

Psalm 119

*Prose and
Poetry*

by

G. ALBERT RAMSAY

1987

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Meditation on this most wonderful portion of the inspired word has brought to me great spiritual blessing. The brief comments and verses of poetry were written while my mind and heart were engaged with God's word, mostly in the early morning hours, while traveling, waiting in airports, or visiting the sick. I found this to be a profitable way of "redeeming the time."

Those who read this book will understand that I make no claim to literary excellence; these are just simple thoughts, expressed from the heart, which were inspired by reading and meditating on the verses of Psalm 119. Thus it was decided to circulate this little work so that others might be touched by it.

This would not have been possible apart from the valued help of Gordon and Doris Ramsay, who assisted with the editing and printing. Also a special thanks to Matt Brescia for the typesetting services, and to Don Draper for the cover design. To each one, I render my heartfelt thanks.

Albert Ramsay

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Albert Ramsay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Albert" on top and "Ramsay" on the bottom, both starting with a capital letter.

Foreword

I am honored and happy to write the foreword to this little book on Psalm 119 by our esteemed and beloved brother Albert Ramsay.

When he first showed me a "sample" of a few verses a while back, I immediately thought it would be very helpful and practical and it has turned out just that.

This work is no exception to his form and style, which has always been "words easy to be understood," combined with godly example and experience gained from many years "laboring" amongst those gathered unto the Lord's precious Name. The Psalmist's love for the Word of God is further enhanced in these lines of prose and poetry by our brother's own love for "the precepts and commandments of the Lord."

It is not "dry theology," which some men mistake for "the deep things of God," but rather warm exhortations to wholehearted obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and God's blessed Book. I'm sure all who read it will be profited thereby, as I was, and it will probably prove even more beneficial as a "daily devotional."

Matthew J. Brescia
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Verse 1'

*"Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
who walk in the law of the Lord."*

Blessed, happy or well off — who? Those who walk in the law of the Lord. Every law has boundaries and limits — so the law of the Lord, or the law of "Lordship." If He is my Lord then I must know what is His mind for me, so enabling me not to transgress. In life we have to learn the principles of certain laws. Ignorance can bring us to disaster. We had to be taught as children that fire burns, water drowns. We cannot violate the laws of nature with impunity; neither can the Christian violate spiritual laws without paying a price.

The law is righteous — trifles not —
Cannot be bribed, cannot be bought;
Must be adhered to, must be obeyed,
For in breaching its rules a price must be paid.

Verse 2

*"Blessed are they that keep His testimonies,
and that seek Him with the whole heart."*

A whole heart in any field of endeavor is the only way to get the most out of it. In the things of the Lord it has been proven that they who wholeheartedly serve Him receive the greatest enrichment in soul. "Blessed are they that keep (observe) His testimonies." God has given wonderful testimonies in the scriptures. "That from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation," was Paul's word to Timothy. We learn valuable lessons from the testimonies of scripture. It challenges our inmost soul to be like Joseph, Samuel and Daniel — hence to be Christlike. They are pronounced blessed, or happy, that keep His testimonies, that seek Him with their whole heart.

The wholehearted Christian is happy,
For his heart is right with the Lord.
He takes his pattern for living
From the testimonies in His Word.
He longs to be more like His Master.
His all at Christ's feet he would lay,
Would follow the footsteps of others
Who followed the Lord in the way.

Verse 3

"They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways."

Iniquity is the thought of "perversion" — putting to wrong use. This is true of us by nature — we are all wrong. After we are born from above, all is changed. We walk in His ways. Our course of life, our daily habits, our movements are controlled by Him. We look to Him for direction. The Christian life is made up of small acts done for Him — a cup of cold water, the widow's mite, the box of ointment, the loaves and fishes, the boat loaned, the new tomb. Iniquity was found in Lucifer, the son of the morning, and all who are under his control are enslaved to sin.

If you walk in the Way,
Read your Bible and pray,
Iniquity from you will flee:
His word will direct,
And prayer will protect,
Your life ever happy shall be.

Verse 4

"Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently."

Diligence is a great factor in the things of the Lord. "Diligent in business." "The King's business requireth haste." (I Sam. 21:8) We cannot be diligent if we are not wholehearted and enthusiastic. When we love a person it is not difficult to move swiftly at their smallest hint of desire. David's men broke through the enemy's ranks to bring him a drink of water because they had heard just a sigh from his lips. So the Lord's commandments will be observed with diligence if we are revelling in His love. "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments."

Angel hosts at His command
Brought the message down to man,
Of the heart of God laid bare
When His Son He did not spare.
Surely then at His command
Objects of His love should stand
Always ready to obey,
Thus their debt of love to pay.
Diligence in every step
Must such love in us beget.
Cold indeed that heart has grown
Which this virtue has not known.

Verse 5

"O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!"

"O", his whole soul seems to pant this expression. How he would like to keep in God's way. No doubt he learned from experience that this was the only happy way. He was ashamed when he found himself departing from it. When our ways fit in with God's statutes there is deep peace in the soul. God's statutes are His set principles which never change. Our hearts, by nature, are against God and His ways; therefore it is of utmost importance that we put no confidence in the flesh.

Direction is what he prayed for,
That he might not be ashamed,
But walking in God's commandments,
His praise might be sustained.
For praise is the essence of worship,
And worship is service sublime,
Our hearts cannot generate worship
Unless to His laws we incline.

Verse 6

*"Then shall I not be ashamed when
I have respect unto all Thy commandments."*

The Psalmist made living a serious business. He understood the evil principle in his own heart, the tendency to disobey God's commandments. The first sin in Eden by Adam and Eve brought shame upon them. Only when we have respect unto all God's commandments can we lift our eyes to meet His, without shame.

All God's commandments are righteous,
All call for the highest respect,
'Tis only when all are adhered to
That we can this blessing expect;
The blessing the Psalmist desired
Was a life to be lived without shame,
Will we settle for less in our lifetime,
Or earnestly covet the same?

Verse 7

*"I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart,
when I shall have learned Thy righteous judgments."*

To praise God is to glorify Him; here the Psalmist would praise God intelligently, with a true or an upright heart, as he learned His righteous judgments. The soul that learns God's judgments experimentally will always acknowledge them to be righteous; this will inspire praise.

Uprightness of heart is special,
And when it is filled with praise,
It glorifies God in its breathings
As it utters heavenly lays;
Having justified God in His sayings,
And studied His mind to discern,
We vow now to praise Him uprightly
For the judgments He makes us to learn.

Verse 8

"I will keep Thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly."

"I will keep" — a promise to guard that which God has established. "His statutes" — they would speak of foundation principles. As he sums up God's law, testimonies, commandments, and God's way in this portion of this wonderful Psalm, the Psalmist makes a vow to keep His statutes. He will not change them; with all his might he will wholeheartedly observe them. "This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock . . ." "To obey is better than sacrifice."

His feet will keep to the beaten track,
With him there will be no turning back;
God's statutes with him shall be observed.
He'll walk in the light of the given word.
With all his heart the law he'll keep,
And on God's precepts plant his feet;
Observant he'll be of all God's ways —
His obedient life will inspire praise.

Verse 9

*"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to Thy word."*

"Wherewithall shall a young man cleanse his way?" A good question! A young man's way is very important: When it is corrupted his life is rendered useless for the Lord. Taking heed to God's word will ensure a clean walk. God has laid down for us in His Word the rules of life. "In all thy ways acknowledge him and He shall direct thy path." "Wherewithal." God has given us the wherewithal — to be "fully furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3:16) A "furnished room" (Luke 22:12); a "furnished table" (Prov. 9:2), and a "furnished Christian" (II Tim. 3:16).

While dwelling in this house of clay,
How can a young man cleanse his way?
From heaven above a voice is heard,
"By taking heed unto the Word."
That life so fraught with dangerous ways,
Must have a guide the trail to blaze;
And if he follows in the way,
From virtue's paths he will not stray.

Verse 10

*"With my whole heart have I sought Thee:
O let me not wander from Thy commandments."*

"With my whole heart have I sought thee." Christianity is a heart work. It is most important: Nothing but the whole heart is sufficient to engage in such a work. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" — no duplicity. God made the human heart for Himself, and only when He has complete possession will there be peace of mind and virtuous actions. "O my son, give me thine heart." When the heart is His alone we shall be kept from wandering.

My whole heart's occupation,
Is taken up by Thee;
The blessed consummation,
A mind and spirit free;
My feet shall never wander,
My path shall guarded be,
My life shall light the pathway,
And lead some soul to Thee.

Verse 11

*"Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against Thee."*

By nature we are sinners; born in sin, it is natural for us to sin. As saints we hate sin and would live without it. The word of God not only gives direction, but power. "Where the word of a king is, there is power." The Lord Jesus used it against the devil and he fled from Him. It is called, "the sword of the Spirit." Let us hide it in our hearts so we will not sin against Him.

Thy word in my heart I would hide,
In Thee I would ever abide;
Thy will be my aim,
As Thy word makes it plain –
This rule has been tested and tried.
When Thy word is hid in my heart,
My soul shall not walk in the dark;
But always in light, with full knowledge of right,
I will from all evil depart.

Verse 12

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy statutes."

"Blessed art thou, O Lord," or "I adore Thee." He is worthy of adoration; His statutes are trustworthy. The Psalmist wanted to be taught by them and to be knowledgeable in them. The secret of knowing His statutes is heart affection for Him. His statutes are principles which remain the same regardless of time: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," "Teach me Thy statutes" — how? By hearing, reading, learning.

The devoted soul will have an open ear,
Longing to know His mind, and quick to hear;
Ready to honor His statutes, His word obey –
Walking with Him, communing in the way.

Verse 13

"With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Thy mouth."

Of the sinner God says, "the poison of asps is under their lips." (Romans 3:13) What a miracle He has wrought! "The lips of the righteous feed many" (Prov. 10:21). "The lips of knowledge are a precious jewel" (Prov. 20:15). "So will we render the calves of our lips" (Hos. 14:2). "Righteous lips are the delight of kings" (Prov. 16:13). In contrast, the wicked say, "our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Ps. 12:4).

Can the lips of man be trusted,
Without a change of heart?
The fount is utter poison,
The lips but form a part.
But when the soul is cleansed,
And the captive lips are freed,
Their holy occupation
A multitude will feed.

Verse 14

*"I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies,
as much as in all riches."*

"I have rejoiced." Some rejoice in conquest, some in riches, some in fame, but the Psalmist has his own secret rejoicing – "Thy testimonies." How wonderful to be in agreement with God and to rejoice in what the Lord has recorded for us. As we read of men who honored God, we are in company with those whom the Lord has called "blessed . . . for they have died in the Lord and their works do follow them."

Let me ponder in the pathway,
Of those men who lived for God,
Let me imitate their actions,
Free from malice, guile, and fraud;
And rejoice in contemplation,
Of their noble acts and deeds,
Leaving thus a testimony,
Greater far than drafting creeds.

Verse 15

"I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways."

"I will meditate:" – This makes the difference. There are so many things that would be unprofitable, but nothing could be more profitable than God's precepts. They direct us in His ways. This is so important in a dark world. To have respect unto God's ways will sometimes be against our own judgment. David said: "As for God, His way is perfect."

To know each day the perfect way
And seek therein to walk,
Will regulate my conduct, give credence to my talk;
For men will judge me solely by what the eye can see;
The age-old proverb still holds true:
"The fruit declares the tree."

Verse 16

"I will delight myself in Thy statutes: I will not forget Thy word."

"I will delight myself in thy statutes." This follows the thought of verse 15. As we meditate in His precepts we see their perfection and regard them as statutes never to be changed. Thus we delight in them.

Pause now, my soul, and consider,
What it is that brings thee delight;
For that is what will control thee
Whether for wrong or for right.
The Psalmist made choice of God's statutes
Therein he would find his delight;
For in difficult days, as he walked in God's ways
He proved that they guided aright.

