalmist knew that he could not stand before his enemies without God holding him up. Without this continual support from God, he could not live – either physically or spiritually.

i. His idea was that this support (Uphold me) would come according to God’s word. It would be consistent with God’s word and find its source in God’s word.

ii. “In the Middle Ages, under the monastic order of the Benedictines, when a novice’s period of preparation was ended and he was ready to become attached to the monastery for life, there was an induction ceremony in which, with outstretched arms, the novice recited Psalm 119:116 three times. . . . The community repeated the words and then sang the Gloria Patri, which was a way of acknowledging that the commitments of the monastic life could only be sustained by God, to whom all glory belongs.” (Boice)

b. Do not let me be ashamed of my hope: The psalmist could pray this because he had his hope properly set. It was set upon God and His word (verses 43, 49, 74, 81, and 114). When our hope is so set, we can ask God to protect and vindicate us.

c. Hold me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall observe Your statutes continually: This is the second request in this brief section for support from God, and especially through His word. In receiving this support and security, the psalmist would use it for further obedience to God.

i. This constant dependence upon God – the constant prayer, “Hold me up, and I shall be safe” – will in fact keep one safe.

You reject all those who stray from Your statutes, For their deceit is falsehood. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross; Therefore I love Your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments.

a. You reject all those who stray from Your statutes: The psalmist here speaks of the righteous judgment of God. He uses His word (statutes) as a measuring line for His judgment, rejecting all those who stray from His word and the principles revealed therein.

b. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross: In His judgments, God has a purifying purpose and effect. He will cleanse the earth from the wicked, treating them as impurities that need to be scraped away.

i. Dross: “The scum that forms on the top when a precious metal is being refined, is discarded by the metalsmith (cf. Isaiah 1:22; Jeremiah 6:28-30; Ezekiel 22:18-19).” (VanGemeren)

ii. Like dross: Sin is really very much like dross.

· Dross takes away from the shine and glory of metal; it makes it dull.

· Dross is deceptive; it is not silver, but seems like it; it is not gold but seems like it.

· Dross is not made better by the fire.

· Dross is worthless. It has no value, no purpose.

· Dross is actually damaging to metal, because it can lead to rust. Metal with dross in it will be eaten away.

c. Therefore I love Your testimonies: The consideration of these righteous judgments made the psalmist praise God even more. He praised God and His word (Your testimonies) as righteous measures of judgment.

i. Therefore I love Your testimonies: “...because they take out the precious from the vile, and make men the same within as without.” (Trapp)

d. My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments: As the psalmist considered the righteous judgments of God, he looked to his own life and understood that it was not entirely righteous. This sense of trembling fear would make him run to God for His atoning, covering sacrifice.

i. The psalmist didn’t celebrate over the judgment on the wicked; it made him tremble in holy fear himself.

ii. “The presence of God is so real for the psalmist that he responds to his God in spirit and body. His life of obedience is lived in the presence of the living God, whereas the wicked act as if God does not see or care.” (VanGemeren)

iii. “His best servants are not exempted from an awful dread, upon such occasions; scenes of this kind, shown in vision to the prophets, cause their flesh to quiver, and all their bones to shake.” (Horne)

iv. “It is only as we tremble before the exalted and holy God that we will ever see the world and its distorted values to be the empty things they are. If we do not tremble before God, the world’s system will seem wonderful to us and consume us pleasantly.” (Boice)

I have done justice and righteousness; Do not leave me to my oppressors. Be surety for Your servant for good; Do not let the proud oppress me.

a. I have done justice and righteousness: As in other sections of this psalm, this is not a claim to sinless perfection. The psalmist is expressing confidence in the general righteousness of his life. The psalmist knew his life and the lives of his oppressors; he knew that his life was dedicated to God and theirs was not.

i. “Nor is this kind of pleading to be censured as self-righteous: when we are dealing with God as to our shortcomings, we use a very different tone from that with which we face the censures of our fellow-men; when they are in the question, and we are guiltless towards them, we are justified in pleading our innocence.” (Spurgeon)

ii. This confidence in his spiritual condition and his separation from those who didn’t follow God is notable. The psalmist knew that his life was different from those who did not follow God. The difference was in more than theology; it was in life.

iii. Horne saw in these words something that Jesus could claim: “The Son of David might use the words in their full and absolute sense, and plead

for a glorious resurrection, on the foot of his having performed a perfect obedience to the law.”

- b. Be surety for Your servant for good: The psalmist asked God to defend and stand up for him. It was only through God defending him that he could avoid the oppression of the proud.
- i. “Take up my interests and weave them with thine own, and stand for me. As my Master, undertake thy servants’ cause, and represent me before the faces of haughty men till they see what an august ally I have in the Lord my God.” (Spurgeon)
- ii. This provides evidence that his previous claim to justice and righteousness was not in an absolute sense. If he felt completely just and righteous before God, he would not have pleaded for God to stand as a surety for him – but he did. “Though upright before man, he ever felt himself a sinner before God.” (Bridges)
- iii. The psalmist cried out to God as Job did: Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself (Job 17:3). The psalmist prayed that God would be to him what Jesus is to His people – a surety of the covenant (Hebrews 7:22).
- iv. “. . .as Judah in the place of Benjamin – ‘I will be surety of him: of mine hand shalt thou require him.’ (Genesis 43:9)” (Bridges)
- v. “We should have been crushed beneath our proud adversary the devil if our Lord Jesus had not stood between us and the accuser, and become a surety for us.” (Spurgeon)
- c. Do not let the proud oppress me: Psalm 119:122 is another rare verse in this psalm that does not mention the word of God in some way.
- i. “According to the Masoretes, Psalm 119:122 is the only verse in the psalm that does not mention the Word of God. We have seen that Psalm 119:84 also seems not to mention it; Psalm 119:90, 121, 132 may be examples too.” (Boice)
- ii. “The fact that the Bible is not mentioned here, in Psalm 119:122, may be an indication of the depth of mental anguish to which the psalmist fell as a result of the oppression he had endured from wicked men. For a moment his eyes seem to be off the Bible and on his fierce oppressors instead.” (Boice)

My eyes fail from seeking Your salvation And Your righteous word. Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, And teach me Your statutes. I am Your servant; Give me understanding, That I may know Your testimonies.

- a. My eyes fail from seeking Your salvation and Your righteous word: This was another indication of how committed the psalmist was to the word of God, and how much he valued the salvation he found from it.
- i. “He looked to God alone, he looked eagerly, he looked long, he looked till his eyes ached. The mercy is, that if our eyes fail, God does not fail, nor do his eyes fail.” (Spurgeon)
- ii. This waiting expectation shows us that faith came before experience. The psalmist was willing to have faith until the experience came. He would wait for God’s salvation, and wait as long as it took.
- b. Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, and teach me Your statutes: The psalmist understood that when God teaches His people, it is evidence of His mercy. He has no inherent obligation to teach us; yet out of the merciful impulse of His heart, He does so.
- c. I am Your servant; give me understanding: For the third time in four verses, the psalmist calls himself a servant of God. He understood that this meant he had obligations to God, and that God – as his Master – had obligations to him. Therefore he could ask for understanding.
- i. “I have voluntarily hired myself unto thee, chosen the things that please thee, and taken hold of the covenant. . . . Now, this is all the wages I crave of thee, ‘Give me understanding.’” (Trapp)
- ii. “We may expect a master to teach his own servant the meaning of his own orders.” (Spurgeon)
- d. Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies: The psalmist wanted understanding – not so much to know the future or some hidden secrets of his soul or that of someone else’s, but so that he would know the testimonies of God better.
- i. He believed that the word of God could be understood, with the help of God Himself.
- ii. He believed that understanding God’s word was of great importance, because it would lead him into other wisdom and understanding of life.
- iii. “It is remarkable that the psalmist does not pray for understanding through acquiring knowledge, but begs of the Lord first that he may have the gracious gift of understanding, and then may obtain the desired instruction.” (Spurgeon)

It is time for You to act, O LORD, For they have regarded Your law as void.

