

One of the first things you notice when looking at this psalm is that it is divided into sections using the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Adam Clarke makes the following observation: “Every *part* is divided into *eight verses*; and each verse begins with that letter of the alphabet which forms the *title* of the part, e.g.: The *eight* first verses have *aleph* prefixed, the second *eight beth*, each of the *eight* verses beginning with *that* letter; and so of the rest.” This observation would not be obvious to the English reader.

Psa. 119:1 ALEPH. Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

“Blessed” simply references happiness. The Hebrew for *undefiled* is a reference to “integrity, without blemish.” When I looked up the Hebrew for *walk*, “behave” and “exercise (self)” stood out among the many choices. The Psalmist is basically saying that those who live lives of integrity and avoid choices that would tarnish their reputation or corrupt their character will be happy. He is also saying that it takes energy and effort to make these choices; they don’t come naturally. This type of person is one who behaves according to God’s law and works to stay within His protective parameters.

Psa. 119:2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.

This verse starts with the thoughts of the previous verse. Those who live according to God’s law are those who worship (from the Hebrew for *seek*) God. They have decided to place their faith in God and live in obedience to His word. The “whole heart” is a reference to “the feelings, the will, and the intellect.” These people have made a rational choice to follow God, and they are satisfied with their choice. These are the people who are truly happy in this world.

Psa. 119:3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

Another by-product of living according to God’s law is that you will not do iniquity; you will not be morally corrupt or wicked. Obedience to God’s law always results in righteous living.

Psa. 119:4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.

The Psalmist makes note that the Lord has *commanded* us to keep His commandments. As I have often heard from the pulpit, “They aren’t the ten suggestions.” This is a statement of God’s sovereignty. We may choose to rebel and follow false gods, but that in no way changes the fact that God is THE authority in the universe. The fact that we are encouraged to use diligence in keeping God’s commandments is recognition that obedience requires effort and carefulness. This implies that we must be watchful and cautious, not reckless in our choices.

Psa. 119:5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

The Hebrew for *directed* is a reference to being sure and faithful. The Psalmist is expressing his desire to be faithful and obedient to God's law at all times. I truly identify with his heart. The flesh is a powerful influence in our lives. Paul was very transparent about the struggle between the flesh and the spirit.

Romans 7:18–23 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

Psa. 119:6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

The Psalmist is well aware that faithful obedience to God's laws will result in honor and not shame. Disobedience, on the other hand, causes the child of faith to be ashamed (disappointed, full of guilt) before the Lord. Having respect to God's commands references finding pleasure in obedience.

Psa. 119:7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

The first half of this verse is a statement of bold, courageous worship of God. *Learned* is a reference to having been taught through use of proper incentives, i.e., the rod of correction. “Righteous judgment” is a reference to the fact that God's judgments or corrective measures taken to teach His children are right and equitable; He is no respecter of persons.

Revelation 3:19 “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

Acts 10:34 “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons....”

Psa. 119:8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

The Psalmist has decided that he is going to obey God's commandments. Even as he declares his choice, he prays for God not to forsake him. I like the phrasing from the NLT for the last half of this verse: “Please don't give up on me!” I can't tell you how

many times I have prayed this prayer knowing that He would never give up on me, yet feeling the need to express my heart in light of failure at a given point.

Psa. 119:9 BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

The thoughts of the second stanza of this song build on and strengthen the thoughts of the first stanza. This stanza starts with a question—How does a young man live a clean and innocent life? The answer—By paying attention to and obeying God’s word.

Psa. 119:10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

This thought parallels the thoughts of verse 8. The Psalmist has sought to follow God with his “whole heart.” He desires to obey; he has looked at the facts and made a conscious decision to obey. Still, he recognizes that he needs God’s help to obey. This reminds me of the words of Jesus as recorded by the Apostle John.

John 15:5 “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

We believers today are so blessed to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us to provide constant direction and correction as needed. He will never, however, force us to obey.

Psa. 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

The Psalmist recognizes the importance of knowing God’s word so well that it is a part of his being. He has memorized it. To take the time to memorize the message is a response of love for the one that sent it; it shows that you treasure it. The Psalmist knew that making the word a part of him was a safeguard against choosing to sin against God. Sin is a choice.

Joshua 24:15 “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Psa. 119:12 Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

According to the Hebrew, the word *blessed* in this verse is an expression of adoration. The Psalmist adores YHWH and desires to learn from Him. Every teacher knows that the students who perform the best are those who have a desire to learn.

Psa. 119:13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

I think this is a reference by the Psalmist that he has been obedient to the message of God as declared by Moses.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Psa. 119:14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much* as in all riches.

The Hebrew supports the CJB as a better translation.

*I rejoice in the way of your instruction **more than** in any kind of wealth.*

The Psalmist recognizes that a life lived in obedience to God's law will reap far greater eternal treasure than the temporary material wealth accumulated during this lifetime.

Psa. 119:15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

The Hebrew for *meditate* references "to ponder, to converse (with oneself, and hence aloud), pray." To spend time in meditation on God's word and commandments is evidence that you value its truth. To "have respect" is a reference to taking pleasure in those thoughts as you consider their impact on your life.

Psa. 119:16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

He ends this stanza of the song with another statement of commitment, just as he did in the first stanza. He is determined to take pleasure in God's law and to remember it by hiding it in his heart (cf vs 11). This is a much more confident commitment by the Psalmist than that stated in verse 8.

Psa. 119:17 GIMEL. Deal bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live, and keep thy word.

With the beginning of the third stanza of his song, the Psalmist is asking for God to bestow His good will upon him. His motive—That he may live and give a testimony of how he treasures God's word through a testimony of obedience. He isn't asking for blessing because he deserves it, or because he wants to enjoy the good things in life. He is asking for the opportunity to honor God with his life.

Psa. 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

This is the theme verse for my website. The Psalmist is aware that only through the revelation of God can he understand and enjoy the difficult and/or hidden (from the Hebrew for *wondrous things*) truths of God's word. It's his spiritual eyes that the Psalmist is asking to be opened. He wants to do more than just read the words; he

wants to apply them to his life. This would equate with our prayer today to be sensitive to the teaching of the Spirit as we study God's word.

Psa. 119:19 I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

As a man of faith, the Psalmist knew that he was a stranger in a foreign land while on this earth under the dominion of the enemy, Satan. His citizenship was in God's kingdom. As such, he desired to understand the laws of that kingdom. The writer of Hebrews affirms that the men of faith in Old Testament times were looking forward to their future as part of the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 11:13-16 "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Psa. 119:20 My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

I like the wording of the NLT for this verse.

I am overwhelmed continually with a desire for your laws.

I think this is just another way of saying that the Psalmist was eager to be a part of God's Kingdom. In God's Kingdom, God is sovereign; and everything is subject to His judgment.

Psa. 119:21 Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

The Psalmist is declaring that God has been faithful to rebuke those who in arrogance have been led astray by deceit—those who have chosen to embrace sin as their lifestyle. They have chosen to reject God's instruction.

Proverbs 13:1 "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke."

But "God is faithful." (1Corinthians 1:9)

Revelation 3:19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

Psa. 119:22 Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

In this verse the Psalmist is asking for God to remove/roll away his disgrace and disrespect in light of his obedience to God's word. This seems to equate to our asking for forgiveness of our sins; we are asking to be made clean before God. The difference is that the Psalmist was basing his request on his own obedience; we make our request in light of the obedience of Jesus to endure the cross as the only acceptable sacrifice for our sin.

Psa. 119:23 Princes also did sit *and* speak against me: *but* thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

The Psalmist is referencing the ruling authorities among the people. The fact that they would be discussing the Psalmist and his actions lends credence to me that the reference is to David. The king would be an obvious target of criticism to those who were jealous of his position. Instead of roaring back with self-justification, the Psalmist responded to his critics by meditating on God's law. Again, I believe he was familiar with the words of Moses that declare vengeance belongs to God (Deuteronomy 32:35).

Psa. 119:24 Thy testimonies also *are* my delight *and* my counsellors.

I think the Psalmist is saying that he takes pleasure from the word of God and considers it his best source of wisdom—far better than the counsel of men.

Psa. 119:25 DALETH. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

This seems to be recognition by the Psalmist that he is but dust and destined to die. He knows that life is to be found in the truth of God's word. Again, the Psalmist makes reference to the words of God through Moses.

Deuteronomy 30:20 "That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Psa. 119:26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

The Psalmist is saying that he has been truthful before God in confessing his way of life. He knows that God has heard him. Now he is asking God to teach him, with the rod of correction as needed, to be obedient to His commands. I certainly identify with his heart. There have been many times I have asked God to make me a vessel of honor before Him no matter what He has to allow or bring about in my life to make me into that vessel.