Verse 17

*"Deal bountifully with Thy servant,
that I may live, and keep Thy word."*

The Psalmist classified himself as a servant. The great apostle Paul loved this title, "a bond slave of Jesus Christ." The poor worlding is a slave to sin. "His servants ye are to whom ye obey." Ours is a service of love, a willing, obedient service. God deals with His servants bountifully; He has promised to supply all their need. Give to Him and He will multiply it. The lad gave his lunch intended only for himself; the Lord fed a multitude and gave 12 baskets to the disciples. "The cattle on a thousand hills are His."

A servant indeed, is one who is freed
From the dark evil bondage of sin;
He rejoices to serve in accord with the word
Of the Master whose service he's in.
Rich bounty's supplied as we walk by His side
With no other object in view,
But to do His sweet will, and the purpose fulfill,
Of the One Who has made all things new.

Verse 18

*"Open Thou mine eyes,
that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."*

Uncover my eyes – not to see the wonderful works of man but wondrous things out of Thy law. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His spirit." These are things that the human eye has never seen. Salvation is an uncovering of the eyes; the veil is taken away when the soul turns to Christ. (II Cor. 3:16 & 17) Even after conversion there is the danger of becoming blind and not able to see afar off. (II Peter 1)

These eyes once sealed in nature's night,
At Thy command were given sight;
Oh, may these eyes from veil be free,
The wonders in Thy law to see.
Within Thy law great treasures lie,
Forever sealed to nature's eye.
Oh, miracle of heavenly sight,
Now in Thy law I find delight!
Tis like the cloud in Israel's day
Which guided them along the way;
To God's redeemed, its beams were bright,
But to the Egyptians – black as night.

Verse 19

"I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me."

"I am a stranger in the earth." The Psalmist is lonesome for home. What sweeter solace than a message from home to cheer him until he arrives? "Hide not thy commandments from me." Let me know how things are at home. Keep me posted. This strange land saddens me, but a message from the homeland will cheer me until I arrive.

I am a stranger in the earth
Away from home.
In my heart there is a longing
As I roam;
For a message from Thy law
That will serve my heart to draw
Nearer home, as I roam
This earth alone.

Verse 20

*"My soul breaketh for the longing
that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times."*

There are many broken hearts but few found thus longing after the Word of God. This speaks of deep desire. Spiritual things affect the heart. God's home is the heart. If God is not at home in my heart, I will act strangely, and behave unwisely.

Some break their heart for riches,
While others reach for fame;
Still others spend a lifetime
Establishing their name.
But the Psalmist's heart was longing
For the living word of God,
And all who know the better part
Would the Psalmist's choice applaud.

Verse 21

*"Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed,
which do err from Thy commandments."*

To err from the commands of men is a serious offense, but to err from God's commands is a show of pride and independence and we stand to be rebuked of Him. A rebuke from the Queen would be a mark of shame on a subject, to be carried to the grave. What shall we say when God rebukes?

*"As many as I love I rebuke,
To cause them to walk in My way;
For if they are left to themselves
From My precepts like sheep they will stray;
But when with the rod I correct,
And show that it is for their good,
They bow and agree, as their spirits are free
For my chast'ning is then understood."*

Verse 22

*"Remove from me reproach and contempt;
for I have kept Thy testimonies."*

Reproach and contempt are repulsive to human nature. The Psalmist wanted them removed, but the Lord Jesus could say, "For thy sake I have borne reproach," and "Thou hast known my reproach." "Let us go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach."

*"Reproach," He could say, "broke my heart."
As I hear this the teardrops would start.
For I find after all He has done,
This is something His people would shun;
And although He has died,
Heavens joys to provide,
Of reproach and His shame they want none.*

Verse 23 and 24

*"Princes also did sit and speak against me:
but Thy servant did meditate in Thy statutes.
Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors."*

Whoever wrote these words, "Princes did sit and speak against me," was partaking of the Master's portion, for He said in Psalm 69, "They that sit in the gate speak against Me." All those who meditate in His statutes operate on such an elevated plain that they are not moved by the opinion of princes or song of drunkards.

My ship is sailing on higher seas,
My sail is unfurled to the heavenly breeze,
My anchor of hope is within the veil,
His statutes the ballast as on I sail;
"Thy testimonies," I hear them say,
"Delight my soul and mark the way."
My counsel is not what princes say,
But the word of the Lord marks out my way.

Verse 25

*"My soul cleaveth unto the dust:
quicken Thou me according to Thy word."*

Man was made to cleave to his God. When he turned his back on God he became a cleaver to the dust. Only when he is quickened by the Spirit of God, "Born again by the word of God," can he truly elude the dust.

A life of trust or a life of dust, —
One or the other a certain must;
Upon each soul a choice is thrust, —
Cleave to the Lord or cleave to the dust.

Verse 26

*"I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me:
teach me Thy statutes."*

Every Christian had a declaration day when he confessed Christ as Lord. God heard that confession. Now the Psalmist wants to be taught the statutes of the Lord, "the permanent rules of His government" (Webster).

Declare thy way and firmly stand
With willing heart and ready hand,
To do what e'er He doth command,
Set in statutes' clear demand;
Thus shalt thou be a shining light,
A soldier ready for the fight.
His statutes clear shall be thy might,
To guide thy pilgrim feet aright.

Verse 27

*"Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts
So shall I talk of Thy wondrous works."*

The precept always goes before the promise. It is like the salt in the meat offering which was never to be lacking. To try and eat the meal offering without salt would prove tasteless; so God's promises can only be sweet to us when we fulfill His precepts. "I will be a Father unto you and ye shall be My sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty: Hear the precept: "Come out . . . be ye separate." (II. Cor. 6:17)

To try to claim a promise without precept,
Is like dreaming that you're drinking while you thirst,
But, to understand His precepts have a purpose,
And that purpose is, God's portion must come first;
Thus every soul that carries out His precepts
Shall prove His promise true: "Shall never thirst,"
And the simple recipe for happy living,
Is to always give the Lord His portion first.

Verse 28

*"My soul melteth for heaviness:
strengthen Thou me according unto Thy word."*

When the soul is in heaviness only God can strengthen. His word is the remedy. "Thy words were found and I did eat them and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart (or soul)." Jonah said, "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord." How often the Lord has to melt us so that He can mold us!

The word of God is the perfect mold,
Producing saints like men of old;
He first will cause the heart to melt
With heaviness that can be felt;
The broken spirit then will yield,
And a saint for service will be sealed.

Verse 29

"Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Thy law graciously."

The devil was a liar from the beginning, so all who are his offspring are partakers with him. The Psalmist knew the living and true God; therefore he could not tolerate lying. God desireth truth in the inner parts; everyone that is godly has the same desire. God's law is like Himself, true and righteous.

Remove from me the evil way,
Grant me Thy law from day to day,
To be a sentinel in my soul,
My thoughts and actions to control;
Help me to practice without flaw,
Each jot and tittle of Thy law.

Verse 30

"I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me."

Man is a freewill agent; he can make a choice. The Psalmist chose the way of truth. Adam chose to believe a lie and brought a curse upon creation and all his posterity. The way of truth is God's way – he who would walk therein must submit to God's judgments.

The way of choice
Is man's by birth,
But the choice of a way
While here on earth
Is for hell's dark gloom
Or heaven's mirth.

Verse 31

"I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame."

Many are sticking to false doctrine, false gods, and false ways, but the Psalmist would stick to God's testimonies; as a result he would not be put to shame. God's testimonies are all true, never exaggerated or distorted. They bring us into contact with those who lived and served God in a bygone day, and with events in which we can view the workings of God Himself.

No stain nor shame shall mar the name,
Of the man whose aim is not for gain,
Who lives alone for his master's fame;
He'll stick to the track, though all turn back,
He'll finish his course, he has the knack,
Of pushing through 'til he wins the plaque.

Verse 32

*"I will run the way of Thy commandments,
when Thou shall enlarge my heart."*

It takes a large heart to practice all the word of God. Man by nature is selfish, narrow and confined, when it comes to thinking of God; but when we are born again we have a new life which gives largeness of heart to run in the way of His commandments.

To run for God gives pleasure,
When the heart has been enlarged,
When every nerve and fiber
With devotion has been charged;
From the powerhouse – Mount Calv'ry –
Where I see He died for me,
Strength is given for the running,
Even so, Lord, let it be.

Verse 33

*"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes;
and I shall keep it unto the end."*

The Psalmist was thirsting for knowledge – the knowledge of God's statutes. He had a heart to keep them, but desired a mind to know them. Many know them, but have no heart to keep them. This will be to their everlasting shame.

The grace of God in teaching
Is a touching thought indeed,
Unlike man's universities
With dogma, rule and creed;
The grace of God makes humble men,
Men who are true inside,
While the schools of men teach knowledge,
Which caters to his pride.
They are geared to man's ambition,
His ego to inflate;
God's grace will humble to the dust,
And make man truly great.

Verse 34

*"Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law;
yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."*

Keeping God's law will not take a soul to heaven, but every soul of heavenly birth will have a desire to keep it with his whole heart.

The heart of man was made for God,
For God Himself to fill,
And never can be satisfied,
Til subject to His will.
For understanding is his prayer,
To keep God's law his goal;
For well he knows that life is blest~
Which is under God's control.

Verse 35

*"Make me to go in the way of Thy Commandments;
for therein do I delight."*

The Psalmist desired to go in the path of God's commandments. We must all walk a path through life, and happy is the man who, at the end, can look back and say: "I have walked in the way of Thy commandments and therein did I find delight."

A path is made by constant tread
Be that tread good or bad;
'Tis wiser to follow God's commands
Than to later wish you had.

Verse 36

"Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness."

The heart is the vital center that controls all else. Covetousness, once it takes hold of the heart, is a disease that only death can cure. Therefore, "keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life."

If the heart is right with God
As the road of life is trod;
We need never fear the ending of the way.
For the heart the life doth mold;
By its actions are controlled;
And will either lead to God or lead away.

Verse 37

*"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity,
and quicken Thou me in Thy way."*

What my eye sees affects my heart. The eye can never be satisfied with seeing. It is good when we have power to close the eye from that which would defile. The Psalmist's desire was to be quickened in the Lord's ways. He would say, "Give me life in Thy ways," or "Help me to put life into my living for Thee."

Mine eyes I'd lift to heaven
From the empty scenes of earth,
Do Thou my footsteps quicken,
To the homeland of my birth;
For the soul that's born from heaven
Never can contented be,
Until he's safe in glory,
With the Man of Calvary.

Verse 38

"Stablish Thy word unto Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear."

There was a reverential fear of the Lord in the soul of the Psalmist, which he expressed in this request. He wanted it to be established in his soul, and his soul to be established in that fear. It is one thing to know the letter of the word; but to have it made good, or to come into action in relation to our circumstances, gives it full meaning. The devoted soul will ever desire this.

Make good to me Thy word, O Lord;
And may it in my heart be stored,
That I may never from it stray
But seek its precepts to obey.
Help me, O Lord, by it to live,
To others of its bounties give,
And view this as a great career –
To be devoted to Thy fear.

Verse 39

"Turn away my reproach which I fear: for Thy judgments are good."

Sin is the reproach of any people. The Psalmist dreaded reproach, which could mean being blameworthy, or could be reproach for Christ (Messiah), Who said, "Reproach hath broken mine heart." Sinners blame God: Adam said to God: "The woman that Thou gavest me; she gave me of the tree and I did eat." God clothed Himself in a body like Adam's and took the blame. We see the punishment meted out in the dark hours on the cross.

I deserved the darkness;
I deserved the shame;
I did all the sinning.
He took all the blame.
He turned my shame to gladness,
My reproach He took away;
And changed the dreaded darkness
To everlasting day.

Verse 40

*"Behold I have longed after Thy precepts;
quicken me in Thy righteousness."*

Precepts precede promises. The Psalmist wanted to fulfill the word of God, so God's promise was, "He that hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness shall be filled."

Precept is to promise
What muscle is to bone,
Many claim the promise,
But the precept leave alone;
In covenant of heaven
God decrees this is His will:
When we carry out the precept
He the promise will fulfill.