- a. It is time for You to act, O LORD: We admire the holy boldness of the psalmist. It almost seems rude for a man to tell God, It is time for You to

act. Yet many who walk with God understand the desperate plea of the psalmist perfectly. He is so needy and dependent on God that it is good and right to make his request so boldly.

i. "The psalmist speaketh not as prescribing God a time, but as reminding him of his own glory and of his people's necessity." (Trapp)

ii. It is true that we don't know the ways of God's timing; many times, we have been wrong on this point. We have thought God must act now, when in His wisdom and glory He worked later. Yet all we can do is pray by what we can see; and when we see conditions as the psalmist saw, it is good for us to say, It is time for You to act, O LORD.

iii. "We might expect the writer to have said that God should act now because if he delays it will be too late; he will be crushed by his oppressors.... Here, instead of pleading his own desperate condition, he calls on God to act because God's 'law is being broken'." (Boice)

b. For they have regarded Your law as void: Prompting the bold plea was the observation that many disregarded the word and law of God. In such times – when every man does what is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25) – it is proper for the people of God to plead for Him to act.

i. "The 'law' of God is 'made void' by those who deny its authority, or its obligation; by those who render it of none effect, through their traditions or their lives." (Horne)

ii. "To persist in making void the law after so magnificent an exhibition of Almighty working – must it not expose the transgressors to reap the fruit of their own obstinacy, and to prepare to meet him as their Judge, whom they refuse to receive as their Saviour?" (Bridges)

Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold! Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way.

a. Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold: Though others regarded the word of God as void, the psalmist decided to love His commandments all the more in response. He valued them more than gold – even more than fine gold.

i. The psalmist remembered what kind of men considered the word of God as void. When he considered the monstrous men who had been enemies of God's word – men in our own age like Stalin, Hitler, Mao – he knew that the word of God was lovely.

ii. "I like them better because they slight them, and prize that way the more they persecute. I kindle myself from their coldness." (Trapp)

iii. "...above solid gold; gold separated from the dross, perfectly refined." (Clarke)

iv. "Should I not love [Your commandments]? Can gold, yea, fine gold, offer to me blessings such as these? Can it heal my broken heart? Can it give relief to my wounded spirit? Has it any peace or prospect of comfort for me on my death bed?" (Bridges)

b. Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right: With great confidence, the psalmist proclaimed the inerrancy of God's word. It was right, not wrong; and it was right concerning all things.

· When the Bible gives us history, it is right and true; the events actually happened as described.

· When the Bible gives us poetry, it is right and true; the feeling and experiences were real for the writer and ring true to human experience.

· When the Bible gives us prophecy, it is right and true; the events described will or have already come to pass, just as it is written.

· When the Bible gives us instruction, it is right and true; it truly does tell us the will of God and the best way of life.

· When the Bible tells us of God, it is right and true; it reveals to us what the nature and heart and mind of God are, as much as we can comprehend.

c. I hate every false way: Because the psalmist loved and trusted the word of God so much, he naturally hated every false way. He could not love the truth without also hating lies.

i. As Jesus said, No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24).

ii. "We cannot love the right path without hating the wrong ones.... Are you willing to hate what God hates? If not, you will never learn to love God truly, and you will certainly never walk in the way that brings true blessing." (Boice)

iii. And significantly, he hated every false way, not just some of them. "If Satan get a grip of thee by any one sin, is it not enough to carry thee to damnation? As the butcher carries the beast to the slaughter, sometime bound by all the four feet, and sometime by one only; so it is with Satan. Though thou be not a slave to all sin; if thou be a slave to one, the grip he hath of thee, by that one sinful affection, is sufficient to captive thee." (William Cowper, cited in Spurgeon)

Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them.

- a. Your testimonies are wonderful: The psalmist again declared his wonder and pleasure in the word of God. It was a continuing source of fascination to him.
  - i. "The word 'wonderful' is equivalent to our use of the word miraculous. These testimonies are supernatural, superhuman." (Morgan)
  - ii. The testimonies are supernatural in their nature, being free from error. They are supernatural in their effects, as they instruct, elevate, strengthen, and comfort the soul.
  - iii. "Jesus the eternal Word is called Wonderful, and all the uttered words of God are wonderful in their degree. Those who know them best wonder at them most. It is wonderful that God should have borne testimony at all to sinful men, and more wonderful still that his testimony should be of such a character, so clear, so full, so gracious, so mighty." (Spurgeon)
  - iv. "There is a height, length, depth, and breadth in thy word and testimonies that are truly astonishing; and on this account my soul loves them, and I deeply study them. The more I study, the more light and salvation I obtain." (Clarke)
  - v. "Let us not enter into the testimonies, as a dry task, or an ordinary study; but let us concentrate our minds, our faith, humility, and prayer, in a more devoted contemplation of them." (Bridges)
- b. Therefore my soul keeps them: The enduring, abiding delight he had in the word of God prompted greater obedience. This was obedience in more than outward action; it was obedience in soul.
  - i. "Holy admiration of the testimonies will kindle spiritual devotedness to them – Therefore doth my soul keep them" (Bridges)

The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.

- a. The entrance of Your words gives light: The psalmist repeated a previous idea, that God's word brought light to him. His words made things more clear, not less. When the word came in, light and clarity came in.
  - i. "The Hebrew word for 'entrance' is pethach. Depending on whether it is pronounced with a short or a long e it can mean either 'door' (with a short e) or 'revelation' (with a long e)... Martin Luther thought it had to do with revelation; so his translation read, 'Wenn dein Wort offenbar wird' ('When your word is revealed')." (Boice)
  - ii. "The explanation for this double meaning is that in the early days of the formation of the Hebrew language the Jews were bedouins, who lived in tents. The only opening in the tent was the flap of skin that was the door. So when the door was opened, light came into the tent, illuminating everything inside." (Boice)
  - iii. "It is painful to remember how much light may be shining around us on every side, without finding an entrance into the heart." (Bridges)
  - iv. "The word finds no entrance into some minds because they are blocked up with self-conceit, or prejudice, or indifference; but where due attention is given, divine illumination must surely follow upon knowledge of the mind of God." (Spurgeon)
- b. It gives understanding to the simple: The word of God is so clear and light-giving that even the simple find understanding. It does not take great intellect or mental powers to benefit from God's word.
  - i. "It is a most striking instance of Divine condescension, that this word – so wonderful in its high and heavenly mysteries – should yet open a path so plain, that the most unlearned may find and walk in it." (Bridges)
  - ii. "So astonishing is the power of this heavenly light, that from any one page of this holy book, a child, or even [the simple], under heavenly teaching, may draw more instruction than the most acute philosopher could ever attain from any other fountain of light!" (Bridges)
  - iii. "These simple-hearted ones are frequently despised, and their simplicity has another meaning infused into it, so as to be made the theme of ridicule; but what matters it? Those whom the world dubs as fools are among the truly wise if they are taught of God." (Spurgeon)
  - This is a blessing for the simple; God does not forget them. He has not made salvation or growth in godliness primarily a matter of the intellect.
  - This is a promise for the simple; they can approach God's word with confidence, expecting God to give them understanding.
  - This is a responsibility for the simple; they cannot make excuses for their average (or lower) intellect or mental powers. They are still responsible to seek God in His word.
- c. I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your commandments: Because the word of God is light-giving and clear (clear enough for the simple), the psalmist desired God's word like a thirsty animal pants for water.

i. He may be panting because he is thirsty, or he may be panting gasping for air; but panting always denotes desire.

ii. “A metaphor taken from an animal exhausted in the chase. He runs, open-mouthed, to take in the cooling air; the heart beating high, and the muscular force nearly expended through fatigue. The psalmist sought for salvation, as he would run from a ferocious beast for his life. Nothing can show his earnestness in a stronger point of view.” (Clarke)

iii. I longed for Your commandments: “This cannot mean anything else than that he longed to know them, longed to keep them, longed to teach them, longed to bring all around him into obedience to them. Many religious people long after the promises, and they do well; but they must not forget to have an equal longing for the commandments.” (Spurgeon)

iv. Yet longing that is not acted upon is more wishing than longing. As Spurgeon observed, true longing will show itself in action: “Never rest content with mere longings. He that really longs is not content to long.”

Look upon me and be merciful to me, As Your custom is toward those who love Your name. Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me. Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Your precepts. Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes.

a. Look upon me and be merciful to me: This first request is really two: asking God to look and then to be merciful. The psalmist had reason to believe God would answer, knowing that this was God’s custom. . .toward those who love Your name.

i. It is wonderful to think that God has a custom, a pattern of action, toward those who love His name. That custom is to look upon them (giving them His attention) and to be merciful to them. This promise is a solid ground for trusting, bold prayer in a time of need.

ii. Look . . . be merciful: Yet God’s look – the turning of His attention – would be a curse and not a blessing unless it was accompanied by His mercy. If we have the first, we desire the second.

iii. “Lord! Since our looks to thee are often so slight, so cold, so distant, that no impression is made upon our hearts; do thou condescend continually to look upon us with mercy and power.” (Bridges)

iv. “Brethren, there is great virtue in our looking to Christ: it is the way of salvation. What virtue, then, must there be in Christ’s love-gaze upon us!” (Spurgeon)

v. Those who love Your name: To love the name of God means to . . .

- Love the person of God.
- Love the character of God.
- Love the revelation of God.
- Love the glory of God.

b. Direct my steps by Your word: The second request shows what he wanted to do with the mercy received from God. He wanted to take that mercy and use it to walk rightly before God. One part of this was to let no iniquity have dominion over him.

i. Many today want to direct their steps by something else, anything else other than the word of God.

