# Psalms - Commentaries by Hamilton Smith

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Brokenhearted, The

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In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke we have the touching record of the Lord's entrance upon His public ministry in this world of sin and sorrow; and we learn, from His own lips, the character of His ministry. Quoting Isaiah's prophecy concerning Himself, He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted."

The world is full of broken hearts. It may endeavor to cover up its sorrow with a mirth and laughter but, says the preacher, in the book of Proverbs, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful" (Prov. 14:13). Underneath all the outward gaiety of the world there are secret sorrows and broken hearts.

Turning to the Word of God, we discover for our comfort that God is not indifferent to these broken hearts. The Psalmist tells us that God is One that "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Moreover, the Psalmist immediately adds, "He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord" (Psa. 147:2-5). The number of the stars is too great for us to tell; the sorrow of a broken heart too deep for us to fathom; but God can count the stars in heaven and heal the broken hearts on earth. In the greatness of His love He gave His only begotten Son to come into this world to heal the brokenhearted.

When we look at Jesus, we at last see One perfect Man who came into this world to seek broken hearts. The devil, indeed, sought to turn Him from His quest, by offering Him all the kingdoms of this world and their glory. But, refusing the world, its honors, and its riches, He chose to become a poor Man seeking brokenhearted men in order to dry their tears and heal their wounds.

As we trace His path through this valley of tears, in search of broken hearts, we see Him, in the Gospel of Luke, healing the heart of a brokenhearted sinner; binding up the wounds of a brokenhearted saint; and drying the tears of a brokenhearted widow. Moreover, we learn that such was the wickedness and hardness of man's heart that at last His heart was broken. We broke the heart of the One who came to heal our broken hearts.

Thus we discover that hearts are broken by the sins of the sinner, by the failures of the saints, by the death of our loved ones, and above all, by unrequited love.

Psalms, Psalm 119:169-176: Divison 22 (Tau)

Divison 22 (Tau)

Praise to God, and testimony to man, from a restored and delivered soul.

(vv. 169-170) The prayer of the godly man for a mind formed by the Word of God, and for the Lord's deliverance from his trials.

(vv. 171-172) The result of his deliverance will be praise to God, and testimony to men. Praise and testimony can, however, only flow from a soul that is taught of God. Therefore the psalmist says, “My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes;” and immediately he adds, “My tongue shall speak of thy word.” The psalm opens with prayer, continues in praise, leading to testimony. This is ever the divine order.

(vv. 173-174) Moreover, the one that renders a testimony in an evil world will find opposition that calls for support; thus the cry goes up, “Let thine hand help me.” He can plead for this help, seeing his heart is set on the things of the Lord. His choice, his longing, and his delight, centre in the Word and salvation of the Lord.

(vv. 175-176) His one desire is to live for the Lord's praise, as sustained by the Lord, in contrast to his past life in which he followed his own will, going astray like a lost sheep. If he went astray, the Lord sought him, and still he can say, “Seek thy servant;” for, he can add, in contrast to the days when he went astray, “I do not forget thy commandments.”

Psalms, Psalm 119:161-168: Divison 21 (Schin)

Divison 21 (Schin)

The blessing of the man who owns the supreme authority of the Word, and walks in subjection to it.

(v. 161) The great ones of this world may persecute the godly without a cause; but, for the believer the authority of the Word of God is above the authority of man. He trembles at the Word of God rather than stand in awe of the power of princes. For him God's Word is supreme in its authority (cp. Acts 4:19-20).

(vv. 162-168) The psalmist recounts the blessings that flow to the one whose life is governed by the supreme authority of the Word.

First, the Word becomes the joy of his heart, as he discovers the treasures it contains, even as one finds great spoil (v. 160).

Second, it leads him to discern between good and evil, and thus to abhor the false and love the truth (v. 163).

Third, it calls forth constant praise throughout the day (v. 164).

Fourth, it brings great peace into his life, so that he is no longer governed by circumstances, nor stumbled by trials (v. 165).

Fifth, it leads the soul to look beyond the opposition of princes, and the trials of circumstances, and wait in hope for the salvation of the Lord (v. 166).

Sixth, while waiting for the Lord's deliverance, there is submission and obedience to the Lord's Words (v. 167).

Seventh, walking in obedience to the Lord, there is nothing in his life hidden from God. He can say, “All my ways are before thee” (v. 168).

