

PSALMS 119

(Aleph) The word is the source of happiness to those who walk by it

1 ¶ Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. 2 Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. 3 They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways.

An atheist once told me that he never exceeded the speed limit since he did not want the worry of getting caught and fined. He did not want to complicate his life by breaking civil and criminal laws. If that philosophy works to give some degree of peace of mind to someone who does not even believe in God, think how much more assurance we can have to know and follow the law of the Lord. Typically, when we read about being blameless (or undefiled) we tend to relate that to some sort “sinless perfection” to which only the Lord Jesus attained. What is meant here is a lifestyle (way) of integrity. We live so much of the details of our lives on “auto pilot” in that we do not stop and think about what choices we should make. We call such operations “habits.” We have “preprogrammed” ourselves to certain predictable responses to the various stimuli we encounter in everyday living. The “programming” can be according to the way of the world or according to the law of the Lord. If we react according to the way of the world, then we will encounter needless problems that cause us consternation and reason to worry. It can also cost us money and maybe inflict bodily harm on ourselves. How much happier (blessed) we are when we are free from consternation, worry, guilt, debt, and pain.

Each of us should want to draw closer to God and express our love to Him for the salvation we have in Christ Jesus. To do that requires that we be engaged in knowing and doing those things that please Him. In building relationships with people, unless we invest of ourselves and our time, relationships are either not formed or not nurtured and will fail to grow to any significant depth. Can we expect any different result in our relationship with God? If we are to seek (look for and find) the Lord, then we must search in the places He is likely to be found. We can find Him in His word, in His testimonies, in His commandments, etc. The more we know of His statutes and that for which He stands, the closer we are drawn to Him.

As we are privileged to know His precepts and His advice, then we bear a responsibility to make the right choices to choose His way and to never deliberately do anything wrong (presumptive sin or turning the grace of God into license to sin).

4 ¶ You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. 5 Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! 6 Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

The happiness (blessedness) promised in this octet of verses is sometimes elusive in that we fail to fully obey the precepts and to follow the ideas that are the bases for the commandments we find in God’s word. We usually will obey the parts that are not difficult or do those things that cost us nothing and then we are surprised that we still have worries and concerns and are not gloriously happy in the way our life has turned out. The Psalmist recognized the problem in his lack of steadfastness (faithfulness) in fully obeying what God intended for him to do. Typically, we go about our business and do not give a lot of thought about the choices we make until we encounter a problem that is of our own making. Only then do we start to examine what we were doing in relationship to God’s council for us. If we examine why we have problems and why we fail we may find that the underlying reasons are bad assumptions or erroneous principles that are not aligned with God’s word. By heeding all of God’s commands, then we are more likely to avoid the embarrassment of problems and failures.

7 ¶ I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. 8 I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

Having learned lessons “the hard way” we should be more inclined to better learn God’s laws and to see how we can apply them to situations in life. As we put into practice “walking according to God’s ways” we will see evidence of the rightness of such a lifestyle and we can better appreciate the benefits this brings. Praise will be a natural response of our appreciation. But beyond that, when we consider what life would be like if we did not know the Lord and were ignorant of His ways, then we can join the plea of David to never be absent from the presence of the Lord.

(Beth) The word is the source of holiness to those who give heed to it

9 ¶ How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

This discourse on holiness forms an interesting sequence of verses that starts with the desired end result: purity or holiness. We are admonished to be holy because God is holy and He has chosen us to be part of His family. So how does a person keep himself pure. The answer is to live or walk in agreement with the word of God. However, all who attempt to do so will find many failures along the way. Though we may want to do what is good, we find as Paul stated in Romans 7, “The good that I would, I do not.” Obviously, we need help in accomplishing what we desire to do. How do we avail ourselves of such help?

10 ¶ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

As with any endeavor, a half-hearted attempt will not produce desirable results. In manifesting holiness in our lives even a whole-hearted effort will not get the job done unless we have help beyond our own capabilities. We along with the Psalmist pray for God's help in the presence of the Holy Spirit to keep us from wandering off the path of righteousness and to restore us to a right relationship.

11 ¶ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

One might ask how the Holy Spirit guides us in our daily lives. One way is to bring to mind the basic precepts of the Kingdom of God. These concepts are tools by which we are guided and if we are not familiar with them, then we are disadvantaged in following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Some times we miss the mark simply because we are not aware of the target. If we do not know what God's word says, then we will use our own wit to determine what action we will take. Many times that results in making things worse rather than better.

12 ¶ Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees.

It is one thing to know the words in a document, but it is a different matter to really understand the full meaning of those words along with their implication for daily living and interacting with other people. Not only does the Holy Spirit use the precepts and concepts we have hidden in our hearts, He also helps us put them there with understanding and wisdom so that they are more than just words. It is through revelation by the Spirit that we come to "know" in our inner most being the decrees of God. This is why the things of God are foolishness to those who do not know Him.

13 ¶ With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. 14 I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. 16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

If holiness is our objective and we come to realize that the word of God is the pathway toward that objective, then we are not likely to persevere in that pathway unless we find some pleasure in the trip. As we get into the word of God, we will start to see how marvelous it really is. It is so simple even a child can understand the basics, yet it is so deep that the greatest human mind could never fathom all that is there. As we discover the obvious and the hidden mysteries of the word, then we find great delight and are drawn to think more and more about the word and how it applies to life. It becomes interwoven in our thought process (mediate on God's precepts) and we will find ourselves recalling and quoting (with my lips I recount all the laws) the words of God in relationship to whatever comes our way.

(Gimel) The word is the source of truth to those whose eyes the Lord opens by his Spirit

17 ¶ Do good to your servant, and I will live; I will obey your word.

The appeal to God from "the servant" is for bountiful goodness rather than what is deserved. It is truly by God's grace that we live rather than perish since the wages of sin is death and all have sinned and fall short of God's glory. In the same way, our service (what a servant does) in the Kingdom of God often falls short of all God would do through us if we would fully obey His word. None of us can chide God for not giving us what we deserve but all can be thankful that He gives out of Who He is rather than what we have done. Since we owe our lives to God's mercy, we should spend our lives in His service (obey His word).

18 ¶ Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

It is good have the law in its letter and to know that certain things are to be avoided and other things are to be sought after. If we just blindly follow "the letter of the law" we will find benefit. However, there is more to God's precepts and commandments than just the literal letter of them. It is better to find the "spirit of the law" and to walk in such a way that so that we function from principle rather than by just a set of rules. We discover the spirit of the law by revelation of the Law Giver in our spirits in that we can know (perhaps beyond our understanding) what is right and wrong in the situations we encounter in life. It is best when these "wonderful things" are borne out in our daily lives as a supernatural response to whatever comes our way – not because of what we understand of God's word – but because the life of Christ is being lived through us.

19 ¶ I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me.

Being a "stranger" (or temporary resident) on earth implies that this world is neither our origin nor our destination. The idea that we are just passing through this world at this time is helpful for us to not become enamored with the things of this world. Jesus talked about this when He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven." Since heaven is our home we can consider one link to our "homeland" to be the word of God. It is also a map that helps guide us in the way to the place where God dwells. If we could imagine finding ourselves in the middle of a foreign country without a map or a frame of reference, then we sense the earnestness of the plea to not have God's commands hidden from us.

20 ¶ My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.

So often we hear an admonition to have a "well-rounded" life that is balanced with many interests and

pursuits. That advice has a certain rational appeal to us and many people try to do just that. However, when we consider those who have made some of the greatest contributions to mankind – people such as the apostle Paul, Einstein, Edison, Schweitzer, and Luther – we find these people were highly focus in one area of their lives. We might say that their work had “eaten them up.” They had identified their top priority and had pursued it with vigor. If we recognize the laws of God as absolute truths that provide us with a foundation for life, then we will make them priority in our daily living. The soul is characterized by our intellect, emotion and will. All three of these need to be engaged in apprehending and incorporating God’s ways into our very being.

21 ¶ You rebuke the arrogant, who are cursed and who stray from your commands.