Verse 41

*"Let Thy mercies come also unto me O Lord;
even Thy salvation, according to Thy word."*

"God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us; even when we were dead in sins." "By grace are ye saved." We should never forget the Lord's mercies for they are new every morning. We have salvation from the *punishment* of our sin; we are saved daily from the *power* of sin, and we shall be saved finally from the *presence* of sin at His coming.

Mercy's strains shall be the meter
Of heaven's future song;
As salvation's praise is swelling
From that vast, unnumbered throng,
To Jehovah's faithful servant
Who to heavenly courts shall bring
Ransomed sinners without number –
They alone this song shall sing.

Verse 42

*"So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me:
For I trust in Thy word."*

Those who live near to the Lord and love His word will always be reproached by those who know Him not. They who delight in His word shall always have an answer, for He said: "Take no thought before what ye shall say." The Lord will give the right word, at the right time.

To be reproached is not a shame,
If that reproach is for His name:
He bore my curse upon the tree,
And gladly bore reproach for me.
This answer then to those I give
Who ask me why for Him I live,
Why from reproach I do not flee:
'Tis all because He died for me.

Verse 43

*"And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;
for I have hoped in Thy judgments."*

"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth;" (Rom. 10:8). "Thy words were found and I did eat them," "Desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us . . . and we beheld His glory."

Take from me silver and gold,
The comforts of life I forego;
If only Thy word will remain;
That I its sweet message might know.
Its precepts I cherish as gold,
As silver, each promise I claim
This my comfort shall be, to glorify Thee,
As Thy word in my heart I retain.

Verse 44 and 45

*"So shall I keep Thy law continually for ever and ever.
And I will walk at liberty for I seek Thy precepts."*

Keeping His precepts brings liberty. To do what I want and what I like is bondage to self, and the worst kind of slavery. But to have the power to do what we ought to do, is true liberty. The keeping of His word is the secret.

Liberty – the quest of ages –
Puny man pursues the search,
For this coveted possession
Which is just beyond his reach;
Never dreaming that his bondage
Springs from self within the soul,
And that crowning Christ as Master
Ends the search, and gains the goal.

Verse 46

*"I will speak of Thy testimonies also before Kings,
and will not be ashamed."*

The testimonies of God are like Himself: majestic and kingly. Kings are going to shut their mouths at Him, for that which had not been told them, shall they see (His testimonies). Why should we be ashamed to speak of THE KING'S testimonies before His inferiors?

To speak before the King,
He would not be ashamed,
But ere he ventures forth
He has his subject named.
God's testimonies are his choice
They to his heart are dear,
He's confident the King Himself
Will have an open ear.

Verse 47

"And I will delight myself in Thy commandments which I have loved."

There are many things that men delight in, but they are not lasting. As we grow familiar with them, they lose their charm. That which is of God, His commandments, are like Himself: infinite. Therefore they always hold some new charm that we never saw before.

The delights of earth shall wither,
And their charms shall pass away;
But God's commandments never
Shall wither or decay;
His commandments are His sayings,
And His sayings are commands;
They are never slavish edicts,
But the claim which love demands.

Verse 48

*"My hands also will I lift up unto Thy commandments,
which I have loved; and I will meditate in Thy statutes."*

The Psalmist here is thinking of God's commandments. He would lift up his hands in a holy gesture as if to salute them – ready to obey them. Because he loved them, he had made them his meditation.

God's statutes are his constant guest
For them deep love burns in his breast;
Can any thus approach God's law
And not be struck with holy awe,
And raise the hands as if to say,
I have surrendered to God's way.

Verse 49

*"Remember the word unto Thy servant,
upon which Thou hast caused me to hope."*

"We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24) "Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given unto us." (Rom. 5:5) "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men;" teaches us (Christians) to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope." (Titus 2:11-13) So this blessed hope, if kept fresh before us, will regulate the Christian life.

Hope like a day star
Shines in the soul,
Guiding the pilgrims
On to the goal;
Faith drops her anchor
All doubts interred,
Holds to each promise
Found in the Word.

Verse 50

*"This is my comfort in my affliction;
for Thy word hath quickened me."*

"Being born again by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." The Psalmist knew he had been quickened, or given life through the word, therefore he could turn to the same source for comfort. As the new babe turns to its mother for love and sustenance, so the Christian must read the word to nurture the spiritual life he has been given.

Comfort is satisfaction,
Comfort is also cheer,
Comfort – an arm to lean on,
When danger draweth near.
Comfort – a word of assurance,
Whispered within the soul,
Comfort is known completely
By a life in God's control.

Verse 51

*"The proud have had me greatly in derision:
yet have I not declined from Thy law."*

Pride, in any form, is hateful to God. It emanates from Satan and dwells in the heart of every son of Adam. When the law of God becomes the delight and duty of the believer, there will be ridicule from the proud.

To be derided by the proud,
Will separate me from the crowd,
And let me see the path to take,
As I their company forsake.
Thy law my heritage shall be,
For by it Thou didst humble me
And showed me by its firm decree,
My only hope was Calvary.

Verse 52

*"I remembered Thy judgments of old, O Lord,
and have comforted myself."*

We are so constituted that we need comfort. It is an ingredient that is not built into the soul of man – it must come from outside. Therefore Jesus said: "I will not leave you comfortless." Here the Psalmist is comforted by reflecting on God's past judgments. "Ebenezer" – "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

His love in time past
Sweet comfort can bring,
And cause me in trouble
His praises to sing.
I bow to His judgments,
My joy is complete,
And, ruled by His counsel,
My rest is so sweet.

Verse 53

*"Horror hath taken hold upon me
because of the wicked that forsake Thy law."*

The Psalmist loved the law of the Lord, and he was horrified at the attitude of the wicked men who forsook it. He knew from experience the blessing and rest there was in keeping God's word. Terror filled his soul when he foresaw the awful consequences awaiting the wicked.

Forsaking God's law is a danger
That only the righteous can see;
For they have observed in its boundaries,
The only way to be free.
Thus horror for that which awaiteth
That one who would dare to despise,
The benevolent law of the Maker
Who governs the earth and the skies.

Verse 54

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

He will sing: When God brings us up out of the horrible pit and plants our feet upon a rock, He puts a new song in our mouth. One of the sweetest gifts God has given to man is the ability to sing. The Psalmist said: "I will praise the name of the Lord with a song." Here he reflects upon his songs and finds that God's statutes had been woven into them throughout his pilgrimage.

One of the choicest gifts from heaven,
Is the gift of song that God has given;
What better theme could e'er be heard,
Than the statutes found in God's own word.
Their value is known in heaven alone;
With majestic sweetness they grace the throne.

Verse 55 and 56

*"I have remembered Thy name, O Lord, in the night,
and have kept Thy law. This I had, because I kept Thy precepts."*

Names are so hard to remember, so easy to forget. But here the Psalmist remembers the name of the Lord in the night. God has always revealed Himself in names. To Abraham He was "El Shaddai" – the all sufficient one. To Israel He was "Jehovah" – the ever existing One, as well as the great "I AM" – the ever present One. To the Christian He is known as "Father." "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." (Heb. 1:1) We know Him as Lord Jesus Christ – He is both Jesus my Savior, and my Lord. He is the Christ, the coming Messiah, Who is now glorified in heaven. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe. Those that know Thy name shall put their trust in Thee."

Majestic Name, who would not bow,
And own its worth! I wonder how
This mighty One could condescend
To dwell on earth and live with men;
Relate to them, and for them die,
Secure for them a home on high;
Stupendous thought: He bore my pain!
Can I do less than own His name?

Verse 57

*"Thou art my portion, O Lord:
I have said that I would keep Thy words."*

The portion was a great thing in Israel's day. When the land was divided, each tribe received its inheritance. The tribe of Levi was given no part; the Lord was their portion. It may have been one of the Levites who wrote this Psalm.

The kings who earthly sceptres sway
Will see their titles pass away;
The glittering gold from mines of earth
Can be devalued – lose its worth.
Yes, all beneath the sun must fade,
Which by the hand of man was made;
But those whose portion is the Lord,
Who stake their claim upon His Word,
When all to vapor has been turned,
And man's gigantic works are burned,
Shall view their portion – praise His name –
The Eternal One for aye the same!

Verse 58

*"I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart:
be merciful unto me according to Thy word."*

Nothing but wholeheartedness shall receive attention in the royal court of heaven. The Psalmist firmly believed this, and thus he expected God to keep His Word.

A divided heart is never true,
An honest heart is found in few;
But where this treasure rare is found,
Wholeheartedness proves fertile ground;
For He has promised in His Word,
Wholehearted seekers shall be heard.

Verse 59

"I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies."

The Christian has continual need, as had the Psalmist, to think upon his way. As he prayerfully brings his deeds before the Lord, he learns wherein he has departed from Him and His ways. And so he is able to turn his feet in the right direction.

As goes the heart, so go the feet;
As go the feet, so goes the man;
As goes the man, so goes the crowd;
As goes the crowd, so goes the Nation;
Then stop and think upon thy way,
Lest others following go astray.

Verse 60

"I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments."

Diligence in the things of God will bring blessing from God. It delights His heart to see perseverance in those who seek to serve Him. To delay in the things of God shows a lack of love for God and His things. "Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

God has spoken! Let us ever
Seek to own His every claim;
None can prosper, if from duty
They designedly refrain.
God has spoken! Let us hasten
To fulfill each clear demand;
This shall merit His approval
When before Him we shall stand.

Verse 61

*"The bands of the wicked have robbed me:
but I have not forgotten Thy law."*

We have all been defrauded by that great robber the devil. He took from us what God had given to us in Adam, and he left us "half dead." But thank God for One who came to where we were, picked us up after we had been robbed, poured in oil and wine, and took us to the inn. His name is Jesus, the Lifegiver, the One Who has bestowed upon us more than Satan took from us.

Robbed and left by the wayside,
Wounded and doomed to die;
Passed by the priest and the Levite,
No one to hear his cry;
But, lo! There was One on a journey,
With pity and love in His heart,
Who stooped by the side of this stranger,
The healing balm to impart.
He lifted him out of the gutter,
And left him with those whom He knew.
This One on His journey was Jesus —
The one by the wayside was you.

Verse 62

"At midnight I will arise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments."

It was midnight when the destroying Angel passed through the land of Egypt. It was midnight when the cry came: "Behold the bridegroom cometh!" This is a difficult time to awaken, but it shows appreciation in the heart, when one will rise from sleep to thank God for His righteous judgments.

It is good for the heart to be thankful
For the blessings which hallow our days;
But how great is the heart that is thankful
For the law that controlleth our ways.
To give thanks is wisdom in action;
To arise denotes purpose of heart;
But to side with the Lord in His judgments
New perspective to life will impart.

Verse 63

*"I am a companion of all them that fear Thee,
and of them that keep Thy precepts."*

"It is not good for man to be alone." Few creatures were ever created to be alone. We were created to live in harmony with others. Birds of the air gather in flocks, and animals rove with others of their own kind. The old saying holds true: "Birds of a feather flock together." Christian fellowship, or companionship, is next to fellowship with God. But "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Therefore the Psalmist was found in company with those who, like himself, feared God.

"I am companion," the Psalmist could say,
"Of all who fear God and walk in His way;"
I need companions; but, Lord, let them be
Those who are wholly devoted to Thee.

Verse 64

"The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy: Teach me Thy statutes."

As he looked around, with God's fear in his heart, he could see evidence of His mercy in everything. How nice when the eye is anointed to see as God sees! The Psalmist longed to learn God's statutes.

Mercy is love that withholdeth,
While grace is love that bestows;
As sinners we're worthy of neither,
But each from the heart of God flows.
His statutes can never be altered,
As sure as the throne they remain.
Enshrined in a promise of mercy,
Forever abiding the same.

Verse 65

*"Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant,
O Lord, according unto Thy word."*

As he looks back over life he is compelled to utter these words, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant." This is also the testimony of all who have served in the Lord's field. As Master He demands implicit obedience. As servants, our rendering of this kind of obedience is the very hallmark of true devotion. As the servant who walks by this rule looks back over life, he can say with the Psalmist: "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant according to Thy word."

