

PSALM 119.161-168

psalm
God's Word 119

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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Psalm 119.161-168
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Introduction to Psalm 119.161-168

Throughout Psalm 119 we have commented on the various *affections* the psalmist mentions with respect to the Word of God. This Ψ (*sin/shin*) stanza is no exception, and it affords us an opportunity to reflect on the role of affections in the life of faith.

Affections are those deep sentiments of the heart, the values and priorities of the conscience, and the brightest and most illuminating thoughts of the mind which cause our souls to incline – to seek and desire certain things more than others – and our wills to choose in certain ways. We want to have holy affections operating in our soul so that we will always *incline toward* and *will* to be holy.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

We hope you find this study of Psalm 119 instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Where Your Treasure Is

Pray Psalm 119.161, 162.

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

Sing Psalm 119.161, 162.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I take my stand with gladness on Your holy, righteous Word.
I rejoice as with great treasure in Your holy Law, O Lord.
Princes persecute me daily; without cause they seek my harm.
Yet I stand on Your Word squarely; hold me with Your mighty arm.

Read Psalm 119.161-168; meditate on verses 161, 162.

Preparation

1. What was the psalmist facing?
2. How did the psalmist regard God's Word?

Meditation

It doesn't get much worse than when the government is out to get you.

Jerusalem and Judah during the period in which the psalmist was writing was a mixture of faithful believers and people who were compromised in their faith. Sadly, some of the most compromised were those in high places – priests and rulers. They had found that by tolerating, if not embracing, foreign gods, they could make political alliances that were lucrative all around.

Such people could not tolerate those like our psalmist who were forever calling them out for their sins. Those who had power could be brutal toward the prophets of God, and our psalmist was no exception. He was being persecuted. We don't know how or to what extent, but the government was on him to lighten up and leave them alone. He had the word from the government; he also had the Word of God.

The psalmist treasured the Word of God more than he feared the words of men. He stood "in awe" of God's Word. This becomes true of all those who read and meditate on God's Word consistently and at ever-greater depths. Consequently, they treasure that Word and its teachings, and they will not back down from it no matter how severe the threats.

When the Word of God is our greatest treasure, our hearts will be in awe of Him, and we will not fear what men might do to us.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

It has always been thus, that "because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes; but by a man of understanding and knowledge right will be prolonged" (Prov. 28.2). And as the many "princes" seek to control the narrative of the whole it seems as if the righteous have been silenced. But that is never the case. The "princes" are only people. "Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish" (Ps. 146.3, 4).

Jesus warned us not to fear them, but to "fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt.

10.28). He is the One who loves us, chastens us, guides us, and protects us. “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him” (Prov. 30.5).

“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding;
for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold.
She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her” (Prov. 3.13-15).

Our focus must change from one of fear to joy found in the bounteous grace of God’s Word and truth. Jesus said, “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk. 12.32). And He told us to “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6.33), and when we do, Jesus confirms the validity of our seeking by telling us that where our treasure is, “there your heart will be also” (Lk. 12.24).

When our heart is ensconced in His Kingdom, then we will no longer act as children, “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...” (Eph. 4.14); but we will have God’s understanding and knowledge “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4.12). Without fear, because our heart is “rejoicing” in God’s Word, and we have found “great treasure” there. Princes may think they rule over us, but we know better! Our heart stands in awe of God (Ps. 119.161, 162).

“The LORD shall reign forever—your God...Praise the LORD!” (Ps. 145.10)

For reflection

1. Why do we not need to fear what men might do to us?
2. How is the Word of God like a great treasure? How does God intend that we should “spend” this treasure?
3. What does it mean for you to be “ensconced” in God’s Kingdom? How is that apparent in your daily life?

Those whose hearts stand in awe of God’s word, will rather endure the wrath of man, than break the law of God. By the word of God we are unspeakable gainers. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.161, 162*

Pray Psalm 119.166-168.

Bring your day before the Lord in prayer, task by task. Commit yourself before the Lord to keeping His Word and living in His salvation throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 119.166-168.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I hope for Your salvation and I keep Your holy Word.
All Your precepts and commandments I love as I love You, Lord.
All my ways are spread before You; my soul keeps Your holy Word!
More than life itself I love You and Your Word, O righteous Lord.