Thus the Word having its place of supremacy over his soul, the godly man has joy in the Word, hatred of evil, continual praise, great peace, hope in the Lord, obedience to the Lord, and openness before the Lord.

Psalms, Psalm 119:49-56: Division 7 (Zain)

Division 7 (Zain)

Confidence in the Word of the Lord in the presence of the derision of the wicked.

(vv. 49-50) God has caused His servant to trust in His Word; therefore, with the utmost confidence, he can look to God to fulfill His Word. He knows that God must be true to His Word. This confidence in the stability of God’s Word had been his comfort in the midst of affliction. His confidence in the Word was the outcome of being quickened by it.

(vs. 51) Nevertheless, confidence in the Word of God made the servant of the Lord an object of derision to the proud men of the world—those who had thrown off allegiance to God and His Word. In spite of derision the soul was not moved from its confidence.

(vv. 52-53) In the face of derision the godly man was comforted and strengthened in steadfastness, by the remembrance of God’s judgments upon the wicked in the days of old. God’s past judgments lead the soul to shrink with horror from those who had forsaken God’s law.

(vv. 54-56) Nevertheless, while waiting for God to fulfill His word—while yet in the house of pilgrimage and surrounded by the darkness of night—the godly man found his joy in the Word and the Name of the Lord. This confidence was the outcome of obedience to the Word.

Psalms, Psalm 119:153-160: Divison 20 (Resh)

Divison 20 (Resh)

Faithfulness in persecution, hatred of evil, and love of the truth.

(vv. 153-154 ) The psalmist is conscious that God is not indifferent to the trials of those who remain faithful to His Word. Therefore he appeals to the Lord to look upon his affliction. Moreover, the interest of God’s people must be God’s interest; therefore the psalmist can put his case into God’s hands. Without attempting to answer his enemies, he seeks that God would plead his cause, deliver him from his afflictions, and keep his soul in the energy of life.

(vv. 155-157) Surrounded by the wicked, who have no respect for God’s Word, and who hate and persecute the godly, he remains faithful to God; as he says, “Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.” He finds that his enemies are “many” (JND). Again he appeals to be quickened, or sustained in a life according to the Word.

(vs. 158) Faithful to the Lord and His Word, he shrinks from the ways of the transgressors who care nothing for the Word. Their ways are a grief to the godly man.

(vv. 159-160) If the evil of transgressors is hated, it is because the truth is loved. Thus the psalmist can say, “I love thy precepts.” The evil that he hates will pass away; the truth that he loves will endure forever.

Thus the godly man is marked by faithfulness in persecution, hatred of evil, and love of the truth.

Psalms, Psalm 119:144-152: Division 19 (Koph)

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Whole-hearted dependence upon the Lord when surrounded by enemies bent on mischief.

(vv. 145-146) The psalmist expresses his whole-hearted dependence upon the Lord, seeking the consciousness that his prayer is heard. True dependence leads to obedience, therefore, he adds, “I will keep thy statutes.” Further, he desires, not only to be heard, but that his prayer may be answered by a complete deliverance that would set him free to obey the Lord’s testimonies without hindrance.

(vv. 147-148) His dependence is not merely the passive acknowledgment of general indebtedness to God; it is an active, wholehearted dependence that calls upon God, and does so with diligence that leads the believer to rise before the dawn to cry to the Lord. Moreover, his dependence is the outcome of confidence, for he can say, “I hoped in thy word.” The godly man is thus marked by dependence, obedience, and confidence. Further the Word in which his confidence is placed becomes the meditation of His heart, in the quiet of the night watches.

(vv. 149-150) Nevertheless, his whole-hearted diligence is not the ground of his appeal to the Lord; but rather the loving-kindness in the heart of the Lord. To this he looks for the quickening energy of life to sustain him, though his enemies draw near with mischief in their hearts.

Psalms, Psalm 119:137-144: Division 18 (Tzaddi)

Division 18 (Tzaddi)

The maintenance of the rights of God in a world of evil.

(vv. 137-138) The psalmist recognizes that God is righteous and all His judgments in accord with Himself. His testimonies—the witness of Himself and His ways—are according to righteousness, and very faithful, in contrast to man’s testimonies which, too often, are given only to deceive.