Pride leads to presumption which is characteristic of arrogant people. The opposite of arrogance is humility. Those who presume to know more than God, ignore His commandments for they think their way is better. Such a sinful attitude is seen in the rebellion of Lucifer and the downfall of many angels. Just as pride turns angels into devils, pride will turn men into tools of Satan to carry out his work in opposition to the will and purposes of God. An attitude of pride will hinder and prevent repentance and leave people under the curse of the law – the soul that sins shall die. Not only do the proud stand in opposition to God but they also oppose and ridicule all who would embrace God in humility.

22 ¶ Remove from me scorn and contempt, for I keep your statutes.

The scorn and contempt the righteous encounter come from the arrogant and proud who attempt to put down everything and everybody so that they may appear to be exalted. Those who would follow God and worship Him are viewed by many as being weak intellectually and naive. We should never be discouraged or even concerned with what the world thinks for so they mistreated even God Himself and crucified the Son of God with scorn and contempt. In the end, the cause of Christ and His ways will be vindicated and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. If we are patient, then we see our stand on the statues of God vindicated even in this life.

23 ¶ Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees.

As societies become more corrupt and evil becomes more open, then those in positions of power will let their opposition to the authority of God be known. In some cases we find judges, the civil law, and certainly the court of public opinion condemning those who would take a stand against such evils as abortion, pornography, and homosexuality as being against “freedom.” When we find ourselves in such situations, we need to increase our resolve to do what is right and keep our attention on God’s word since it is the source of all truth and that truth will cause us to know true freedom.

24 ¶ Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

Considering that we are “strangers on earth” and not part of the world system, we needs something or someone to turn to for counsel and advice compatible with “who we are.” The counsel of the world is based on worldly principles and much of it is not suitable for the child of God. The fact that God’s ways lead to life and His words are the source of truth are also reasons for us to find great pleasure in them. As the Lord reveals His counsel by His Spirit we find ourselves relying more and more on the sure and proven guidance we find in His statutes. It is for this reason that “when in Rome, do as the Romans do” is really bad advice.

(Daleth) The word is the source of law (order) to those whose heart he renews

25 ¶ I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word. (NIV)

25 ¶ My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word. (KJV)

(Note: Both the NIV and the KJV are shown. The older translation perhaps better captures the subtle meaning of the verse. The following comments are based on these words.) In our unregenerate state our souls are intimately tied to the way of the world (the dust). Not only by our inherent nature but also by what we are taught (either directly or by observation), we are imprinted with and by the world system. Our mind, emotion, and will find a certain comfort with and we may find that we are drawn (cleave) to that which we are familiar. For the Christian, this same familiarity and habitual way of life cause us to continue to operate (at times) according to the way of the world. However, the way of the world (carnality) leads to death while the way of the Spirit (walking according to God’s word) leads to life. The solution to the dilemma, according to the Apostle Paul is to be transformed by the renewing of our minds to wean ourselves from the way of the world. The only way that renewing will work is seen here in the second half of the verse and that is to be “quicken” or enlivened or given new life as prescribed in God’s word. That new life is from God through Jesus Christ Who described Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

26 ¶ I recounted my ways and you answered me; teach me your decrees. 27 Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders.

As we come to realize that our natural tendency is to follow the way of the world with the predictable consequences, then we would do well to carry out (with God's help) a thorough examination of all aspects of life. If we are honest in this assessment, then we will find many actions and attitudes that are contrary to the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven. Such an examination is practically always the first step in a true turnaround of our life. It can be discouraging to learn that what we have been doing does not work and that we have only a vague idea of what actions and attitudes are needed as replacements for those we need to abandon. The place to search for the right precepts is in God's word. However, in order to truly benefit from what we find there, we must have help from God's Spirit to interpret the practical and deeper meaning of these precepts. Without such help, then we will struggle to know the application in our lives though we think about it often. However, as the Spirit guides us, then our understanding will be opened to see the wonders in God's word.

28 ¶ My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. 29 Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me through your law.

Having repented and turned from the ways of the old life, we might think that all our troubles and battles would be over. We find that is not usually the case. Just as the Children of Israel overcame several significant points of resistance (Jericho and Ai) as they entered the Promised Land, the battles went on for decades as they discovered additional strongholds in the process of taking control of the land. In the same way in our individual lives, we may experience some significant victories at the point of our conversion, but we continue to uncover (actually, God reveals them to us) strongholds of the enemy in our lives. It is not unusual for a Christian to become discouraged as he discovers these areas in his life that are still not fully yielded to God's way. These are not battles to be fought in our own strength. Just as we were not able to "save ourselves" we are not able to complete the task of become more like Christ in our own strength. (Gal 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?)

Sometimes Christians will begin looking for quick fixes to the sanctification process by which we are being prepared for an eternity with God and they may drift away from God's word and adopt some false ideas that have no basis in God's word. We also run the risk of deceiving ourselves into thinking that the strongholds in our lives are "not so bad" and that we can "live with them." Actually, we cannot "live with them" since the things that are contrary to God's will literally drain our life away and we fail to grow to become all God has intended for us to be.

30 ¶ I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws. 31 I hold fast to your statutes, O LORD; do not let me be put to shame. 32 I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

By setting our hearts on God's laws and precepts, we will choose the way of truth. It will not "just happen" without our involvement and dedication to being in the word. We will not be deceived by the way of the world or by false teachings.

Earlier (verse 25) we saw that our natural tendency is for our soul to "cleave" or hold fast to the "dust" or the earthy or natural way. The alternative is for us to cleave or hold fast to God's statutes. We may find that our adherence to doing things "God's way" is contrary to popular ideas of the time and some may feel a need to apologize for their stand against what is commonly accepted in the culture. Such potential conflicts with the culture are all around us in the issues of abortion, pornography, cohabitation, homosexuality, sensuality, astrology, reincarnation, etc. As Christians, we do not need to apologize for our stand as long as that stand is on the word of God. God's word will be vindicated.

If we gravitate to the way of the world we are held down to the lowest points of our earthly existence. However, by holding on to the principles of Kingdom of God, we are set free from "the dust" and are able to enjoy real freedom within the limits of the commandment of God. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, then you are My disciples indeed and you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

(He) The word begets perseverance by its promises

33 ¶ Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. 34 Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

Someone once said, "He who is his own pupil, has a fool for his master." Many people want to "figure it out for themselves" rather than go to the expert on a subject. Who would better know the way and intent of God's word other than God Himself? Our ability to follow the path in which we should walk is totally dependent on God pointing the way (teaching us) and giving us understanding so that we can see the principles involved rather than just knowing the words of His law. The extent, in both time (to the end) and depth (with all my heart), to which we are successful in keeping or obeying God's word is also dependent on being properly taught and having proper insight to God's point of view.

35 ¶ Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. 36 Turn my heart towards your statutes and not towards selfish gain.

A life that is pleasing to God is its own reward. As we follow God's direction for our lives, then we will discover the wisdom of His ways and the joy that accompanies being in a right relationship with the Creator. If we are focusing on God's ways, then we will be spared the problems that come from our natural tendency to satisfy self and the frustration of never having enough.

37 ¶ Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

In 1John 2:16 we see "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." In the first two verses of this octet, David had apparently dealt with the pride of life in that he humbly realized his great need for God to teach him and give him understanding. In the next two verses (35 and 36) the lust of the flesh is countered by asking God to turn his heart toward God rather than toward things of the world. Next he addressed the issue of the lust of the eyes. There are many "gates" to our mind. All our senses are possible routes for stimulating our minds. The most powerful stimuli are visual and many times the temptation to do wrong starts with what we see. In all three cases, David realized that he could not handle these situations in his own strength. His plea was for help from God to teach, give, direct, turn, and to preserve or give life. If the things of the world (carnality) lead to death and the things of Father (spirituality) lead to life (Romans 8:6), then that for which David prayed would, indeed, preserve his life according to God's word.

38 ¶ Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared.

Young's Literal Translation says "Establish to Thy servant Thy saying, That is concerning Thy fear." We might say "Lord, show me how awesome You are." God is showing us more of how really awesome He is by those who may not even believe in Him. Science and technology are discovering marvelous things in God's creation that prove (by the very complexity of microscopic things) that life did not just evolve. The exploration of space has shown the enormity of creation is beyond our comprehension. Truly, God is awesome.