2 Love/Hate

Pray Psalm 119.163.

I hate and abhor lying,
But I love Your law.

Sing Psalm 119.163, 164.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I hate all sin and lying but I love Your holy Law.
All throughout the day I praise You, thanking You in joy and awe.
For Your judgments all are righteous; all who love Your Law have peace.
We shall never stumble as our faith and love for You increase.

Read Psalm 119.161-168; meditate on verse 163.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist hate?
2. What did he love?

Meditation

In many ways, the Christian life boils down to hating what we should and loving what we should. Christians have a love/hate relationship with the things of the world. We hate everything that deceives, lies, and flouts the truth; we love God and His Law and all His Word and everything in the world that glorifies Him. What we love we are drawn to, embrace, delight in and enjoy, and seek to emulate. What we hate we put away from us and do everything in our power to guard ourselves and others against.

It follows that we can tell what we love and what we hate by the amount of time and effort we devote to matters.

It behooves us, like the psalmist, to rehearse our love for God and His Word daily. Not just to read and study it, but to say to the Lord, “Oh, how I love Your Word” (Ps. 119.97). And then to explain why. How it is living and powerful. Equips us for every good work. Holds for the promise of eternal glory. Gives light to our path. Delights and comforts us with the assurance of our Lord’s Presence. Transforms us into His image. Guides our steps in the ways of God’s Kingdom. And more. Tell God daily that you love His Word, and tell Him why. Your love for the Law and all God’s Word will grow.

And tell Him also what you hate: everything that is contrary to truth. Lies. Deceit. Equivocation. Falsehood. Law-breaking. Mere self-interest. By rehearsing what you hate you’ll be reminded of that conviction whenever the temptation arises to fall in line with whatever is not of God and His truth.

Love what God loves and hate what He hates. That’s the key to full and abundant life.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The psalmist is in good company when he states that he hates and abhors lying (Ps. 119.163) because God hates it too. He commanded us, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20.16). We certainly don’t like it when anyone lies about us, so we must never do that to anyone else. Not just because we don’t like it; but because God says not to do it.

Getting the love/hate situation straight begins in and with us. Revival will not happen in us while sin is lurking in our lives. As God warned Cain when he was angry with his brother Abel, “If you do well, will you

not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Gen. 4.7). And God says the same thing to us: Sin is creeping about you, but you should rule over it!

And how do we come to rule over the sin that is near us? How do we learn to love God’s Law and hate the sin in our own lives? By staying in God’s Word and by being filled with His Holy Spirit:

“Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps. 119.97).

“Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way” (Ps. 119.104).

“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3.2).

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2.5).

“But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2.16).

Jesus Christ is the truth (Jn. 14.6). And if we are to be like Him, we must be truthful through and through.

There is no place in our lives for equivocation, little lies, or spinning the truth for any reason. “A righteous man hates lying...” (Prov. 13.5). We must be believable people of the truth; for if we lie about anything, how will we be believed when we speak about the good and bad news of the Gospel?

Loving God’s Word and hating sin must begin in us:

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19.14).

For reflection

1. Why is it appropriate that believers should hate lying and all sin? What does it mean to hate these?
2. Can we love God with all our heart if we don’t hate sin? Explain.
3. What can we do to encourage our fellow believers in the teaching of Psalm 119.162? Whom will you encourage today?

Now if the love of the law and the hatred of falsehood are inseparably conjoined, it is a plain inference that all who are not taught in the school of God are infected with deceit and hypocrisy. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.163*

Pray Psalm 119.161, 162.

Where do you expect to be challenged today concerning what to love and what to hate? Commit your day to the Lord, especially those challenges and temptations you expect to face. Seek grace to love God and His Word, come what may.

Sing Psalm 119.161, 162.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I take my stand with gladness on Your holy, righteous Word.

I rejoice as with great treasure in Your holy Law, O Lord.

Princes persecute me daily; without cause they seek my harm.

Yet I stand on Your Word squarely; hold me with Your mighty arm.

3 How to Praise the Lord

Pray Psalm 119.164.

Seven times a day I praise You,
Because of Your righteous judgments.