(vv. 139-141) The recognition of the righteousness of God and the faithfulness of His testimonies brings the God-fearing man into conflict with those who forget God’s words. His earnest zeal in conflict with evil was not simply hatred of evil, but rather love of the truth. He can say of God’s Word, “Thy servant loveth it.” Nevertheless, the one who is zealous for the Word in a scene of evil will be insignificant and despised in the eyes of the world. Even so, the servant of the Lord does not forget His precepts.

(vv. 142-144) He knows the truth will prevail, and that God’s righteousness is everlasting. Enemies may surround him, trouble and anguish may take hold of him, but trial and sorrow will pass away, while the righteousness of God’s testimonies will abide. Therefore, he finds his delight in God’s commandments, and looks to God for guidance into the path that leads to life beyond all trouble and anguish.

(vv. 151-152) As a result of his whole-hearted dependence upon the Lord, he finds, that, though his enemies draw near to do him harm, the Lord is near to preserve, and that His commandments are truth and firmly established forever.

Psalms, Psalm 119:129-136: Division 17 (Pe)

Division 17 (Pe)

The effect of the Word as light in the soul.

(vs. 129) The godly man expresses his appreciation of God’s Word in itself, apart from the blessing that it brings. It is wonderful, therefore it is cherished.

(vv. 130-132) There is also what the Word does: it gives light and understanding—light, where it enters, and understanding where there is simplicity. Moreover, it creates a thirst and longing, which can only be met by the mercy of God fulfilling His Word, and thus doing as He is wont to do unto those that love His Name.

(vv. 133-136) Where the light finds an entrance there is the desire on the part of the believer for a condition in accordance with all that the light reveals.

First, as to himself, the godly man desires that his steps may be governed by the truth, and not by sin, as in the natural man (cf. John 8:32).

Second, as to his circumstances, he desires that he may be delivered from the oppression of man, in order to obey God.

Third, as to God, he desires to sit a learner at His feet in the conscious sunshine of His favor (cf. Luke 10:39).

Fourth, as to the wicked, he is filled with sorrow as he thinks of their portion in disobeying the Word.

Psalms, Psalm 119:121-128: Division 16 (Am)

Division 16 (Ain)

In the midst of evil, ripe for judgment, the upright soul looks to God to secure its good.

(vv. 121-122) Conscious of his own uprightness, the psalmist can, with a good conscience, look to God not to be forsaken, “Leave me not to my oppressors.” But while appealing to God on the ground of his own integrity, it is to God, Himself, the servant looks to vindicate him against pride and oppression, and not to his own estimate of his righteousness (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4-5).

(vv. 123-125) Having turned to God, he waits for God’s Word of “righteousness” to deliver him from his enemies, and God’s “mercy” to deal with himself. As God’s servant he desires, not only deliverance from evil, but, to be instructed in the truth, to have his understanding opened that he may know God’s testimonies, and thus learn God’s mind.

(vs. 126) Further the servant of the Lord discerns the time (cf. Luke 12:54-59). He sees that God's authority must be maintained, and that evil is ripe for judgment; so that the extreme of evil gives the assurance that deliverance is at hand.

(vv. 127-128) The knowledge that God is about to act in judgment only makes the true soul increasingly value God's Word. Its value is esteemed far above the gold that man values so highly. God's precepts about "all things" are seen to be right. All is measured by the Word, and all that is false is refused.

Psalms, Psalm 119:113-120: Division 15 (Samech)

Division 15 (Samech)

God and His Word, the resource of the one who refuses man's vain thoughts.

(vv. 113-114) The believer hates the reasoning of the double-minded man (JND), the one who halts, or wavers between two opinions.

(Comp. 1 Kings 18:21, and {vi 30273-30275}James 1:6-8). In contrast to such he loves the Word that reveals the mind of God. This hatred of man's thoughts, and love of God's Word, arouses the hatred of man. In the presence of this opposition, God and His Word are the alone resource and confidence of the soul, "Thou art my hiding place and shield: I hope in thy word."

(vs. 115) However, to have God for our protection demands separation from evil. Therefore, evil doers are desired to depart, for the godly man has definitely decided to walk in obedience to God.

(vv. 116-117) As a separate man he can look with confidence to be upheld by God in the presence of evil, so that he may not be put to shame before his opposers by any failure on his part. Only as he is held by God will he be safe, and free to continually give heed to God's statutes.