"According to Thy word,"
Let all who serve exclaim
Thou hast fulfilled Thy promise
In keeping with Thy Name.
When Thy law was obeyed,
Which is the servant's right,
Thou did'st fulfill Thy word —
Thou God Whose name is Light.

Verse 66

*"Teach me good judgments and knowledge:
for I have believed Thy commandments."*

To be taught of God is to be taught aright. We must have a teachable spirit before God can reveal to us His knowledge. Knowledge is what we acquire by searching and experience; but judgment is from God, enabling us to use knowledge aright.

Give me a heart filled with judgments,
Help me in knowledge to grow;
Thus will I love Thy commandments,
And love unto others will show.
When knowledge is balanced by judgment,
And Christ is the center of each;
My heart will observe Thy commandments,
My behavior a sermon will preach.

Verse 67

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word."

Our lives as believers are made up of experiences. They are like landmarks, which we refer to as "before" and "after." Here the Psalmist looked back on a time of affliction: before, he was straying; after, he kept the word.

Affliction is God's great refiner,
How often in sorrow and pain
The soul is made to relinquish,
What before was counted as gain.
Thus affliction but sharpens the vision,
And casts a new light on the way,
And makes us to own with contrition
The folly in going astray.

Verse 68

"Thou art good, and doest good; teach me Thy statutes."

Who teacheth like Him? The Psalmist desired to know the fixed laws of the One Who was good, and in keeping with Himself, could only do good.

The grace of God teaches us (Titus 2). A soul is in a healthy condition when it is willing to learn.

To be learned in the realm of science,
Will give me a place among men;
They'll honor degrees of achievement,
Always ready such zeal to commend.
But learned in the statutes of heaven,
A stranger to men I must be,
Understood by the Man in the Glory,
Who purchased redemption for me.

Verse 69

*"The proud have forged a lie against me:
but I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart."*

We could read it thus: "The proud one hath forged a lie against me." Satan fell from heaven because of pride against the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He said: "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Satan said: "Thou shall not surely die."

The great pretender to God's throne
Hurled from his seat on high,
Invades the scene of innocence,
And perpetrates this lie.
Though God has said thou shalt not eat
Just eat and you'll be wise.
You'll be like God in knowledge,
You shall not surely die.
God's statutes — steadfast as His throne —
"The soul that sins shall die."
The conflict of the ages is
Truth versus Satan's lie.
The cross of Christ in grandeur stands
As witness to earth and sky —
The price that heaven had to pay
To thwart the devil's lie.

Verse 70

"Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in Thy Law."

Grease is very slippery; pride leads to physical independence. It speaks of an abnormal condition, when found in the natural sense, and a very unhealthy condition as well. The heart that delights in God's law is a healthy one. The heart is the citadel of the soul. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Solomon asked for an understanding heart, to be able to discern between good and bad.

To delight in God's law is the cure,
For a heart by nature impure;
There is nothing on earth,
Except the new birth —
Can this blessing for sinners secure.

Verse 71

*"It is good for me that I have been afflicted;
that I might learn Thy statutes."*

This was hindsight. Looking back, he remembers his affliction as a time when God was teaching him to appreciate the word that "forever is settled in heaven."

Looking back on days of hardship,
The exercised soul will admit,
Those lessons learned in affliction,
The scholar will never forget.
His heart is attuned to God's statutes —
His character takes on their mold,
Experience gained in affliction
Is more precious than silver or gold.

Verse 72

"The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

To the heart of man, in his natural state, gold is supreme. To obtain it, he will travel to earth's remotest bounds, commit any crime, endure any hardship. God's law, to the Christian, should control his movements and energize all his actions.

Gold and silver, while precious,
Fail the soul to draw,
Of one who has found the Saviour
And would walk in His holy law.
These precious metals are useful
To serve in a worthy cause,
But must not equate for a moment
With God and His holy laws.

Verse 73

"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I might learn Thy commandments."

To be made by Him gave me being; but to be fashioned determined what sort of a being. The Psalmist wanted to learn God's commandments, therefore he prayed for understanding to know the Lord's will for him, and the purpose for his life. To know this is a great achievement.

Made by His hand for a purpose,
Fashioned to do His will;
Divine instruction is needed,
That I might this calling fulfill.
My Textbook will be God's commandments,
His Spirit my Teacher shall be;
In a constant state of obedience,
My spirit shall ever be free.

Verse 74

*"They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me;
because I have hoped in Thy word."*

Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart. David himself feared the Lord, and when he would meet with others that had the same spirit, there would be joy and gladness as they conversed together. In Psalm 4, when David was in great distress, he craved for the light of God's countenance and regarded it above the gladness of those who had their corn and oil increased, or above the gladness of men in times of their greatest prosperity.

Gladness in the human heart,
Untold blessing will impart.
Hands will work with willingness,
Feet will run with eagerness,
Voices sound with melody,
Eyes will shine with sympathy,
Gladness, like a tiny spark,
Ignites the flame, dispels the dark.

Verse 75

*"I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right (righteous),
and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."*

It is good for the soul, when afflicted, to reflect on the reason, and remember that God is faithful, and His judgments are right. "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (I Cor. 10:13).

Beware in times of affliction
To credit God with His right
As Lord of your life to chastise you,
To perfect your way in His sight.
Affliction, the Psalmist confesses,
Is a purging from that which is wrong;
It enlarges the heart of the cleansed one
And sweetens the note in his song.

Verse 76

*"Let, I pray Thee, Thy merciful kindness be for my comfort,
according to Thy word unto Thy servant."*

Comfort, not an ingredient built into the human soul, must come from without. Therefore the Psalmist in distress looked to the Lord, whose lovingkindness was recorded for him in the Word. The Christian has the only God-given Comforter, the Holy Spirit. He applies the word of God, in which is recorded the lovingkindness of the Lord.

**"I will not leave you comfortless,
I will come unto you;"
Was the promise of the Saviour,
With Calvary's cross in view.
"I will send my Holy Spirit,
Within thee to abide;
He will comfort, just as I have,
Walking by thy side."**

Verse 77

*"Let Thy tender mercies come unto me,
that I might live: for Thy law is my delight."*

Zacharias spoke concerning the birth of John the Baptist: "Through the tender mercies of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us." (Luke 1:78). We read in Prov. 12: "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." But the tender mercies of our God caused Him to send His only well-beloved Son to die for our sins, to bring us out of cruel bondage into the glorious liberty of sons of God.

**Our God in tender mercy,
Clothed Himself in human form,
Paid a visit to our planet,
As a babe was virgin-born;
Walked this scene, the Man of sorrows,
Mingling with its grief and woe,
Died and rose to bring salvation,
To this dying world below.**

Verse 78

*"Let the proud be ashamed;
for they have dealt perversely with me without a cause:
but I will meditate in Thy precepts."*

The proud need no cause to persecute the righteous. Pride is the product of Satan and that which hurled him from his throne. God hates pride; so should all who love God detest it as well.

The proud are a class without knowledge,
With plenty of ego and gall,
They never were born of the Spirit,
And deny man's ruin and fall.
The righteous are mocked by their insults.
In pride, they have put them to shame,
But the righteous shall flourish forever,
By the precepts that honor His name.

Verse 79

*"Let those that fear Thee turn unto me,
and those that have known Thy testimonies."*

Here is a reverential fear of God, known and found only in His own people. Like the fear of a child for the parent — a reverence that dreads to offend — it is a quality found in love. Those who love His testimonies will always seek out those of kindred spirit.

Heaven views with pleasure,
The man who fears the Lord,
Who humbly walks with others,
In obedience to the word.
The topics of their discourse
Are testimonies true.
Of things the Lord has shown them —
Of things both old and new.

Verse 80

"Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes; that I be not ashamed."

A sound heart is the life of the flesh. Keep the heart right and all else will be right. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Keep thy heart above all keeping;
Guard as with a towering wall.
If with God thy heart is perfect,
Then thy feet shall never fall.
He has bought thee to possess thee,
Heart's the throne-room of the soul,
Crown Him there as Lord and Master
Let the Owner take control.

Verse 81

"My soul fainteth for Thy salvation: but I hope in Thy word."

"Men ought always to pray and not to faint" — "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord." There is always a cure. When the Lord is brought into view, a thousand difficulties vanish.

Fainting men and fallen warriors
Never can a victory gain,
Let not then your hands be idle,
Lest you suffer shame.
Prayer will chase away the faintness,
Strength it will renew,
And will lift the fallen warrior
Battles to pursue.

Verse 82

*"Mine eyes fail for Thy word, saying,
When wilt Thou comfort me?"*

The Psalmist was greatly distressed and his eyes failed, as he looked for the answer to his cry. His chief burden was, "When wilt Thou comfort me?" Often the soul waits for an answer from the Lord, but when it comes it is comfort indeed. Daniel waited for 21 days, but how wonderful when the word came, "O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea be strong." This testimony to God's faithfulness should cheer each waiting soul.

Oh, fainting soul, take courage!
Thy prayer no doubt is heard;
In due time God will answer
In keeping with His Word.
Make sure your life's in order
Search well: Are motives true?
If so, you have this comfort —
That God will answer you.

Verse 83

*"For I am become like a bottle in the smoke;
yet do I not forget Thy Statutes."*

"I have become" denotes better days; he had not always been in this condition. These bottles of skin to which he refers had become darkened from the smoke, and their surfaces parched and dried. How like the child of God who must live in this world which is polluted by smoke from the pit. This world system has no room for our Lord Jesus Christ! Despite all this, the Psalmist treasured God's statutes in his soul.

The smoke of the pit swirls around us,
All the systems of Satan are sin,
We must ever keep happy in Jesus,
Or become like these bottles of skin.
The smoke of the pit will not harm us,
If we study His statutues to keep;
Our vessels will not be affected,
Though the smoke in our eyes make us weep.

Verse 84

*"How many are the days of Thy servant?
when wilt Thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?"*

It is always a good exercise to be conscious of our days. The Lord has told us that the days of our years are threescore years and ten, but we are not told how long we will live. Therefore, we should treat each day as we treat each dollar — invest it wisely. Each day invested in the service of the Lord pays eternal dividends. All can invest: prayer, preacher, practical worker, pilgrim, problem-solver, pence-giver, penholder, pit-digger, plower, piemaker, peacemaker. All can bring forth the precious fruit of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Go forth, each day investing,
In the service of the Lord,
Days are lost and crowns relinquished,
If they merit no reward.
Treat each day as if 'twere final
With no others yet to be,
Thus thy years will bear the image,
Of the One Who set thee free.

Verse 85

"The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after Thy law."

God has much to say about pride. It was the sin of Satan and is hateful to God. The proud He knoweth afar off. Some of the pitfalls of pride are self-exaltation, self-vindication, vainglory, resentment, and a whole host of things that spring from the same root.

Pride dwells within the human heart
In Eden's garden was its start;
When man put forth his puny hand
And disobeyed God's plain command.
That weed so hateful to our God
Must under Christians' feet be trod,
And ever kept in death's embrace,
Oh, God, for this give daily grace.

Verse 86

"All Thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help Thou me."

All Thy commandments — he left out none. It is nice when a saint does not pick and choose which ones he will keep. For those who would keep all will no doubt be persecuted. Ishmael "mocked" when Isaac was weaned. The New Testament speaks of "persecution." If we keep all the commandments, and are weaned from the world and its ways, help will be given in time of persecution.

If wrongfully charged
Respond with love and patience;
Fret not thyself
Thine honour to defend.
"Vengeance is mine"
Thus saith the Lord Almighty;
"I will repay."
On Him we can depend.

Verse 87

*"They had almost consumed me upon earth;
but I forsook not Thy precepts."*

The Christian is often brought to the very brink — almost consumed; cast down, but not forsaken. But even in our direst circumstances, almost consumed with terror, how good to reflect on God's laws and say in truth, "I have not forsaken them."

Almost consumed but not quite,
Almost o'ercome by his might —
The struggle is real,
Satan makes us to feel
That we'll ne'er overcome in the fight;
But His precepts so precious we view,
As we grasp them, our vow we renew;
When finally at Home by His side
We never His precepts denied.