Sing Psalm 119.163-165.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I hate all sin and lying but I love Your holy Law.
All throughout the day I praise You, thanking You in joy and awe.
For Your judgments all are righteous; all who love Your Law have peace.
We shall never stumble as our faith and love for You increase.

Read Psalm 119.161-168; meditate on verse 164.

Preparation

1. How often did the psalmist praise the Lord?
2. What guided his praises?

Meditation

Because we do not know how to pray as we ought (Rom. 8.26), we need all the instruction and help we can get. We've all been in the occasional prayer meeting where the leader will urge us to spend the next few moments in praise. Whereupon follows a series of prayers that sound somewhat like, "Lord, we really just praise You." A praise song from the '70s urged us, "Let's just praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let's just lift our voice to heaven and praise the Lord." And that was it. Surely we can find more specific words with which to exalt our glorious God and Savior?

This brief verse is packed with instructions for prayer. First, we note that the psalmist resolved to praise God "seven times a day". This can have one of two meanings. Either he literally set aside seven times to retreat in prayer and praise to God, rather like Daniel (Dan. 6.10); or the number seven here stands for completion and is the equivalent of saying, "I praise the Lord without ceasing" (cf. 1 Thess. 5.17; see Calvin quote that follows). Either way, whether seven set times a day or all throughout the day, this amounts to more praise to God than most of us are accustomed to offer of a day. We can all improve in this.

But where do we find the words to praise the Lord? Right there in His Word, in His "righteous judgments." The preposition לְ (ab), is better translated "according to" rather than "because." Although, if we truly understand God's righteous judgments and marvel at the wonders of His Law, we will certainly have cause to praise Him; yet "according to" directs us to seek in those judgments, as in all God's Word, the unfathomable depths of His goodness, wisdom, justice, truth, mercy, and love as grounds for giving specific words of praise to the Lord throughout the day.

Scripture affords abundant reasons to praise God. But we must train our mind to discover those reasons, our heart to delight in them, and our tongue to exalt and glorify God in constant praise and thanks.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments" (Ps. 119.7).

God's righteous judgments often discipline us; but by that we know we are loved: "For whom the LORD loves He chastens..." and "whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights" (Heb. 12.6; Prov. 3.11, 12).

The psalmist's maturity level shines in this verse: "Seven times a day I praise You" for all the ways and times You are kind enough, through Your holy Word, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to convict me of sin and to point out all the things that please and displease You (Ps. 119.164). That is a bold prayer. And that is a mature prayer.

We will do well to follow his example and his heart for learning the judgments of God, through the guidance and instruction found in His Word. For it is: "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4.12). Also, by the way, "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4.13). So, it only makes sense that we praise God for His righteous judgments, and we strive to learn them as well. Because learning them is the first step in doing them and in being thankful for them. "For praise from the upright is beautiful" (Ps. 33.1).

We do not praise Him because He is lenient with us; instead, we praise Him because we know that He expects us to grow and change and become more like Jesus. He always dangles that carrot out for us—that we can be sanctified, we can be changed, we can increase in holiness, and we can be revived. "...that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 11.20).

How then can we praise Him, for His righteous judgments, with our life and with our words?
"Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament!
Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness!
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp!
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!
Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with clashing cymbals!
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!" (Ps. 150)

For reflection

1. For what do you typically give praise to the Lord?
2. What could you do to bring more praise and thanks into your daily life?
3. How would you expect giving more praise to the Lord to help you grow in love and obedience to Him?

By the adverb seven times, the Prophet means that he was continually or very often engaged in celebrating the praises of God.
John Calvin (1506-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.164*

Pray Psalm 119.161-163

What opportunities will you have to take a stand on God's Word today? Commit them and all your day to the Lord, and ask Him to make His Word readily available to you throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 119.161-163.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I take my stand with gladness on Your holy, righteous Word.
I rejoice as with great treasure in Your holy Law, O Lord.
Princes persecute me daily; without cause they seek my harm.
Yet I stand on Your Word squarely; hold me with Your mighty arm.

4 Soul Work

Pray Psalm 119.165, 167.

Great peace have those who love Your law,
And nothing causes them to stumble...
My soul keeps Your testimonies,
And I love them exceedingly.

