

# 10 Word-Wrapped Wonders of Grace

Psalm 119:17-24

February 6, 2022

## INTRO:

Do you need any help...

- *How much help do you need to get from here to heaven?* What kind of help do you need?
  
- *Where will that true heavenly help come from?*
  - CREATOR God... **God's GRACE...** and...
  - **God's WORD**, God's Spirit, & God's People!

## PRAYER

## CONTEXT:

- A. Series – **"Perspective"**
- B. Previous Sermons: cf. Psalm 119:**1**; 119:**9**; 119:**17**

**T/S:** Spurgeon: *The Psalmist speaks with the Lord as a man speaks with his friend.*

**BIG IDEA:** **We NEED God's Word...**  
because it defines, describes, & deploys  
**God's Grace, Glory, & Gospel!**

*Every verse in God's Word shines a degree of victorious & transformative light upon the narrow path of truth, love, & divine blessing.*

- JDP

***“If it's not biblical... its unbelievable!”***

**If it's not biblical grace... it's unbelievable grace – period.**

- JDP

## **PREVIEW:**

### **10 Word-wrapped-wonders in God's Gospel-grace:**

- 1. LOVING *grace* v.17a
- 2. LIFE-GIVING *grace* v.17b
- 3. SOVEREIGN *grace* v.18
- 4. MERCIFUL *grace* v.19
- 5. SANCTIFYING *grace* v.20
- 6. WARNING *grace* v.21
- 7. RESCUING *grace* v.22
- 8. PERSEVERING *grace* v.23
- 9. UPLIFTING *grace* v.24a
- 10. ENLIGHTENING *grace* v.24b

## **TEXT:**

### **Psalm 119:17-24**

*“If ever we feel we can ignore our daily time with God in His Word, then this is the Scripture to read.” - Wiersbe*

# I. LOVING Grace (v.17a)

<sup>17</sup> *Deal bountifully with your servant,*

A. Last week we pointed out:

- a. *Power* (Grace... being dealt with bountifully)
- b. *Person* (Servant... a true servant of Almighty God)
- c. *Purpose* (Serving... biblically, per God's 3 W's)

B. SEQUENCE: Sovereign-Grace & Human-Responsibility

*We work for him because he works in us.*

▪ Charles Spurgeon

C. **John 3:16** is dealing out bountiful, loving grace! -JDP

*May we ALL become double-fisted seed sowing servants who become comfortable behind the plow!*

# II. LIFE-GIVING Grace (v.17b)

*that I may live and keep your word*

➤ See again the SEQUENCE here:

1. Request → Reason
2. Sovereign-Grace → Human-Responsibility

God's **loving**-grace miraculously gifts us His **life-giving** grace. –JDP

*Life-GIVING grace is also life-SUSTAINING grace!*  
–JDP

God's loving & life-giving grace awakens us to our need for His saving-grace. –JDP

God gives His grace generously to His servants. –JDP

- God's grace leads to life! –JDP
- God's grace enables us to live God's Word. –JDP
- **God's Word defines God's grace.** –JDP

Living & keeping God's Word = **BE-ing!**

*You can't keep what you don't have!*  
–JDP

### III. SOVEREIGN Grace (v.18)

<sup>18</sup> **Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.**

- See WHO, How, Why, What, & Where of biblical seeing!
- *God's sovereignty & grace are miraculously united.* – JDP
- *“Open my eyes”*
  - Note the expressed dependence upon God's grace
  - Note that those who have received God's grace recognize their need for God's fundamental graces
  - Note God's sovereign grace begins by affirming that the spiritually blind are in fact spiritually blind.
  - *God alone can open blind spiritual eyes...*
    - See here in Psalm 119:18
    - See Jesus & the blind (cf. John 9)
  - *God alone can open closed spiritual hearts...*
    - See Acts 16 and Lydia's embrace of grace

**Don't miss the divine, sovereign grace that is embedded in the DNA of our human responsibility.**

– JDP

- See **1 Corinthians 2:14** & the *Stickman Gospel*

*The more God opens our eyes the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.*

– Matthew Henry

*Eyes that feast on the vanities of this world  
will never see the wonders in God's Word.*

– Wiersbe

***Saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law,  
but of their own blindness.*** - Thomas Manton

***The veil is not on the book, but on our hearts.***

**John Kerr: (1877)**

The great reason why men do not feel the power and beauty of the Bible is a spiritual one. They do not realize the grand evil which the Bible has come to cure, and they have not a heart to the blessings which it offers to bestow.