- “Direct my steps by my feelings.”
- “Direct my steps by my lusts.”
- “Direct my steps by my friends.”
- “Direct my steps by my parents.”
- “Direct my steps by my circumstances.”
- “Direct my steps by my fate.”
- “Direct my steps by my comfort.”

ii. The idea of the Hebrew here, according to Spurgeon, is “Make my steps firm in thy word.” We can walk forward in life with confidence as we find direction in God’s word.

iii. “The psalmist would be kept from all vacillation, hesitation, or wandering; but he wants, when he is right, to be firmly right, to be distinctly, decidedly right, so he pleads, ‘Make my steps firm.’ Oh, how we often stagger along! We do what is right, but we quiver and shake while we are doing it.” (Spurgeon)



iv. The psalmist was wise to understand that sin can have dominion over a man, even a man or woman who has a strong spiritual life. The Apostle Paul recognized the same danger: All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (1 Corinthians 6:12).

v. Sin, unchecked, will attempt to gain and hold dominion in my life. First it may be in a small or seemingly insignificant area, but that dominion will grow in size and strength until my spiritual life is seriously compromised.

vi. "I had rather be a prisoner to man all my life than be in bondage to sin one day. He says not, Let not this and the other man rule over me; but 'let not sin have dominion over me.' Well said!" (Michael Bruce, cited in Spurgeon)

vii. Yet when our steps are directed by the word of God, we will avoid being under the dominion of sin, and we can be freed from whatever level of dominion sin may have gained.

viii. In a New Testament context, this prayer has even greater grounds for confidence. "But let us mark, how fully is this prayer warranted by the special promise of the Gospel – 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace' (Romans 6:14, with 12)." (Bridges)

ix. "Brethren, we can overcome sin in the power of the Lord... Sin is strong, but grace is stronger. Satan is wise, but God is all-wise. The Lord is on our side." (Spurgeon)

c. Redeem me from the oppression of man: The third request recognizes that there are dangers beyond the potential dominion of sin in the psalmist's spiritual life. There are also dangers from the oppression of man, from those who would oppose and oppress.

i. Notably, the psalmist asked for this so that I may keep Your precepts. He didn't just want liberty from man's oppression so he could serve himself, but so that he could properly obey God.

d. Make Your face shine upon Your servant: The fourth request is for an experience of the grace and goodness of God. To know the face of God shining upon you is to be at peace with God and to know He is at peace with you.

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

a. Rivers of water run down from my eyes: This is a good example of poetic hyperbole in the psalms. Though there were not literal rivers of water coming down the face of the psalmist, he spoke truly according to the literary style of poetry. There is not the slightest problem in understanding his meaning.

i. "The idiom 'streams [lit., "irrigation canals," see Psalm 1:3] of tears' is a hyperbole for deep sorrow and anguish of soul." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Tears show compassion, and compassion wins others far more effectively than belligerent arguments and certainly more effectively than anger." (Boice)

b. Because men do not keep Your law: The psalmist here did not sorrow over his own troubles, but over the sins of others and the consequences those sins would bring. As Jesus grieved over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39) and over the hard hearts of the religious leaders (Mark 3:5), so the psalmist grieved here.

i. "It grieveth me greatly to see thy law violated, and the transgressors thereof so careless of their own eternal good." (Trapp)

ii. "...plentiful and perpetual tears, witnesses of my deep sorrow for God's dishonour and displeasure, and for the miseries which sinners bring upon themselves." (Poole)

iii. "The want of this spirit is ever a feature of hardness and pride – a painful blot upon the profession of the gospel... The same yearning sympathy forms the life, the pulse, and the strength of Missionary exertion, and has ever distinguished those honoured servants of God who have devoted their time, their health, their talent, their all." (Bridges)

iv. "The experience of this verse indicates a great advance upon anything we have had before: the Psalm and the Psalmist are both growing. That man is a ripe believer who sorrows because of the sins of others." (Spurgeon)

"The initial letter with which every verse commences sounds like the Hebrew word for righteousness: our keynote is righteousness." (Spurgeon)

Righteous are You, O LORD, And upright are Your judgments. Your testimonies, which You have commanded, Are righteous and very faithful.

a. Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments: The psalmist understood that the righteous character of God was displayed in His word (Your judgments). In this the word of God is an accurate revelation of God, not only of His thoughts but also of His very character.

- i. We might say that God's written word is an incomplete display of His character and nature; that is, there is more to God than what we can receive from His word. But what we do have in His word is accurate and properly displays to us who He is.
  - ii. We might say that the God who actually exists is not different than His written revelation to us. He is greater than what can be comprehended through His written word, but He is not different from what is revealed to us through that word.
  - iii. "The strophe begins on an affirmation of the Lord's righteousness...and ends on an affirmation of his word. In between the psalmist laments his troubles." (VanGemeren)
- b. Your testimonies, which You have commanded, are righteous and very faithful: For emphasis, the psalmist repeats the idea from the previous verse. The written word of God reflects both His righteous character and the fact that He is very faithful.
- i. "The force of this expression is much feebler than that of the original, which literally may be rendered, 'Thou hast commanded righteousness, thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly.' So the Septuagint hath it. Righteousness and truth were his testimonies; the testimonies were one with his righteousness and truth." (Stephen, cited in Spurgeon)
  - ii. God's words are especially helpful for establishing that He is very faithful. We often judge a person's faithfulness by seeing if their words and their actions match. Along with other believers through the centuries, the psalmist could say that the words of God and the actions of God were and are consistent, and show Him to be very faithful.
  - iii. "Trust in the reliability of God's word is directly proportionate to one's trust in the Lord himself." (VanGemeren)
  - iv. "The Bible mirrors the character of God. Anyone who cares about knowing what is righteous and wants to act righteously should study the Bible." (Boice)

My zeal has consumed me, Because my enemies have forgotten Your words. Your word is very pure; Therefore Your servant loves it.

- a. My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words: The more the enemies of the psalmist rejected the word of God, the more he was determined to be zealous for those words. He would make sure that he honored the word of God even if others did not.
- i. Zeal implies energy and action. The appreciation of the psalmist for the word of God was not passive. The living and active word of God brought forth a living and active response from the psalmist.
  - ii. "Thus we see every man is eaten up with some kind of zeal. The drunkard is consumed with drunkenness, the whore-monger is spent with his whoredom, the heretic is eaten with heresies. Oh, how ought this to make us ashamed, who are so little eaten, spent, and consumed with the zeal of the word!... Oh, what a benefit it is to be eaten up with the love and zeal of a good thing!" (Greenham, cited in Spurgeon)
  - iii. "Such was [the psalmist's] high estimation of the testimonies of his God, that his spirits were consumed with vehement grief in witnessing their neglect. He could bear that his enemies should forget him; but his zeal could not endure, that they should forget the words of his God." (Bridges)
  - iv. This brings to mind the passage remembered by the disciples when Jesus cleansed the temple courts of the merchants and moneychangers at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13-17). At that time, the disciples remembered the line from Psalm 69:9: Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up. This line carries much the same thought, and also reflects the kind of zeal that Jesus had when He cleared the temple courts. They had forgotten His words.
  - v. "They have forgotten thy words, i.e. despise and disobey them; which in Scripture use is oft called a forgetting of them, as the remembering of them is oft put for loving and practicing them." (Poole)
- b. Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it: The psalmist understood and appreciated the purity of God's word. In its original autograph writings it is perfectly pure, being absolutely inspired by God. In addition, the copies we have of those original writings are also pure, being extremely reliable copies.
- i. Pure: "...in the original, 'tried, refined, purified, like gold in the furnace,' absolutely perfect, without the dross of vanity and fallibility, which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them." (Horne)
  - ii. "In the word of God there is no admixture of error or sin. It is pure in its sense, pure in its language, pure in its spirit, pure in its influence, and all this to the very highest degree – 'very pure'." (Spurgeon)
  - iii. For the Hebrew Scriptures, the quality of the text was preserved by the diligent practices of the professional scribes. According to researchers (such as Josh McDowell in Evidence that Demands a Verdict), they practiced the following in the preparation and copying of manuscripts:
    - The parchment was made only from the skin of clean animals. It had to be prepared by a Jew only, and the skins were fastened together by strings taken from clean animals.
    - Each column had to have no less than 48 and no more than 60 lines. The entire parchment had to be lined before writing began.
    - The ink had to be of no other color than black, and it had to be prepared according to a special recipe.

· No word and no letter could be written from memory; the scribe had to have an authentic copy before him, and he had to read and pronounce out loud each word before writing it.

· He was required to reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the word for “God” (Elohim) and wash his whole body before writing the word used in place of “Jehovah” [LORD in the New King James Version] so as not to contaminate the Holy Name.

· Strict rules were given concerning forms of the letters, spaces between letters, words, and sections, the use of the pen, the color of the parchment, and so forth.

· The revision of a roll had to be made within 30 days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless. One mistake on a sheet condemned the entire sheet; if three mistakes were found in any larger section, the entire manuscript was condemned.

· Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter had been omitted, or an extra letter inserted, or if any letter touched one another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed.

iv. The manuscript evidence for the accuracy of the Hebrew text is established. Until 1947, the oldest Hebrew manuscripts were from about AD 900. In 1947, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed manuscripts from 150-200 BC. In comparing the manuscripts, almost 1000 years apart, there were remarkably few differences. This proved that the diligent practices of the professional scribes had accurately preserved the text of the Hebrew Scriptures.

v. Regarding the Greek Scriptures, there is a similarly astonishing rate of accuracy. Because of the vast number and quality of ancient Greek manuscripts, and the existence of relatively early copies, scholars often say that the error rate is between 0.5% and 2%.

vi. “New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very misleading. Most of the differences are completely inconsequential – spelling errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side by side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement a full 98% of the time.” (Greg Koukl)

vii. Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. According to Geisler and Nix in their book *A General Introduction to the Bible*, this means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire New Testament text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt. These lines concern about 400 words, and none of the questioned lines or words affect any significant doctrine of the Christian faith.

viii. Indeed! Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it. This is true for both the original autographs and the extremely reliable copies we have of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. “Therefore; because of that exact purity and holiness of it...ungodly men either despise or hate it.” (Poole)

c. Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it: The Bible gives us almost unending reasons to love the word of God and the God who gave it to us.

· It is the word of the LORD (Genesis 15:1).

· It is the word of God (Luke 8:11).

· It is the word of the kingdom (Matthew 13:19).

· It is the word of salvation (Acts 13:26).

· It is the word of grace (Acts 14:3).

· It is the word of the gospel (Acts 15:7).

· It is the word of faith (Romans 10:8).

· It is the word of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18).

· It is the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

· It is the word of truth (2 Corinthians 6:7).

· It is the word of life (Philippians 2:16).

· It is the word of Christ (Colossians 3:16).

· It is the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3).

I am small and despised, Yet I do not forget Your precepts. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.

a. I am small and despised, yet I do not forget Your precepts: The psalmist felt himself insignificant, both in his own estimate (small) and in the

עֲשֵׂה לִּי כְּעֵשֶׂה לְאֲחֵרִים (despised). Yet he found comfort and strength in remembering the word of God.

i. We think of individuals who have been small and despised – a young man like David (1 Samuel 16:10-13) and an older man like Paul (2 Corinthians 11). Yet they found courage in God, and they understood God by His word.

ii. It also shows us that the psalmist would not neglect God’s word when he was depressed or downcast. Small and despised does not feel good; yet he still remembered the word of God when he felt this way. It is common to run away from exactly what we need when we feel small and despised.

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פ. The psalmist

b. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth: The psalmist confidently stated the everlasting character of God’s righteousness; He is righteous and will not change. Connected to that, he proclaimed that this unchanging God has given us a word (Your law) that is truth.

אֲנִי יְדַעְתִּי שֶׁלְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

אך

i. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness: “This is the joy and glory of the saints, that what God is he always will be, and his mode of procedure towards the sons of men is immutable. Having kept his promise, and dealt out justice among his people, he will do so world without end.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Your law is truth: We remember the conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. Jesus said, “For this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate’s cynical reply was, “What is truth?” (John 18:37-38). For Pilate, soldiers and armies were truth; Rome was truth; Caesar was truth; and political power was truth. Yet Jesus knew what truth was, while Pilate was still seeking. Jesus knew, Your law is truth.

iii. This is especially meaningful in a day when relativism has a strong hold in the everyday thinking of people. It is common for people today to think there is no such thing as “real” truth; there is only your truth and my truth and their truth. Western society used to believe that truth was that which corresponded to reality (what is really there); now truth is often held to be what makes sense or is helpful to me individually.

iv. The late Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer used to promote the idea of “true truth.” His concept was that the Biblical message is true fundamentally, apart from how one receives it or how it works in one’s life.

Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, Yet Your commandments are my delights. The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; Give me understanding, and I shall live.

a. Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet Your commandments are my delights: Despite the difficulties of his life, the psalmist still found delight in God’s word. His appreciation of God and His word was not only valid in good times, but also in trouble and anguish.

i. “When we are most sorely afflicted, and cannot see the reason for the dispensation, we may fall back upon this most sure and certain fact, that God is righteous, and his dealings with us are righteous too. It should be our glory to sing this brave confession when all things around us appear to suggest the contrary. This is the richest adoration.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “Years ago there were Christians who used to put the promises of God to the test and when they received what was promised would write ‘T’ and ‘P’ in their Bible next to the promise. The letters stood for ‘tried and proven,’ exactly what the psalmist says he found to be true in his experience.” (Boice)

b. The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; give me understanding, and I shall live: We might think that what the psalmist needed to live was deliverance from his trouble and anguish. He found understanding the word of God more important.

i. One reason he found this to be so was because he understood that the righteousness of God’s word is everlasting. He knew the eternal character of the word of God, and it made that word all the more important and relevant to him.

ii. “When all other laws and sentences, though engraven in brass or marble, shall decay and determine, Thy law lasteth for ever, and so shall they that observe it.” (Trapp)

I cry out with my voice, and will keep Your statutes. I do not let my voice be silent, for I have heard Your voice. I will not let my lips be silent, for I have heard Your voice. I will keep Your statutes. I do not let my voice be silent, for I have heard Your voice. I will not let my lips be silent, for I have heard Your voice. I will keep Your statutes.

without a blessing.” (Clarke)

iii. “There may be no beauty of elocution about such prayers, no length of expression, no depth of doctrine, nor accuracy of diction; but if the whole heart be in them they will find their way to the heart of God.” (Spurgeon)

iv. “God looks not at the elegance of your prayers, to see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are.” (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

b. I cry out to You; save me, and I will keep Your testimonies: For emphasis, the idea is repeated from the previous verse. The psalmist passionately cried out to God for the wisdom and strength and ability to obey God. This is a prayer that pleases God.

i. I cry out means that the prayer was vocal. “Men find it very helpful to use their voices in prayer; it is difficult long to maintain the intensity of devotion unless we hear ourselves speak; hence [the psalmist] at length broke through his silence, arose from his quiet meditations, and began crying with voice as well as heart unto the Lord his God.” (Spurgeon)

c. I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word: The psalmist passionately depended on God and His word, but that did not eliminate the participation of the psalmist in any way. He still woke early to seek God, in prayer (cry for help) that was helped by God’s word (I hope in Your word).

i. “So long as the duty only of prayer is known, we shall be content with our set seasons. But when the privilege is felt, we shall be early at work, following it closely morning and night.” (Bridges)

ii. “The word furnished his hope, and his hope his prayer.” (Trapp)

iii. We use prayer in our study of the word of God; this is essential. Yet we also use the word of God in our prayers. In prayer, the word of God shows us:

- The nature and heart of the God we pray to.
- What we have received from God, and what we should thank Him for.
- His greatness, informing and expanding our praise.
- His moral will, directing us to pray that we can do it.
- His promises to His people, which we claim by faith.
- Substance for our prayers, as we pray-read the Scriptures.

iv. “He who is diligent in prayer will never be destitute of hope. Observe that as the early bird gets the worm, so the early prayer is soon refreshed with hope.” (Spurgeon)

My eyes are awake through the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word. Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O LORD, revive me according to Your justice.

a. My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word: The psalmist not only woke early to seek God (as in the previous verse), he also stayed awake through the night to think about God and His word.

i. Jesus sometimes prayed early in the morning (Mark 1:35). On some occasions Jesus prayed all night (Luke 6:12).

ii. Boice defines meditate: “Internalizing the Bible’s teaching to such an extent that the truths discovered in the Bible become part of how we think, so that we think differently and then also function differently as a result.”

b. Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O LORD, revive me according to Your justice: The psalmist asked for God to hear him according to the goodness and mercy (lovingkindness) of God; he also asked God to revive him according to the justice of God. Both are reasons to pray and to have confidence in our pleading.

i. We can pray according to Your lovingkindness: “Lord, I know that I don’t deserve to be heard by You. Yet I believe that You are rich in grace and mercy. Please, according to Your generous and kind love, hear my prayer.”

ii. Spurgeon on lovingkindness (hesed): “Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but lovingkindness is doubly dear; it is the cream of kindness.”

iii. We can pray according to Your justice: “Lord, I know that my sins are righteously forgiven because of what Jesus did on the cross. I know that You have forgiven me according to Your justice, and as one so forgiven I pray. I also know that You, according to Your justice, see the righteousness of my cause with those who are against me. Because of these, please bring me new life.”

iv. Revive me according to Your justice: Though revival from God is never deserved, it can still be asked for according to the justice of God. It can be prayed for based on the justice-satisfying work of Jesus Christ. It can also be prayed for with an eye to honoring the justice of God on earth, especially when wickedness abounds.