Verse 88

*"Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness;
so shall I keep the testimony of Thy mouth."*

"You hath He quickened who were dead" — Only "living" souls can keep his testimonies. "Being born again by the Word of God, that liveth and abideth forever." We were all dead in Adam, but it was God's lovingkindness that devised a way to give dead sinners life. We should ever be thankful that we have been quickened, and so live to show our appreciation by keeping His testimonies.

Quicken me, Lord, in Thy kindness,
Teach me the words from Thy mouth,
Give me the understanding
And courage to walk in Thy truth.
A debtor am I to Thy mercy,
A slave to Thy love I would be,
A subject who swears his allegiance
And serves, because he is free.

Verse 89

"Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven."

While we see the restlessness of a world wrecked by sin, how good to know that we can look above and see there a realm where all is settled, as secure as the Throne of God. His Word, with every promise, as well as His prophecies, will be carried out.

The Word of God is as silver,
Purified seven times;
Settled forever in heaven,
Cherished by ancient minds.
Dated to last through the ages,
Suited to every heart;
Blended by God the Spirit,
The blessing of God to impart.

Verse 90 and 91

"Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for all are Thy servants."

Saints of all ages have testified to this fact, that "God is faithful." He will fulfill every promise, keep every covenant, reward every deed. He is steadfast and trustworthy. He will never let you down, nor fail you.

Thy faithfulness is witnessed
By every beast and bird,
By every tree and blade of grass
Where language ne'er was heard.
The flowers bloom and blossom
Where man has never trod;
They all are silent witnesses
To the faithfulness of God.

Verse 92

*"Unless Thy law had been my delights,
I should then have perished in mine affliction."*

The Psalmist could say as well: "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." The Lord Jesus said: "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea Thy law is within my heart." God said, of the Lord Jesus, in the prophesy of Isaiah "Behold my servant . . . mine elect in whom my soul delighteth."

Delight dwells in the heart of God
It beamed upon His Son;
When with mankind he sojourned here
Until His work was done;
For those who enter into life
And own God's way is right,
Can truly say with saints of old;
"Thy law is my delight."

Verse 93

*"I will never forget Thy precepts;
for with them Thou hast quickened me."*

God's precepts are precious to those who know their meaning. Only quickened saints can really understand, and they will never forget. God gave us a memory and has instructed us to use it. The Lord Jesus said to His people long ago: "This do in remembrance of Me."

Tis blessed just to remember,
The precept that set us free;
When we grasped the simple meaning
Of the words, "Come unto me."
Nor shall we forget, forever,
When we put them to the test,
How the darkness of nature vanished,
As we entered into rest.

Verse 94

"I am Thine, save me; for I have sought Thy precepts."

When coming from the heart sincerely and without reservation, "I am Thine" is a very devotional expression. It spells out the secret of a happy Christian life. To know we are not our own, but are bought with a price, shifts the responsibility from me to my Owner. The Psalmist knew he belonged to the Lord, but he wanted to know daily salvation from sin, self, Satan, the world, and the wicked.

I am Thine, Thou Lord of all creation,
Bought by Thy redeeming blood.
Oh, that I might thy precepts practice
With energy from the fount of love!

Verse 95

*"The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:
but I will consider Thy testimonies."*

The wicked are always against the just. They put the Lord Jesus to death, and they shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God. But "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The Psalmist would consider the testimonies of those who contended with the wicked and overcame them.

Thy testimonies gender strength
In times of dread and fear;
For, as of old, faith grasps the fact
That Thou art ever near.
The wicked plot against the just,
Their cause is bound to fail;
For God is stronger than His foes —
Through Him the just prevail.

Verse 96

*"I have seen an end of all perfection:
but Thy commandment is exceeding broad."*

As by the eye of faith he looked into the future, the Psalmist could see that all man's works will be destroyed. Every Christian knows that, "The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My word shall not pass away." God's commandments are like Himself — perfect. All that the natural eye can behold lacks this quality of perfection.

Shattered and burned to ashes,
The works of man shall be.
The end of earth's perfection,
The eye of faith can see.
But God's commands are broader
Than earth's limitations can span,
Their worth and beauty more lasting,
Than all the perfections of man.

Verse 97

"Oh how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day."

It would seem that at this point the Psalmist could no longer contain his feelings, as he breathed out this exclamation: "Oh! how I love Thy law." It may have been in the evening, after a day of delight in God's law. Wonderful occupation, wonderful attitude; loving God's law. The blessed man of Psalm 1 delighted in the law of the Lord, and was like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

What moves a man is what he loves,
Be it object fair or foul.

'Twill not be hard to read the man,
And know his thoughts, if you have scanned
The driving force that doth demand
His time, attention, foot and hand;
'Tis just the things he loves.
And so the Psalmist loved God's law
And from it did sweet comfort draw.
As others looked, they surely saw
The love that moved the man.

Verse 98

*"Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser
than mine enemies: for they are ever with me."*

Although the Psalmist knew not the New Testament truth, that "Christ is made unto us wisdom;" yet he experienced this blessedness. His knowledge came by learning God's commandments. So we today must ever rely on that wisdom that cometh from above: "That is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality and without hypocrisy."

Wisdom is a virtue that money cannot buy,
Better poor with wisdom, than to rank among the high,
For wisdom crowns all virtues
With the stamp of ancient fame;
Better poor, a child of wisdom,
Than a slave to earthly name.

Verse 99

*"I have more understanding than all my teachers:
for Thy testimonies are my meditation."*

The man who meditates upon the word of God is drinking from the fountain head, rather than in the muddy streams of man's reasonings. God the Spirit will always honor the word He has inspired. Therefore the man that makes God's commandments his source of meditation, shall be wiser than all his teachers who know not the Lord.

**"Wiser than all my teachers,"
The man of God can say,
Who maketh the Word of God,
His counselor each day.
For the fountainhead of wisdom,
Is the mind and will of God;
If we choose this charter for our course,
We have Wisdom's pathway trod.**

Verse 100

"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts."

Cause and effect we all must recognize. So the Psalmist, because he kept God's precepts, had in effect more understanding than the ancients. The man who fails to keep God's laws has distorted vision — his priorities are not right, therefore his understanding is darkened (Rom. 1).

**Born in the realm of darkness,
Nurtured in nature's night
Tho honored by scrolls that are ancient,
Man's knowledge lacks true wisdom's light;
He ever must grope in the darkness,
Who refuseth the light from on high,
Tho bolstered by badges of honor,
As a beast in the dust he must lie.**

Verse 101

*"I have refrained my feet from every evil way,
that I might keep Thy word."*

'Refrain' denotes a choice. The man who would keep God's word must not only make a choice, but must have discernment. There are many things which appear good, but are evil; therefore, we must have our senses alerted to discern between good and evil.

If thou the word of God would keep,
From evil ways withdraw thy feet;
Be quick to judge – alert to learn,
The good or evil to discern.
For evil lurks along the way,
And all are prone to go astray;
Enshrine God's word within thy heart,
If thou from evil would depart.

Verse 102

"I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou has taught me."

Who teacheth like Him? When the Lord teaches His own, they will not depart from His judgments, for they are right, and in the keeping of them, there is great reward. Peace of mind, quietness of conscience, access in prayer, happiness of heart – these are rich bounties which are given when we learn of Him. "They shall be all taught of God."

He taught us first our desperate need,
Then how from sin we could be freed,
How righteousness could be obtained,
By trusting in His precious Name.
Then for His child He undertook
To teach us from the inspired book,
We're taught obedience is best,
To keep the soul in perfect rest.

Verse 103

*"How sweet are Thy words unto my taste!
yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"*

What sweeter word could be imagined than the word 'forgiven'? But it is only sweet to one who is in need of forgiveness. What better word than 'saved' to one who is lost and perishing, or 'free' to one who is captive?

Words but serve as vehicles,
To carry forth the thought,
The background makes the difference,
Enhancing what is brought;
Liberty is just a word,
Until the slave you see,
Casting his shackles in the dust
And crying, "I am free."
"Paid in full!" How meaningless
To one who has no debt,
But what to one who could not pay?
These words he'd ne'er forget.
And when the name of Jesus,
Comes forth from saintly lip,
The background makes the difference —
Jesus saved him from the pit.

Verse 104

*"Through Thy precepts I get understanding:
therefore I hate every false way."*

God has said of man in his natural state: "There is none that understandeth" (Rom. 3:11). Then He bids man to "forsake the foolish . . . and go in the way of understanding" (Prov. 9:6). "Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:20).

Men will honor the one who has money,
And put him out front in the race,
Although he has no understanding,
(Unless he's a subject of grace);
Thus men, without God, in confusion
Are seeking to better their day,
But refuse to be ruled by God's precepts —
So the blind lead the blind in the way.

Verse 105

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

We were born in the kingdom of darkness, and though we have been brought into His marvelous light we still have to walk in this dark world and seek to live as children of light. Therefore we need light on our path. No doubt the Psalmist had in mind the miner's lamp, which was fastened to the foot so that with each step he took light was shed for the next one. Thus he viewed the word of God: each step he took gave light for another.

Thy word is a lamp ever burning,
Which sheddeth a light on my way,
To help me Thy pathway to follow,
As I would Thy precepts obey;
Dispelling the darkness of nature,
And lighting my way to the throne,
Its beams take the chill from my spirit,
And give me a foretaste of Home.

Verse 106

*"I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will
keep Thy righteous judgments."*

A man is very serious when he binds himself by an oath; he is in earnest. So the Psalmist as he views the future and vows to keep God's righteous judgments. From past experience no doubt he had learned that they were righteous judgments. He must have had dealings with God about it to come to this solemn decision.

O, noble soul, with courage fraught,
Who dares to vow and changeth not,
Thrice noble if that vow's demand
Is wholly keeping God's command;
In heaven's honored jewel list
Will stand the man who doeth this.

Verse 107

*"I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord,
according unto Thy word."*

Affliction has been the lot of God's people because they live in a world that is hostile to God. The race of Adam is at enmity with God; therefore in the world the Christian has tribulation. Life through the word is the answer — "quicken, or nourish me" — the word of God can do this.

"Quicken, O Lord" — we hear the cry,
From saintly lips arise,
To Him Who nurtures through His word,
And heavenly strength supplies;
Man shall not live by bread alone,
Procured by sweat of face,
But by the living word of God,
Made good by cov'nant grace.

Verse 108

*"Accept, I beseech Thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord,
and teach me Thy judgments."*

The Psalmist said: "I will praise the name of God with a song. I will magnify Him with thanksgiving; this also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." (Ps. 69:30) God is hungry for the praise of His people (Ps. 50:12-14). He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, but He asks for the thanksgiving of His people.

You can buy a bullock for money,
The ox can be brought from the stall —
Placed on a beautiful altar —
And God not be in it at all;
But the song must spring from a nature,
That knows only heavenly birth,
Its theme is the work of redemption,
The Redeemer alone knows its worth.

Verse 109

"My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Thy law."

"While he carried his life in his hand, he carried the law in his heart" (Spurgeon). There was much in the Psalmist's life that could have turned him aside to an easier path, forgetting the law, but in his sorest trials with his life in his hand he could say, "yet do I not forget thy law."

The man who remembers the law of the Lord,
When troubles and grief 'whelm his soul,
Shall not be forgot by the God of all grace,
When in prayer he these troubles has told;
For hath He not said, if upon Him we call
In the dark'ning and dangerous day,
He will deliver, and we in return
Should glorify Him in the way?

Verse 110

*"The wicked have laid a snare for me;
yet I erred not from Thy precepts."*

A snare is something hidden from view. The wicked one heads legions of wicked spirits whose work it is to thwart the purposes of God, to discourage His people and to lay snares for their feet. The Psalmist knew that the only way of safety was to hold to God's precepts – if he fulfilled the precept God would fulfill the promise. "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand."

As we walk for the Lord in this dark world of sin,
And the wicked lay snares for our feet,
We must ever adhere to the precepts of God,
When the onslaughts of Satan we meet;
Thus our steps will be guided around every snare,
And our service for Him be complete,
If we follow the pattern laid down in His word,
He will banish each foe that we meet.