***Wonders without grace cannot open the eyes fully; but grace without wonders can.***

.— Joseph Caryl, 1602–1673.

There are promises in God's word that no man has ever tried to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some old estate that has descended to a man who lives in a modern house, and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains.

— *Henry Ward Beecher, 1872.*

**T/S:** *“If you don't understand the discussion... you won't understand the decision!” - JDP*

## IV. MERCIFUL Grace (v.19)

<sup>19</sup> *I am a sojourner on the earth;*  
*hide not your commandments from me!*

As “a stranger” he is fearful of losing his way

— **George Horne, 1730–1792.**

*Faithful worshippers live like fish out of water in this fallen world!* - JDP

As biblical believers, here on earth... we are:  
Sojourners vs. settlers

**God loves the sojourner!** - JDP

***God SENDS the sojournering servants!*** - JDP

See here the Great Commandments & the Great Commission  
unified in The Gospel's merciful grace!

*A man's greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore, eternity should be his scope. A godly man will do so.* - Thomas Manton

## **V. SANCTIFYING** Grace (v.20)

<sup>20</sup> *My soul is **consumed with longing** for your rules at all times.*



God's **loving** & **life-giving** grace...  
are also **saving** & **sanctifying** graces!

- JDP

God's grace sanctifies the **souls** of His saints!

- JDP

*God's sanctifying grace*  
**consumes the souls of His saints!** - JDP

God's sanctifying graces consume the souls  
of His saints with a **consistent** & **continuous**  
**longing** for God's Word, will, & ways! - JDP

Some observations from those who inspired Spurgeon:

*The desires of gracious men after holiness are **intense***

We should feel holy longings "*at all times.*"

Desires which can be put off and on like our  
garments are at best but mere wishes... they are  
temporary emotions born of excitement, and  
doomed to die when the heat which created them  
has cooled down.

The “*longing*” to find out and follow the hidden wonders was almost unbearable. This *longing* continued with the Psalmist “*at all times,*” or “*in every season.*” Prosperity could not make him forget it; adversity could not quench it. In sickness or health, in happiness or sadness, in-company or alone, **NOTHING** overcame that *longing*. - F.G. Marchant.

*A bad man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, the fears of hell, or when he is sermon sick, cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness; but he is the only blessed man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness*  
**at ALL times.** - Thomas Brooks, 1608–1680.

## VI. WARNING Grace (v.21)

<sup>21</sup> *You rebuke* the arrogant, accursed ones, who wander from you're your *commandments.*

*Only humble hearts are obedient.  
Pride lies at the root of all sin: if men were not arrogant,  
they would not be disobedient.* - Spurgeon

**Proverbs 27:5-6**

*“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.”*

*The wrathful man, the prodigal man... the slothful man, is rather an enemy to himself than to God; but the proud man sets himself against God, because he doth against his laws; he maketh himself equal with God, because he doth all without God, and craves no help of him; he exalteth himself above God, because he will have his own will though it be contrary to God’s will.*

*Proud men may be called God’s enemies, because... (they) pull honor (and glory) from God.*

*- Henry Smith, 1560–1591.*

## **VII. RESCUING** Grace (v.22)

<sup>22</sup> **Take away from me scorn and contempt,**  
**for I have kept your testimonies.**

The best way to deal with slander

is to pray about it: God will either remove it,  
or remove the sting from it. - Spurgeon

*“For I have kept thy testimonies.”*

*If through fear of reproach we forsake the  
divine testimony we shall deserve the coward’s  
doom; our safety lies in sticking close to the true  
and to the right.*

*It has often been the lot of those that do well  
to be ill spoken of. — Matthew Henry.*

**You can’t stop them from talking... your job is to  
make sure that what they are saying is not true!**

- Pastor Kevin Cosby

*If it does not come from a loving heart  
AND The Word of God... don’t let it in!*

- Pastor David Orr

**VIII. PERSEVERING Grace** (v.23)

<sup>23</sup>Even though **princes sit plotting against me,**  
your servant will meditate on your statutes.