They draw near who follow after wickedness; They are far from Your law. You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth.

a. They draw near who follow after wickedness: The psalmist could sense that the wicked who opposed him were coming closer and becoming more of a threat to him.

b. They are far from Your law: Though they came closer to the psalmist, they were far from God's word.

i. "Before these men could become persecutors of [the psalmist] they were obliged to get away from the restraints of God's law. They could not hate a saint and yet love the law." (Spurgeon)

c. You are near, O LORD: Though the wicked were both near to the psalmist and far from God's word, the psalmist knew that God was near. God had come near to the psalmist, and one way was through the word of God itself.

i. "Note the realism of the double statement, They draw near...but thou art near. The threat is not glossed over; it is put in perspective by a bigger fact." (Kidner)

d. And all Your commandments are truth: Because God came near to the psalmist, he could see clearly that all God's commandments are truth. He understood that God's word was truly inspired and infallible.

Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.

a. I have known of old: The psalmist had an old relationship with the word of God. The great love and appreciation he had with the Scriptures was not a youthful surge of infatuation; it was the deep, settled love with roots made deep by time.

b. You have founded them forever: His long love and appreciation for the Scriptures led him to understand that they were eternal (founded... forever). The more he studied and meditated upon them, the more he understood their divine origin.

i. "We are satisfied with the truth which is old as the hills and as fixed as the great mountains. Let 'cultured intellects' invent another god, more gentle and effeminate than the God of Abraham; we are well content to worship Jehovah, who is eternally the same." (Spurgeon)

ii. This was his testimony to answered prayer. This whole passage shows us:

- How he prayed (with my whole heart, Psalm 119:145).
- What he prayed for (save me, and I will keep Your testimonies, Psalm 119:146).
- When he prayed (before the dawning of the morning, Psalm 119:147).
- How long he prayed (through the night watches, Psalm 119:148).
- The grounds of his request (according to Your lovingkindness...according to Your justice, Psalm 119:149).
- How God answered his prayer (You are near, O LORD, Psalm 119:150).
- His testimony to answered prayer (Your testimonies... You have founded them forever, Psalm 119:152).

Consider my affliction and deliver me, For I do not forget Your law. Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word.

a. Consider my affliction and deliver me: We are reminded that the psalmist's life was not lived in an ivory tower or a secluded place where all he did was study the Scriptures all day long. He lived a real life, interacting with people (some of whom became his enemies or opponents). He lived a life that experienced affliction.

i. "Yet there is no impatience: he does not ask for hasty action, but for consideration. In effect he cries – 'Look into my grief, and see whether I do not need to be delivered. From my sorrowful condition judge as to the proper method and time for my rescue.'" (Spurgeon)

b. For I do not forget Your law: In the lives of some, affliction drives them away from God and His word. For the psalmist, such troubled times drove him closer to God and His word.

c. Plead my cause and redeem me: The psalmist looked for help and salvation outside of himself. This reinforces the idea that his previous claims to righteousness were not absolute, and were made comparing himself to other men, ungodly men. He knew that he needed God to po ps. P

a. Many are my persecutors and my enemies: The psalmist lived life in the real world, not sheltered in a constant Scripture-study environment. His trust in the word of God was forged in the real world, a world full of persecutors and enemies.

i. "Persecution, to the false professor, is an occasion of apostasy (Matthew 13:20-21); to the faithful servant of Christ, it is the trial of his faith (1 Peter 1:6-7), the source of his richest consolations (Matthew 5:10-12, Acts 13:50-52, 1 Peter 4:12-16), the guard of his profession (Matthew 10:16, Philippians 2:14-16), and the strength of his perseverance (Acts 20:22-24)." (Bridges)

b. Yet I do not turn from Your testimonies: The presence of so many persecutors and enemies did not make the psalmist despair or doubt the love of God for him. He didn't have the expectation that a godly life was a problem-free life. Instead, he was determined to keep turned to and focused on the word of God.

i. "So long as they cannot drive or draw us into a spiritual decline our foes have done us no great harm, and they have accomplished nothing by their malice. If we do not decline they are defeated. If they cannot make us sin they have missed their mark. Faithfulness to the truth is victory over our enemies." (Spurgeon)

c. I see the treacherous and am disgusted, because they do not keep Your word: It wasn't that the psalmist expected godly behavior from the ungodly – something that Paul warned about (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). He felt disgusted because God and His word were being disgraced, even if it came from the disgraceful.

i. "I was sorry to see such sinners. I was sick of them, disgusted with them, I could not endure them. I found no pleasure in them, they were a sad sight to me, however fine their clothing or witty their chattering. Even when they were most mirthful a sight of them made my heart heavy; I could not tolerate either them or their doings." (Spurgeon)

ii. This sensitivity toward sin and passion for the glory of God is entirely characteristic of the revival that the psalmist prays for repeatedly in this section.

iii. "A fellowship with the joys of angels over repenting sinners (Luke 15:10) will be accompanied with bitterness of godly sorrow over the hardness and impenitency of those, who keep not the word of God." (Bridges)

Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness. The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.

a. Consider how I love Your precepts; revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness: The psalmist asked God to look at his love for His word, but then asked for revival on the basis of God's lovingkindness instead of on his own merit.

i. "A second time he asks for consideration. As he said before, 'Consider mine affliction,' so now he says, 'Consider mine affection.' He loved the precepts of God – loved them unspeakably – loved them so as to be grieved with those who did not love them." (Spurgeon)

b. Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness: An idea stated before (Psalm 119:88) is here repeated. Revival is never deserved or earned, but given from the lovingkindness of God.

i. "The consciousness of need is revealed in the thrice repeated, 'Quicken [Revive] me.' He feels the weakening of his very life under the pressure of circumstances." (Morgan)

c. The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever: The psalmist again declares the infallible character of the word of God. The entire word is true, not merely portions or individual concepts from the word. Not only is it true; it is eternally true.

i. "The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels. ... There is not one single mistake either in the word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of revelation nor of providence will there be any need to put a single note of errata. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse." (Spurgeon)

"The qoph stanza was almost entirely a prayer. In these stanzas the petitions tend to drop away – stanza twenty-one (the sin/shin stanza) has no explicit prayers at all – and in their place comes a quiet, obedient waiting for God." (Boice)

Princes persecute me without a cause, But my heart stands in awe of Your word. I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure.

a. Princes persecute me without a cause: In the real-life world of the psalmist, he even interacted with princes – rulers among men, who persecuted him without a cause.

i. Those who believe that David was the anonymous psalmist of this great psalm know that David was indeed persecuted by princes (Saul and his associates) without a cause.



ii. "It was well that the sufferer could truthfully assert that this persecution was without cause. He had not broken their laws, he had not injured them, he had not even desired to see them injured, he had not been an advocate of rebellion or anarchy, he had neither openly nor secretly opposed their power, and therefore, while this made their oppression the more inexcusable, it took away a part of its sting, and helped the brave-hearted servant of God to bear up." (Spurgeon)

iii. "This division is remarkable in that it is one of the only two which contain no petition [the other was Mem, Psalm 119:97-104]. That fact is the more remarkable because its opening sentence shows that the singer is still conscious of the circumstances of trial." (Morgan)

b. But my heart stands in awe of Your word: Difficult trials – even persecution by those in authority – would not make the psalmist lose his awe of God's word. He did not have a conditional appreciation of the word of God; he loved it in good times and bad.

i. "He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and sceptres become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God." (Spurgeon)

ii. Bridges says that some great Jewish Scripture collections have on their frontispiece Jacob's statement of fear and astonishment connected with his vision of God at Bethel: How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven! (Genesis 28:17).

c. I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure: The psalmist loved God's word as some people love treasure. He knew it was precious and enriching to life. Yet the original Hebrew has treasure in the sense of spoil or plunder from battle.

i. Rejoice at Your word: "I will go to the length of saying that unless we do have deep awe of the word we shall never have high joy over it. Our rejoicing will be measured by our reverencing." (Spurgeon)

ii. "This appears to refer to such spoil as is acquired by stripping the dead in a field of battle, taking the rich garments of the slain chiefs; or it may refer to plunder in general. As God opened his eyes he beheld wonders in his law; and each discovery of this kind was like finding a prize." (Clarke)

iii. Sometimes spoil is fought for, and riches from God's word must be fought for. Other times spoil is found, and the riches from God's word are simply received.

- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, the battle is over.
- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, the enemy has less to fight with.
- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, there is a sense of victory.
- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, there is profit, pleasure, and honor.