Psa. 119:27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

In this verse the Psalmist is asking for discernment regarding how to live his life in accordance with God's law. Several of the translations use the word "meditate" for the word *talk*; it is one of the choices, but I believe a poor choice in this instance. The Psalmist wants discernment in order to be able to boldly declare the often difficult truths and works of God. Again, this is another one of my prayers. My desire is to encourage others in the truth of God's word, i.e., the website. My prayer is to share God's truth as revealed by His Spirit, not the understanding of Sharon. That is why I try to be so careful to separate my opinion from His word.

Psa. 119:28 My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

In this verse the Psalmist is sharing that he is grieving with a heavy heart. I think it is an expression of what we would identify as "being in the valley" vs. "being on the mountaintop" spiritually. He is asking for God to strengthen him according to His word. Again, reference can be made to the words of Moses.

Exodus 15:2 "The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

David had also written a song embracing this truth.

2Samuel 22:31-33 "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God? God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect."

Psa. 119:29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

Maybe this verse is the reason for the heavy heart of the Psalmist; maybe he had yielded to lying in circumstances in which he should have trusted the Lord. He is asking God to remove lying as a source of temptation for him. He is imploring God for mercy according to His word. Again, we can find a basis for his request in the words of Moses.

Exodus 34:6 "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...."

Again, I can empathize with the heart of David. Much to my shame I have knowingly made wrong choices at times. The heart is willing, but the flesh is weak. I am oh so grateful for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Psa. 119:30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me*.

At this point, the Psalmist is looking forward and not back. He has chosen to live according to God's morals (from the Hebrew for *truth*). The next phrase is interesting. The Hebrew for *laid* states, "to level." I got a better understanding when I looked up *level* in Webster—"A horizontal line or plane; that is, a straight line or a plane which is tangent to a true level at a given point." I understood what a level was, but seeing that definition helped me to make the connection—to understand that the Psalmist was positioning God's word as the *level* by which to measure his life.

Psa. 119:31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.

I don't agree with the choice of *shame* for translating this verse; I would have chosen *disappointed*. The Psalmist has proven his familiarity with God's word; he is revealing a need for affirmation. He is transparent with his humanity. I equate it with my thoughts often of "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," as expressed by the Father who brought his child to Jesus for deliverance from demons (Mark 9).

Psa. 119:32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

I like the CJB translation of this verse: "*I will run the way of your mitzvot, for you have broadened my understanding.*"

In this verse the Psalmist speaks of running, not walking according to God's commands. This is an expression of confidence in the path he is taking. He is not concerned about the surface of the ground; his confidence is in his understanding of God's word. He wants the Lord to establish sure ground upon which he can make choices concerning how to conduct his life. He is not questioning whether God will answer this prayer; he knows that He will. Again, we can find a basis for his confidence in the words of Moses

Deuteronomy 4:29 "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

Psa. 119:33 HE. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it *unto the end*.

The 5th stanza of this song begins with another prayer for YHWH, the self-existent, eternal God, to teach the Psalmist how to live according to His law. He knows that YHWH never fails at what He determines to do. God's teaching will eventually result in his obedience. Again this truth is supported in scripture.

1Kings 8:56 "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."

We are privileged to have God's personal expression of this truth as declared by the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

It has become increasingly clear that the focus of this psalm is the writer's love for the word of God.

Psa. 119:34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.

I think the Psalmist is expressing his heart in this verse, but not a realistic outcome from his understanding. He assumes that his understanding will result in victorious living. Although it could and should, the reality is that people of faith will fall into sin along the way. I think he/we can realistically declare that a sincere desire to obey combined with understanding will result in more victories than in failures. David is a prime example of this truth. He is described as a man after God's own heart, yet scripture is faithful to record times in which he yielded to the flesh and sinned.

Psa. 119:35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

This is interesting wording. The KJV makes it sound like the Psalmist is asking God to make him do something he delights in doing. The NIV has a better translation.

"Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight."

The Psalmist is aware that God's commands lead to a happier life, but he needs God's continual direction. He realizes that his own wisdom can lead him down the wrong path. The writer of Proverbs expresses it well.

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Psa. 119:36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

"incline" = to stretch or spread out; by implication, to bend away (including moral deflection)...cause to yield

The Psalmist is aware that he needs divine help in directing his thoughts and feelings toward God's testimony, His word. The distractions of the flesh and the world are continually pulling us in the opposite direction. I have often thought it would be nice to be a godly robot, but I realize that would really be limiting the joy that I can experience in my relationship with the Lord. True love comes from the ability to choose to be a part of that relationship and enjoy the growth in intimacy that is experienced by working through the tough times, the challenging times, and coming out of those times stronger and more committed than ever. Sometimes that bond is strengthened through victory in the process; sometimes that bond is strengthened through failure and forgiveness.

“covetousness” – plunder, dishonest gain, greed – Webster: A strong or inordinate desire of obtaining and possessing some supposed good; excessive desire for riches or money.

This word describes the biggest worldly lure that fights against our desire to obey God's word. Webster hits the nail on the head by referencing how we justify these desires as “good.” The tactics of the enemy haven't changed since he confronted Eve in the garden. It's the temptation that God hasn't provided for us sufficiently or that He is holding back for some selfish reason. The last part of Webster's definition made me think of the following verse:

1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Psa. 119:37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

Again, the Psalmist is asking for divine help in making right choices. He is aware that covetousness finds its root in the things we see—just as it did with Eve. I think the better choice from the Hebrew for *beholding* would have been *gaze* or *stare*. You can't always control what passes in front of your eyes, but you can certainly control the duration of your gaze. If David had averted his eyes as soon as he glimpsed Bathsheba, he would probably never have fallen into sin. It's only through immersing ourselves in the Word of God that we will be more likely to heed the guidance of the Spirit when we are confronted with worldly temptations. The Hebrew for *vanity* is a reference to “destructive evil and moral ruin.” Sadly, our world is full of sights that will lead us to destructive choices and moral ruin. Our “entertainment” industry is just a façade for marketing evil and classifying it as normal and/or morally justified on the basis that it's just entertainment and everyone should be able to choose their own morality. The

problem with that way of thinking is that there is no firm moral foundation apart from the Word of God.

“quicken thou me...” – My translation: “preserve my life by directing me into choices established in your word.” The Psalmist is aware that his life is best guarded by living in obedience to God.

Psa. 119:38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

“Stablish” = Abide, accomplish...(make to) stand (up), stir up, strengthen – Webster: To settle permanently in a state; to make firm.

I like the NAS for this verse: *“Establish Your word to Your servant, As that which produces reverence for You.”*

The Psalmist is asking for God’s help in strengthening his commitment to God’s word. It’s a plea to help him recognize all the times that God’s word has proven true in his life so that he can have firm handles to grasp when the going gets tough. I have found myself envious sometimes when reading the scripture and observing God’s visible interaction with men/women. Then I realize that He interacts with me just as surely; I just have to open my eyes and the eyes of my heart and recognize those times of supernatural provision. As His child, I know that I am not subject to luck, but to blessing—not to chance, but to His plan.

Psa. 119:39 Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

I think the NLT captures the heart of the Psalmist in this verse: *“Help me abandon my shameful ways; your laws are all I want in life.”*

The Hebrew root for *reproach* is a reference to being exposed or stripped. The Psalmist recognizes that he is a man born in sin whose heart is naturally wicked. He doesn’t want to be exposed for who he is; he wants to “cross over” (from the Hebrew for *turn away*) to a new way of life based on God’s law/judgments. I thought it was interesting that the Hebrew for “turn away” also referenced “sweet smelling.” The Psalmist knew that crossing over to live according to God’s law would produce a life that was fragrant and produced a sweet savour before the Lord just as surely as the offerings in the temple that were offered in obedience to His word.

Psa. 119:40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Again, I think the NLT expresses the heart of the Psalmist: *“I long to obey your commandments! Renew my life with your goodness.”*

This verse reminds me again of the priceless privilege we have of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Psalmist knew he was dependent upon the Lord for his righteousness, yet he was subject to maintaining his relationship through obedience to the law. I understand that he experienced the presence of the Spirit in his life, but it was a privilege that he feared losing.

Psalm 51:11 "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me."

How often do we take that privilege for granted? How often do we just ignore His presence? He is so ready and willing to empower us to obey if we would just yield.

How much do we "long" for God's word? Webster defines *long* as "to wish for something with eagerness." For too many years of my Christian life I sadly admit that time in scripture was more duty than desire. I can thankfully say that in the last many years His Word has become the focus of my life. I can't get enough of it. My favorite pastime is studying it, searching for its treasures, and trying to unlock its mysteries.

Psa. 119:41 VAU. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word.

As this stanza begins, the Psalmist is asking for God to show him kindness and favor resulting in his salvation/deliverance/safety. He is basing this prayer on God's word. I don't know if this is in reference to one of the general promises made by God as recorded by Moses (Deuteronomy 30:15-16) or more specific to David (1Chronicles 17:26-27) if he was the Psalmist.