Spurgeon: *It is very beautiful to see the two sittings: the princes sitting to reproach David, and David sitting with his God and his Bible, answering his traducers by never answering them at all.*

Those who feed upon the word grow strong and peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from the strife of tongues.

Matthew Henry: Herein David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that vilified and *crucified the Lord of glory... (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8)*

**God's servant, must have God's comforts.**

—Thomas Manton.

**God's servants have God's comforts!**

He renders not injury for injury, reproach for reproach. It is dangerous to fight against Satan or his instruments with their own weapons; for so they shall easily overcome us. Let us fight with the armour of God... —*William Cowper.*

## IX. UPLIFTING Grace (v.24a)

<sup>24</sup> *Your testimonies* are *my delight*;

- Who &/or what are you listening to?
- Who &/or what are your delights???
- Who/What are your trusted counselors?

Spurgeon: *It was their delight to slander...  
and his delight to meditate.*

*The best answer to accusing princes  
is the word of the justifying King.*

In his distress  
the Scriptures were his *delight*... —*Charles Bridges.*

## X. ENLIGHTENING Grace (v.24b)

<sup>24</sup> **Your testimonies** are my delight;  
**they are my counselors.**

*“I am doing a mighty work and I cannot come down!”*

*The words of the Lord serve us for many purposes; in our sorrows they are our delight, and in our difficulties they are our guide; we derive joy from them and discover wisdom in them. If we desire to find comfort in the Scriptures we must submit ourselves to their counsel, and when we follow their counsel it must not be with reluctance but with delight. This is the safest way of dealing with those who plot for our ruin; let us give more heed to the true testimonies of the Lord than to the false witness of our foes.*

### REVIEW:

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## **CLOSING:**

*Every syllable of Scripture  
is a holy, harmonious-note, singing & sharing  
an authoritative aspect of Christ's great love song  
of His Gospel's glory & grace.*

- JDP

## **PRAYER**

## **WORSHIP:**

- *"Call It Grace"*
- *"Cardboard Testimony" ("How He Loves Us")*
- *"Faces of Amazing Grace"*



# STUDY NOTES:

## Matthew Henry on Psalm 119:17-24

### Verse 17

We are here taught, 1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully with me, that I may live.* It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; if these be withheld, we die, or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered and we become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence. 2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is therefore a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye: "Not that I may live and grow rich, live and be merry, but that I may live and keep thy word, may observe it myself and transmit it to those that shall come after, which the longer I live the better I shall do."

### Verse 18

Observe here, 1. That there are wondrous things in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet, to behold, not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and things which were long hidden from the wise and prudent, but are now revealed unto babes. If there were wonders in the law, much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is Wonderful. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach to look into them, 1 Pt. 1:12. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel must beg of him to open their eyes and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace cause the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God has said, *Let there be light*, have yet need to be further enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that those who at first saw men as trees walking may

come to see all things clearly; and *the more God opens our eyes the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.*

#### Verse 19

Here we have, 1. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition: *I am a stranger in the earth. We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage.* David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men. God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth and must so account ourselves. 2. The request he makes to God thereupon: *Hide not thy commandments from me.* He means more: “Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it.

*I am a stranger,* and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me...

all that a poor stranger can desire. *I am a stranger* here, and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence.”