(vv. 118-120) He sees that those who wander from God's statutes are "set at naught" (JND). They come to nothing and are treated as dross in God's sight. The judgment of such fills the soul with holy fear.

Psalms, Psalm 119:105-112: Division 14 (Nun)

Division 14 (Nun)

The effect of the Word on the path of the believer (vs. 105) In the last section the Word filled the heart; in this it is acknowledged as a guide to the feet; and not only does the Word keep the feet from evil, but it marks out a path for the saint through this world.

(vs. 106) In order to benefit by the light of the Word, it must be obeyed. Hence the saint devotes himself to perform the Word, here referred to as the Lord's "righteous judgments" in contrast to man's unrighteous ways.

(vv. 107-108) However, the path the godly man has to tread is often one of deep affliction; even so, the light of the Word reveals a path through the trial. Thus, in this instance, there is no prayer for deliverance, but the desire to be energized in the trial (vs. 107), to offer acceptable praises in spite of it, and to be taught of the Lord through it (vs. 108).

(vv. 109-110) So real is the trial that the godly man's life is continually in his hand, while surrounded by the snares of the wicked (1 Sam. 19:5; Job 13:14). Nevertheless, the continual presence of evil does not lead to the Word being forgotten: having the light of the Word the soul escapes the snares of the wicked.

(vv. 111-112) The Word that guides the godly through all trial remains as his eternal heritage, even when trials are forever past. He rejoices in it; the set purpose of his heart is to walk in obedience "unto the end."

Psalms, Psalm 119:97-104: Division 13 (Mem)

Division 13 (Mem)

The effect of the Word when loved for its own sake.

(vs. 97) The godly man expresses his affection for the Word. It is loved, not simply for the blessing that it brings, or the effects it produces, but for its own sake. That which the psalmist loves is the subject of his meditation all the day.

(vv. 98-100) Results follow from the Word having its place in the affections. It makes the godly man wiser than his enemies. So Peter and John found when before the Jewish leaders: and again Stephen, whose enemies were "not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts 4:13-16; 6:10).

Further, the Word in the heart is above all teaching, however good and right in its place; therefore by the Word the godly man can acquire understanding above all his teachers. Again, the Word when loved and obeyed, will give more understanding than all the human experience of the aged.

(v. 101) Moreover love for the Word not only produces inward affects in the soul, but it has a practical effect upon the walk. It urns the feet from every evil way, so that in separation from evil the Word can be obeyed.

(v. 102) Above all, the Word held in affection brings the believer into direct contact with God, “thou hast taught me.” (cf. Luke 10:39; Tim. 2:7). This is the secret of a wisdom beyond anything that can be acquired from man, teachers, or human experience. It is a wisdom acquired in the presence of God, and held in faith with God.

(vv. 103-104) Thus loving the Word, and realizing its blessed effects, it becomes more precious to the soul than natural things however sweet. The one who knows the sweetness of the Word not only has understanding to discern between good and evil, but learns to refuse the evil, and thus say, “I hate every false way.”

Psalms, Psalm 119:89-96: Division 12 (Lamed)

Division 12 (Lamed)

The abiding faithfulness of God to His immutable Word, the stay of the godly in the midst of trial.

(vs. 89) The godly man, looking beyond his trials, sees that God’s Word is “settled in the heavens.” Thus beyond the reach of man, it is unaffected by all that takes place on earth.

(vv. 90-91) Not only is God’s Word settled in the heavens, but, on earth God is faithful in fulfilling His Word throughout all generations. Moreover, creation is the abiding witness of God’s faithfulness to His Word. All created things continue according to the fixed laws by which they were set in motion. They are His servants doing His bidding. Thus the purpose of God is settled in the heavens; the faithfulness of God to carry out that purpose continues on earth; and all created things in heaven and earth bear continual witness to this faithfulness of God.

(vv. 92-93) The psalmist has thus expressed his confidence in God’s Word. There comes a time, however, when his faith is put to the test. Adverse circumstances are allowed of such an overwhelming character that to sight they would appear to be beyond the control of God. Will the tried soul, in these circumstances, retain its faith in God? It is indeed sustained, for in his inward soul he delights in God’s Word, when, in his outward circumstances, he can no longer see God’s hand. With this inward delight in God’s Word the soul is revived.