Deuteronomy 30:15-16 "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it."

1Chronicles 17:26-27 "And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed for ever."

The important truth to note is that the Psalmist knew that God's word was sure and was a firm foundation upon which to present any request.

Deuteronomy 8:3 "...that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."

Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Psa. 119:42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

This verse follows naturally from the previous one. The Psalmist knows that he can trust God's word, and that based on that word he has no reason to fear the ridicule, censure or rebuke of any man. There will be no valid basis for such censure for the person who is following God in faith in obedience to His word. This goes hand in hand with the counsel of Peter.

1 Peter 3:15 "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear...."

Psa. 119:43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

This verse indicates a chink in the Psalmists armor of faith. He is pleading with the Lord to keep him strong in his faith. The Hebrew for *hoped* is a reference to "patience, be pained, wait, trust." We know that David had proven his hope in God's word as he waited for God to establish him as king. Even so, the Psalmist is expressing his awareness of his need to trust God to supply all his needs—the greatest of which is his faith in God.

Psa. 119:44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

The Psalmist is aware that his ability to obey God's word and reap the benefit of the promises of God is dependent upon his faith.

Psa. 119:45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

This immediately reminds me of the truth Paul taught in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 7:10-14 "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

The Psalmist recognized the truth that Paul was teaching to the Romans. He knew that God's law was good, and that he could live life to the fullest within its safe parameters.

And the words of the Apostle John.

John 8:31-32 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Psa. 119:46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

The Psalmist is declaring a bold faith in his God, the God of Israel, YHWH. It's a truth believers need to embrace boldly today. The Hebrew for *ashamed* states, "to pale," and Webster adds the idea of reacting as though you have done something wrong. We are so indoctrinated with political correctness today and with tolerance and everybody's right to believe how they want, that it has affected our willingness to speak God's truth boldly. We are to speak boldly in love, but that doesn't mean apologizing for God's truth or fearing to speak because someone might have their feelings hurt. Our desire for them to embrace THE truth should override any fear or hesitation we might have in sharing God's word.

Psa. 119:47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

How does one fall in love with God's commandments? By realizing that they are coming from a loving Creator who wants only what is good for us. He has established these commandments to protect us and to enable us to enjoy life to the fullest. The Psalmist knew this.

Psa. 119:48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

In the Jewish culture the lifting of hands often accompanied prayer and worship. It was a natural response before the Lord. It would seem that lifting up his hands to the commandments is the Psalmist's way of expressing his faith in God's provision for him through His commandments. Meditation is a reference to taking time to seriously think about God's truth and how it should impact our lives. Again, it is a natural response regarding something you love.

Psa. 119:49 ZAIN. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

It's interesting how the Psalmist appears to be reminding God not to forget His promises. He would better be reminding himself to remember all the times and ways that God has affirmed His word throughout the history of the nation of Israel and in his own life. Many times we don't even recognize God's hand at work in our lives until after the fact. The more we remind ourselves of His actions in the past, the more likely it is that we will recognize His actions on our behalf in the present.

As I read this verse again, I saw that the Psalmist could be asking God to help him remember God's word instead of the other way around.

Psa. 119:50 This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

It sounds as though the Psalmist is experiencing a time of trouble, or maybe he is just referencing a previous time of trouble, and he knows that it is the promises of God's word that enables one to endure such times. We have a precious promise that mirrors the promises God made to Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations...."

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

It's a reminder that though we may not understand God's ways, we can have confidence in His character.

1John 4:8 "... for God is love."

Psa. 119:51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.

I like the NIV for this verse: *"The arrogant mock me without restraint, but I do not turn from your law."*

Another synonym from the Hebrew for *proud* is presumptuous. This is becoming a truth that believers today are learning first-hand in America more than at any other time in our history. There are those who claim to be biblical experts who berate God's word and deny its inerrancy. They are presumptuous to think that they can give a different meaning to God's declared meaning regarding morality and sin. I believe the day is coming (sooner than we might think) when believers are going to face judgment for standing true to God's word. The Psalmist is declaring that he has proven his faith in God by standing firm on His word in spite of the attacks of the wicked.

Psa. 119:52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

The Psalmist is comforted by the memory of God's judgments based on His word. They have proven dependable. It is very comforting to know that though we may not always

understand His ways and His timing, we can depend on His word and His character. He is unchanging, and fulfillment of His word in the past is evidence of the sure fulfillment of His word in the now and in the future.

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not...."

Psa. 119:53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Remembering God's judgments turns the thoughts of the Psalmist toward those who have chosen to reject Him and His law. It was interesting to see that the Hebrew for *horror* was a reference to anger; Webster goes on to add "a painful emotion of fear, dread, and abhorrence." I believe this should be the response of every person of faith toward the wicked. We should be angry that they so blatantly blaspheme or belittle our God and His truth, and then should be filled with dread for where their wickedness is going to lead them.

Psa. 119:54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

I like the CJB translation of this verse: "*Your laws have become my songs wherever I make my home.*"

This makes me think of the wonderful Christian hymns and choruses that we sing in church that declare God's truth. Music is a wonderful way to memorize God's word. I especially love the praise and worship music that is basically scripture set to music. Interestingly enough, many of those songs come directly from the Psalms.

Psa. 119:55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

Psa. 119:56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

I love the NLT for these two verses: "*I reflect at night on who you are, O LORD, and I obey your law because of this. This is my happy way of life: obeying your commandments.*"

I identify with the Psalmist's thoughts in these verses. In these last several years of my verse-by-verse journey through God's word, my thoughts are directed toward Him much more often than not. The nighttime seems to have many opportunities for special times of reflection and communion without interruption and distraction. Obedience to His word is much easier the more I invest in my relationship and communion with the Lord. I am the happiest I have ever been in my life, and it seems to be directly proportionate to my conscious obedience to His word.

Psa. 119:57 CHETH. *Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.*

The Psalmist is again acknowledging YHWH, the self-existent, eternal God, as his Lord, his inheritance (from the Hebrew). All of any expectation the Psalmist has for the future is bound up in his faith in God. He is stating as proof of his faith the fact that he obeys God's word. That falls in line exactly with what Jesus taught.

John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Psa. 119:58 I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

These words echo the thoughts of Solomon in his prayer before the people when bringing the ark of the covenant to the temple.

1Kings 8:23 "And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepst covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart...."

When one seeks God with his whole heart, the way he conducts his life will reflect that desire. That person can confidently expect to experience God's mercy in response to his faithfulness and obedience. Again, I believe the Psalmist is being influenced by the word of God through Moses.

Deuteronomy 5:9-10 "Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

Psa. 119:59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

Psa. 119:60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

The Psalmist at one point spent some time thinking about how he was living his life—the choices he was making, the priorities he had established in his life, was he making a difference in his world, etc. After that time of reflection, he "turned," the Hebrew references a return to the starting point, which if David is the Psalmist, was as a shepherd boy with a strong, unwavering faith in His God and the mindset to live accordingly. Upon reflection, the Psalmist found that he had wandered out of the protective parameters that God had established for him. He didn't hesitate to repent and choose to obey God once he had identified the problem. He eagerly turned his life around to again reflect the faith and obedience toward God from which he had strayed.

Psa. 119:61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law.

I tend to think that the NLT gives the essence of what the Psalmist is thinking. *“Evil people try to drag me into sin, but I am firmly anchored to your law.”*

The person of faith is ever being confronted by the wicked with the temptation to indulge the flesh. Peer pressure is one of the enemy’s strongest attack modes. The Psalmist finds the strength to reject that pressure through the law of God that has been firmly embedded in his mind/heart. This was exactly the mentality of the Savior when confronted with the temptation of Satan in the wilderness. (see Matthew 4)

Psa. 119:62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

As I looked at the Hebrew for “rise,” I found some of the following entries thought provoking: confirm, continue, strengthen, succeed. At first read, it seems to be a statement of just waking up in the middle of the night to thank God for His word, His law (from the Hebrew for *judgments*). I was hit with the thought in connection with the last verse that maybe this was a statement of the Psalmist’s strength to succeed in beating the temptation through the power of God’s word. The works of the wicked are often equated with night and darkness.

Job 30:26 “When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness.”

John 3:19 “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

The Psalmist may be saying that in the midst of his struggle against the attacks of the enemy, he is able to stand strong in the power of God’s word.

Psa. 119:63 I am a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

The word *companion* is a reference to someone with whom you are “knit together,” one with whom you enjoy close fellowship. The Psalmist is stating a heart connection to others who have chosen to fear God and obey His word because they trust Him. Again, that is a principle every believer should embrace.

Proverbs 4:14 “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.”

2Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

1John 1:6-7 "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Psa. 119:64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

The main word that jumps out from the Hebrew for *mercy* is kindness; Webster adds the idea of compassionate treatment of an offender or adversary." The Psalmist states an awareness of the abundance of God's mercy toward man by describing it as full to overflowing. Based on that mercy, the Psalmist is imploring the Lord to *teach* him; the Hebrew implies that he is asking for God to use His rod of correction as necessary to impress upon him the truth of His word.

Psa. 119:65 TETH. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

This stanza begins with the Psalmist's acknowledgement that God is true to His word. He had promised that those who followed Him in love and obedience would be blessed. He had also promised that he would send judgment for disobedience.

Deuteronomy 8:5 "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, *so* the LORD thy God chasteneth thee."

Joshua 23:14 "And, behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, **that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you**; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof."

1Samuel 12:14-15 "If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers."

Joshua 1:8 "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

The Psalmist is thanking God for dealing well with him. He had been blessed because he had served God in faith and obedience.

Psa. 119:66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

The Psalmist is asking for God to continue to teach him. Again, the Hebrew for *teach* references the use of a goad or rod if necessary. This reflects the sincerity of his request. He wants to learn whatever the cost. He doesn't want to just know facts; he wants to have the ability to understand and utilize the knowledge he possesses. The Psalmist is basing his request on the fact that he has believed God's law.

Psa. 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

As with most of us, there was a time in the Psalmist's life when he disobeyed God's law and had to be chastened. On a positive note, he seems to have learned his lesson. He can now describe himself as a man of faith and obedience. The Hebrew for *kept* indicates that he has recognized God's law as a hedge that is meant to surround and protect him.

Psa. 119:68 Thou *art* good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

David had echoed this truth as king.

1Chronicles 16:34 "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

I also love a verse from the prophet Nahum that declares the same truth.

Nahum 1:7 "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."

I think this is a statement from the Psalmist that he knows that all God's laws and statutes are for good, and he wants to fully understand them as such. We all have to admit that as we read scripture, there are things that God instructs the people of Israel to do that don't seem good. The more time we spend in the word asking God to help us understand, we begin to see His love and wisdom for His people through these commands. The Psalmist is committed to obeying God's laws, but just like most of us, he wants to understand the purpose behind the command.

Psa. 119:69 The proud have forged a lie against me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.

The Psalmist is evidently being slandered by a group of people he describes as *proud* (arrogant, insulting, rude). Those who slander others are usually motivated by jealousy or other selfish purposes. The Psalmist is not going to let these people get him down. He is going to stay faithful to the Lord and put all his effort into obeying His word.

Psa. 119:70 Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.

The Hebrew for *fat* referenced being thick or stupid. It would seem that the Psalmist is describing them as having thick hearts that are unable to feel. I decided to do a phrase search on Google and found this insight from Nancy Missler at <http://www.khouse.org/articles/2004/499>.

“Psalm 119:70 ...says that when we make emotional choices, our hearts become "fat as grease" (like kitchen lard!). This grease, then, not only clogs, chokes out and quenches any communication or personal leading from God, it also causes us to become insensitive and unfeeling towards others.... It's interesting to note that in a real life situation, when you put grease or fat on a physical burn, you not only make that area insensitive and resistant to healing, you also cause a scar to be formed in its place. Sin and self are just like that grease - they not only make us insensitive and resistant to God's leading, they also leave scars on our lives. In other words, we always reap the consequences of our wrong choices....”

Obviously, those who would slander others are not delighting in God's law. The Psalmist is declaring himself as one who delights in God's law and would never treat others as he is being treated.

Psa. 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

This verse appears to be referencing verse 67. The Psalmist is able to identify this experience as one that has changed his heart; it has made him more sensitive to how our actions impact others. Experience is always an opportunity for learning. When we have been on the receiving end of mistreatment by others, we don't want to be in the position of treating others the same way. The Psalmist's experience has caused him to want to learn God's law and live by it.

Psa. 119:72 The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

This verse shows that the Psalmist knows the difference in earthly riches and spiritual riches. He knows that the word of God is far more important to his well being than any material wealth he possesses.

Psa. 119:73 JOD. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

The Psalmist recognizes God as his Creator. I get the idea that he is asking God to bring him to a level of understanding that matches the glory of his physical design. He wants to learn God's commandments. The Hebrew for *learn* indicates that he wants to be an expert in understanding God's law; he wants to diligently apply his learning to his life.

Psa. 119:74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

This expression of the Psalmist should reflect the heart of every person who loves God; we should rejoice every time we see someone else who loves God and patiently waits (from the Hebrew for *hoped*) for God to work out His plan for their life because they trust in His word. When we are steadfast in our faith no matter what life may throw our way, it is an encouragement to others of the family of faith.

Psa. 119:75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

The Psalmist has complete trust in God's judgments. I think in context that he is still referencing the affliction he is enduring that is being inflicted by the proud, slanderous people mentioned earlier. Instead of bemoaning his situation or complaining about the injustice of it all, the Psalmist sees that God's hand is ever in control. He knows that his Creator would never have allowed this situation to afflict him without good reason. It would seem he recognized the truth stated by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Psa. 119:76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

Every child of God knows that he is undeserving of God's love and kindness; it is an expression of His mercy.

Exodus 34:6 "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...."

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations...."

1Kings 8:23 "And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepeth covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart...."

I continue to notice the Psalmist's foundation for all his thoughts as coming from the books of Moses in particular. Mercy is God's expression of compassion and pity towards those who are suffering and cannot help themselves. The Psalmist has learned that it is in God's word, His promises, His law, that the man of faith can find comfort. I liked Webster's definition for comfort: "To make strong; to invigorate; to fortify... To assist or help; to aid... To impart strength and hope to; to encourage." I think we should learn to make application of this truth when ministering to those in need. The Psalmist could find comfort in God's word because that word is full of promise and commitment to act on behalf of those who love Him. When we give comfort to others it should be more than just an expression of words; it should be with the intent to strengthening their faith, encouraging their spirit, and giving help where possible.

Psa. 119:77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

The Hebrew for "tender mercies" is a reference to the type of love a mother has for her unborn child; an understanding that that baby is totally dependent upon you for his survival. The Psalmist is positioning himself before God as that helpless baby. He knows that his life is totally dependent on the provision and protection of God. He delights in God's law because it is in that law that he finds God's promise of blessing and protection to those that love Him.

Deuteronomy 5:29 "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"

Deuteronomy 5:33 "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."

Deuteronomy 30:120 "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days...."

Psa. 119:78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.

This verse is basically an expression of the Psalmist's willingness to leave the judgment of the proud to the Lord. As I looked at the Hebrew and Webster for the word *ashamed*, I began to think that the Psalmist is praying for his enemies to be convicted of their wrongdoing. He is clear in stating that he has been willfully mistreated without justification. He then commits to meditating in God's word instead of letting his mind brood over how he has been wronged. Good advice for us all.

Psa. 119:79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

It would seem that the Psalmist has experienced some adverse reactions from others based on the slander about him. He is asking for the Lord to make the truth known so that those who fear God, just as he does, will again look on him favorably. Maybe they see events as a judgment for sin in the Psalmist's life. It is amazing how often we draw the wrong conclusions from the trouble that God allows in the lives of fellow believers.

Psa. 119:80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

The word *heart* is a reference to the will and intellect. The Psalmist is praying for his heart to be without blemish in regard to God's statutes. His desire is for his life to reflect what he knows to be the truth from God's word. He also knows that a life lived according to God's word will protect him from ever being in a position to have to repent or feel shame for his actions. I ditto that prayer.

Psa. 119:81 CAPH. My soul fainteth for thy salvation: *but* I hope in thy word.

As I read through this stanza, I got the feeling that the Psalmist was getting more discouraged again. That is so "human." The Psalmist is wishing for an end (from the Hebrew for *fainteth*) to his time of affliction. I like the way the CJB puts it: "I am dying to know your salvation..." Even as he expresses his despair, he expresses his confidence in God's word. I am reminded of the words of the desperate father wanting deliverance for his son from demon possession as told by Mark: *Mark 9:24* "...Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

I have uttered this phrase in prayer many times.

Psa. 119:82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

The Hebrew for the word *fail* is the same as the one translated *fainteth* in the previous verse. This is the Hebrew poet using poetic repetition to make his point. At the end of this verse, however, he is wondering when God is going to comfort him? Again, I can identify. In the midst of a "valley" experience, it's one thing to know God's word and another to be able to embrace its truth and apply it to your life. We are so zoned in on the "time" factor, the now, that we forget that God's accounting of time is not the same.

We also tend to forget that it takes time for us and/or those around us to benefit from our experiences. God's comfort is His word, His promise—and He or it will never fail. It is made certain to us through His character as proven in the past and recorded in His word and/or in history, or through our own previous experiences. The word "when" indicates that the Psalmist is aware of the truth; he knows God will provide.