#### Verse 20

David had prayed that God would open his eyes (v. 18) and open the law (v. 19); **now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire for knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much.** 1. His desire was importunate: *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments, or (as some read it) "It is taken up, and wholly employed, in longing for thy judgments; the whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone if I want the word of God, the direction, converse, and comfort of it."* 2. **It was constant—at all times. It was not now and then, in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God as its necessary food, which there is no living without.**

#### Verse 21

**Here is, 1. The wretched character of wicked people.** The temper of their minds is bad. **They are proud; they magnify themselves above others.** And yet that is not all: **they magnify themselves against God**, and set up their wills in competition with and opposition to the will of God, as if their hearts, and tongues, and all, were their own. **There is something of pride at the bottom of every willful sin**, and the tenour of their lives is no better: They *do err from thy commandments*, as Israel, that did *always err in their hearts*; they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder that they err in practice, and willfully turn aside out of the good way. **This is the effect of their pride; for they say, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? As Pharaoh, Who is the Lord?**

2. The wretched case of such. **They are certainly cursed, for God resists the proud; and those that throw off the commands of the law lay themselves under its curse (Gal. 3:10)**, and he that now *beholds them afar off* will shortly say to them, *Go, you cursed.*

**The proud sinners bless themselves; God curses them; and, though the most direful**

*effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are often severely rebuked in this world: Providence crosses them, vexes them, and, wherein they dealt proudly, God shows himself above them; and these rebukes are earnest/worthy of worse.*

David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God and pray the more earnestly that he might not *err from God's commandments*. Thus, saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

#### Verse 22

Here, 1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men, that they might be *removed*, or (as the word is) *rolled, from off him*. This intimates that they lay upon him, and that neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned.

Some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean; others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. ***It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill-spoken of.*** It intimates that they lay heavily upon him.

***Hard and foul words indeed break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit;***

therefore David prays, "Lord, *remove* them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty or discouraged in it."

God has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust.

To him we may appeal as the assertor of right and avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise that he will clear up our *righteousness as the light*, Ps. 37:6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good and then it shall be removed.

2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God:

*For I have kept thy testimonies.* He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but, (1.) That he was jeered for well-doing. He was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, will be turned into the greater honour shortly. (2.) That he was not jeered out of well-doing: "Lord, remove it from me, *for I have kept thy testimonies* notwithstanding."

If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity,  
we may be sure it will end well.

### Verse 23

See here, 1. How **David was abused even by great men**, who should have known better his character and his case, and have been more generous: *Princes did sit*, sit in council, sit in judgment, and *speak against me*. What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood, when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers.

Herein David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that vilified and *crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Co. 2:8.*

**2. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses: he *meditated in God's statutes*, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man, he heard not.**

*When they spoke against him, he found that in the word of God which spoke for him, and spoke comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him.*

Those that have pleasure in communion with God may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

#### Verse 24

Here David explains his meditating in God's statutes (v. 23), which was of such use to him when princes sat and spoke against him. 1. Did the affliction make his sad? **The word of God comforted his, and was his delight**, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul when other comforts are embittered. 2. Did it perplex him? Was he at a loss what to do when the princes spoke against him? **God's statutes were his counsellors, and they counselled him to bear it patiently and commit his cause to God.**

*God's testimonies* will be the best counsellors both to princes and private persons.

*They are the men of my counsel;* so the word is.

***There will be found more safety and satisfaction in consulting them than in the multitude of other counsellors.***

Observe here...

Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them; and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking take them for their delight in comfortable walking.<sup>1</sup>

- Matthew Henry

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## Warren Wiersbe on Psalm 119:17-24

*Gimel (vv. 17–24)—We Need God's Word!*

If ever we feel we can ignore our daily time with God in His Word, then this is the Scripture to read.

*We need the Word because we are servants (vv. 17, 23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 84, 122, 124, 125, 135, 140, 176), and in His Word, our Master gives us directions for the work He wants us to do.*

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<sup>1</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (pp. 915–916). Hendrickson.