Verse 111

*"Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever,
for they are the rejoicing of my heart."*

The heart is the citadel of the soul of man; that which rejoices the heart is that which is most precious. The Psalmist here chooses the testimonies of the Lord; he had proven them to be that which rejoiced his heart. Not his gold and silver — they will change in value — but God's testimonies will always be the same. Therefore he takes them as 'an heritage'!

How rich a heritage for the soul,
To walk with men of God of old,
To see their deeds for God performed,
While humble faith their lives adorned.
The records left of lowly men,
And women, too, by Spirit's pen;
To cheer the heart and teach the mind
Of those of us who come behind,
That we might learn, and courage take,
And live our lives for Jesus' sake.

Verse 112

*"I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes alway,
even unto the end."*

Man, being a freewill agent, can decide how he will incline his heart to perform. Man is not a robot, but is energized by his own desires which propel him in his chosen direction. Here the Psalmist declares that his heart is inclined to perform His statutes.

When the heart is inclined,
Be it noble or base,
The will to perform is the same;
Only God can discern
How the heart doth incline,
But the viewer will judge by the race.

Verse 113

"I hate vain thoughts; but Thy law do I love."

The godly man is marked by hating what God hates, and loving what God loves. The wicked love what God hates — sin; they hate what God loves — righteousness. This is the secret of true repentance which takes place in a sinner's soul; the godly man will have the same attitude toward good as the wicked toward evil.

The tree of good and evil,
Was Eve and Adam's fate,
They knew that they were naked
But their knowledge came too late.
If Eve had vain thoughts hated,
And loved the law of God,
No plague of thorns and thistles
Would have marred fair Eden's sod.

Verse 114

"Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Thy word."

The first act of man in the garden when he had sinned against God was to hide from God, but now the Psalmist declares that God is his hiding place. God gave man life and he forfeited it through disobedience; now God has given him eternal life. "We are hid with Christ in God." God is also his shield.

In Eden's fair untainted scene,
Where Adam with his God had been,
No hiding place was ever sought
Until that deed of sin was wrought;
Now man inherits Adam's fear,
And dreads to have his God draw near;
His fig-leaf apron is his pride,
Thus from his God he seeks to hide.
But when that man is born again,
And cured of sin the fevered brain,
His nature now craves to abide
And ever in God's presence hide;
Thus shielded now, this cry is heard:
"My hope lies only in Thy word."

Verse 115

*"Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep
the commandments of my God."*

Evil doers are bad company at any time, for one who would keep the commandments of God can have no part with them. When God said, "Let there be light" He divided the light from the darkness. So it is today – evil is darkness; keeping God's commandments is light.

Evil doers must depart,
When God's commands are in the heart,
When will is set God's law to keep,
The separate path will mark the feet.

Verse 116

*"Uphold me according unto Thy word, that I may live:
and let me not be ashamed of my hope."*

God had brought him up out of an horrible pit. Now his desire is, 'hold me up' or preserve me. This is a much-needed prayer. The Psalmist understood that it must be 'according unto Thy word.' Only as we are upheld by the Word can we be assured we shall not be ashamed of our hope.

Thy Word is what Thou givest,
To keep us in the way,
In diligence to read it,
And humbly to obey;
Upholden from each pitfall,
This hope with lustre bright,
Shall paint our path to glory,
And guide our steps aright.

Verse 117

"Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually."

Safety is what he had in mind. That soul in repentance has written himself off; from thenceforth he has no confidence in the flesh. His only safety is in the One Who saved him. We are like the lost sheep on the shoulders of the Shepherd – He does the holding. We need to be held by His hand. "All thy saints are in thy hand."

Safe on the Shepherd's shoulders,
Held by His pierced hand,
Found that I might forever
Firm on His precepts stand;
Therefore shall He uphold me –
His promise is sure as His throne –
When He placed me upon His shoulders,
His plan was to bring me home.

Verse 118

"Thou has trodden down all them that err from Thy statutes, for their deceit is falsehood."

Under His feet He will tread them down, who in pride of heart have erred from His statutes. The humble soul will seek to abide by them and rejoice in them. The righteous love His precepts and will rejoice in that day when He shall tread down all the wicked; they shall be put under His feet, and the righteous shall reign with Him forever.

When we err from the laws of nature,
A penalty must be paid;
With jealous care for our safety,
We make sure no error is made.
But what of the statutes of heaven –
Is the same precaution observed,
To adhere to the law of Lordship
By the statutes laid down in His Word?
If under His foot He shall trample
The wicked who err from His way,
Can I lightly advance without caution,
And think there'll be nothing to pay?

Verse 119

*"Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross;
therefore I love Thy testimonies."*

God's testimonies have to do with those who suffered at the hands of the wicked. The wicked are the dross in the great caldron of time. The precious metal will be seen in all its purity when the Lord Jesus and His redeemed ones are revealed. The dross shall be skimmed from time's caldron, and be remembered no more. Oh, for the day when the wicked of earth shall be remembered no more!

The wicked of earth are like cancer,
Destroying each cell it invades,
So the wicked exploiteth the righteous,
And ruins what God's hands have made;
Like dross that is skimmed from the surface,
The scum to the scrap heap must go,
While the righteous, refined and made precious,
As the stars forever shall glow.

Verse 120

*"My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am
afraid of Thy judgments."*

Of the wicked God has said: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." This saint knew God; he had seen His works and was made to tremble when he thought of His power. How good to know Him as Saviour — God, as a Father Who loves His child. This changes the fear and dread into that reverential fear of a child toward a father whom he loves and trusts. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

This fear is reverence in the souls
Of those who know the Lord —
Have seen His works and felt His touch,
And proved His faithful word;
They tremble when their eyes behold
The lawless and profane,
Who walk in ways adverse to God,
And desecrate His Name.

Verse 121

"I have done judgment and justice; leave me not to mine oppressors."

When one is oppressed, it is comforting to be able to look back and remember that judgment and justice have been the habit of life. When this is so it will enable the Christian to accept with fortitude the attacks of the oppressor.

Oppressed and oppressor before Him shall stand,
To account for their conduct in life,
Where no steps are retraced and no actions erased,
And the Judge shall a reason demand;
Oh, how good it will be when in glory we see,
And look full in His wonderful face,
Then with judgment and justice we hear Him declare,
"Well done, thou hast finished the race!"

Verse 122

"Be surety for Thy servant for good; let not the proud oppress me."

To be surety for a friend is an expression of confidence; but "He that goeth surety for a stranger shall smart for it" (Prov. 11:15). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He was surety for the stranger and smarted for it.

He was surety for me, when He hung on the tree,
And my judgment upon Him did fall;
When they spat in His face, and His back they did lace,
And for drink gave Him vin'gar and gall;
Now my debt to repay my all I would lay
At those feet that were wounded for me,
And never forget that He canceled my debt,
As my Surety on dark Calvary.

Verse 123

*"Mine eyes shall fail for Thy salvation, and for
the word of Thy righteousness."*

No doubt it was the aspect of salvation that we have in Rom. 8: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; waiting for the redemption of our bodies." Redemption has reached our souls but not yet our bodies. We have the seal of the Holy Spirit that our bodies will be redeemed.

When out of Eden man was turned,
Within his breast anew there burned
A hope he never had before,
That God would to him all restore;
Yea, and much more than he had lost.
Yet Adam little knew the cost —
The woman's seed would bruise the head
Of him who in temptation led.
Yet He, that seed, must die before
The great Creator could restore
And shower on him blessings more
Than human mind could e'er explore.
So hope was placed within his breast,
God gave him much, but hid the rest,
Until that day when, fully dressed,
In splendor Eden never guessed
Could come to one who fell so low,
To merit only endless woe;
For this salvation human eye
Has sought, as looking to the sky —
"When shall it come? When shall it be? —
Forever from the curse set free!"

Verse 124

*"Deal with Thy servant according to Thy mercy,
and teach me Thy statutes."*

God made man in the beginning for Himself, but man became lost to Him. Now in redemption He has recovered him; He will deal with man to perfect him for His glory. The Psalmist longed to be dealt with in mercy or lovingkindness, and to be taught the statutes that would make him appreciate the Lord's dealings with him.

Deal with Thy servant in mercy, Lord,
Teach me the statutes from Thy word;
Make me a student with ready ear,
To learn Thy ways and Thy word revere;
So shall I be a vessel meet
For use by the Master in service sweet;
Thy statutes for living will guide my feet,
And my life, when over, will be complete.

Verse 125

*"I am Thy servant; give me understanding,
that I might know Thy testimonies."*

This was the title given to our Lord Jesus Christ in prophecy. "Behold my Servant . . . in whom my soul delighteth." We have been saved to serve. Shame on one who receives the benefits of salvation from hell and a wasted life, and refuses to be faithful in service! To understand the will of the Master, and to do it, is true service.

**Servants are not masters,
Asserting mind and will,
But passive individuals
With a duty to fulfill;
Their eye is on their master,
To understand his will,
And obedience is required,
Faithful service to fulfill.**

Verse 126

"It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law."

Every redeemed soul is made to cry out from its depths: "It is time for Thee to work, oh Lord!" God has a timetable by which He works: "The selfsame day" (Ex. 40); "The hour is come" (John 17:1); "When the fulness of the time had come" (Gal. 4:4).

**Be patient, oh soul, and consider –
God's silence is never neglect.
Our God is a God of precision,
His time is His own to select;
The wicked may seem now to prosper,
While they void every law in their way;
But judgment's as sure for the lawless
As rewards are for saints in that day.**

Verse 127

*"Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold:
yea, above fine gold."*

In material things, gold is the most valued . . . men have left home and loved ones for the sake of gold. They have dared their very lives for gold. Yet here is one who has found something superior to fine gold; these have captured his affection: His commandments. He loved the Giver, therefore he loved His commandments.

Come make thy choice, for gold or God's commands:
Which do you covet most?

The gold will buy you comforts here on earth,
Provide for days of leisure filled with mirth;
Yet all must end with time and be no more,
Though mighty vaults were built to hold your store;
But God's commands enrich the soul for heaven,
Where shining streets of gold forever gleam;
And saints who make God's law their treasure here,
Will there take up the theme from days of old,
When God's commands were prized above fine gold.

Verse 128

*"Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right;
and I hate every false way."*

God is always right. Every way must be tested by His standard: If it is contrary to God's way, it is false. We must have our senses exercised by reason of use, to discern both good and evil. This comes by loving and living in God's word.

Every false way has a shade that looks right,
Designed by a sinister hand;
To deceive and detract from the way that is right,
The great deceiver has planned.
But those who esteem the way that is right,
And purpose the truth to obey,
Shall escape Satan's snare, for they're ever aware
Of his wiles and his counterfeit way.

Verse 129

"Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them."

The testimonies of God never ceased to inspire praise from saints of old. The writer of this Psalm seems lost for words to describe them. Each generation witnessed experiences with the Lord and left them for future generations. Oh how much has fallen to us! Surely we can say, "Thy testimonies are wonderful."

The testimonies of the Lord,
Are written in His precious word;
The Spirit's work from age to age,
Shines forth on every sacred page.
Bereft of hope this world would be,
If in the Book they did not see
The death of Christ upon the tree,
To set a world of sinners free.

Verse 130

*"The entrance of Thy words giveth light;
it giveth understanding unto the simple."*

"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." It was His word in the beginning that gave light. All is darkness apart from His word. "God who caused the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart."

God's word is like the sunshine,
With beaming rays of light,
When it riseth in the morning,
To dispel the shades of night.
Man by nature dwells in darkness,
Naught can penetrate his night,
'Til the One Who made the sunshine,
Fills his soul with heavenly light.

Verse 131

"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Thy commandments."

Soul thirst is real, and only those who have known the blessedness of soul satisfaction will pant for its return. They will not be content until His commandments are untarnished in their soul; they are their meat and drink.

Not for gold or silver,
Or for fame that earth demands,
But for heart that's ever panting
To know Thy blest commands.
Give me a list'ning attitude,
That when Thy voice is heard,
My soul shall spring to action;
To carry out Thy word.

Verse 132

"Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name."