Psa. 119:83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

In the time of the Psalmist bottles were made of animal skins. When exposed to the heat and smoke they would obviously dry out and shrivel up. I think the Psalmist is feeling spiritually dried out and shriveled. I decided to do a phrase search on Google and found the following excerpt from a sermon by Charles Spurgeon at www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0071.htm.

"The figure of "a bottle in the smoke" is essentially oriental; we must therefore go to the East for its explanation. This we will supply to our hearers and readers in the words of the Author of the Pictorial Bible: "This doubtless refers to a leathern bottle, of kid or goat-skin. The peasantry of Asia keep many articles, both dry and liquid, in such bottles, which, for security, are suspended from the roof, or hung against the walls of their humble dwellings. Here they soon become quite black with smoke....When such vessels do not contain liquids, and are not quite filled by the solids which they hold, they contract a shrunk and shrivelled appearance....First, *God's people have their trials*—they get put in the smoke; secondly, *God's people feel their trials*—they "become like a bottle in the smoke;" thirdly, *God's people do not forget God's statutes in their trials*—"I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes."

In other words, the believer might find himself spiritually and/or physically faint and weary, but he always has *hope* (confident expectation) of deliverance according to God's word.

Psa. 119:84 How many *are* the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

The Psalmist is still wondering how long his affliction is going to last, and has gotten to the point of wanting God to judge those who are persecuting him. I am reminded of the verse in Revelation when the fifth seal is opened and the souls under the altar are wondering *when* God is going to avenge them.

Revelation 6:9-10 "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Again, the word *when* denotes expectation.

Psa. 119:85 The proud have digged pits for me, which *are* not after thy law.

The Psalmist is bemoaning the fact that the proud have plotted (from the Hebrew for *digged*) his pit-fall; their slander was with malicious intent. They are not acting in accordance with God's law—implying that to be in direct contrast to the Psalmist who is following God's law. In other words, it's not fair; they deserve to be judged.

Psa. 119:86 All thy commandments *are* faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.

It's like the Psalmist is trying to encourage himself—

- God's word is faithful and true.
- I am being wrongfully persecuted.
- I should be able to expect God's protection.

So he cries out for God to intervene on his behalf.

Psa. 119:87 They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

It would seem that the Psalmist had come close to dying, in his eyes at least, due to this wrongful persecution. He is reminding God that in spite of his helplessness, he clung to God's word as his hope.

Psa. 119:88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

The Psalmist is asking for God to revive him (body and soul) according to His kindness and mercy. This statement acknowledges God's character, his own position of helplessness and the fact that he is undeserving of that help. The last phrase is a commitment to live his life in obedience to God's word; he doesn't want to die. I am reminded of the words of King Hezekiah.

*Isaiah 38:16-19 "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For **the grave cannot praise thee**, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, **the living, he shall praise thee**, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth."*

Psa. 119:89 LAMED. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

"For ever" = i.e. the vanishing point; generally, time out of mind

We can talk about the concept and generally understand it, but I believe we don't really grasp "forever." That's why I liked the Hebrew reference to "time out of mind." God's word is settled/established/firm/unchanging. Scripture emphasizes this truth time and again.

*Deuteronomy 8:3 "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but **by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.**"*

*2Samuel 22:31 "As for God, his way is perfect; **the word of the LORD is tried**: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him."*

*1Kings 8:56 "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: **there hath not failed one word of all his good promise**, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."*

*Isaiah 55:11 "So shall **my word** be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it **shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**"*

*John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth.**"*

*1Peter 1:25 "But **the word of the Lord endureth for ever.**"*

The scripture is full of statements that things have come about according to God's word or affirmations of "as it is written."

I couldn't help but make note of the distinction being made that God's word is settled "in heaven." I think this is an emphasis of God's sovereignty throughout all His creation. I believe that we are the jewel of His creation and that He has ordered that creation for our well being. This is all according to His sovereign will—not because we are deserving.

Psa. 119:90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

The Psalmist understood that God's faithfulness is part of His character; it's part of who He is. He is committed to fulfilling His word, and that word includes His provision and promises for mankind. It is God who established the earth. The Hebrew for *established* references "render sure, fashion, fasten, firm, be fitted, be fixed, order, make provision,

be stable," among other things. I think this emphasizes the truth of Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 1:16 "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, **and by him all things consist.**"

"consist" – held together, supported and maintained

Psa. 119:91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

"They" = heaven, all generations, the earth

Again, this makes reference to the truth declared by Paul in Colossians. It is God who is sovereign; He makes the rules; He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and all creation is there to serve and honor Him.

Psa. 119:92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

I think about the implications of this verse often. In my mind it is more often expressed as, "How do people live who have no hope in the future in Christ?" or "How can people live without the meaning in life that is ours in Christ?" or "How do people find comfort in times of trouble without Christ?" All of these truths are ours to embrace through God's word. Except we delight in His law, His word, His promises, there are no good answers.

Psa. 119:93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

The Psalmist is declaring his commitment to God's word because he has personally experienced God's blessing and provision for him according to His word.

Psa. 119:94 I *am* thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

In this verse the Psalmist is declaring his total dependence upon God as his Father, his Creator, his Master. He knows that he has no hope apart from God.

Psa. 119:95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.

"The wicked" is another reference to those who are afflicting the Psalmist. He knows that they are patiently waiting for him to break down and be destroyed by their persecution. He is determined to endure by holding fast to the truth of God's word.

He is not focusing on his troubles; he is focusing on the promises of God. We should seek to emulate the Psalmist in our dark times.

Psa. 119:96 I have seen an end of all perfection: *but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

I did a phrase search on the first half of this phrase and found that this verse is the basis for the saying, "All good things must come to an end." Then I found that the Book of Common Prayer translates this verse as, "I see that all things come to an end." In an exposition on this verse by Charles Spurgeon (www.eternallifeministries.org/psalm119l.htm) I found that he interpreted "perfection" as referring to man. The root word in Hebrew for *perfection* states:

"to end, whether intransitive (to cease, be finished, perish) or transitived (to complete, prepare, consume)...."

The Hebrew for *end* states:

"an extremity; adverbially (with prepositional prefix) after...."

Maybe the Book of Common Prayer has the best interpretation. More important, however, is the truth that God's word is "exceeding broad." In other words, God's word declares Him to be more than sufficient to provide beyond what we need.

Psa. 119:97 MEM. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

This verse would indicate that the Psalmist is a happy man; he has emerged from his spiritual valley.

Psalm 1:1-2 "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

Psa. 119:98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me.

In this verse the Psalmist is acknowledging that the man of faith usually has enemies. Those who position themselves against men and women of faith are also positioning themselves against God—the focus of their faith. This shows their lack of wisdom.

Job 28:28 "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Those who fear the Lord are wise. That fear or reverence of Almighty God is evidenced in someone's life by how he/she lives, and one who fears the Lord lives according to His commandments, His word.

Psa. 119:99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

It would seem that the Psalmist didn't consider his teachers to be strong men of faith. Or maybe he is saying that his personal life experience has given him the opportunity to more fully understand God's word through having to depend on it. His troubles have caused him to make God's word his focus, his comfort, his strength.

Psa. 119:100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

In this verse the Psalmist is declaring his understanding to be greater than those who have lived longer lives than he—evidently without regard to God's word since he makes the comparison to himself as one who obeys God's word.

Or maybe he is referencing the Jews of old who had rebelled against God.

Psa. 119:101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

This verse is yet another expression of the Psalmist's determination to live according to the commands and truth of God's word. He has made deliberate choices to avoid evil. It's a sad fact that so many believers fall into sin just because they have not been careful to avoid places and/or circumstances that subject them to temptation.

Psa. 119:102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

The Psalmist credits his ability to make good judgments to God's teaching. The context of this psalm seems to indicate that the greatest part of that teaching has come through God's word, though I am sure that his experiences that prove the truth of that word have influence as well. God only allows experiences that will work for good to enter the lives of those who love Him. He is still the teacher through those experiences. This truth is affirmed by one of my favorite verses.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Psa. 119:103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

It is obvious to me that anyone who victoriously chooses to avoid evil and live in obedience to God has to delight in God's word. One of Webster's definitions for the word *taste* applies: "To partake of; to participate in; — usually with an implied sense of relish or pleasure." The Hebrew for *sweet* also references pleasure. In other words, the man of faith savors the truth of God's word and takes pleasure in spending time in it to learn from it. This verse expresses my sentiments toward God's word now more than at any other time in my life. I truly enjoy going through His word verse by verse and

seeking the teaching of the Spirit to learn its precious truths and how to apply them to my life and what is happening in the world around me.