Sing Psalm 119.163-168.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I hate all sin and lying but I love Your holy Law.
All throughout the day I praise You, thanking You in joy and awe.
For Your judgments all are righteous; all who love Your Law have peace.
We shall never stumble as our faith and love for You increase.

Lord, I hope for Your salvation and I keep Your holy Word.
All Your precepts and commandments I love as I love You, Lord.
All my ways are spread before You; my soul keeps Your holy Word!
More than life itself I love You and Your Word, O righteous Lord.

Read Psalm 119.161-168; meditate on verses 165, 167.

Preparation

1. What do they possess who love God's Law?
2. Where must keeping God's Word begin?

Meditation

I've pulled these two verses out of their normal order to emphasize again the way Hebrew poetry works. We can see a parallel structure here that is designed to embrace all three of these verses into a single idea. Verse 166, which we will consider in our next installment, makes a bridge between today's verses.

Verses 165 and 167 have the psalmist committing to love God's Word to begin and close this passage. Similarly, not "to stumble" is paired with "keeps". Nothing can cause us to stumble when we keep God's Word. But we must do so from within, from the depths of our being, our soul (v. 167). Keeping God's Word is soul work. We must devote our *mind* to knowing and understanding God's Law. The focus and desire of our *heart* must be to delight in His Word. And our *conscience* must set obedience to God's Law, testimonies, statutes, precepts – all His Word – as the defining priority for our actions.

If we will set our soul (v. 167) in this way, we will know peace within (v. 165). Set your soul to obey the Word of God, and keep it in all your ways, and you will know *shalom*, peace. And neither temptation nor trial will cause you to stumble in your path.

Obedying God is soul work in the first instance. Wrap your soul around God's Word, immerse in and delight in it, and you'll keep the Word out of and unto the peace that passes all understanding.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Peace is something that most people desire but cannot seem to find. It appears to be in short supply. True tranquility of spirit comes only by the hand of God. As Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (Jn. 14.27).

Except for our salvation, which is a gift, much else of the Christian life comes through the Holy Spirit

working diligently in us, and by a sincere effort of the will on our part. “Great peace have those who love Your law” (Ps. 119.165), when we have made it our business to learn God’s Laws and to live by them. “The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul” (Prov. 16.17). We strive to depart from anything evil and keep our way on the path of righteousness, which requires an act of our will to do what is pleasing in God’s sight, to gain peace and to preserve our soul for righteous living.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4.6, 7). Here again we are working out our salvation through prayer, with thanksgiving, as God’s peace guards our heart, mind, and soul and bestows a peace that goes beyond anything we understand peace to be.

When we love and do God’s Law we will have great peace, and nothing will cause us to stumble. “But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble” (Prov. 4.18, 19). But we do, and so we avoid it. “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on” (Prov. 4.14, 15). Exertion required.

Our reward for the effort? An abundance of peace with God is to be found in that obedience.

“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:

I am the LORD your God,

Who teaches you to profit,

Who leads you by the way you should go.

Oh, that you had heeded My commandments!

Then your peace would have been like a river,

and your righteousness like the waves of the sea” (Is. 48.17, 18).

Peace does come by loving God’s Word exceedingly—heart and soul work.

For reflection

1. What does it mean to “work out” (not “for”) your salvation (Phil. 2.12)?
2. Why does loving the Word of God bring peace to our soul?
3. Does it seem contradictory to you that we should have to work to know the peace of God? Explain.

... *our love to the word of God must subdue our lusts, and root out carnal affection: we must make heart work of it, or we make nothing of it.* Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.167*

Pray Psalm 119.161, 162.

Set your heart to know and love God’s Word (Ps. 119.112). Commit yourself afresh to Him, to learn Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24) and to live for Him in all your ways.

Sing Psalm 119.161, 162.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I take my stand with gladness on Your holy, righteous Word.

I rejoice as with great treasure in Your holy Law, O Lord.

Princes persecute me daily; without cause they seek my harm.

Yet I stand on Your Word squarely; hold me with Your mighty arm.

5 Hope and Do

Pray Psalm 119.166.

LORD, I hope for Your salvation,
And I do Your commandments.