39 ¶ Take away the disgrace I dread, for your laws are good.

Initially, we might think that David is fearful of being mocked or scorned by the world for his stand on the principles of God. However, it is more likely that David is concerned with reproach or shame that might come to him for not being fully faithful to the good laws of God. Such reproach not only harms us but also brings criticism from the world that is directed toward God.

40 ¶ How I long for your precepts! Preserve my life in your righteousness.

If we sincerely want to continue in a "life relationship" with God, then we will hunger (long for) the spiritual food that comes from His word. David addressed several things that would distract us from persevering or enduring to the end. Without the on-going renewal and revitalization that comes from a constant and continuing walk with the Lord, then we become insensitive to the things of God and we miss the benefits that are ours as a result of being His Children.

(Vau) The word reveals the mercy and salvation of the Lord

41 ¶ May your unfailing love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; 42 then I will answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word.

God's unfailing love is unconditional and is demonstrated in the mercy He shows to us by His grace. The greatest manifestation of the loving kindness is the gift of salvation. As Paul wrote to the Roman, "But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Ro 5:8) If we are criticized by the "accuser" our only answer to him is that we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. We dare not answer with our own accomplishments or our own goodness. When Christ Himself was confronted by the devil in the wilderness temptation, He simply relied on the words of the Scriptures and responded, "It is written."

43 ¶ Do not snatch the 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.

Jesus told his disciples that they would be taken before magistrates and falsely accused. He assured them that they should not worry about what to say in such situations, for the Holy Spirit would provide words for them. It is by the power of God's Holy Spirit within us that the word of God is brought to bear on any situation so that we can "speak" to the problems or the accusations and that we can order our very lives in obedience to God's laws.

45 ¶ I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.

Jesus said that if we would abide in His words and His words abide in us, then we would be His disciples indeed and that we would know the truth and the truth would set us free. In his commentary on this verse C. H. Spurgeon wrote "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."

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.

Our love for the commands of God and the subsequent delight we find is a result of having experienced the benefits of obedience. It is similar to the realization that many young adults come to as they begin to see the rightness and wisdom of the advice and rules their parents offered and enforced when they were younger. As we mature in our walk with God, then our faith grows and we are not hesitant to take our stand on the unchanging word of God regardless of the circumstances and regardless of the status and power of others involved. We need not back away from God's way because it never disappoints us.

48 I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.

There is perhaps a double meaning in the words of this verse. The most obvious is that hands are lifted in a gesture of esteem and respects for the commands of God. As we contemplate His word, such esteem flows from the revelation or realization of the depth and profoundness of what God has given us in His word. Another possible meaning is that as we lift our hands in obedience to God's commands, we see results that are eventually beneficial to us and to God's Kingdom. Many times the benefits are seen only in retrospect as we think about how God did work all things for good because of our love for Him which was manifested in obedience to His commands.

(Zayin) The word awakens the comfort of hope in God

49 ¶ Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope.

50 ¶ My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.

Many times when we pray we remind God of what He has said in His word. It is not as if God has forgotten but that it is upon these words that our hope is based. For the child of God, our hope is not wishful thinking but is found on the sure word of God. It is in this hope that we find comfort in knowing that we have eternal life in spite of problems we may be encountering.

51 ¶ The arrogant mock me without restraint, but I do not turn from your law.

52 ¶ I remember your ancient laws, O LORD, and I find comfort in them.

When a believer has problems, then he is likely to encounter the ridicule of those who do not know God. They tell us how foolish we are to believe in God and that we should be more practical and do things the way the world operates rather than stick to some "out dated" ideas found in ancient manuscripts we call the Bible. However, it is in these "eternal" ideas in the Bible that we are comforted and find confidence. History has proven again and again that the way of the world fails and comes to ruin but the word of God is enduring and never fails.

53 ¶ Indignation grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken your law.

54 ¶ Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge.

In not-too-distant past times people would be horrified, indignant, or outraged when salacious actions of people (especially those in the public arena) would come to light. It seems, however, that in our present culture that we have experienced an inability to be outraged regarding the evil in which people get involved. We have become insensitive to such things and find ourselves trying to adopt an attitude of tolerance to whatever happens. Another side of our reaction to the actions of the wicked is that we should have a sense of horror at the perspective of what awaits those who reject God and forsake His ways. Again, it seems that we have become insensitive to the outcome of those who are lost without Jesus. As ambassadors for Christ we must maintain sensitivity to not only what the actions of the wicked are doing to our culture but also to what they are doing to themselves.

While we may react with indignation or horror to sin we should find harmony in holiness that results from abiding in the word of God. The guiding principles of our life (our theme song) should always be firmly based on the sure foundation of God's word.

55 ¶ In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law. 56 This has been my practice: I obey your precepts.

In the time when these words were written, the night was a time for meditation and thought regarding the meaning of life and our place in the larger order of things. Because of television and movies many have turned the nights in times of amusement. This is tragic in that the root components of the word "amuse" are "a" (meaning "not") and "muse" (to think). As a consequence of spending (wasting) time watching much of what is on television without (critically) thinking we have been indoctrinated with the philosophy of the world. How much better would all of us be if we spent (invested) that same amount of time meditating on the word of God. The result would be that we would walk in God's precepts, placing our hope and confidence in Him and find comfort (assurance and consolation) when the world system fails.

The Psalmists could have been referring to his dreams rather than to his time of meditation. We are told that our dreams are perhaps some indication of what is going on in our subconscious mind. The events of the days, our fears, our hopes, and many other stimuli can influence our dreams. We may have heard that those who are

trying to learn a foreign language will sometimes experience dreams in that new language after they have become proficient in it. How do we react in dreams? Do we respond in ways that are in keeping with who we are in Christ or do we find ourselves behaving as those who are still dominated by the Old Nature? Blessed is the person who obeys God's precepts even in his dreams.

Another application of remembering the Lord in the night could be our reaction to the times in our lives when we are experiencing troubles and the outlook seems dark and foreboding. When we have problems we must look to the Lord and go to His word rather than turn to our own wits and craftiness or perhaps follow some path that is contrary to the principles of the Kingdom of God.

(Cheth) The word presents the Lord as the portion of the trusting soul

57 ¶ You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words.

58 ¶ I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.

The nation of Israel came into the land of Canaan and the territory was "portioned" out to them by tribes and then by families. In whatever collective endeavor we engage we normally expect to receive what many would call our "fair share." In life itself, we have a sense of fairness and have expectations of being able to be treated fairly by the world system. Many times such expectations result in disappointment. Once we come to a realization that this world is not our home and that our inheritance is "in Christ" being made "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," then we will not place our hope in receiving anything from this world. Our confidence must be placed in God and God alone. When we do that, then we will be able to prioritize our efforts toward knowing Him and obeying Him and receiving from Him what He knows is best for us in the life and in the life to come. Unlike the world system, His promises never fail. He renews them every morning.

59 ¶ I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. 60 I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.

Self examination of ourselves with regard to the ways of God will usually show that we have opportunities to walk closer to God. We experience things in our daily lives and each experience can be used by God to draw us closer to Himself. Our desire should be such that when we find that we are not in alignment with God's ways that we will take whatever action is needed as soon as we discover the need for change. When we fail, consideration of our ways may reveal that we strayed from God's statutes. However, that is not always the cause of failure. God may be working a greater work in our lives or even the lives of others and our response to failure may be where the lessons of the experience are.

61 ¶ Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law.

62 ¶ At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws.

It is unlikely (in 21st Century America) that any of us will be literally bound with ropes for our faith.