Psa. 119:104 Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

God's word is the only standard by which we can judge what is true and moral, good and evil, right and wrong. When we delight in God's word, we truly dislike and have an aversion to actions that go against its teaching. We understand that those who reject His word and act accordingly are not only hurting themselves, they are hurting others.

Psa. 119:105 NUN. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

This stanza begins with the Psalmist declaring God's word to be the means through which he finds direction. A lamp and light speak of illumination and the ability to see a clear way before you. It speaks of the ability to avoid dangerous obstacles and clearly discern signs that ensure you are going the right way.

Psa. 119:106 I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

It was interesting to note that several of the translations translate *perform* as *confirm*, which is a good choice from the Hebrew; but I also liked some other options—make good, strengthen, succeed. The Hebrew for *sworn* was very interesting—“to seven oneself, i.e. swear (as if by repeating a declaration seven times)...” This definition intrigued me so I went searching on the internet for more insight and found two excerpts that I thought were interesting.

From “I Will Bring You Back: The Story of Jacob, His Sons, and His God,” by Sue Sandidge:

“The most important feature of Beersheba was the great well dug by Jacob's ancestors. The Bible tells two stories about the digging of this well. According to E's story the well was dug by Abraham, who made a treaty with Abimelech, the king of the nearby city-state of Gerar, which guaranteed Abraham the right to use it (see Holman, p. 162; Genesis 21:25-31). At this time the word for swearing an oath, *shava*, meant, literally, “to declare seven times” or “to commit oneself using seven things” (Holman, p.1030). A person who made an oath—*shava*—made a promise seven—*sheva*—times over. On this occasion Abraham gave Abimelech seven ewe lambs to attest to the truth of his statement that he had dug this well himself, and Abraham and Abimelech swore mutual oaths of non-aggression (Genesis 21:28-31). The word *beer* means “well,” and so the name “Beersheba” meant “well of the oath” or “well of the seven (promises).”

From the January 2006 issue of Walk Thru the Bible's "Closer Walk" magazine.

In the Old Testament, God used the name "I AM" to identify Himself to His people in Egyptian bondage (Exodus 3:14-15). What clearer claim to deity could there be than for Jesus to **declare seven times** over: "I AM..." in John's gospel? "I am ... bread ... light ... the good shepherd ... the door ... the resurrection ... the way ... the vine."

I decided to read through the psalm and see how many times the Psalmist committed to keep God's law and found 16 times. Of course, there were numerous other references to having kept or expressing delight in, love for, or desiring to learn about God's word. I also found another verse that seems to apply to this verse and the meaning for *swear*.

Psalm 119:164 "Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments."

I am confident, based on his declaration of love for God's word and his many references to scripture, that the Psalmist was well aware of the importance of keeping an oath or vow before God.

Numbers 30:2 "If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."

Deuteronomy 23:21 "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."

Psa. 119:107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word. The Psalmist is declaring himself in a position of intense affliction; those who are persecuting him are passionate in their hatred for him (according to the Hebrew). He is calling on God to keep His word, to revive him and give him strength. Again, his request is rooted in the truth of scripture.

Leviticus 18:5 "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD."

Deuteronomy 4:40 "Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever."

1Samuel 2:9 "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail."

Psa. 119:108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

I remember being surprised when I first learned that God considered the heartfelt words of our mouth in the context of sacrifices and offerings.

*Jeremiah 33:11 "The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring **the sacrifice of praise** into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD."*

*Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer **the sacrifice of praise** to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."*

It seems like such a small thing to express our thanks, praise and love for God, Who has done soooooo much for us. I think the Lord considers it a sacrifice and offering because it's coming from a heart of love and appreciation and in direct rejection of the world and the god of this world—Satan. He is well aware of our humanity and the effort it takes to yield to Him and reject temptation—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

1 John 2:15–16 "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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."

Psa. 119:109 My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

I think the Psalmist is stating an awareness of his responsibility in the choices he makes. He is not a robot. It seems he is also stating that although the choice is not always easy, he is committed to keeping God's law.

Psa. 119:110 The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

The Psalmist reiterates that the wicked are trying to trap him in wrongdoing, but he is holding fast to the truth of God's word. It would seem that so far he has avoided being caught. When the man of faith is obedient to the word of God, he will never get caught in wrongdoing.

Psa. 119:111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

When I looked at the Hebrew for *heritage*, I was reminded that when you inherit something it becomes your possession. The Psalmist is declaring God's word a

possession in which he delights. He has made it his personal possession by faith evidenced by how he lives. He also seems to understand that the man of faith will live forever with God.

Psa. 119:112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

I thought the CJB had the best translation for this verse: *"I have resolved to obey your laws forever, at every step."*

The Hebrew for *alway* was a reference to forever. The Hebrew for *end* included "a heel, i.e. (figuratively) the last of anything (used adverbially, for ever); also result, i.e. compensation...*reward*." It didn't seem to be in context to relate to the end of his time of affliction or the end of his life. I believe he had eternity in mind in context with the previous verse. I think his focus is on eternal *reward*.

Psa. 119:113 SAMECH. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

"thoughts" = divided (in mind), i.e. (concretely) a skeptic—thought.

As is often the case, the word *vain* as added by the translators was misleading. Once I saw the Hebrew, my mind immediately went to a verse in James.

James 1:8 "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Webster's definitions for a *skeptic* gives a clearer understanding: "A doubter as to whether any fact or truth can be certainly known... A person who doubts the existence and perfections of God, or the truth of revelation..." The Psalmist has already declared his companionship with those who fear God and keep His precepts (v63). He is declaring himself an enemy of all who refuse to accept God's word as truth and, in turn, the God Who has declared that truth.

Psa. 119:114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

The Psalmist is acknowledging that his only sure cover, protection, and defense is God. God has revealed Himself through His word, and the Psalmist is willing to wait patiently (from Hebrew for *hope*) for God to act according to His word, knowing that His timing and purposes are beyond our understanding. The prophet Isaiah expressed this truth beautifully in some of my favorite verses.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Psa. 119:115 Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

The Psalmist is boldly declaring to those that are trying to trap him in wrongdoing that they might as well give up and go away. He is earnestly committed to keeping the commandments of "his" God. (Note: The personal possessive is not in the Hebrew for the King James, but is in the Hebrew for the NIV. All nine translations that I normally use include the personal possessive.) I think the Psalmist chooses the word *elohiym* instead of YHWH because he is talking to evil doers that do not accept God as the one and only. Elohiym is a reference to gods in general, and the Psalmist is making a distinction between "his" God and any other "god."

Psa. 119:116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

I think the NLT gives a good sense of the heart of the Psalmist. *"LORD, sustain me as you promised, that I may live! Do not let my hope be crushed."*

I think this is an honest plea from the heart of a man of faith who is in the position of waiting on God's timing in answer to his prayer and doesn't understand why it is taking so long (from his perspective).

Psa. 119:117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

The Psalmist is again declaring his dependency upon God to provide him the strength he needs to endure until the time of deliverance. Again, he expresses his determination to look to God's word as his anchor.

Psa. 119:118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.

After looking at the Hebrew, I would paraphrase it this way: "You have weighed and found wanting or despised those that have used your statutes deceitfully: their fraud is a lie of deceit."

This should be a strong warning to many professing Christians today who play fast and loose with God's word towards their own purposes.

Psa. 119:119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

"Dross" is the scum or refuse that is thrown away in the refining process of metals. The Psalmist is equating the wicked with useless garbage. He makes no bones about the

fact that one of his motivations for loving God's word is that it is through faith and obedience to God as declared in His word that he is deemed of value before God.

Psa. 119:120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

The Psalmist is reverent in his attitude before God. He has a healthy fear of God's power and authority in judgment. Webster defines reverence as a mixture of awe, fear, respect and affection.

Psa. 119:121 AIN. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

In doing a phrase search for "judgment and justice," this is a phrase that gives support for David authoring this Psalm.

2Samuel 8:15 "And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people."

1Chronicles 18:14 "So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people."

It is just human frailty for us to approach God with—I've done what you said; why am I still being persecuted. It is so hard to try to think with God's concept of time when we are living in earthly time. It's hard to remember that God is working His purposes for good when we are hurting or suffering or in trouble.

Psa. 119:122 Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

This verse follows naturally on the heels of my thoughts in the previous verse. The Psalmist is looking for an end to his oppression; he is eager to see God act in deliverance on his behalf. *Surety* is a reference to being connected with someone so as to act on their behalf.

Psa. 119:123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

The Psalmist is giving us a word picture of looking so long for God to deliver him that he can no longer hold his eyes open; they won't focus any more; he's weary with the wait. "The word of thy righteousness" is a reference to God's promises. He is expecting God to deliver him based on His word. Again, the Psalmist is being transparent with his feelings and emotions.