As the Psalmist remembered God's dealings with others of his servants, he craved the same mercies for himself. When we remember, we are encouraged in the things of the Lord ("EBENEZER" – Hitherto hath the Lord helped us). In times of stress and difficulty we need to beware the fiery darts of the enemy. We must take the shield of faith to quench them.

What a comfort it is in times of distress,
To remember the Lord, and His mercies assess,
Of His ways with His people who loved His great name,
How He wrought their deliv'rance and honored their claim.

Verse 133

"Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

God would have the life of His people in order. This was the desire of the Psalmist – when God said go, to take the step; when He said stop, to stand still. Both are in God's program for His people: steps and stops. In this way we will avoid iniquity having dominion over us. Lives of early Christians were molded by the word, the apostles' doctrine. "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form (mold) of doctrine" (Rom. 6)

As the metal poured into the mold,
Takes on a shape and form,
Designed to serve the master
In whose mind the plan was born;
So the Lord, the Master Planner,
Has for me His own design;
May my steps by Him be ordered,
And my ways to His incline.

Verse 134

"Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Thy precepts."

Keeping God's precepts was in his heart, but he could see there was opposition to be faced, the opposition of man. Mankind is so constituted against God and His ways that, in order to keep His precepts, we must have God's delivering power.

Deliverance is what he prayed for,
The precepts he would keep,
If the Lord would grant his petition,
His cause he would seek to complete;
His precepts were ever before him,
Molded by them he would run,
The rules of the race set before him,
His reward just a simple "Well done."

Verse 135

*"Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant;
and teach me Thy statutes."*

"Thy face to shine" carries the thought of the breaking of day – sunrise. "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:3). The sunshine of God's countenance meant more to the Psalmist than all the world; so to each saint. What else matters when we have the light of His countenance? "Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us" (Ps. 4:6). This meant more to the Psalmist than the time of the increase of corn and wine.

Shine, Lord, upon Thy servant,
That he in turn may shine,
Reflecting in the darkness,
That holy life of Thine.
With rays of love outreaching,
From my yielded soul today,
May men catch the gleam while passing,
Turn and seek the narrow way.

Verse 136

*"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,
because they kept not the law."*

For those who know God and revere His word and respect His laws, there is a feeling of hurt when those laws are broken. They weep for those who break them, for they know every broken law carries a penalty. It is an insult to the lawgiver to slight His word.

If all the tears that have been shed,
By those who lived and now are dead,
Were analyzed by Him Who saw
The first one fall from broken law,
How few would be assessed sincere,
Because God's law to them was dear;
Such tears He treasures 'til that day,
And there will have them on display;
The judgment seat will make full clear,
The worth and value of each tear.

Verse 137

"Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments."

This is the voice of experience; the Psalmist no doubt had observed the word of God being fulfilled. David's testimony was "That thou mightest be justified when thou speaketh, and be clear when thou judgesth" (Ps. 51:4). Sweet rest of soul is the lot of all those who can justify God in His sayings and in His ways. Righteousness is costly; only God can estimate its worth.

As we stand by faith at Calvary,
And hear that lonely cry,
Because our God is righteous,
The soul that sins must die.
The sinless One upon the tree,
For sinners, sin was made;
Thus the One Who passed the sentence
Is the righteous One Who paid.

Verse 138

*"Thy testimonies that Thou hast commanded
are righteous and very faithful."*

Here again we have the voice of experience. It is good to be able to testify of God's faithfulness. Experience alone can give expression to this truth. Sometimes we would run from an experience which afterwards enables us to say, "Our God is faithful."

As the mountain standeth sure,
God's commandments shall endure;
Heaven and earth shall pass away,
Ushering in eternal day.
Even when this comes at last,
Jot or tittle shall not pass
From the righteous law of heaven,
All shall be fulfilled as given.

Verse 139

"My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words."

The One Who alone could say, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up" gave His life to prove His claim. It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing. Zeal is begotten in the soul by devotion to a cause. Let it ever be that of pleasing God and doing His will.

True to the word the martyr stands,
The burning stake to grace,
His zeal for God has brought him there,
The fiery death to face.
His enemies have put him there,
Their zeal as well is seen;
But far as heaven is from hell,
Their misjudged zeal hath been;
Thus poles apart are right and wrong,
Likewise their brand of zeal,
That burns within the human breast,
To conquer either field.

Verse 140

"Thy word is very pure: therefore Thy servant loveth it."

Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; even their minds and consciences are defiled. God's word is like Himself: pure, holy, and loved by those that love Him. The test of our love to Him is how we treat His word.

Why call ye Me the Lord of lords,
And flout the things I say?
The walk is but a living lie,
Of those that disobey;
My word is pure — that sets the course,
My purpose to fulfill,
Enshrine My law within thy heart,
And know My perfect will.

Verse 141

"I am small and despised: yet do not I forget Thy precepts."

By what did he measure himself? No doubt by the God of heaven. How small we are when we measure by this scale; yet the Lord thinketh upon us. Man despises what God loves. The more God means to us, the smaller we feel ourselves to be. The more we think of ourselves, the smaller God will be to us.

Small and despised, but not forgotten,
Redeemed and made His own;
Oh, mystery of mysteries,
I yet shall share His throne!
And when I mount to heights above,
I never shall forget,
The precepts I had loved on earth
Shall there fresh praise beget.

Verse 142

*"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and Thy law is the truth."*

As the Psalmist looked around upon the fading beauty of all his eyes could see, as he beheld man's feeble efforts to perform righteously, he exclaimed, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth."

Everlasting is the word,
Oh, who can comprehend
Eternity, that vast expanse,
That never has an end;
God's righteousness, that Gift of love,
Eternally the same,
Who would not bow before such love,
And from all wrong abstain!

Verse 143

*"Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me:
yet Thy commandments are my delight."*

Trouble and anguish have been the lot of the sons of Adam because of the curse; however, this little word 'yet' spells hope. It seems to divide ruin and hope. "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord." (Hab. 3:17)

Trouble and anguish and deep distress,
May oft obstruct the way,
Of one who seeks to live for God,
And would His word obey;
Yet in that soul there is a rest,
Which nothing can disturb,
He has the heritage of peace,
Delighting in God's word.

Verse 144

*"The righteousness of Thy testimonies is everlasting:
give me understanding, and I shall live."*

How good to know that God always deals righteously; His righteousness is everlasting. Men change, times change – God's testimonies never change. They are the same in every age. We can apply Abraham's experience to our own and claim the same promises.

He prayed for understanding,
That he might comprehend,
The testimonies of His God
On Whom he did depend;
He proved them righteous, as we do,
And everlasting, too;
Each time we venture out in faith,
They're sealed to us as true.

Verse 145

*"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, oh Lord.
I will keep Thy statutes."*

Keeping God's statutes involves the whole heart. He wants it all, then He can govern and control for His glory. Halfheartedness in God's things will bring disaster.

My whole heart set on pleasing God,
Pause now, my soul, and see:
Is this the object of my life,
His willing slave to be?
Half of my heart will never do,
In service for the King,
Who gave His all to pay my debt,
And my salvation bring.

Verse 146

"I cried unto Thee; save me, and I shall keep Thy testimonies."

Peter cried these words when he was sinking, and the Lord stretched forth His hand to save him. The Lord Jesus cried these words, "Save me, oh God, for the waters are come in unto my soul." There was none to save Him, He sank beneath the load of our sins. Let us be ever mindful of His testimonies.

"Save me, oh God," was Peter's cry,
When sinking in the wave,
Could he forget the tender touch,
That hand stretched forth to save?
How often in the stress of life,
From bleeding heart is heard,
"Oh Lord, stretch forth Thy hand to save
According to Thy word."

Verse 147

*"I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:
I hoped in Thy word."*

Some soul was passing through deep trial: was it Daniel or Moses? All the heroes of faith have known trying experiences, but the word was ever before them.

The word becomes more precious,
When the soul perceives a need;
The child of faith must have a guide,
To give to faith a lead;
He loses touch with time and sense,
As he the word explores,
And treasures this far more than gold
Which the heart of man adores.

Verse 148

*"Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I
might meditate in Thy word."*

Meditation in the word is a rewarding occupation – it is really that which nourishes the soul. The night watches go quickly when we are getting manna from the word. Was this Daniel in the lion's den, or Moses on the mount for forty days?

A watch in the night can be lonely,
When all the world is asleep,
But the soul that communes with heaven,
Will find those seasons most sweet;
When alone with His God in communion,
That still, small voice can be heard,
He fain would prevent the night watches.
To gather soul food from the word.

Verse 149

*"Hear my voice according unto Thy lovingkindess: O Lord,
quicken me according to Thy judgment."*

The word 'quicken' is in keeping with the whole Psalm. It seems to bring the thought of restoration. The child of God passing through this defiling scene feels often at a distance from the Lord, and his heart cries out for nearness, ever reaching out to be near Him.

Quicken, oh Lord, this soul of mine,
That I Thy face may see;
Remove the dross, repair the breach,
And bring me back to Thee;
That I may serve as once I did,
With heart set on my task,
"Lord, just restore my soul to Thee,"
Thy servant now would ask.

Verse 150

"They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from Thy law."

If this were Daniel, our minds would go back to the time when they had to pray only to the king under penalty of death in a den of lions; if it were Moses, we would think back to the time when Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled. If it were David, we would think of times when Saul sought his life, but David would not stretch forth his hand against him. David could say, "Thy law have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee."

"Far from Thy law." What an outrage,
The creature his Maker to spurn;
The outcome is seen in the conduct,
Where the heart with mischief doth burn;
These words were spoken of Judas,
He drew near the Lord to betray,
The outcome in actions must surface,
When the heart is not set to obey.

Verse 151

"Thou art near, O Lord; and all Thy commandments are truth."

He reassures himself of God's nearness; although the enemy was nigh, God was nearer. Our blessed Lord told His own, "I will not leave you comfortless . . . I will come to you." When we need comfort He will come to us, He draws near. Sometimes we keep Him from drawing near because we seek comfort from other things. "Be not far from me for trouble is near." It is only those who know the truth of God's commandments who will appreciate His nearness. "Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto thee."

God's nearness will always bring comfort,
To the soul that delights in His Word,
His commands demand swift obedience,
When the heart by His love has been stirred;
The motive will be just to please Him,
The mandate to move in His fear,
His mercies shall seem as great mountains,
When the soul can exclaim, "Thou art near."

Verse 152

*"Concerning Thy testimonies, I have known of old that
Thou hast founded them forever."*

The Psalmist must have gained this knowledge from others who had gone before him. He has made it his own by experience and has confidence that he is dealing with things eternal when he is handling the testimonies of the Lord. "Forever, Oh Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

Not like this passing vapor's scene
The things of God that once have been,
But stamped with God's eternal seal,
From age to age their glories yield;
Each generation thus displays
That God is right in all His ways;
This changing scene beneath the skies
Can never change God's truth to lies.

Verse 153

"Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forget Thy law."

How often God's people raise this cry, and the Lord draws near for their deliverance. In times of affliction, God's law is remembered and observed.

Affliction is often the angel
The Father of mercy doth send,
To bring His law to remembrance,
That I might my goings amend;
How oft when the pathway is easy,
His law from my heart slips away,
Affliction but serves to recover
The feet that are going astray.

Verse 154

"Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to Thy word."

The writer had a special cause which he committed to the Lord that He might plead it for him. We all at times have a cause that only God can plead. How good to be able to commit it to Him! His present work at the right hand of God is to plead our cause here on earth.

"Tis finished!" On the cross He cried,
When for our sins the Savior died,
Now at the throne of God above,
Our cause He undertakes in love;
On our behalf He stands to plead,
As great High Priest to meet our need,
Soon shall He rise from off the throne,
Come to the air to take us home.

Verse 155

"Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Thy statutes."

What a hopeless condition the wicked are in: "Far from salvation" – lost to their Creator. "They seek not" infers that they could if they would. Man has a free will. How awful to make the wrong choice! What a gulf separates the righteous and the wicked even in this life.