Sing Psalm 119.166-168.

(Hymn to Joy: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)

Lord, I hope for Your salvation and I keep Your holy Word.
All Your precepts and commandments I love as I love You, Lord.
All my ways are spread before You; my soul keeps Your holy Word!
More than life itself I love You and Your Word, O righteous Lord.

Read Psalm 119.161-168; meditate on verses 166.

Preparation

1. For what did the psalmist hope?
2. What did he do?

Meditation

From love for God and His Law the psalmist hoped to know more of God's salvation; and he therefore did the commandments of God *unto* greater love for Him and His Word.

The great central message of all Scripture is the salvation God provides through our Lord Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews describes this as "so great a salvation" (Heb. 2.3), and the apostle Paul mentions it as having potential exceedingly abundantly beyond anything we have ever dared to ask or think (Eph. 3.20). More of God's salvation awaits us day by day as we work out our salvation in fear and trembling to grow in grace and become more like Jesus Christ (Phil. 2.12; 2 Pet. 3.18; 2 Cor. 3.12-18).

But we're not likely to do this unless we love the Word of God (v. 165) and hope earnestly for the salvation promised there. And even hoping is not enough. Hoping leads to doing – doing the commandments of God which we love. As we obey God's Word, we realize how true and valuable it is, and we increase in the experience of salvation. The result of this is that we will love God's Word even more (v. 167).

Love God's Word so that you read about the salvation it promises. Hope to realize more of that salvation and obey whatever God teaches in His Word. Obey the Word of God and you will grow in His salvation and love Him even more. Love, read, hope, do, love, read... Think of it as an upward spiral into greater measures of grace and salvation. What a way to live!

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

As believers, what other way would we want to live? Indeed, this is the only way. As Simon Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6.68).

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever" (Ps. 111.10).

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them" (Ps. 103.17, 18).

"My soul faints for your salvation, but I hope in Your word" (Ps. 119.81).

We “rejoice in hope of the glory of God”... and... “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom 5.2, 5).

If our goal is to become more like Jesus every day, and we are hoping for our daily and eternal salvation, and we are doing God’s commandments, then we are able to embrace these words from Paul: “To them” (that’s us) “God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery” (the hoping and the doing) “among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1.27).

It is a mystery why God would love us so much that He would give His only begotten Son to save us (Jn. 3.16). And it is a mystery that we cannot do anything good enough to earn this salvation gift. And it is also a mystery that our belief in the cleansing blood of Jesus is sufficient to save us, but that we must also work out this hoped-for salvation in fear and trembling. But even that is a mystery, because while we are working, it is really “God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2.12 13).

All these unfathomable mysteries are compounded by our inability to truly grasp the majesty of God’s lovingkindness, because if we could truly understand it, we wouldn’t need faith to believe it. And here is the good part: We know that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11.1), and that “without faith it is impossible to please” God (Heb. 11.6). So, the very fact that we know, and God knows, that we are made of dust is a super big plus for us! (Ps. 103.14)

And the cherry on top of that cake? We only need to faithfully hope for God’s salvation and do His commandments. (Ps. 119.166)

“What a way to live!”

For reflection

1. What’s the difference between working *for* salvation and working *out* salvation?
2. What does it mean to hope for the salvation of the Lord?
3. Whom will you encourage today to hope for the Lord’s salvation?

From the order of the words we learn, that if a man would keep himself in the fear of God, and the love of the law, it is necessary for him, above all things, to seek for salvation in God. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.166

Pray Psalm 119.163-165.

Set some times today to draw aside from activity and give thanks and praise to the Lord. Call on Him to keep you in His pathway in all you do.

Sing Psalm 119.163-165.

(Hymn to Joy: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)

Lord, I hate all sin and lying but I love Your holy Law.

All throughout the day I praise You, thanking You in joy and awe.

For Your judgments all are righteous; all who love Your Law have peace.

We shall never stumble as our faith and love for You increase.

6 All Our Ways

Pray Psalm 119.168.

I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,
For all my ways *are* before You.

Sing Psalm 119.166-168.