I hate and abhor lying, But I love Your law. Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments.

a. I hate and abhor lying, but I love Your law: The hatred and love in this verse fit together perfectly. One who truly loves the pure truth of God will naturally hate lies.

i. "If we keep clear of all lying, our song will be the more acceptable because it comes out of pure lips. If we never flatter men we shall be in the better condition for honouring the Lord." (Spurgeon)

b. Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments: The goodness and the glory of God's word (Your righteous judgments) prompted praise from the psalmist. This praise was constant and continual (seven times a day).

i. "...seven times; many times; that definite number being oft taken indefinitely, as Leviticus 26:28, and elsewhere." (Poole)

ii. It is good to make regular times for prayer, Bible reading, and reflection throughout the day; but it must be done without a legalistic spirit. "Young Christians indeed sometimes unwarily bring themselves into 'bondage,' in forcing their consciences to a frequency of set times for duty, interfering with present obligations, or pressing unduly upon the weaknesses of the flesh." (Bridges)

iii. "Do we praise God seven times a day? Do we praise him once in seven days?" (Spurgeon)

Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. LORD, I hope for Your salvation, And I do Your commandments.

a. Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble: The great love that the psalmist had for the law brought real benefits to his life. It brought him great peace and stability in life (nothing causes them to stumble).

i. "Shalom is a large, embracing word for the good that comes to the one God favors." (Boice)

- ii. "Amidst the storms and tempests of the world, there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those, who not only do the will of God, but 'love' to do it." (Horne)
- iii. "They are at peace with God, by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves, by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men, by the spirit of charity; and the whole creation is at peace with them, and all things work together for their good." (Horne)
- iv. "This verse does not promise peace to those who perfectly keep God's Law, for who can keep it? It promises peace to those who 'love' God's Law." (Boice)
- v. "In every age there have been Luthers and Latimers [Hugh Latimer, martyred in 1555], who have not only held fast their confidence, but whose peace has deepened with the roaring of the waves. The more they have been forsaken of men, the closer has been their communion with God." (Martin, cited in Spurgeon)

b. I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments: The psalmist here displays the kind of active faith and trust that saves. He had faith in God for salvation; yet it was a faith that could also say, "I do Your commandments." This is the kind of living faith so strongly promoted in the Epistle of James.

i. "This saying he borrowed from good old Jacob, Genesis 49:18." (Trapp)

ii. This hope is very much like faith. "Faith is the exercise of the soul in a sense of need, in desire, and in trust. Faith goes to God on the ground of the promise; hope in the expectation of the thing promised. Thus hope implies the operation of faith." (Bridges)

My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, For all my ways are before You.

a. My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly: The psalmist kept the word of God not only with his outward actions, but also with his soul. His love and conformity to the word of God was deeply rooted, not superficial.

i. "Indeed, the bias of the new nature to keep the precepts is as prevalent, as that of the old nature to break them" (Bridges)

b. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You: For the psalmist, the knowledge that all my ways are before You prompted obedience. He knew that the God who gave the word also observed his life. This is in contrast to the many who live as if God does not observe all...ways of a man.

i. "The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him: Mark 14:65. So does the hypocrite; he first says in his heart, God sees not, or at least forgets that he sees, and then he makes bold to sin against him" (Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. Your precepts...Your testimonies...before You: "Note the reverence for God Himself, not for Scripture in isolation." (Kidner)

"The psalmist is approaching the end of the Psalm, and his petitions gather force and fervency; he seems to break into the inner circle of divine fellowship, and to come even to the feet of the great God whose help he is imploring. This nearness creates the most lowly view of himself, and leads him to close the Psalm upon his face in deepest self-humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost sheep." (Spurgeon)

Let my cry come before You, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Your word. Let my supplication come before You; Deliver me according to Your word.

a. Let my cry come before You...give me understanding according to Your word: The cry of the psalmist is an expression of prayer, a plea to gain understanding according to Your word. He wanted his thoughts to be transformed according to the word of God.

i. This is very much the same kind of thought the Apostle Paul expressed in Romans 12:2: And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The psalmist wanted his understanding of life and the world shaped – transformed – by the word of God.

ii. "Here the psalmist's cry for deliverance is personified; made an intelligent being, and sent up to the throne of grace to negotiate in his behalf." (Clarke)

iii. Come before You: "The verb q-r-b in the Hiphil is a technical term for the act of presenting an offering... He has nothing left to present but a 'cry.'" (VanGemeren)

b. Let my supplication come before You: This is another reference to prayer by the psalmist, this time a prayer for deliverance according to Your word. He wanted deliverance, but wanted it only as it was consistent with God's revealed word and will. He did not want an unrighteous or unwise deliverance.

i. He also asked for this deliverance according to the promises of God's word. "It is beautiful to observe the oil of the Psalmist's faith feeding the flame of his supplication. Every petition is urged upon the warrant of a promise – according to thy word." (Bridges)

ii. "Many prayers hath he made to God in this Psalm: now in the end he prays for his prayers, that the Lord would let them come before him." (Cowper, cited in Spurgeon)

My lips shall utter praise, For You teach me Your statutes. My tongue shall speak of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness.

a. My lips shall utter praise. . . . My tongue shall speak of Your word: The psalmist wanted his words (lips. . . . tongue) to both praise God and to speak of His word. He knew that often words are either wicked or vain or both. He was determined that others would hear him praise God, and speak of His word.

i. "In the two expressions, pour forth [shall utter] and sing [shall speak], there may be a hint of, respectively, the spontaneous personal and the corporate: the former word suggesting the bubbling up of a spring, and the latter (lit. 'my tongue will answer') the antiphonal praise of a choir." (Kidner)

b. My lips shall utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes: His lips could praise God because they had been taught His word. The psalmist's lips did not praise God by nature; he had to be taught God's truth, and taught from God Himself. Also, the word of God informed his praise; it was intelligent.

i. "And yet who of us are fit to praise, except those whom God has taught? The 'new song' ill accords with the old heart." (Bridges)

c. For all Your commandments are righteous: Knowing the purity and inerrancy of God's word made the psalmist want to speak of it to others. He was confident in his convictions.

i. "Then should we break through our sinful silence. . . . It is not only of God's works that we are to speak, but of his word." (Spurgeon)

Let Your hand become my help, For I have chosen Your precepts. I long for Your salvation, O LORD, And Your law is my delight.

a. Let Your hand become my help, for I have chosen Your precepts: The psalmist felt he could boldly ask for God's help, because he had chosen to love and keep the word of God.

i. "The prayer reminds us of Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink; he, too, cried, 'Lord, help me,' and the hand of his Master was stretched out for his rescue." (Spurgeon)

b. I long for Your salvation. . . Your law is my delight: These two expressions go together. Because God's salvation is from and according to His word (1 Peter 1:23), it was natural for him to delight in God's word as he longed for God's salvation.

i. Salvation "... hath long been the object of the hopes, the desires, and the 'longing' expectation of the faithful, from Adam to this hour; and will continue so to be, until He, who hath already visited us in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty, to complete our redemption and take us to himself." (Horne)

Let my soul live, and it shall praise You; And let Your judgments help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments.

a. Let my soul live, and it shall praise You; and let Your judgments help me: The psalmist recognized that his soul needed both life from God and guidance from God's word. With this combination of life and guidance, he would build a healthy relationship with God.

i. "Psalm 119:175, the next to the last verse, is a good biblical statement of what the Westminster Shorter Catechism calls 'the chief end of man,' namely, to glorify God and to enjoy him forever: 'Let me live that I may praise you.' But Psalm 119:176, the last verse, reminds us that this praise comes from poor, weak, lost, and straying sinners like ourselves." (Boice)

ii. The ending section of this great psalm emphasizes the psalmist's great need for God and his dependence upon Him. His love for and dedication to the word of God has not made him more spiritually independent, but more spiritually dependent upon God. What did the psalmist need?

· Understanding (Psalm 119:169).

· Deliverance (Psalm 119:170).

· Ability to worship God rightly (Psalm 119:171-172).

· Power to live an upright life (Psalm 119:173-174).

· Strength to persevere (Psalm 119:175).

iii. “The consciousness of need is revealed in each successive petition. Yet the song is never a wail of despair, because side by side with the sense of need, there is evident throughout a profound conviction of the sufficiency of the will of God.” (Morgan)

b. I have gone astray like a lost sheep: This great psalm ends on a touching note. The psalmist remembered his own frailty and sinful tendencies (astray like a lost sheep), and therefore asked God to seek him.

i. “Here is, first, a confession of imperfection and of helplessness. It means really a continual imperfection and helplessness, for the Hebrew verb relates not only to the past, but to the present.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “The author had not become self-righteous by his devotions, despite his reiterated claims to have obeyed the Bible’s teachings.” (Boice)

iii. “This verse is extremely emotional and full of tears, for truly we are all thus going astray, so that we must pray to be visited, sought, and carried over by the most godly Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God blessed forever. Amen.” (Luther, cited in Boice)

iv. “He was not like a dog, that somehow or other can find its way back; but he was like a lost sheep, which goes further and further away from home; yet still he was a sheep, and the Lord’s sheep, his property, and precious in his sight, and therefore he hoped to be sought in order to be restored.” (Spurgeon)

c. Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments: We can surmise that God sought His servant in His word. God does seek after us in His word. His word tests us; it encourages us; it strengthens us; it rebukes us; it helps us; it teaches us; it gives us understanding; it protects us.