However, in other parts of the world, this situation is a present reality. We are likely to find that we may be bound by rules and regulations that prohibit or discourage any overt expression of our Christian faith. We may also find that outreach to the lost is hampered by the secularity in our culture and a general unconcern or perhaps disdain for anything moral or spiritual. We see lives of young women being ruined and lives of unborn children being snuffed out in abortion mills we find that the laws of the land and societal pressures bind us to keep silent. In such times as these, we must not forget how to do things God's way. We must avoid using the tactics of the world in opposing such things, but recognize that the battle is spiritual and we must be waging spiritual warfare to win the war. Such battles are fought in the prayer closet and perhaps late into the night as we recall the call of God upon our lives to rescue the perishing and care for the dying. At the same time, the child of God should be thankful for the grace and preserving power of God for giving us His laws that are able to keep us on the paths of righteousness.

63 ¶ I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.

64 ¶ The earth is filled with your love, O LORD; teach me your decrees.

In contrast to the persecution of the wicked and the secularization of our society, we find comfort in knowing that God has a remnant of those who love and reverence Him. Among these faithful, we find fellowship and a community of love. Among God's people we learn from each other the truths God has revealed to each of us so that the community of believers grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. To the extent we are able to share the love of God with those around us, to that extent will the earth be filled with God's love.

(Teth) The word makes affliction instructive and chastening

65 ¶ Do good to your servant according to your word, O LORD. 66 Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands.

This first verse could be translated to be an affirmation rather than a plea. Indeed, God does do good to His servants and has promised to do so in His word. Whatever comes our way is filtered through the cloth of God's love and omniscience. As Paul wrote to the Roman in 8:28, God does work all things together for our good.

As we experience life, we must be open to learn from each event what good God is working out in our lives. Whether life's events are judged as blessings or afflictions is immaterial in the bigger picture of the greater work that God is accomplishing in us who trust in Him and love Him. We need to view each happening in light of God's word so that we can put each thing in proper perspective.

67 ¶ Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

68 ¶ You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.

Only in retrospect can we realize the benefit of affliction in our lives. As we see the scope of God's dealings with mankind, we realize that God is drawing us to Himself and He uses both blessings and chastisements to accomplish His purposes for us. However, neither blessing nor chastisement will work unless we recognize the absolute goodness of God and the goodness of all that He does. Without this recognition, then we are likely to credit ourselves with deserving the blessings and to blame for any problems we encounter.

69 ¶ Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep your precepts with all my heart. 70 Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law.

The child of God can expect and will experience the opposition of those who would stand against God and His principles. Such opposition comes when we are being blessed or when we are under God's chastening. If we are being blessed, then the arrogant in their envy may accuse us of acquiring the blessing unlawfully. If we are being chastened, then the accusation may be that we have trusted God in vain. Such envy and perverse actions comes from the insensitivity of a dead heart that has not experienced the life-giving Spirit of God.

71 ¶ It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

72 ¶ The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

If we can but realize that God is sovereign and that He cares for us in the smallest details (even the hairs of head are numbered) and if we can realize that He is good, then our conclusions regarding the problems or afflictions of life come for a positive perspective. Not only do the problems we encounter help us to learn and obey God's ways, but God's word helps us to view everything from an eternal perspective rather than a temporal one. It helps us to discern true values in life.

(Jod) The word begets a fellowship in the fear of God

73 ¶ Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.

Secular humanists embrace the theory of mindless evolution in an attempt to convince themselves there is not a Creator God. They realize that admitting the reality of the creation requires a Creator and logically extends to the necessity of knowing and following His ways. Since God made us, then He knows what is best for us and He is gracious to reveal that "best" in His word to us.

74 ¶ May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word.

True believers should find joy in mutual fellowship with those who put their trust in the hope revealed in the word of God. The only workable basis for true fellowship among people is that they reverence God and are fully committed to Him and to His ways. Without this commitment, their human tendencies of pride, greed, and envy leads to strife and discord.

75 ¶ I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

76 ¶ May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant. 77 Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.

All of us have or will experience problems and difficulties in life. One source of such "difficulties" is God's chastisements that are designed to bring us back into the paths of righteousness. Just as a child will turn to his parents for comfort in times of discipline, we may find comfort in God's unfailing love for us. As we realize His goodness and His intent to give us eternal life, then we find pleasure and delight in His laws because we know these lead us away from destruction.

78 ¶ May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts. 79 May those who fear you turn to me, those who understand your statutes.

Other sources of problems and difficulties are those who do not know God. Many do evil for the sake of doing evil and others are hurt by their senseless actions. When we or our loved ones are victims of such wrongs, then we must turn to the God's word for understanding and for the grace to move on with God's plan for our lives. During such times, we also find comfort among fellow believers who are able to encourage and support us through the tough times.

80 ¶ May my heart be blameless towards your decrees, that I may not be put to shame.

While we cannot control the random acts of violence (whether physical or emotional) that the ungodly may inflict on any and all who are around them, we can lessen the chastisements we might encounter by knowing and choosing God's ways. It is far better to learn the lessons of life by the school of instruction than by the school of hard knocks.

(Kaph) The word creates a longing for the full peace of salvation

81 ¶ My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word. 82 My eyes fail, looking for your promise; I say, "When will you comfort me?"

When God saves us, we are fully saved. However, in this life, we do not experience the fullness of His salvation as revealed and described in the word of God. Because of this we look forward with eager anticipation to that time when we be complete in Him. We have an "earnest" of our salvation in the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives that gives us only a hint of how great heaven will be. David looked forward to the time when the promise of God to send the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) would be an experienced reality. We are living in that reality today. How much more should be looking forward to that day when we shall see Him, face to face and know Him even as we are known.

83 ¶ Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees.

Wineskins become old and lose their pliability and usefulness. This ageing process is accelerated by exposure to harsh environments such as smoke. Our physical bodies also age and eventually time takes its toll. Harsh environments and especially practices (such as smoking or drug use) that abuse the body accelerate the process. In the same way our souls can become "old" and we lose our flexibility to deal with difficulties. We can keep ourselves "young" in our soul life by insulating our thoughts and emotions from abusive environments by relying on the great promises found in God's word. Meditating on His word and focusing our thoughts and hopes on Him lift us above the harshness of the smog in the valleys of despair.

84 ¶ How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors?

Our natural tendency and our hope is for deliverance from the trials and tribulations of this life and we hope to see the vindication of those who are persecuted for doing what is right. We should take comfort in knowing that God is in control and that He can and will use the trials of this life to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Judgement Day will come and God will vindicate His righteousness.

85 ¶ The arrogant dig pitfalls for me, contrary to your law. 86 All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for men persecute me without cause. 87 They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts.

We live in a world of secular humanism in which people want to be their own god. This attitude is the ultimate in arrogance. This religion of humanity has spread its philosophy into all part of life and laid traps of its worldly mind-set are all along the road of daily living. Such thinking has also infiltrated some churches and it is openly taught in our public schools. Those who would stand in opposition of such so-called sophisticated thinking find themselves being ridiculed in an effort to lessen their influence. Secular humanism is a most intolerant religion when it is confronted by Christianity and seeks to destroy any Christian influence in our culture. We must be careful in fighting this war in that we do not adopt the weapons of the enemy but must solely rely on the precepts of God.

88 ¶ Preserve my life according to your love, and I will obey the statutes of your mouth.

There are pitfalls of humanistic thinking even along the high road of righteous living. As we read this verse, our tendency is to think that "by obeying the statutes of God, our lives will be preserved." While that thought certainly has an element of truth, it misses the far greater truth that because of God's great love, He preserves our lives as an expression of His mercy and grace. Our obedience should then be our response to Him Who loves us. While it may be "good" to think that by obeying laws and wise precepts we will be protected, it is "best" to realize that obedience is not the origin but the outcome of our lives being preserved or saved.

(Lamedh) The word is faithful and unchanging

89 ¶ Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. 90 Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures. 91 Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you. (NIV) [They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants. - KJV]

Even as God is eternal and unchanging, so is His word. Words are indicators of who we are and we see the nature and character of God in His words. In contrast to this stability, we see civil governments passing laws and repealing them since their laws are not perfect and do not have eternal qualities. We even see such repeal of so-called truths in religious organizations when the leaders of a particular group will issue a new encyclical that changes former practices and beliefs and replaces them with new ones. On the other hand, God's laws cannot be and do not need to be changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We should take great comfort in such stability.