(Hymn to Joy: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)

Lord, I hope for Your salvation and I keep Your holy Word.
All Your precepts and commandments I love as I love You, Lord.
All my ways are spread before You; my soul keeps Your holy Word!
More than life itself I love You and Your Word, O righteous Lord.

Psalm 119.161-168; meditate on verse 168.

Preparation

1. How much of the psalmist's life did God see?
2. What did knowing this move the psalmist to do?

Meditation

We recall that “precepts” are those teachings or doctrines derived from studying God’s Word and comparing Scripture with Scripture (1 Cor. 2.12, 13). “Testimonies” are the written records of what God has spoken, both to His prophets and through them. Like the other words used in Psalm 119 to refer to Scripture – rules, commandments, judgments, statutes, words, etc. – these “parts” of Scripture are meant to stand for the whole of it. So the psalmist is reporting here that he was faithful in keeping all of God’s Word, as much as he possessed in his day.

The reason for this is, as we have seen (cf. v. 159), because God considers and scrutinizes all our ways. God is more serious about us walking the path of righteousness than we are (Heb. 12.3-11). He watches *all* our ways – every thought, word, and deed. He knows the desires of our heart. And He has given His Spirit to convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment for all our ways (Jn. 16.8-11).

The simple fact is God knows better than we do how we ought to live. He has prepared a way for us that is full and abundant in righteousness, peace, and joy. And His Word speaks to every aspect of our lives – all our ways – so that in everything we do we might honor Him and increase in His salvation.

Our part is to hear the Word of God as it speaks into all our ways. This requires continuous reading, patient meditation, daily offering ourselves to God according to His Word, resisting temptation and the devil, and walking in God’s pathway. God’s Word shows us the way of life for *all* of life. Let’s make sure we don’t miss any of what God has in store for us.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God’s Laws, as opposed to traffic laws, have a different emotional gravitas for us as believers. We don’t run through red lights because we don’t want to cause an accident; not because we love the State.

We keep God’s Laws because we fear and love Him. And well, OK, He also knows everything that we do: “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths” (Prov. 5.21).

We might be able to get away with a “rolling stop” when a sign beckons; but we will never get away with breaking any of God’s Laws, no matter how minor an infraction we perceive it to be. This is a good thing.

Because why would we want to fudge on His precepts, testimonies, commandments, words, judgments, statutes, laws, or anything else? Anything antithetical to God's ways either disrespect Him or hurt a fellow human being.

"The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Prov. 15.3). He watches us for our good, to keep us from evil. He answers our daily request to "deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6.13).

Also, as He watches us, He checks our hearts to see where they stand with Him. "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the hearts" (Prov. 17.3).

Since "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" then it is exceptionally wise of us to keep His Laws. All of them.

As we endeavor to hope and do, we will do well to take to heart some helpful words God gave to Zechariah: "These are the things you shall do:

Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;
give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;
let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor;
and do not love a false oath." (Zech. 8.16, 17; Ex. 20.1-17).

We do His commandments because we love Him; and because we fear Him. (Jn. 14.15) "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (Jn. 15.21).

He watches all your ways. Keep His Word.

For reflection

1. How should knowing that God sees all our ways affect our daily lives?
2. What should be our attitude toward all God's ways?
3. Whom will you encourage today to walk in God's ways?

We must keep the commandments of God by obedience to them, and his promises by reliance on them. God's eye is on us at all times; this should make us very careful to keep his commandments. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.168

Pray Psalm 119.161, 162.

Ask God to open the treasure of His Word and to give you riches to spend for the souls of others today (2 Cor. 12.15).

Sing Psalm 119.161, 162.

(Hymn to Joy: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)

Lord, I take my stand with gladness on Your holy, righteous Word.
I rejoice as with great treasure in Your holy Law, O Lord.
Princes persecute me daily; without cause they seek my harm.
Yet I stand on Your Word squarely; hold me with Your mighty arm.

7 By the Word Affected

Pray Psalm 119.161, 162.

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

Sing Psalm 119.161, 162.

(Hymn to Joy: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)

Lord, I take my stand with gladness on Your holy, righteous Word.
I rejoice as with great treasure in Your holy Law, O Lord.
Princes persecute me daily; without cause they seek my harm.
Yet I stand on Your Word squarely; hold me with Your mighty arm.