(vv. 94-96) As quickened and revived, the godly man can say, “I am thine.” He had prayed for comfort (vs. 76), and waited for comfort (vs. 82); now he receives the comfort in learning the settled purpose of God. However, he still looks for final deliverance from his enemies, who have waited to destroy him. While waiting for God’s salvation, he finds his present strength in considering God’s testimonies (vs. 95). Around him he sees nothing but universal failure.

Amongst men nothing reaches to perfection. Nevertheless, he finds that God’s Word is exceeding broad—broad enough to reach to every detail of life, and thus guide in every circumstance that can arise.

Psalms, Psalm 119:81-88: Division 11 (Caph)

Division 11 (Caph)

The exercises of a saint whose prayer remains for a while unanswered.

(vv. 81-84) The godly man in trouble had looked to the Lord for comfort (vs. 76), but the answer is delayed and the pressure expands. He faints for deliverance; the eyes fail in looking for the fulfillment of the word. He becomes dried and withered in soul like a bottle in the smoke. Nevertheless, the deepening trial only serves to bring out his confidence in God. His soul may faint, but hope in the Word of God remains: his eyes may fail, but faith still looks to God for comfort. His soul may be withered, but it does not forget God’s statutes. Life is brief, the days are slipping away; when will God end the trial?

(vv. 85-87) In confidence of heart, the afflicted soul spreads out the trial before God. The proud had digged pits to entrap him; they persecuted him wrongfully; they almost consumed him from the land. Moreover, not only do the wicked oppose the people of God but, they oppose God Himself. Their actions are not after God’s law; they are wrongful in God’s sight; they forsake God’s precepts. God is not unmindful of the sorrows of the saints, and He cannot ignore the evil ways of the wicked.

(vs. 88) In the consciousness of this the saint turns to God, not only for outward deliverance, but for inward quickening that, revived in soul, he may be able to walk in obedience to the Word.

Psalms, Psalm 119:81-88: Division 10 (Jod)

Division 10 (Jod)

God acknowledged as the Creator, and justified in all His dealings with His creature.

(vv. 73-74) The Lord’s servant, acknowledging that he is the creature of God’s hands, pleads for understanding that he may learn the will of God in order to walk suitably to his Creator. The one that thus owns God, and confides in His Word, will be gladly acknowledged by all that fear the Lord.

(vv. 75-77) Moreover, he not only owns that God has fashioned him, but, he justifies God in all His dealings with him. Even in afflicting him God had acted in faithfulness. While submitting to God’s faithful dealings, he can, in the midst of affliction, count upon God’s merciful kindness to comfort him, and in His tender mercy to spare him. He can thus plead with conscious integrity, for God’s law is his delight. Time

was when he went astray, and sought his own will; now he delights in God's will.

(vs. 78) God had dealt with him faithfully for his good, but the proud had dealt perversely with him without a cause. He looks that they may be ashamed.

(vv. 79-80) He has sought the comfort of the Lord in his affliction, now he desires the sympathy of the saints— "Let those that fear thee turn unto me." Thus encouraged he desires that his heart may be found perfect in God's Word, that he may not, like the proud, be ashamed.

Psalms, Psalm 119:65-72: Division 9 (Teth)

Division 9 (Teth)

Blessing through the chastening of the Lord.

(vv. 65-67) The servant of the Lord justifies God in His dealings, however painful. "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant." Time was when the servant dealt ill with God, for he says, "I went astray." Then God, in mercy, dealt with him in chastening— "I was afflicted." His will broken by affliction, he now submits to God's will.

(vs. 68) He recognizes that behind all God's dealings in chastening there is the goodness of God, so that he can say, "Thou art good, and doest good." God being good he desires to be taught of God.

(vv. 69-70) When going astray the wicked were indifferent to the godly man: now that he has returned to the path of obedience, they speak lies concerning him. But the lies of the enemy only energize the psalmist to keep the truth with his whole heart. The wicked in their prosperity are perfectly indifferent to God's law; the restored soul delights in it.

(vv. 71-72) He has learned in affliction to value the Word above the thousands of gold and silver in which the proud boast; hence he can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Psalms, Psalm 119:57-64: Division 8 (Cheth)

Division 8 (Cheth)

Blessing through having the Lord for the portion of the soul.