The physical world finds stability and continuity in God's laws. We are told that the universe is expanding and that we rushing through space at incredible speeds. We know that the planets in our solar system orbit the sun and it seems that everything is in a state of constant change and yet it remains the same. The rising of the sun and the going down of the sun, the change of seasons, springtime and harvest: all these find continuance

in the order that God created in His universe. All of creation operates according to the way God made it and everything in the universe serves God's purposes.

92 ¶ If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

93 ¶ I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.

94 ¶ Save me, for I am yours; I have sought out your precepts.

When we encounter challenges and perils in life, it is good to have an unchanging point of reference (a true north) so that we do not lose our way and so that we have help to get back on the right path and to proceed in the right direction. The word of God is the only reliable reference point in which we can fully trust. We should pray that God will bring to our minds the precepts and concepts that we have hidden in our hearts (because we sought them out) as we face the challenges of life. Furthermore, we should pray for the courage to act according to these principles and thereby avoid the grief and troubles that results from ignorance and/or failure to follow God's way.

95 ¶ The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes.

Imagine traveling the road of life on the path of righteousness. This path is protected by the precepts and principles of the kingdom of God. Outside the boundaries of this road (the path of righteousness) there are those who would attack us. If we stray off the path, then we become vulnerable to those who are waiting to destroy us. That is reason enough for us to know the pathway boundaries (ponder God's statutes).

96 ¶ To all perfection I see a limit; but your commands are boundless.

No matter how perfect any accomplishment of man may be, it has limitations – it will be only so big, will only last so long, can only do so much. On the other hand, the commands and words of God are not limited by time, space or applicability.

(Mem) The word commands the approval of the heart

97 ¶ Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Some people love golf and it's all they think about. Every situation in life will have a golf analogy. Others love football and they will tend to relate real life situations to the game of football. We will think about, meditate on and incorporate into our conversation that which we love. If we listen to ourselves in what we say to others and especially in what we say to ourselves in our thought life, we will have a reasonable idea of what is really important to us. When we discover the true value of the words of God, then they will become the center of the thoughts and intents of our heart. The word "meditate" has also been translated "pray." If praying is conversation with God, then we see that our love of the word of God would cause us to be in continual conversation with the Author of the word and that conversation would be related to and in agreement with the precepts found in His word.

98 ¶ Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

The word of God impact all our interpersonal relationship. None of us like to be at a disadvantage when interacting with others. However, our confidence should always be in God and in the wisdom of His words. Whether we are dealing with those who are opposing us, those who are trying to teach or those who are trying to lead us we find wisdom, insight and understanding beyond that available to the world if we make the word of God our companion, contemplate His statutes and obey His precepts.

101 ¶ I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.

We have a responsibility to avoid areas that might tempt us to do what is wrong. Sometimes we think that because we are knowledgeable of the word of God that we can be exposed to any and all kinds of philosophies, sordid temptations, and various enticements without being disobedient to God's word. Such an attitude is contrary to the thought expressed in the prayer "Lead us not into temptation."

102 ¶ I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me.

Our motivation to be obedient to the laws and commandments of God should not be solely on the basis of "it's the right thing to do and I will be better off doing the right thing." The strongest motivation must always be our relationship with God. We are to be obedient because of Who He is and because the laws are His laws.

103 ¶ How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Not everyone who experiences the words of God find them pleasant. In fact, many have a quite negative reaction to the Scriptures. The word brings conviction and in it we see our situation in the light of God's word. As is sometime stated, the truth hurts. So, why would one person find God's word sweet and another find it bitter. Paul gives us insight into this in 1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." One might say that enjoying the word of God is an "acquired taste."

104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

The understanding we gain from the principles of the word of God helps us to realize the foolishness of the way of the world or any other way that is contrary to the way God has shown us in Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the Way (Path), the Truth and the Life." Every other path leads away from God since the way of the Cross is the only one that leads to Him.

(Nun) The word is a light to the path

105 ¶ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Two complementary ideas are presented in this verse regarding the God's word. This first is that the word gives us "next step" vision when all around us is darkness. Lamps are used at night and the amount of light is such that we cannot clearly see into our surroundings beyond our next step. A lamp is no good to us unless it has oil in it and the wick has been lit. For the word of God to be useful in our lives it must be interpreted and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit (oil) and then we must let that combustible mixture be ignited in us for the benefits of it to be realized in our lives. The second idea is that the word of God is like the light of the noonday sun that illuminates everything as far as we can see. Such light put the happenings around us in a larger context of not only what is happening around us spatially but also what is happening around us chronologically. By this great light we can see the handiwork of God in the creation and in the call and covenant of Abraham. We can see His purposes being unfolded in the birth of the Messiah and the atoning death at Calvary. We can also know that the culmination of all things will see the Resurrected and Glorified Christ reigning over all.

106 ¶ I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.

Having recognized the power of the light of the word of God, we should commit ourselves to follow the light and to avoid the darkness. To do otherwise would be quite foolish. The confirmation of that commitment is to discover and to obey all that God has for us to shine the light on our world.

107 ¶ I have suffered much; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word.

Our service in the Lord's kingdom "does not screen us from trials" (afflictions) but rather "secures them for us." (Quotes are from *Psalms-Treasury of David* by C. H. Spurgeon) In other words, suffering, affliction and/or trials come with the work of service. The more we are obedient, the more we will experience trials. The remedy for such suffering, affliction or trial is being quickened or given a vigorous spiritual life. The more we are subjected to trials, the more we develop or grow and the stronger will be our life in all areas: spiritually, soul-life, and in our physical bodies. [Think of going to college. The purpose is to learn. Part of the process is studying and part is testing. Think of the tests as afflictions. This is where we have an opportunity to see if we have grasped the concepts which we have been studying and it is in the trials that we convert the concept from the abstract to the concrete.]

108 ¶ Accept, O LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws.

The very fact that God has given us new life (quickened us) and continues to sustain us by His power is reason enough for us to continually praise Him. Sometimes we think that God should be so pleased that we would deign to praise Him. Such thoughts are echoes of the carnal nature. Instead we should be amazed not only that He saved us when we were without any merit, but also that He would accept what we offer Him. God is so high and awesome that we should never take for granted any access and acceptance He affords us. We should always be careful that we do not fall into an attitude that we must offer praise or that we offer praise in order to manipulate God. Our praise should always flow willingly because "there is no work of free grace where there is no fruit of free will."

One of the purest forms of praise is to willingly walk in obedience to the laws of the Lord. In doing so we are saying that we love the Lord and that we accept His preeminence, that we recognize His greatness and that we honor Him by the sacrifice of our wills to His will.

109 ¶ Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law. 110 The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts.

For David, his physical life was in constant danger from the time he was anointed to be king until he actually ascended to the throne. Later in his elder years he was again exposed to physical danger. The nature of the danger for David was the hidden traps set for him by those who wanted to kill him. David's success was enhanced by his obedience and observance of God's precepts in his life conduct. The more we walk in God principles, the closer we are to Him and the more of His grace we experience. In a spiritual sense, we, as God's elect are under attack by the evil one and will be until we depart this present world. For the Christian the worse dangers lie not so much in the obvious temptations but in the subtle enticements to abandon God's ways for the ways of the world. Just as David discovered, security is found in following the paths of righteousness mapped out

in the word of God.

111 ¶ Your statutes are my heritage for ever; they are the joy of my heart. 112 My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.

Other words for “heritage” are culture, tradition, inheritance, legacy, and birthright. For the child of God, not only do we benefit from the rich traditions of forefathers who honored and walked in God’s word (our inheritance), but we also can pass along to those who follow a sense of value that places the word and way of the Lord in first place in the lives of our children and those on whom we have influence (our legacy). This situation will happen only if we find joy in God’s ways and set our affections on “things above” that have eternal value.

(Samakh) The word from which to swerve is hateful

This stanza of eight verses present three sets of contrasts of evil and good. While we seek the Lord’s way with enthusiasm, we must be just as energetic in avoiding the way of the world.

113 ¶ I hate double-minded men, but I love your law.