Read Psalm 119.161-168; meditate on verses 161, 162.

Preparation

1. How did the psalmist feel about God's Word?
2. To what did he liken the Word?

Meditation

Throughout Psalm 119 we have commented on the various *affections* the psalmist mentions with respect to the Word of God. This *W* (*sin/shin*) stanza is no exception, and it affords us an opportunity to reflect on the role of affections in the life of faith.

Jonathan Edwards wrote that “true religion, in great part, consists in holy affections” which “are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul” (*A Treatise on Religious Affections*). Affections are those deep sentiments of the heart, the values and priorities of the conscience, and the brightest and most illuminating thoughts of the mind which cause our souls to incline – to seek and desire certain things more than others – and our wills to choose in certain ways. We want to have “holy affections” operating in our soul so that we will always *incline toward* and *will* to be holy.

Our psalmist mentions several such holy affections with respect to God and His Word: awe (v. 161), rejoicing (v. 162), treasuring (v. 162), love (vv. 163, 165, 167), praise (v. 164), peace (v. 165), hope (v. 166), and diligence (vv. 166-168). Such affections are not natural to us, at least, not where God and His Word are concerned. We must cultivate these affections and focus them consistently on the Lord and His Word. Otherwise, our affections can become misguided, attach to other objects, and lead us away from God rather than to Him (2 Cor. 6.12).

How do we do this? By returning often to the Lord, listening and responding to Him as He speaks to us from His Word, and calling on Him to shape our soul to know, love, and serve Him. When we allow the Word thus to affect us, our affections will cling to the Lord and His Word, precisely as He intends.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Celtic Christians during the revival period of 430-800 AD claimed things from the world and used them for God's glory. Rather than destroy or cancel things, they reused and repurposed them. I would like to do the same with Elizabeth Barret Browning's poem entitled *How Do I Love Thee?* Imagine you are reciting this beautiful love poem to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (thus Thee is capitalized).

How Do I Love Thee?
Sonnet XLIII

How do I love Thee? Let me count the ways.
I love Thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love Thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love Thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love Thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love Thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love Thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love Thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love Thee better after death.

~Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1806-1861

When we love God most of all, we will long to read about Him, share time with Him, talk with Him, learn what pleases Him, know what brings Him delight, and do the things that show Him that we love Him dearly. He is, after all, our greatest treasure (Jn. 14.15; Eph. 2.10; Ex. 20.1-17; Jer. 15.16; Ps. 119.162). “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Lk. 12.34).

“How do we do this? By turning often to the Lord, listening and responding to Him as He speaks to us from His Word, and calling on Him to shape our soul to know, love, and serve Him. When we allow the Word thus to affect us, our affections will cling to the Lord and His Word, precisely as He intends.”

For reflection

1. How would you encourage a new believer to grow in love for the Lord and His Word?
2. The more you love the Lord and His Word, the more you will become like Jesus. Why is this so?
3. How can we keep negative and distracting affections in check?

We are to praise God even for afflictions; through grace we get good from them. Those that love the world have great vexation, for it does not answer what they expect; those that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes what they expect. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.161-165

Pray Psalm 119.163-168.

Use your time of prayer to inventory your affections where the Word of God is concerned. Talk with God plainly about how you feel about His Word, about reading and meditating in it, and about carrying it with you into every aspect of your life. Pray Browning's poem to God.

Sing Psalm 119.163-168.

(Hymn to Joy: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

Lord, I hate all sin and lying but I love Your holy Law.
All throughout the day I praise You, thanking You in joy and awe.
For Your judgments all are righteous; all who love Your Law have peace.
We shall never stumble as our faith and love for You increase.

Psalm 119.161-168

Lord, I hope for Your salvation and I keep Your holy Word.
All Your precepts and commandments I love as I love You, Lord.
All my ways are spread before You; my soul keeps Your holy Word!
More than life itself I love You and Your Word, O righteous Lord.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What are affections? Give some examples.
2. What does it mean to love God's Law? How would someone be able to tell whether you love God's Law?
3. How should the Word of God shape the way we pray to Him?
4. What does it mean to "hope for" God's salvation? How does the Word of God help us in this?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this part of our study of Psalm 119?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.