Psa. 119:124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

The Psalmist seems to realize that the last statement reflected a dwindling faith, so he follows up with a request for God to be merciful in His response and to continue to teach him his laws through whatever means necessary for him to actually learn.

Psa. 119:125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

The Psalmist again declares himself to be God's *servant*, one who freely and willingly serves and worships Him. The Psalmist wants knowledge with understanding concerning God's word; he wants to be able to think and act wisely with discernment (from the Hebrew for *understanding*).

Psa. 119:126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

Just as we often do, the Psalmist is presuming to tell God what to do based on his own observation—He needs to act now since these wicked people have discredited and broken God's law. In other words, "God, You need to act now in defense of Your own honor." Scripture reveals that this argument is not without precedence. Moses used it when God expressed His desire to destroy the Jews in the wilderness and start over with Moses.

Exodus 32:9-12 "And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people."

Psa. 119:127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

The Psalmist is stating his understanding of the fact that to possess God's word is to possess a treasure far more valuable than gold. In other words, this was a treasure that would benefit him for eternity.

Psa. 119:128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

I think the CJB translation expresses the heart of the Psalmist best: "*Thus I direct my steps by [your] precepts; every false way I hate.*"

If we truly esteem or believe something to be the truth, it should be reflected in how we live.

Psa. 119:129 PE. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

“wonderful” = a miracle:—marvellous thing, wonder(-ful, -fully).

The Psalmist’s attitude towards God’s word is one of wonder and awe. There was a statement in Webster for the word marvelous that I liked: “We speak of a thing as *wonderful* when it awakens our surprise and admiration; as *marvelous* when it is so much out of the ordinary course of things as to seem nearly or quite incredible.”

I think this statement is inspired by the unbelievable promises that are included in God’s word for those who follow Him in faith and obedience. It is truly beyond understanding that any of us who claim Jesus as LORD struggle with obedience in consideration of these promises.

Psa. 119:130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

The Psalmist recognized God’s word as a source of light and illumination to understanding. The Hebrew for simple states, “silly (i.e. seducible):—foolish....” There are many scriptures that describe the simple and foolish.

- They don’t possess a strong knowledge base. - *Proverbs 9:13* “A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.”
- They are gullible. - *Proverbs 14:15* “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.”
- They are easily deceived. - *Romans 16:18* “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
- They blaspheme God’s name. - *Psalms 74:22* “Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.”
- They are prideful. - *Proverbs 14:3* “In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.”
- They do not know God and are wise to do evil. - *Jeremiah 4:22* “For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.”
- They are categorized with those who are disobedient, deceived, worldly, malicious, jealous, and full of hate. - *Titus 3:3* “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”

When I first read this verse, I equated the simple with those who didn’t have much or hadn’t developed their intellectual capabilities. This is just another example of how

language and culture can hinder a good understanding of scripture. The Psalmist is declaring God's word sufficient to give understanding to anyone who is willing to listen with the right heart attitude—no matter their education, character or lifestyle.

Psa. 119:131 I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

Again, the Psalmist paints a word picture to describe his desire to understand and embrace God's word in his life. The Hebrew for *panted* is quite descriptive, "to inhale eagerly." This speaks to me of memorizing God's word, internalizing it and making it a part of you.

Psa. 119:132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

I thought the CJB was a better translation: *"Turn to me, and show me your favor; in keeping with [your] judgment for those who love your name."*

The KJV makes it sound like God quit being merciful for a time; and we know that isn't true since mercy is a part of His character, and He is unchanging.

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not...."

One doesn't love God's name without loving the God it identifies. God always shows mercy to those that love Him, and it is available in limitless supply.

Exodus 20:5-6 "... for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God....And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations...."

Lamentations 3:22-23 "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."

Ephesians 2:4" But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us...."

Psa. 119:133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

The Hebrew for *order* had several interesting choices; "establish, render sure, direct, and make provision" were a few that stood out to me as having application to the possible thoughts of the Psalmist. Again, it's a statement of his dependence upon and faith in

God. He is asking God to give him clear direction, to give him determination, and to strengthen him in making choices that are obedient to and in harmony with His word. He does not want sin to dominate in any area of his life.

Psa. 119:134 Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

The Psalmist is well aware that the unjust treatment of other people can bring out the worst in us. It promotes feelings of hate and a desire to get even. It can cause us to begin to doubt if God really is watching out for our good. The Psalmist doesn't want anything in his life that might tempt him to disobey God's law.

Psa. 119:135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

"Make thy face to shine upon" is a reference to the blessings, protection and peace of God.

Numbers 6:24-26 "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

The Psalmist, as do all people of faith, desires to experience all the blessings that God has promised him. He knows that blessing is directly connected to learning from and living by God's word.

Psa. 119:136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Again, the Psalmist is painting a word picture of a man who is heartbroken and sobbing with grief when he breaks one of God's commands.

The obvious application—Can I honestly say the same?

Psa. 119:137 TZADDI. Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.

This is another statement of God's righteousness in judgment. It makes sense in the flow of thought regarding distress at the thought of breaking God's commands. The Psalmist knows that any judgment from God as a result of that sin will be just.

Psa. 119:138 Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.

The Psalmist is declaring God's word to be just and true. God is clear about consequences for choosing to reject Him and His word, and equally clear about the blessings associated with obedience to His word. Disobedience brings judgment, and obedience brings blessing.

Psa. 119:139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

“zeal” – jealousy or envy

None of the translations really conveyed what I feel the Psalmist is saying. Because of the context, I believe the Psalmist is talking about his zeal for God’s word in contrast to his enemies’ total disregard for God’s word. It would seem that the word “because” should be translated “but” (which is a valid choice from the NIV Strong’s).

Psa. 119:140 Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

God’s word is pure; it is perfect; it has no defect. It is complete truth; it is dependable. The Psalmist knew he could obey God’s word without question; he could be confident in God’s provision for him as promised in His word.

Psa. 119:141 I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.

The first part of this verse reminds me of the thought expressed by David in Psalm 8.

Psalm 8:4 “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?”

The Psalmist considers himself as insignificant among God’s creation. Still, he is God’s creation, and he loves his Creator. He treasures his Creator’s words.

I certainly identify with the heart of the psalmist in this verse. I feel really insignificant sometimes in light of the whole of creation. Yet, miracle of miracles, I am a child of God through faith in Jesus as my Savior. I am precious in His sight.

Psa. 119:142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

This is a statement of the eternal nature of God, which implies that the truth of God’s word is eternal as well.

Psa. 119:143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.

The Psalmist is experiencing a time of trouble at the time of writing this psalm. In spite of his circumstances, he is delighting in God’s word. I think this is a hard truth with which to identify until you experience it for yourself. Faith in God’s word is where the man/woman of faith finds hope to endure the tough times. God’s word provides the motivation to be patient in peace while he/she waits for God to accomplish His purposes on their behalf. And His purposes are always for the good of those that love Him. I just can’t overemphasize this truth and the verse that affirms it in Romans.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Psa. 119:144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

Again, the Psalmist acknowledges the eternal nature of the truth of God's word. I can't help but think that in context the Psalmist is connecting his understanding [and obedience to implied] of God's word with his own eternal future.

Psa. 119:145 KOPH. I cried with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

The Psalmist begins this stanza with a declaration that his prayer is sincere and is of the highest priority on his prayer list so to speak. He is pleading with God to hear him, to pay attention and answer him. For his part, he promises to be obedient to God's word. Frankly, that's a very lopsided bargain; but it is a valid request based on God's promises.

Psa. 119:146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Repetition is one of the characteristics of Hebrew poetry. This verse repeats and gives emphasis to the heart cry of the previous verse.

Psa. 119:147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. "prevented" = precede, anticipate

In other words, the Psalmist was calling out to the Lord in the early hours before dawn. He prayed with the expectation that God would answer him based on His word.

Psa. 119:148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

Not only does the Psalmist arise early to pray, he stays up late to meditate in God's word. Interestingly, the Hebrew for *meditate* includes the idea of praying and talking to God. It reminds me of Paul's declaration that we should "pray without ceasing" (1Thessalonians 5:17). I have found that when I am truly burdened, I spend more time crying out to God regarding that burden.

Psa. 119:149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

The Psalmist is asking God to respond to his request "according to His lovingkindness." As I think back on my journey through this psalm, it seems that many of his requests are based on God's promises to act in accordance with His promises to those that obey

Him and trust Him. It would seem that he is aware at this point that the best basis for his prayer is according to God's kindness and mercy. I am always acutely aware that God's love for His children is the foundational truth for my greatest expectation. I am not always lovable, but I am always loved.

The Psalmist is also aware that God's determination regarding how and when to answer his prayer is best. It hasn't kept him from pleading for God to hear him and answer him now. Still, he knows that he can trust God to respond in His time according to His purposes.