114 ¶ You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.

Many translations (including the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate) associate a person with the Hebrew word translated “thoughts” in the KJV. The idea of this word is ambivalence and half-heartedness. Many of us are more comfortable with the idea of hating an attitude or action rather than hating the person who has the attitude or commits a hateful action. This idea of abhorring half-heartedness is confirmed in the words of Jesus recorded by John in Christ’s message to the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:15-16. It is for sure that God’s laws are not ambivalent. Because they are certain and unchanging, then we can have confidence in them and our hope will not be in vain when it is based on the sure Word of God.

115 ¶ Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God! (NIV)

115 ¶ Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. (KJV)

A subtle difference in the meaning of this verse is seen in comparing the NIV with the KJV. Both meanings have valid application in the life of the believer.

The sense of the NIV rendering is that we need to separate ourselves from “evildoers” so that we can be faithful to God. One could said that “bad company corrupts.” If we are habitually around those of the world, we tend to be influenced by them. This is a reality that we see being played out everyday. Christian are constantly bombarded by a godless media and we have lost our sense of indignation regarding the godlessness of the society in which we live. Such a transformation (losing our sense of outrage) happens gradually unless we are extremely vigilant.

The implication of the KJV is that, as people of God, we are to be influential and make a difference on the world around us. As we live our lives in accordance with the commands of God, we will create an environment that would be uncomfortable to evildoers. In such a society or culture, those who practice things contrary to good moral behavior would not be accepted as “normal” but would be influenced to do the right thing rather than continue in so-called “alternate lifestyles.”

116 ¶ Sustain me according to your promise, and I shall live; do not let my hopes be dashed.

117 Uphold me, and I shall be delivered; I shall always have regard for your decrees.

Whether we find ourselves in a situation when the culture is so depraved that we feel the need to withdraw (separate ourselves) so that we can grow spiritually or if we see ourselves on the front line of the battle in rescuing the culture from its decent into the abyss, we must rely upon the promises of God and trust in Him for any success we have. If we neglect His way in whatever we do, then we become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

118 ¶ You reject all who stray from your decrees, for their deceitfulness is in vain.

119 All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross; therefore I love your statutes.

120 My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.

What is success? How is it measured? One might consider a question such as “When we come to the end of life, did we make a positive difference for having lived on this earth for the years of our life?” Who determines the answers to those questions? These are questions that have concerned people of every culture and for all times. David saw that the answers were related to how we are related to the Creator. God is the One Who determines the answers and He has given us His expectations in His decrees and laws. Those who ignore God’s ways take themselves out of consideration for success. They are rejected and discarded by their own choices. We have an awesome responsibility since we have been created by an awesome God who wants us to be His children. To neglect to respond to Him should cause us to tremble in fear.

(Ayin) The word warrants the plea of innocence

121 ¶ I have done what is righteous and just; do not leave me to my oppressors.

122 Ensure your servant's well-being; let not the arrogant oppress me.

David's profession of having done what he understood to be what God would have him do is similar to our thought when we are faced with persecution or trials. We naturally think that we can ask for God's deliverance when we have been living close to Him. This is why "guilt" hinders our prayer life and causes us to look for other sources of help. Some more obscure translations (Syraic version) attribute righteous and justice to God and makes this a prayer to Him for deliverance from oppressors based not on the merit of the Psalmist but on the merit of God. This is perhaps a more satisfying rendering of this passage in that it is in keeping with the humility evident in the remainder of this octet. The sense of the two verses then becomes, "Since You, Lord, are righteous and just, I ask you to look out for my well being and to protect me from arrogant oppressors."

123 ¶ My eyes fail, looking for your salvation, looking for your righteous promise.

124 ¶ Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees.

125 I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.

Many times we must be patient in waiting for God to act on our behalf. It is as if David knew that God's salvation is real and it is sure to come, but it is not usually on our timetable. Our trust must be in the promises of God and in the knowledge of His love for us. While we are waiting for God's salvation, He uses the situations we encounter to teach us and transform us and make us more like Himself.

126 ¶ It is time for you to act, O LORD; your law is being broken.

127 ¶ Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold,

128 and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.

We can identify with David's concern. We see God's law being broken and people ignoring what is right and we think and sometimes say, "Why doesn't God do something?" We must never lose our sense of outrage at the actions of those who do not follow the ways of the Lord.

(Pe) The word is a testimony to God's character and will

129 ¶ Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them.

In Romans 8:28, Paul writes about "those who love the Lord." In implication, one could conclude there are those who do not love the Lord. Not everyone thinks that Biblical principles regarding personal behavior are "all that wonderful." Many see such principles as restrictive and limiting and they consequently rebel against them. Whether we think God's ways are "wonderful" or if they are "restrictive" may be the primary evidence of whether we love the Lord or not. The more we understand that God's statutes are for our good, then the more we will want to and enjoy obeying them.

130 ¶ The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

When we first see a passage of scripture it may appear to be difficult to understand and even shrouded in mystery. However, as we prayerfully consider the passage and view it in relationship to other passages, then we start seeing the interactions of the various parts of God's Word. Sometime, the "unfolding" or revelation might be to consider what was written in relationship to the historical times and then we are enlightened by the message in its context. When the word of God is "unfolded" in such ways, then even the young and those new in their Christian walk can understand what God is telling us. A person does not have to be a Bible scholar to understand the principles communicated in the Word of God.

131 ¶ I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands.

Once we come to appreciate (how wonderful are His statutes) and to experiences the light of understanding of what God is doing (the unfolding of His words gives light), then we will want more and more to know what God has for us (His children). That desire will be such that we will seek to know God as a thirsty person seeks after water.

132 ¶ Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name.

The plea of one who is "desperately" seeking God is not so much that we find Him but that He find us. On our own, we will not seek Him unless He draws us to Himself. Romans 3:11 tells us "there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God." God does seek those whom He has chosen to be His own.

133 ¶ Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

Is there a connection with having sin in our lives and ruling over us and being vulnerable to oppression from unscrupulous people? I think so. If we find ourselves "addicted" to sinful practices, then we lose the ability to say no to those who might misuse or abuse us. Therefore v 134 follows from v 133.

134 ¶ Redeem me from the oppression of men, that I may obey your precepts.

Two questions come to mind:

1. Is there an inability to obey God's precepts when we are being oppressed of men?
2. Can we still obey God's precepts even when there is oppression?

Perhaps the answer is "yes" to both questions. For the immature and helpless (little children, for example), oppression can cause a distortion of values and a departure from normalcy in that a child may lose the ability to distinguish right from wrong and become psychotic. This can also happen to older children and even adults if the abuse is prolonged. On the other hand, many have undergone severe oppression and they have been able to keep a right sense about themselves and not suffer permanent damage. Typically, those who are able to successfully endure such oppression are those with a strong spiritual base in their lives.

135 ¶ Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your decrees.

In 1 John 1:5, John wrote that God is light and in Him is no darkness. When we are in His presence, then we are in the light (the Shekinah glory) that emanates from Him. It is in God's favorable presence that we learn His ways.

136 ¶ Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.

Charles Spurgeon (*The Psalms, A Treasury of David*) suggested that the Psalmist wept in sympathy with God Who is grieved over the sins (non-obedience) of His people. Unfortunately, many Christians have become callous and uncaring regarding the general sinfulness of our society or even their own sins. We say we identify with Christ in His death on the Cross and yet we don't identify with Him as He "weeps over Jerusalem" because of the sins of the people of God. Because we are not grieved, then we do nothing regarding those who have gone astray and drifted away.

(Tsadhe) The word is a law of morally correct behavior

137 ¶ Righteous are you, O LORD, and your laws are right. 138 The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy.

Many attempt to live their lives by a set of morality standards. Some will make up their own set of standards and other will choose the standards they follow from the writings of a great philosopher or they will attempt to emulate the behavior of a respected friend. Some (maybe even most) will just go with whatever is in vogue for the present time. How does one know what to do or whose philosophy to follow? This is certainly a situation where we should "consider the source." By definition, God is righteous. He is always right and we can have confidence in His laws as being the real and only standard of morally correct behavior.