i. Seek Your servant: “A poor, lost, weak, sinful – yes, even unprofitable – servant (see Luke 17:10), but still a servant of God.” (Boice)

ii. The psalmist describes a Romans 7:21 kind of experience: I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. “And the Psalmist had the same remedy at the early period, as had the apostle in the later times; for God’s salvation is one. The psalmist’s remedy was, ‘Seek thy servant;’ the apostle’s, ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’” (Stephen, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. “The note of urgent need on which the psalm ends is proof enough that the love of Scripture, which has motivated the scribes of every age, need not harden into academic pride. This man would have taken his stance not with the self-congratulating Pharisee of the parable, but with the publican who stood afar off, but went home justified.” (Kidner)

iv. The psalm ends on the reminder that the power and greatness of God’s word does not rest only in its literary brilliance. Its greatness and glory is in the fact that God comes to us and seeks us in and through His word.

v. “I do not think that there could possibly be a more appropriate conclusion of such a Psalm as this, so full of the varied experience and the ever-changing frames and feelings even of a child of God, in the sunshine and the cloud, in the calm and in the storm, than this ever-clinging sense of his propensity to wander, and the expression of his utter inability to find his way back without the Lord’s guiding hand to restore him.” (Bouchier, cited in Spurgeon)

“As far as I have been able, as far as I have been aided by the Lord, I have treated throughout, and expounded, this great Psalm. A task which more able and learned expositors have performed, or will perform better; nevertheless, my services were not to be withheld from it on that account.” (Augustine, cited in Spurgeon)

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WAW - Psalm 119:41-48 The longest

chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119. If you turn to Psalm 119 in your Bible you will notice that there is a strange word every 8 verses. These "strange" words are the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. David wrote this chapter in an acrostic pattern and every letter of the alphabet is followed by 8 verses. It is a chapter full of praise and worship. I thought it would be fun to study Psalm 119 by summarizing each alphabetic section in an acrostic format. I did not know anything about the Hebrew language, so I did a little research. The Hebrew language is written from the right to the left - opposite of the English language. There are 22 letters to the Hebrew alphabet. Today we continue studying with the sixth letter WAW. I am also NOT a poet, so I had to research what an acrostic pattern meant. An Acrostic Poem - is a poem where certain letters in each line spell out a word or phrase. Example below.



WAW - Your Word allows me to walk in freedom. The main focus in these verses today is about freedom. We are free from eternal condemnation because Jesus died and rose again for ALL of our sins! Our sins have been forgiven forever! (click [HERE](#) to read about Forgiveness) In these featured 8 verses we see how this glorious freedom is detailed: May your UNFAILING LOVE come to me, Lord (verse 41) YOUR SALVATION, according to your promise (verse 41) I TRUST in your word (verse 42) I have put my HOPE in your laws (also verse 43) Eternal freedom comes from God's UNFAILING LOVE for all of us. This SALVATION gives us HOPE for the future and when we TRUST in God for our current situation, we are able to WALK ABOUT IN FREEDOM. (see verse below)



I will close today's Bible study with

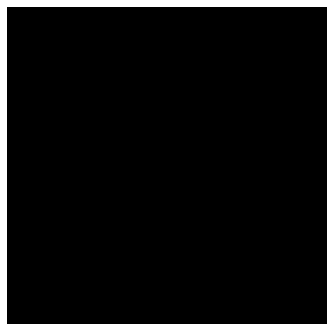
verse 47 "For I delight in your commandments because I love them." Psalm 119:47

Previous Psalm 119 posts:

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Take Up The THANKFULNESS Challenge!

I challenge you to thank God for something everyday for one year! Either write it down in a diary OR share with us on a blog. If you have a blog & would like to share your THANKFULNESS posts with us, then please fill out this form: 365 Days of Being THANKFUL form - click [HERE](#) and you will be added to the THANKFULNESS page.



Reading Psalm 119 over the Author's Shoulder

אֲשֶׁרִי תַמִּימֵי דְרָךְ קְהֻלָּיִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה:  
אֲשֶׁרִי נִצְרֵי עֲדוֹתַי בְּכָל־לֵב יִדְרָשׁוּהוּ:  
אֵף לֹא־פָעַלְוִי עֲוֹנָה בְּדַרְכֵי הַלְכוּ:  
אֲתָה צִוִּיתָה פִקְדוֹתַי לִשְׁמֹר מְאֹד:  
אֲחֲלִי וּכְנֹי דְרָכֶי לִשְׁמֹר חֻקֶּיךָ:

Look up Psalm 119. In many editions of the Bible, you will find, at the head of every eight verses, one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and perhaps the name of the letter. These headings are not part of the Hebrew text, and many Bibles do not have them. They have been supplied to show that the psalm is a form of poetry called an acrostic.

Broadly defined, an acrostic is a composition, usually in verse, in which the initial letters of the lines (or last or middle letters or some such arrangement), taken in order, spell a word or phrase or follow the regular order of the alphabet. This last kind may be further described as an abecedarian, or alphabetic, acrostic.

Psalm 119 is an alphabetic acrostic. The first eight lines of the psalm all begin with the letter aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The next eight lines begin with beth, the second letter. And so on for 176 verses until we reach the end of the matter at the last tav. No wonder the psalm is so long. Each of the letters must have its turn.

The acrostic form is found in other ancient poems besides Psalm 119, both in and out of the Bible. The Akkadian wisdom poem sometimes called the Babylonian Ecclesiastes has a structure similar to Psalm 119. Each of the eleven lines of the twenty-seven stanzas begins with the same cuneiform syllable, and the acrostic spells: "I, Shaggil-kinam-ubbib, the conjurer, bless god and king"—where Shaggil-kinam-ubbib is the name of either the poem's major character or, more likely, the poet himself.

Elsewhere in the Bible, acrostics which are complete or nearly so are found in seven more psalms, in the poem in praise of the good wife in the last chapter of Proverbs, and in each of the first four chapters of Lamentations, bemoaning the overthrow of Jerusalem. The Book of Nahum begins as an acrostic, but the plan is not carried out to the end. Some enterprising scholar has even discovered that Psalm 4 contains an acrostic which, when read backwards, spells: "Unto a lamp for Zerubbabel."

Now why would a poet construct a poem on the acrostic principle?

It is sometimes suggested that the alphabetic structure was an aid to memory, although I doubt it. Countless ordinary people have memorized "The Lord Is My Shepherd," or "Blessed Is the Man Who Walks," or "O Lord, Who Shall Sojourn in Thy Tent," or "Sing to the Lord a New Song"—none of them acrostics. But I had never heard of anyone who had memorized Psalm 119 until an alert young reader in Alabama informed me that James Clerk Maxwell had done so, by the age of eight, with the help of his mother. But even this proves not so much that Psalm 119 is easy to memorize as that there was little that Maxwell and his mother couldn't do.

More credible is the suggestion that the alphabet was symbolic of completeness, and so alphabetic acrostics were composed to express one's complete gratitude or praise, the complete virtue of the good wife, the complete grief of a man who saw Jerusalem overthrown, or, in the case of Psalm 119, complete devotion to the Law of God.

Alternatively the acrostic may be simply a tour de force with little meaning beyond the poet's decision to construct one and his ingenuity in carrying the decision out. Poets have given us plenty of examples right on into modern times. The Anglo-Saxon poet Cynewulf (8th century a.d.) signed four solemn religious poems by working his name in Runic characters into the epilogue of each one. (They are St. Juliana, Elene, The Fates of the Apostles, and Part 2 anyway of the Christ.)

Sir John Davies (1569-1626) sang the praises of Queen Elizabeth I in twenty-six "acrosticke" poems on Elisabetha Regina. (Hymns of Astraea (1599).

Edgar Allen Poe, an inveterate cryptologist and puzzler, devised acrostics on the names of sweethearts, although the practice made it harder to reuse a love poem—young poets sometimes do this—by simply changing the dedication. But I have digressed.

The acrostic form is by nature limiting. Once you have committed yourself to it, you must see it through in spite of its difficulties. How would you, for instance, working in your own language, set about composing eight lines of verse on the topic of the Law of Moses, each beginning with the letter x?

That, of course, is the very task the writer has set for himself in Psalm 119. Can he carry it through successfully, with variety and unity, or must he resort to smoke and mirrors? Let us see.

The first stanza is on aleph. The word "happy" begins line one and is instantly repeated in line two. But since parallelism is the genius of Hebrew poetry, we let that pass. The other six words are varied: "also," "you," "that!" "then," "I will praise you," and the Hebrew direct-object sign, for which we have no English equivalent.

The next stanza, on beth, has the word "blessed" in v. 12, but we note with disappointment that the other seven lines all begin with the preposition b ("in" or "with"). As one scholar remarked, "The author has not sweated unduly over this." (Luis Alonso Schökel, *The Inspired Word*, trans. Francis Martin (London: Burns & Oates, 1976) between pp. 177 and 215.)

Stanza three (gimel) has "open" twice and "even" twice; otherwise "deal," "alien," "wasted away," and "rebuke." This is not too bad.

With dalet we begin to wonder if he could not have thought up more words than three, for he has only used "weep," "cling" (twice) and "way" (five times).

In the next stanza (on he) the psalmist decides to use a string of verbs which have been turned into causatives by means of the prefix hi-. At first thought this seems to be cheating, as if the author is too lazy to find h's any better way. But the series of causative verbs does at least set up a kind of swinging rhythm: "cause me to know," "cause me to understand," "cause me to walk," and so forth, until we end with a final flourish with "behold!" in v. 40.