Psa. 119:150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

It would seem that the Psalmist's enemies are closing in, and he is feeling great pressure from their attack. He is reminding God that these enemies have no regard for God's law (implied: "like I do"). In other words, "Doesn't this mean that you should intervene now?"

Psa. 119:151 Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

Maybe he doesn't always feel it, since he seems to vacillate between despair and confidence, weariness and strength; but the Psalmist knows that God is with Him. David expressed it beautifully.

Psalm 139:7-12 "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

He knows that God's word is true, and he can rest on His promises.

Psa. 119:152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

The Psalmist again affirms his awareness of the concept of eternity. The best verse I can find before the times of the Psalmist that indicate an awareness of eternal existence is from Job.

Job 19:26 "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God...."

If the Psalmist didn't have this expectation, it seems to me it wouldn't be important to him to affirm the truth of God's word for eternity because it would have no impact on him.

Psa. 119:153 RESH. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

The Psalmist takes two steps backwards again. Oh, how I relate. He has just declared that he understands that God knows what is best for Him and that His promises are true. He also understands that God is "near" him (vs 151). Now he goes right back to pleading with God to direct His attention to his situation. It's like he is asking God to take another look, and he knows that He will decide to deliver him now. Why? Because he does not forget His law. Again, a valid request--but a veiled inference that God has forgotten His promise. What happened to "according to thy lovingkindness?" But can't we all relate? It seems like we often like to give God advice regarding His answer to our prayers.

Psa. 119:154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

Now the wording gets stronger. He goes from "consider" to "plead" (*defend* from the Hebrew). Again, he bases his request on God's word, but he is more strongly inserting his feelings into how and when God should respond. It seems his patience is wearing thin.

Psa. 119:155 Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

The Psalmist has vented and now begins to settle down again. He knows that "the wicked" will perish without faith in God and obedience to His word. Man has no hope apart from God.

Psa. 119:156 Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

The Psalmist again acknowledges that God's mercy and compassion are great—like that of a mother for her baby (from the Hebrew). If that is true [and it is], then there is no need to question God about how and when He will answer his prayer; He will do what is best in response to the prayer of His child. The last phrase expresses that his true desire is to yield to God's will.

Psa. 119:157 Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies; *yet* do I not decline from thy testimonies.

It's like the Psalmist is feeling like most of the world is against him, but he is holding fast to the truth of God's word. He is not going to let the circumstances affect what he knows is truth. I think this may become a verse that Christians of today are soon going

to relate to in a very personal way. Many things are happening in America that attack the Christian way of life as taught in God's word. Christians are being compared to terrorists and labeled as intolerant. Many places across the world are legalizing evil practices that were once abhorred and recognized as wicked. I believe we are going to learn very soon what it means to have to stand strong in the truth of God's word when confronted with cruel attacks by the forces of the prince of this world.

Ephesians 2:2 "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience...."

Psa. 119:158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

This expression of the Psalmist's heart should reflect the heart of every child of God. We should be grieved at how God's word is rejected by the masses. Rejection of God's word is rejection of God. Without God they will be condemned for eternity.

Psa. 119:159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

This time the Psalmist makes his request based on both his love for God's word as evidenced in his life and on God's lovingkindness (mercy and compassion).

Psa. 119:160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

Again, these are thoughts from a human viewpoint. God had no beginning [far beyond my ability to even conceive], so in essence His truth [which is part of Who He Is] had no beginning. From a human viewpoint, however, God's word to mankind had a beginning with the creation of man and His communication with him in the Garden of Eden. Regarding the last half of this verse, cf verse 152.

Psa. 119:161 SCHIN. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

Princes is a reference to people of rank or class (cf vs 23). The enemies of the Psalmist aren't just common troublemakers; they come from those in position of leadership and respect in the nation. Whatever their purpose, the Psalmist is adamant that there is no just cause for their attack upon him. In spite of their attack, the Psalmist is more afraid of disobeying God's word than he is of his enemies.

"standeth in awe"= to be startled (by a sudden alarm); hence, to fear in general

That which provokes fear commands your attention and results in either respect or terror.

Psa. 119:162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Many times over, the Psalmist has stated his delight in God's word. This time he compares his delight to that of a soldier who profits from the great spoils of victory in battle. This would seem to be a specifically chosen comparison from one who expects to rejoice at the defeat of his own enemies through judgment from Almighty God.

Psa. 119:163 I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.

The fact that the Psalmist singles out this sin is in direct reference to how his enemies are attacking him with lies and slander (cf vs 69). It is also a statement from the Psalmist that he values what God values—the truth—and hates what He hates.

Proverbs 6:16-19 "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

Psa. 119:164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

I can't help but think that the "seven times" has something to do with a Hebrew idiom, but I could not find any support for that in a web search. The Psalmist is declaring that he lives in an attitude of praise for God and the truth and promises declared in His word. Maybe connection can be made to the search results I found and related in connection to verse 106. Maybe it is just a connection to the fact that the number 7 in scripture stands for completion or perfection. Maybe it's a reference to the fact that he is wholly and completely committed to praising the LORD.

Psa. 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

The prophet Isaiah also connected peace with adherence to the law.

Isaiah 48:18 "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea...."

The Hebrew for the word *offend* is reference to a stumbling-block or an obstacle that causes one to fall. Those who love God's law are not going to lose faith because of the circumstances; their faith is in God. This is a statement that those who love God's word will have the confidence to be patient and trust in His word. I am reminded of my life verse.

Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Those who love God's word are those who have their minds *stayed* (leaning upon, resting upon, standing fast) on God and *trust* (are confident, secure, sure) in Him and His word.

Psa. 119:166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

The Psalmist's hope is one of confident expectation (from the Hebrew). He knows that God is going to deliver him based on His word. He has proven His faith through obedience. This reminds me of the words of James.

James 2:26 "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Psa. 119:167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

Again, the Psalmist uses his poetic style (repetition) to express his heart. He loves God's word and has proven it by how he lives.

Psa. 119:168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

One thing that motivates the Psalmist to obey God is his realization that God is aware of all his ways. He knows that God is omniscient; he can hide nothing from God—not even his thoughts.

1Chronicles 28:9 "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

Psa. 119:169 TAU. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

It's like the Psalmist is saying, "Let my prayer come to the front of the line." He is pleading with the Lord to help him understand the purpose for his delay in giving him deliverance based on His word. I think we can all relate. We like to take one part of the word and make it the basis for our expectations. In the Psalmist's mind, he had been obedient and proven his love for the LORD, so he didn't understand why deliverance didn't come immediately. God's word never establishes time parameters. What it does say is that He will supply our need according to His loving purposes. We are to trust Him. What we determine to be for our good and what He knows to be for our good are

often two very different things. (I think I may have said that earlier in this Psalm.)
Isaiah makes this truth very clear.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Psa. 119:170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

Again, this is basically poetic repetition of the previous verse. The difference is that in the previous verse the Psalmist is asking for understanding; in this verse he wants deliverance.

Psa. 119:171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

The Psalmist is looking forward to continued growth in his understanding of God's word. He is confident that God is going to continue to teach him. His new understanding will be another opportunity for publicly praising God.

The Psalmist has already shown great familiarity with the word of God. Still, he knows that he has much yet to learn. Even more important, he is looking forward to learning more; he is not content with the status quo. This reflects the heart of a person who is in love with his Lord and wants to continue to grow in his relationship to Him.

Psa. 119:172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

The Hebrew for *speak* included "specifically to sing, shout, testify...." The Psalms comprise a collection of songs that we could call the Hebrew hymnal. The Psalmist is declaring his intent to spread the truth of God's word because he knows it is the truth. Every person who possesses the truth of God's word should be eager to share that truth with others. One whose heart is connected to God's heart will want others to experience the same.

Psa. 119:173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

The Psalmist is calling for the help of God's *hand*. God's hand is associated with his provision for and protection of His people through His great power.

Deuteronomy 3:24 "O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?"

Deuteronomy 5:15 "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."

1Chronicles 4:10 "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Psa. 119:174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

For the umpteenth time the Psalmist is declaring his desire for God's deliverance. He never makes this request without reference to his love for God's word and/or his faith in its truth.

Psa. 119:175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

The Psalmist wants to live. He wants to continue to praise God among his people. He wants to find comfort and relief according to God's will—not his own (cf vs 5).

Psa. 119:176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

The Hebrew for "gone astray" was quite enlightening—"to vacillate, i.e., reel or stray." I think the Psalmist is acknowledging his spiritual ups and downs. At times he feels like a sheep that has lost its way. He is asking God to seek him; in other words, he knows that he is dependent upon God for his sustenance (both physically and spiritually) and deliverance. No matter the circumstances, he is committed to staying true to God's word. He is not going to forget. He is going to remember and, in that remembrance, find strength to wait on God's answer in God's time.