(vv. 57-58) The godly man acknowledges that the Lord is the portion of his heart. The immediate result being that he desires to do the will of the One who is his portion— "I have said that I would keep Thy words." Moreover he desires to be in the favor of the One whose Word he obeys, "I entreated thy favor with my whole heart."

(vv. 59-60) The desire to obey the Word, and enjoy the favor of the Lord, of necessity leads to exercise of heart as to his ways. Are they suited to one who has the Lord for his portion? Therefore, he says. "I thought on my ways;" with the practical result that he turned his feet unto the testimonies of the Lord, not reluctantly, but with diligent haste.

(vv. 61-62) The one who is set to obey the Lord will at once find that the wicked are against him; but having the Lord for his portion, he is steadfast and unmoved. However much evil presses upon him he does not forget the Word. At midnight—the darkest—he can rise to praise the Lord.

(vv. 63-64) Freed from the bands of the wicked he finds that having the Lord for his portion brings him into fellowship with others that fear the Lord and keep His Word. Thus in the midst of evil he discerns the mercy of the Lord, to find that it is greater than man's evil, "The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy."

Psalms, Psalm 119:41-48: Division 6 (Vau)

Division 6 (Vau)

A prayer for the Lord's deliverance, that the godly man may silence the reproaches of the wicked.

(vv. 41-43) The psalmist looks to the Lord for deliverance from his enemies according to the Word. Thus will there be an answer to those who reproach him with being forsaken of God. He had put his trust in God's Word; if abandoned of God the Word of truth would be utterly taken out of his mouth. He would have no answer to the reproaches of the wicked. He has confidence in delivering grace, for his hope is in God's judgments.

(vv. 44-48) In the confidence of an answer to his prayer, the psalmist anticipates the blessedness of God's deliverance. The delivered man, free from the opposition and reproaches of the enemy, would continually keep the law and walk in liberty. In freedom of soul he would have no shame in speaking of God's testimonies before the greatest on earth. This, surely, is ever God's order from His servants: first, to "keep" the Word in the soul; followed by a right "walk" —the Word having its practical effect in the life; finally, to "speak" to others, the lips speaking of that which is expressed in the life.

Further, the heart of the godly man delights in that of which he speaks. Loving the Lord's commandments his lips find no shame in speaking of that which fills his heart (cf. Psa. 14:1). He would openly avow his allegiance to God's commands—for such is the force of lifting up the

hands—with no mere lip profession, but as an avowal of the law that he loved. Moreover, that which he loves would be the theme of his meditations.

Psalms, Psalm 119:33-40: Division 5 (He)

Division 5 (He)

A prayer for divine teaching, and an opened understanding, “to go in the path” of the Lord, apart from covetousness and vanity.

(vv. 33-34) The desire of the soul to be taught by the Lord the way of His statutes— “Teach me, O LORD.” Teaching, however, is not enough; we need the opened heart as well as the opened Scriptures, hence the prayer, “Give me understanding” (cf. Luke 24:27, 45; 2 Tim. 2:7).

(vs. 35) Further we are dependent upon the Lord for any practical results that may follow divine teaching. So the prayer follows, “Make me to go.” Well indeed for every saint to pray these three prayers, and in their divine order, “Teach me O LORD,” “Give me understanding,” and “Make me to go.”

(vv. 36-37) Following upon these requests, the psalmist remembers the two great hindrances to a walk of practical godliness:—the root of evil within—covetousness; and the incitement to evil from without, the vanity on every hand. The godly man prays that his heart may be kept from covetousness, and his eyes from beholding vanity.

(vv. 38-40) Thus kept from evil within and vanity without, he prays to be established in the truth, and devoted to God, walking in His fear, and kept from any occasion of reproach in himself. In the knowledge that God’s judgments are good, the godly man, with deep longing after the Lord’s precepts, desires to be energized in the path of righteousness.

Psalms, Psalm 119:25-32: Division 4 (Daleth)

Division 4 (Daleth)

The Lord the alone resource in the time of trouble.

(vs. 25) With the power of evil pressing upon his spirit, the godly man looks only to the Lord for relief. He does not seek to find relief by escaping from the pressure. He seeks God in the pressure, praying that God would raise his drooping spirits according to the comfort of the word.

(vs. 26) This confidence in God is the outcome of confession to God. The soul having made known all its ways to God was conscious of having been heard, “I have declared my ways and thou heardest me.”