139 ¶ My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words.

Sometimes we get frustrated when dealing with those who will not accept the word of God as the standard of behavior. It seems as if the world wants to try to invent their own way rather than go with what has been proven as correct throughout the history of mankind. When we have a strong love for the word of God and when we know "what works" and others deliberately choose an alternative, then our desire to have things done in a right way should cause us to work even harder to advocate and to follow God's way.

The KJV uses the phrase "consumes me" instead of "wears me out." When anything consumes us, it becomes our priority in life. Each of us should take inventory to determine what consumes us. As we see what is happening in our present culture we might conclude that it is rare to find anyone who is consumed by the love of God, the love of God's word, or the love of the work of the Kingdom of God

140 ¶ Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

Many of us like new things. We may redo a room in our house with new furniture or change the color scheme. However, we don't typically see a need to redo the foundation of the house. In the same way we may find new ways of walking in the promises of God but we should never attempt to abandon those promises and replace them with some failed method or philosophy. Christians should be appalled by the tendency of many in our nation who are attempting to find "meaning in life" through eastern religions. It doesn't take a superior intellect to see the poverty and moral decadence of those who have grown up with and practice eastern religions. In our own nation, we have seen a move away from the foundations of what have been thoroughly tested (God's promises) to a humanist philosophy with a result that we are seeing rampant illegal and immoral behavior in government, in business and even in religious organizations.

141 ¶ Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts.

Having no social standing and having no material wealth should never be an excuse for neglecting the principle of righteous living as given in the word of God. The same could be said of having the ultimate in social standing and wealth. David may have been thinking of the situation when he was chosen to be king of Israel. He was the youngest in his family and was not even considered a candidate (by his family) when Samuel came to find a

new kings among the sons of Jesse. This verse may also have Messianic implications in that Jesus was born into the most humble and despised conditions and He did not forget God's precepts but kept them perfectly.

142 ¶ Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true.

If we ever needed a reason to "not forget" God's precepts, then the fact that these are these very principles and precepts will endure for all eternity and they are absolute truth. Not only have God's ways been proven and thoroughly tested, but they will never become outdated or change.

143 ¶ Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight. 144 Your statutes are for ever right; give me understanding that I may live.

One might be tempted to conclude that since God's commands are always right that by following them we would not have any problems. In an ideal world where there is no sin and all enemies of the Kingdom of God are eliminated, then this would be true. Though troubles come (because of the imperfectness of the world in which we live), we find that following God's ways are the best and they provide the pathway through the trouble. Therefore, we should take great delight in them.

(Qoph) The word validates our requests for salvation

How we pray and for what we pray.

145 ¶ I call with all my heart; answer me, O LORD, and I will obey your decrees. 146 I call out to you; save me and I will keep your statutes.

James reminded the early Christians that effectual, fervent prayer was needed if they expected to make a difference as a result of their prayer. This observation agrees with the Psalmist words of calling upon God with "all my heart." How we prayer (in faith, with fervency, etc.) can be as important as that for which we pray. Here the Psalmist calls for salvation. We can be assured that God wants salvation for the lost (Christ came to seek and to save those which were lost.).

The intention of the writer is not to bargain with God regarding his obedience, but it is a realization that unless God does hear us and save us that we cannot (in our own strength) be obedient and keep God's statutes.

When/how long we pray and why we pray.

147 ¶ I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word. 148 My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

Jeremiah (Lamentations 3:21-23) wrote "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16) In the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant, burnt offering, free offering and sweet incense were given to God *every morning*. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Apparently, we need daily communion with God. If God's compassions are new every morning and if our "inward man" is renewed day by day, then it would be logical that those who put their hope in the promises of God as revealed in His word would have this as a daily priority.

Many Christians struggle with being consistent with a daily devotional time (usually in the morning before they get caught up in the daily activities). However, we see that the Psalmist did not have such a mind set of having a set time for devotions but it was a continuous and on-going part of his life. It simply began before he arose and it continued through out the day and into the night.

Why God would save us and to what extent He saves us.

149 ¶ Hear my voice in accordance with your love; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your laws.

We should have confidence in calling out to God for salvation since He loves us with an unconditional love. (Paul said, But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8) God is the initiator of the preservation of our lives. The extent to which He saves and preserves us is defined in His word (laws). In speaking of Jesus Christ and His work of salvation, the author of Hebrews wrote, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

Why we need protection and how God provides protection.

150 ¶ Those who devise wicked schemes are near, but they are far from your law. 151 Yet you are near, O LORD, and all your commands are true.

Sometimes it seems that we are in the midst of perverseness and evil is not far away. When we read the newspaper, the elements of physical dangers are seen on almost every page. While the lifestyle of most Christians do not typically take them into situations where the risk is high, there are random incidences that can effect any of

us. Those who are “far from God’s law” live in the same towns and neighborhoods as we do. While we realize the danger, we sometimes do not appreciate the fact that God provides protection for His children. Sometimes this protection is passive in that we avoid danger areas and sometimes that protection is active in that we are directly protected by a specific intervention on our behalf.

Wicked schemes that are directed toward us in the spiritual realm are less obvious. The humanistic agenda is to make man his own god and to draw people away from relying on God and His word. Our protection from this spiritual danger is provided by God’s Spirit because He has promised to be with us and to even give us the words to speak when such threats arise. Being equipped with God’s full armor and the promises that are available in His word - having hidden them in our hearts - will enable us to know the nearness of the Lord since He is in us and works through us.

How trusting God and walking in His promises builds our faith.

152 ¶ Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last for ever.

The more we walk with the Lord and rely upon Him, the more confidence and faith we have regarding His love, His power, and His faithfulness. We also know that God does not change and that His goodness toward His children is based on the unchanging promises which are, in turn, based on His unchanging nature and these attributes are eternal.

(Resh) The word warrants prayer for deliverance from affliction

153 ¶ Look upon my suffering and deliver me, for I have not forgotten your law. 154 Defend my cause and redeem me; preserve my life according to your promise.

Because we live in a fallen world, there will be suffering and affliction. Some of these maladies are self-inflicted, some are caused by others who are either careless or wicked, some problems (both mental and physical) are there because of genetics and heredity, and in some cases the suffering is part of a direct intervention of God in our lives (as in the situation described in the Book of Job or the “thorn in the flesh” about which Paul wrote). Whatever the source of the suffering, our response to the afflictions we experience will determine whether we are made better and are drawn closer to God or if we are made bitter and are driven away from God. The response we make depends in large part upon how much we trust God and believe His promises.

If suffering is able to make us better and to draw us closer to God, then should we refuse to pray to be delivered from the problem(s) that cause the suffering? This question is almost like the question Paul asked in Roman 6:1 regarding grace and sin: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”

Just as assuredly that God does not want us to enter into or to continue in sin, we can also be assured that God does not want us to suffer. However, that does not mean that He cannot use suffering to bring about changes in our lives. Such passages as Chapter 28 of Deuteronomy clearly show us that blessings (happiness, success, victory, long life, etc.) are the things God desires for us. So, if God wants to bless us, then we should definitely pray for relief and deliverance from suffering and affliction *in accordance with the promises of God*. This is the prayer of the Psalmist.

There is not a demand for God to do anything other than to “consider” or “look upon” the situation. He trusts God to make the right decision in his case based upon the conditional promises that God has already proclaimed. The writer believes that he has kept God’s laws (see Deuteronomy 28:1 - observe and do all that I have commanded) and that makes him *eligible to ask* for consideration to be relieved from the suffering he is experiencing.

There is a realization (see verse 2) that when we have affliction (from whatever source - self inflicted, other people, etc.) we are not able to find relief in our own strength. A call for “redemption” or intervention by a kinsman redeemer is put forth so that deliverance can be experienced. Most Christians can readily see this requirement when it comes to our salvation and deliverance from sin and the “old sin nature.” However, we sometime fail to see its application in our on-going, everyday life experiences. Consequently, we endure suffering and affliction or we attempt to escape the problems in our own strength, all the while failing to realize that (in many cases) attempting to operate in our own strength is why we are experiencing the problems in the first place (see the account of Jacob in Genesis 32).