Now in the sixth stanza our author meets an intransigent problem: aside from a handful of proper names, my Hebrew dictionary only has three entries beginning with waw. One is the ordinary prefix meaning "and," another is a rare word for child, and the third is a specialized word for curtain hooks. The author does all he can do here and begins each verse with "and."

With zayin he does better, using five different words in the eight lines.

For heth he finds eight different words, a fresh word heading each line: "portion," "implored," "thought," "hurried," "cords," "midnight," "companion," and "loving-kindness." We are left breathless and cry, "This is really good egg!"

In the stanza on teth we find the flat and somewhat disappointing word "good" four times. This looks like laziness again until we realize that not many words begin with teth. The author has done all one can do, unless one is prepared to work in references to ritual uncleanness, torn animals, and hemorrhoids.

Yod is another easy letter: lots of words begin with it. But after "hands," "fear," and "know," our author is back on prefixes again. Come now! There are plenty of things yet to be said about the Law with yod-words: the one who despairs might look to the word of God; my soul dries up without God's decrees; praise God for the justice of his ordinances; day to day pours forth speech; able is the word of the Lord to teach!

Stanza eleven gives us eight solid words in kaph. Stanza fourteen gives us eight in nun, and our faith is restored in the author's vocabulary. The two stanzas in between, however, mostly rely on prefixes again: l-, meaning "to," and m-, meaning "from" or "than." Stanza fifteen astonishes us with a clean total of eight sameks, including the technical term for lead oxide (v. 119: the refining and dross metaphor, which comes again in v. 140).

On ayin we have "do" twice and "therefore" in the last two lines of the stanza, but on pe and tsade we are up again to eight different words for each letter.

In the next three stanzas the repeated words stand, with only one exception, at the heads of parallel lines, and they make good poetry.

The final stanza, on tav, makes use of six verbs with the feminine prefix t-. Thus we come to the end of the alphabet and the end of our analysis.

We are ready to make observations.

With respect to variety—The reliance on words with the same prefix seems at first to be taking the easy way. Further thought, however, shows that this is not so. The author is not simply lacking in vocabulary: he wants to do it like this. The acrostic principle has ruled that variety cannot be sought in the first letter anyway. When the author allows the prefix to stand for his acrostic letter, he opens up his choice of verb or noun to the entire alphabet again. This gives him a net gain in variety, not a loss. Reading the psalm in Hebrew we do not just think, “Oh. A bunch of causatives.” We read and hear the meanings of these causatives and are caught up in their cadence and power.

With respect to unity—The psalm’s unity was never in doubt: almost every verse mentions the “statutes” or “precepts” or “commandments” of God. The psalm does not, however, unfold according to any logical plan. The acrostic pattern has ruled out sequential thinking: who can keep track of logic when he has it as his first order of business to find zayins and yods? But with plodding doggedness (we must admire him for this) the poet toils through the alphabet, weaving an arabesque of words without linear development or train of thought, seeking only to praise the word and law of God.

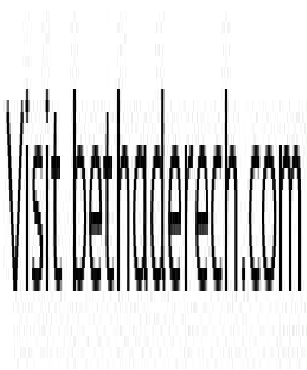
The Babylonian Ecclesiastes may date from as early as 1000 b.c., although the oldest copies are no earlier than the seventh century b.c. Part of it is printed as “A Dialogue about Human Misery,” trans. Robert H. Pfeiffer in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James. B. Pritchard, 3d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 438-40. The complete text and translation may be found as “The Babylonian Theodicy,” in W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), 63-89.

Besides Psalm 119, other acrostic poems in the Psalter are Psalms 9-10 (a single psalm, wrongly divided), 25 (a lament), 34 (a song of thanksgiving), 111 (a song of praise), 37 and 112 (wisdom psalms), and 145 (a hymn).

Time for the next installment on my Psalm 119 project. To recap for any new readers, Psalm 119 was originally written as an acrostic poem with each part starting with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. I wanted to try to see how I could do writing each part starting with the english equivalents. I started with Aleph – A, then Bet/Beth – B and managed to start every line with the appropriate letter (see my previous posts for those parts). I’m posting the real portion of the Psalm first for comparison purposes. Not sure how far I’ll get, but I’ll post as I go along. Here’s Waw/Vaw – W.

VAU. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

Psalms 119:41-48 KJV



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Wash me in Thy sweet mercies, Lord, With Thy salvation now. With Thy Word I will answer him Who lays sin on my brow.

Words from my mouth that I may speak Will all be truths of Thine. With hope in all Thy judgments, Thy Whole law, I seek for mine.



Walking in all Thy precepts, O, What liberty I find! When I speak Thy decrees to kings Will I have peace of mind.

With all delight in Thy commands, Which I have loved so dear, Will I raise up my hands in praise While keeping Thy laws near.

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Feel free to print, share or repost anything on this blog. I do ask that you let me know if you use one of my poems on your blog or at your church somehow. It might give me an idea of better ways to spread His words, which I am always looking to do. And of course, always keep the copyright symbol and my name with the poem so I continue to have the right to use them. You may not realize that if something is posted enough times without the copyright notice, I could lose the copyright and then someone else could conceivably file for a copyright and I would no longer be able to use my own poems! It has happened, so please make sure the (c) is always on the poem whenever you repost. Thanks!

God bless, Denise McKenney



I am a 50+-year-old Christian, live in Indiana with my husband and 3 cats, and love Jesus. God has been giving me the ability to write incredible poems lately as well as the urge to share them. I pray they touch you as He intends.



41 May your unfailing love come to me, Lord, your salvation, according to your promise;42 then I can answer anyone who taunts me, for I trust in your word.43 Never take your word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws.44 I will always obey your law, for ever and ever.45 I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.46 I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame,47 for I delight in your commands because I love them.48 I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees. NIV

The sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet (waw = pronounced like "vuv") continues the acrostic of the sixth section of Psalm 119. After reading verses 41-48, reflect upon how this section corresponds with the first 40 verses. What similarities and key words do you notice?

How is verse 42 an outcome for verse 41?

Look at verse 43. What would it mean for God's word of truth taken from our mouths?

Look at verse 45. What is a precept? How does seeking out God's precepts help the writer of this psalm "walk about in freedom"?

This section contains both vulnerability and confidence. Using verses 41-48 as your guide, describe how these two concepts should be evident in the life of someone who follows after God.

3

Psalms 119:1 - 176

ESV - 1 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.

Clarify • Share • Report • Asked December 14 2013 •  Cathy McDonnell

1. Answers (3)
2. Discuss (1)

Community answers are sorted based on votes. The higher the vote, the further up an answer is.

Psalm 119 is an acrostic. Each set of 8 verses begins with the same letter. Each of the Hebrew words at the beginning of the 8-set verses is a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. So if you were reading in Hebrew, each line of Psalm 119:1-8, for example would begin with the letter "Aleph".

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■ Doreen Lovell Evangelist and Prayer Intercessor

Psalm 119 is known as the longest chapter of the Bible, this psalm is one of the acrostics. Unlike the other acrostics, which contain only one verse for each of the 22 Hebrew letters (alphabet), Psalm 119 includes eight verses for each letter, making a total of 176 verses. There are 22 stanzas, each containing eight verses beginning with the same Hebrew letter. Psalm 119 is an expression of praise and celebration for the Word of God. Each stanza calls us to see strong reasons for highly valuing God's Words and to have strong response to the truths contained in the scriptures. As mentioned above there are 22 Hebrew letters are alphabets. ALEF is the 1st letter which represents God the Father. It is sometimes written as ALEPH and does not always take the vowel (ALUPH) meaning MASTER. It is also the 1st letter of the Hebrew word EMET meaning TRUTH. BEIT the 2nd letter in the Hebrew alphabet means HOUSE and is referred to as "jots and titles"---see Jesus use in Matt. 5:18. GIMEL is the 3rd of the alphabet and means "benefactor" and comes from the word "GENUL" which means giving of reward and punishment, implying man's freewill of choice. GIMEL is said to show a rich man running after a poor man to give charity. Each alphabett or Hebrew letter therefore refers to specific area of man's connection to God.

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■ Jack Gutknecht ABC/DTS graduate, guitar music ministry Baptist church

Psalm 119 is a poem expressed in a creative literary form known as an acrostic poem that is fun and easy to remember for the Jews. It is structured alphabetically with a stanza for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet ("Aleph" is like our "A," "Beth is like "B", etc. The psalmist may have wanted to demonstrate that God's Word is so great that it takes every letter of the alphabet to talk about it. Or maybe it was his way of covering his subject, as we would say, "from A to Z."

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