(vv. 27-28) Having confessed his own ways, the psalmist desires to be taught God’s way, and God’s wondrous works, and thus find relief from his felt weakness by God’s strength.

(vv. 29-32) Desiring God’s way the soul prays to be delivered from man’s way—the way of lying. He has confessed his way (vs. 26), learned God’s way (vs. 27), refused man’s way (vs. 29), and chosen God’s way (vs. 30)—the way of truth. In the confidence that springs from this definite choice of the way of truth, the soul intreats the Lord that he may not be put to shame. Moreover, being ‘enlarged,’ or ‘set free’ from heaviness, he desires with renewed energy to run the way of the Lord’s commandments.

Psalms, Psalm 119:17-24: Division 3 (Gimel)

Division 3 (Gimel)

The servant of the Lord an outcast stranger in an evil world.

(vv. 17-18) The young man who cleanses his way is prepared and meet for the service of the Lord (2 Tim. 2:21). He confesses that with God are the issues of life: he looks to the bountiful mercy of the Lord to spare him, to keep him walking in obedience, and to open his eyes to behold wondrous things out of the law. This is more than discovering in the law a rule of life. The natural man can do this much; only the servant with the opened eyes will behold “wondrous things.”

(vv. 19-24) The remaining verses present the effect of an obedient walk as a servant of the Lord in a world of sin.

First, the one who serves, and is subject to God, in the midst of a rebellious world, will of necessity find himself “a stranger in the earth.” But earth’s strangers are God’s friends; hence the desire of the soul to walk in closest intimacy with God— “Hide not Thy commandments from me” (cf. Gen. 18:17). Such an one values the intimacies of God. They fill his soul, not with occasional desire, but continual longing (vs. 20).

Second, the servant of God finds he is, not only a stranger in the earth, but opposed by the wicked, who in their pride and princely prosperity heap reproaches and contempt upon the one who walks in lowly obedience of God. The godly man forms a just estimate of such. He sees they are rebuked of God and under a curse. There is no need to answer those whom God rebukes, and hence the psalmist is silent in the presence of their hard speeches, finding his delight and counsel in the testimonies of God.

Psalms, Psalm 119:9-16: Division 2 (Beth)

Division 2 (Beth)

The desire of the godly man to enjoy the blessedness of the undefiled in the way. How this is effected and the result.

(vv. 9-12) The desire being awakened, the question is asked, How can a young man cleanse his path, and enjoy the blessedness of the undefiled in the way? The answer follows.

First, by watchful care to bring all his ways under the searchlight of God's Word (vs. 9).

Second, by casting himself upon the power of God to be kept from wandering in paths of his own lust and will. Conscious of his weakness and that right and honest desires will not in themselves keep him in the path of blessing, he whole-heartedly casts himself upon God (vs. 10).

Third, by hiding the Word in his heart, and thus being kept from sinning against God in secret (cf. 1 John 2:14).

Fourth, by owning the blessedness of the Lord and thus in confidence looking to be taught of the Lord (vs. 12).

(vv. 13-16) The way of the young man having been cleansed, he can bear testimony of others (vs. 13), from a heart that is in the enjoyment of God's testimonies (vs. 14), meditates upon them (vs. 15), delights in them, and keeps them in mind (vs. 16).

Psalms, Psalm 119:1-8: Division 1 (Aleph)

Division 1 (Aleph)

The blessedness of the undefiled in the way.

(vv. 1-3) The opening verses present the theme of the whole psalm—the blessedness of those who walk through this world in "the way" marked out by the Lord in His law, who "keep" His testimonies, and seek Him with the whole heart.

The law cherished in the heart leads to a practical walk in which iniquity is refused. Thus the godly are delivered from their own wills to do God's will.

(vv. 4-8) With the blessedness of God's way before his soul, the psalmist turns to God in prayer, admitting the authority of God to "command," and our responsibility "to keep" His precepts. Moreover, there is the longing desire that the responsibility should be met; and, conscious of human weakness, the godly man looks to God to so direct his ways that God's statutes may be kept (vs. 5). Thus walking, a good conscience will be maintained (vs. 6); and, when the conscience is good, praise flows, not from formal lips, but from an upright heart (vs. 7).

Having cast himself upon God, the psalmist can say with confidence, "I will keep thy statutes," though recognizing past failure, which leads to the cry, "O forsake me not utterly."

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