155 ¶ Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek out your decrees.

Here we see the contrast given in the situation and for the condition of those who cannot (and should not) expect deliverance from suffering and affliction. Again, the basis of anticipation (hope or dread) is found in the promises of God. Looking at the latter half of Deuteronomy 28, we can see that the expected outcome of those who do not “observe and do all that God has commanded” is a lack of blessing or (to put it another way) that salvation

(deliverance from problems) is not available. This is not some mystical, arcane set of events but is clearly a logical cause and effect relationship. God's decrees and His laws are given to us so that we can avoid many of the problems that people encounter and have to learn (but rarely do learn) the hard way.

156 ¶ Your compassion is great, O LORD; preserve my life according to your laws.

157 ¶ Many are the foes who persecute me, but I have not turned from your statutes.

These two verses could easily be companion verses in that they show us the positives and negatives sides of life. The Hebrew word translated "great" in verse 156 is the same as that translated "many" in verse 157. On the positive side, "many are the mercies of God" and on the negative side, "many are those who persecute." The focus of the Psalmist is not so much on the good things or the bad things, but his focus is (in both cases) on the word of God. There may be times of ups and downs but the promises of God are steadfast and sure – they are unchanging. If we are conscious of the tender mercies of God, then we must realize that His salvation (preservation of our lives) is promised in His word. Even if we experience persecution from our enemies, we need to stay aligned with the principles of God's laws for it is in these that we will find hope of relief from such persecution. (See Also the First Epistle of Peter.)

158 ¶ I look on the faithless with loathing, for they do not obey your word.

159 ¶ See how I love your precepts; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your love.

Just as life is a mixture of "ups" and "downs" we can expect to find things that cause us grief and things that bring us joy. The Psalmist was grieved and detested the situation of the faithless (transgressors) who suffer and cause others to suffer because they do not believe nor obey God's word. When we see people ruin their own lives and negatively impact those who are in their sphere of influence, we should feel sorrow and (at the same time) hate the situations that are created by failing to follow the clear directions of the principles of the Kingdom of God. Our sorrow is intensified since we know that there is a better way and people do not have to live they way they live.

On the other hand, we experience joy in realizing that God's love reaches out to humanity to give each abundant life (for God so loved the world). Salvation (or preservation of life) is available to those who love God's precepts and walk in them.

160 ¶ All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

A more literal rendering of this verse is "the beginning (head or start) of Your words are truth." This agrees with the declaration of Jesus as He prayed in the Garden and said, "Thy word is truth." Since He is the Living Word, He is also the Living Truth. One could conclude that, apart from God's word, there is no revelation of the truth in the world. As to the enduring quality of God's word we again read the words of Jesus as He stated (Luke 21:33) "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." God's righteous laws have never been and never will be repealed. This should give each of us great comfort to realize that some things are absolutely fixed and that we can rely on them to always be the same.

(Shin) The word warrants deliverance from persecution without a cause

161 ¶ Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart trembles at your word.

If we are suffering persecution because we take a righteous stand, then there may be tendency to give up and give in to those who are attempting to influence us. However, when we consider the words and promises of God regarding righteousness, then we will stand firm and not give in to the persecutors who would like us to change. In a letter to the church in Asia Minor, the Apostle Peter reminded the early Christian that it is far to suffer persecution for righteousness that for doing what is wrong.

162 ¶ I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil.

The promises of God that are found in His Word are the source of hope not only for us for the entire world. Without God's promises we are literally with any legitimate hope. Many people have aspirations that are based on their own ideas and desires, but these have no basis for giving them true that is beyond just wishful thinking. Jesus taught about the man you discovered the promises of God for salvation (entering the Kingdom of God) as being like finding a treasure hidden in a field (or a pearl of great price) and then spending all his resources to buy the field or the pearl.

163 ¶ I hate and abhor falsehood but I love your law.

There are many philosophies and ideas about what life is all about, but unless these are based on or agree with the Word of God, then they will lead people into destruction and ruin rather than salvation and true success in life. We are constantly bombarded by false ideas about what our priorities in life should be by the media. Every television program (from situation comedy to documentaries) will contain subtle (and some not so subtle) messages that reflect the philosophy (religion) of the creators of that work. It is impossible to do otherwise. If we expose ourselves to

movies, television, magazines, etc., then we need to be on guard to filter out and to reject those philosophies that are contradictory to the principles of the Kingdom of God. In order to do that, then we must be familiar with those principles by hiding them in our hearts.

164 ¶ Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws.

Having hidden the word of God in our hearts and having seen the great benefits of walking in the principles of His word, then we gain an appreciation of God for having given these to us for our ultimate good which overflow in praise. It takes some maturity in our Christian walk in order to develop this appreciation. Those who are outside the kingdom (and even those new in the faith) will many times see God's righteous laws as being restriction and counter to their happiness. It is much like a teenager who thinks that his parents rules are just there to make his life miserable, but then see the wisdom of such guidance when he becomes older.

165 ¶ Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.

Since the carnal mind is hostile (at enmity) toward God and cannot submit to His laws, we must conclude that only those who are at peace with God can love God's law. Being at peace with God is the greatest peace we can possibly have. The only way this is possible is by the Cross of Christ in which God has reconciled the all mankind unto Himself. When we have assurance that this ultimate relationship is secured for all eternity, then we are able to faithfully persevere in the face of a multitude of offenses.

166 ¶ I wait for your salvation, O LORD, and I follow your commands. 167 ¶ I obey your statutes, for I love them greatly. 168 I obey your precepts and your statutes, for all my ways are known to you.

When offenses do come our way, then we have perfect confidence that God's salvation will prevail and that gives us hope so that we do not abandon God's righteous ways. After having walked in God's precepts and have seen the results, then we develop a deep appreciation (love) for them. We may not be able to determine how obedience to God's laws and principles will bring about victory when we are in the midst of a particular situation; however, by faith, we can have assurance that His promises never fail and that He is fully aware of our situation and our condition and that God is in control and is working on our behalf to transform us into the image of His Son.

(Tau) The word assures of an answer in due time

169 ¶ May my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word. 170 May my supplication come before you; deliver me according to your promise.

The prayer of our prayers is that they be heard by God. There is so discouraging as to think that our prayers are going no where. We can be assured that if we ask anything according to God's will, then He hears us (1 John 5:14); therefore, our first prayer should be for "understanding according to God's word" so that we do know His will. And if we know that He hears us, then we can be assured that He will answer our prayers according to His promises (1 John 5:15). Here we see the great importance of knowing and being familiar with God's word. Such knowledge of His will and His promises gives us great power in prayer. This is why James could conclude that the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous brings results (James 5:16).

171 ¶ May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees. 172 ¶ May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous. 173 ¶ May your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. 174 I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight. 175 ¶ Let me live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me. 176 ¶ I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.

These last six verses seem to be a progression of concepts that flow from the sovereignty of God's grace. Our response and our expectations should follow a logical sequence of the progression as given by David at the conclusion of this poetic paean to the principles and precepts of God and His Kingdom.

By His grace, God teaches us his decrees and our response is praise unto God. Since we have been taught God's word, then we can realize and recognize the correctness of His precepts. We then develop a genuine appreciation for the Word itself. This appreciation overflows in songs (hymns) that are useful in helping us remember the message of the God's decrees. Remembering and incorporating the concepts of the principles of the Kingdom of God into our lives puts us in position to be under the protection and assistance of God's providential care (Ps 91). We will then experience that salvation (preservation of life, success, etc.) that God promises to those who delight in and keep His commands (Deut 28). As we live our lives in this way, we see more and more clearly the evidence that God's ways are health and healing to our souls and that His paths are where we can experience life to its fullest. Praise will be a natural reaction as we bask in the light of His glorious grace. Despite all that we know and all the guidance that God provides for us, we do, from time to time, drift away and find ourselves "not dwelling in the secret place of the Most High" and not enjoying His protection. Our constant prayer is that God, in

His grace, would draw us back to Himself so that we may resume our walk in the pathway of His commands.