Salvation is far from the wicked,
For they seek not the law of the Lord,
Determined to dwell at a distance,
While His table rich bounties afford;
The righteous who dwell in His presence,
And feast on His heavenly bread,
Will cherish each word of His statutes,
For by them the new man is fed.

Verse 156

"Great are Thy tender mercies, O Lord: quicken me according to Thy judgments."

Mercy is a sweet word to one who is in need of it; but tender mercies go beyond mere mercy. Oh how God delights to show mercy, but it must always be in keeping with His righteousness. The Psalmist felt a quickening as he thought on His tender mercies.

The flame behind the quickening zeal,
Is that the heart is made to feel,
The tender mercies of the Lord
The Holy Spirit doth record,
As shown to men of every age,
Recorded on the sacred page;
When troubles crowd around the door,
Remember those who went before,
And feel the quickening touch of love –
His tender mercies from above.

Verse 157

*"Many are my persecutors and mine enemies:
yet do I not decline from Thy testimonies."*

The righteous always have enemies; the most powerful of all our adversaries is Satan. But in every age the righteous have resorted to God's testimonies for strength and comfort. The Son Himself put this adversary to flight by the word of God. Let us depend on His word in every circumstance of life.

Thy testimonies tried and sweet,
When we with adversaries meet,
Provide a refuge for the soul,
E'en now as in the days of old;
For saints of every age and clime
Who would not from the law decline,
Will gladden when the race is run,
To hear the Master say, "Well done."

Verse 158

*"I beheld the transgressors and was grieved:
because they kept not Thy word."*

To those who love the word of God, it causes grief when they see transgressors set it aside. The respect they have for the word denotes the respect they have for the One Who gave it. Let no man deceive himself into thinking that he can love God and show disrespect for His word.

Our attitude to what we know
Denotes what love to God we show;
'Tis folly to proclaim Him Lord,
And disobey His written word.
The acid test: "Have we obeyed?"
By this alone is love displayed.

Verse 159

*"Consider how I love Thy precepts: quicken me,
O Lord, according to Thy lovingkindness."*

It is good when one can call on the Lord to consider, look into the heart and see the attitude to His precepts. It is so easy to be careless in secret with the Lord's precepts. We all love His promises, but are prone to slight His precepts. Promise: "I will be a Father unto you." Precept: "Come out . . . be separate." How do we rate in this?

His precepts must be honored,
And from the heart obeyed,
If we would claim the promise,
With answers undelayed;
O how we long for action,
When troubles press us sore,
But remember, with the promise
A precept goes before.

Verse 160

"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth forever."

"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God." (Jn. 1:1) The words of the Psalmist were penned before this was known by revelation. He regarded the word as truth itself, which was later made flesh and dwelt among us. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth."

The spoken word the planets spun,
In orbits vast around the sun,
The darkness fled before its might,
When it was heard: "Let there be light."
It animated Adam's dust,
And beautified the planet's crust;
In Person on this earth it trod,
In flesh and blood the Son of God;
The creature nailed Him to the tree —
The Word from all eternity;
But some day in God's wondrous plan
He'll reign as Lord — the Son of Man.

Verse 161

*"Princes have persecuted me without cause:
but my heart standeth in awe of Thy word."*

Many of God's choicest saints have been persecuted by princes in every age, but those who stood in awe of God's word, refusing to disobey, shall have a better resurrection. All who are saved shall have part in the first resurrection, but faithfulness here will give us place in that day.

The princes may practice their terror,
On those who belong to the Lord,
And tempt them to sin against heaven,
By disobeying His word;
How oft in the annals of hist'ry
Saints have died for the sake of the truth,
Do we stand in awe of His precepts?
Obedience alone is the proof.

Verse 162

"I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil."

It is good to analyze our emotions, to find what brings the greatest joy to our soul. No doubt in Eden, before the fall, the greatest joy to Adam were the visits from his kind Creator as He would commune with him and tell of the great future he was destined to fill as governor over the works of His hands. But sin came in; we find him hiding from God and confessing, "I heard thy voice and I was afraid." In this verse we see one of Adam's sons redeemed and brought back to God. The words of his God bring joy to his soul as though he had found great spoil.

Lord, search my heart!
I long for honesty;
I would be true.
What makes my heart rejoice?
Is it Thy word?
Or some mere with'ring spoil of earth
That brings to this poor heart of mine
Its greatest mirth?

Verse 163

"I hate and abhor lying: but Thy law do I love."

Those who love the Lord hate evil. When God saves a sinner the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, enabling him to love what God loves and hate what God hates. It is not only love for God, but the very love of God; that is its character.

To love God's law is wisdom,
That comes with heavenly birth,
Springs from the very heart of God
To be displayed on earth;
Its residence within the heart
Shall be our strength and stay;
Protecting and delivering us
From every evil way.

Verse 164

*"Seven times a day do I praise Thee,
because of Thy righteous judgments."*

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." To praise God for His benefits was looked upon by the apostle as an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing unto God. Praise for His righteous judgments comes from a heart truly in line with the will of God. This is repentance in action; it goes on as long as we live. It is the character of Christian living.

All God's works shall praise Him,
Not understanding why;
Man was made intelligent,
And placed in rank so high,
That he could know the reason,
His soul was moved to raise,
A song in grateful utterance
Of his Creator's praise.

Verse 165

*"Great peace have they that love Thy law:
and nothing shall offend them."*

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." When man sinned against God he was robbed of peace. Only when we embrace the Prince of Peace can we have peace in the soul. To love God's law is to obey its rules; then there is no conflict, all is peace.

Peace, that precious jewel in the soul,
Cannot be bought with silver or with gold,
But as a gift to all is offered free,
By Him, the Prince of Peace —
Who suffered on the tree.
Receive Him, follow in His way,
Peace shall be yours as sure
As night must follow day.

Verse 166

*"Lord, I have hoped for Thy salvation,
and done Thy commandments."*

If the writer was Daniel, the salvation for which he hoped would be a return from Babylon. He had done God's commandments: he prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. No doubt that prayer was answered in the return of the remnant.

Hope is the anchor of the soul,
'Tis cast within the veil,
Secured by Him who cannot lie,
Whose promise cannot fail;
Salvation from sin's penalty,
And from its power, too,
Yea, from its very presence
When the Lord makes all things new.

Verse 167

*"My soul hath kept Thy testimonies;
and I love them exceedingly."*

The word here is, "To observe and look narrowly at." No doubt he searched the records of those who had gone before; he would seek to pattern his going in keeping with the godly conduct of those who walked in the law of the Lord before him. Is this not one of the secrets of success in the Christian life — to follow the footsteps of those who followed the Lord?

**Thy testimonies ever true,
Shed light on ancient days,
And we, with those who love Thy law,
Our Ebenezers raise.**

Verse 168

*"I have kept Thy precepts and Thy testimonies:
for all my ways are before Thee."*

The Psalmist was conscious that the Lord was observing his way. In view of this, he wanted to so live that he might be approved of Him. How solemn life becomes when this truth is realized: He who loves me watches all my ways.

**On all my ways, through all my days
Rests Thine omniscient eye; .
"Lord, help me to remember this,"
Would be my earnest cry;
That I might in Thy precepts walk,
Thy testimonies keep,
And faithful be, and win a crown
To cast before Thy feet.**

Verse 169

*"Let my cry come near before Thee, O Lord:
give me understanding according to Thy word."*

The horse and mule have no understanding, they have to be held in by bit or bridle. The Psalmist's cry was for the Lord's guidance and knowledge of His word. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with my eye." (Ps. 32:8) He was echoing the words of Solomon: "If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searcheth for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. 2:3-5)

Some cry because of hunger,
More cry because of pain;
Some cry for loss of riches,
And some for earthly fame;
But the cry that reaches heaven,
Is the cry from honest soul,
For heavenly understanding
To perform the heavenly role.

Verse 170

*"Let my supplication come before Thee:
deliver me according to Thy word."*

We think of David's cry: "Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense." (Ps. 141:2) Saints of old made prayer the most important part of their lives. The same should be true of us, so that we can look back on our lives with confidence as having been lived in accordance with His word. This adds incense to prayer.

If our prayers we would have heard,
We must order in the word
Every step from day to day,
As we walk the heavenly way;
Confidence shall be our stay,
When in need we kneel to pray.
If our vows we sought to pay
And His word we would obey.

Verse 171

"My lips shall utter praise, when Thou has taught me Thy statutes."

Our lips were made to praise Him. The faculty of speech was given to man to utter words formed in the heart of praise and love for his Creator; but in the fall, man's heart became wicked – filled with hate for his Creator, and his lips pour out words of cursing and bitterness. The new birth puts within the heart love for his Creator, Whom He now knows as His Savior; therefore he will utter with his lips the praise formed in the heart as he is taught by God the Spirit.

If to God a song we'd bring,
In the heart it first must sing;
Bubbling up to overflow,
Song is but the afterglow.

Verse 172

*"My tongue shall speak of Thy Word: for all
Thy commandments are righteousness."*

"The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things" – an unruly evil – full of deadly poison – no man can tame it. (James 3) Here the Psalmist would take what no man could tame and press it into service for the Lord – his tongue tamed by sovereign grace. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver." (Prov. 10:20) Our tongues can be used for good or evil.

O, tongue – thou little member,
Poisoned by the fall,
Uttering oaths and curses,
Slandering one and all;
Now conquered by the Savior,
And tuned for heaven's song,
To sing His praise in glory
With that vast, unnumbered throng.

Verse 173

"Let Thine hand help me: for I have chosen Thy precepts."

How often we come to the end of our own resources, and feel in need of a helping hand. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save." How good it is to know that we can depend on Him in time of need, the very hand of the Almighty. Confidence that He will put forth His hand stems from the fact that we have chosen His precepts as the rule of our life.

The soul that has chosen God's precepts,
To mark out the pathway of life,
Oft finds that his finite resources
Are not enough for the fight;
But because he has chosen His precepts,
He with confidence calls for His hand;
And He Who has marked out the pathway,
In the battle will cause him to stand.

Verse 174

"I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord; and Thy law is my delight."

Daniel, if he were the writer, would no doubt have prayed for deliverance from Babylon when he opened his window toward Jerusalem. David would have prayed for deliverance from Saul. The child of God in this age "groans for the salvation of God, even the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8) Salvation is not complete until the King is on the throne, the devil in the lake of fire and the earth and heavens one. We know this will be fulfilled, hence "we love Thy law . . . it is our delight."

We long for Thy salvation,
The Spirit cries within,
Waiting for deliverance
From the ruin caused by sin;
Thy law will work Thy purpose,
To banish sin's dark night,
And while we wait, we worship,
As we in Thy law delight.

Verse 175

*"Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee;
and let Thy judgments help me."*

His only purpose in living was that he might praise the Lord. How like Paul, who said: "For me to live is Christ." He also wanted God's judgments to be his guide, enabling him to so live. Do we take this attitude toward life? "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." (Psalm 40:23).

Praise springs from heart occupation
With the Author and Giver of Life;
The angels engage in His service,
Who dwell in the regions of light.
The Psalmist petitioned Jehovah
If He would but lengthen his days,
He would make it his life's occupation
To engage in this service of praise.

Verse 176

*"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant;
for I do not forget Thy commandments."*

Many trials had been borne by the Psalmist; he had passed through many experiences as he sought to record them for future generations. He had looked at God's law from every angle: it was always the same, like God Himself. He must be Lord; His law was perfect, leaving no doubt that he owned God's law as the law of Lordship.

His Commandments . . . The Law of Lordship . . . Itemized
His Statutes The Law of Lordship Emphasized
His Precepts The Law of Lordship Vitalized
His Word The Law of Lordship Clarified
His Way The Law of Lordship Exemplified
His Testimonies The Law of Lordship Magnified
His Judgments The Law of Lordship Finalized

As he saw himself before the perfect law of Lordship, he exclaimed: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." When we have done all these things, say, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done what was our duty to do."

Each day he practiced God's precepts
To treasure he likened God's Law
With a conscience he kept the commandments
God's statutes he found without flaw.
His Testimonies were treasured,
As he walked by the word in the way,
Then humbly he summed up his goings:
"As a sheep I have gone astray."