Eli the priest was wrong in many things, but he was right when he taught young Samuel to pray, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:9, NASB). As God’s faithful servant, the anonymous writer of this psalm is ranked along with Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, James, Paul, and Timothy, all of whom carried that title. But each child of God can serve the Lord and bear that same title (113:1; 134:1; 2 Tim. 2:24; 1 Peter 2:16). Everything in creation serves the Lord (v. 91), and we who are His redeemed people ought to join them. He always deals bountifully with His servants and provides for them adequately (13:6; 116:7; 142:7; Luke 22:35; Phil 4:19).

**Not only are we servants, but we are also *students* (v. 18), and our basic manual is the Word of God.**

However, **unless God opens our eyes, we will never see the wonderful things hidden in its pages (Eph. 1:17–18).**

God’s Word is wonderful (v. 129), His works are wonderful (107:8, 15, 21, 24, 31), and His love is wonderful (31:21, NIV), and we must meditate on the wonder of His Person, His truth, and His mighty works. **The eyes have an appetite (vv. 82, 123; 1 John 2:16) and we must be careful where we focus them (v. 37).**

***Eyes that feast on the vanities of this world will never see the wonders in God’s Word.***

Like the patriarchs of old, we are also *strangers* in this world (vv. 19–20; 39:12; 105:12, 23; Gen. 23:4; Ex. 2:22; Lev. 25:23; Heb. 11:8–9, 13–16; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:11), and **we need the Lord’s guidance as we walk the pilgrim path.**

*The laws for driving in Great Britain are different from the laws in the United States and it is dangerous to confuse the two. God’s people are*



*being led on the narrow road that leads to life, while the people of the world are on the broad road that leads to judgment (Matt. 7:13–14).*

**Just as the cloud and fiery pillar led Israel in their wilderness journey (Num. 9:15–23), so the Scriptures lead us (v. 105).**

The psalmist felt a crushing burden to read and ponder God’s ordinances, and unlike many travelers today, he was not afraid to ask the Lord for directions. **If we take time to meditate on the Word and seek the Lord, He will show us the path of life (16:11).**

*Because we serve a different Master, obey a different set of laws, and have our citizenship in a different country (Phil. 3:20), we are different from the lost people whom Jesus called “the children of this world” (Luke 16:8).*

We will not conform to the world (Rom. 12:2), and the world opposes and persecutes us because of this. Therefore, we are sufferers who bear reproach for Jesus Christ (vv. 14–21; Matt. 13:20–21; Heb. 13:13). The psalmist called these persecutors “the arrogant [proud]” (v. 21) and described them as disobeying God’s law (vv.

126, 158), ignoring it (v. 139), wandering from it (vv. 21, 118), and forsaking it (v. 53).

***Because they reject God's Word, they reject God's people and mock them (v. 51), lie about them (v. 69), try to trap them (v. 85), and oppress them without cause (vv. 78; 122).***

These are the “willful sins” that David wrote about in 19:14. This opposition was in high places among the rulers (vv. 23, 161), which would mean the nobles and officers of the land. The psalmist wanted God to remove the reproach they had put on him like a garment (v. 22; see 35:26; 109:29; 132:18), but the psalmist’s suffering gave him opportunity to bear witness to nobles and kings (v. 46; and see Matt. 10:18; Acts 9:15; Phil. 1:12–18; 4:22). The writer needed wisdom to know how to handle these difficult situations and he found counsel in God’s Word (v. 24). Instead of listening to the enemy’s slander, he meditated on God’s truth. That is a good way to keep your mind clean and confident (Phil. 4:4–7).<sup>2</sup>

## **Charles Spurgeon & The Treasury of David:**

*In this section the trials of the way appear to be manifest to the Psalmist’s mind, and he prays accordingly for the help which will meet his case.*

*As in the last eight verses he prayed as a youth newly come into the world, so here he pleads as a servant and a pilgrim, who growingly finds himself to be a stranger in an enemy’s country. His appeal is to God alone, and his*

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<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). [\*Be exultant\*](#) (1st ed., pp. 108–110). Cook Communications Ministries.

*prayer is specially direct and personal. He speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.*

**17. “Deal bountifully with thy servant.”** He takes pleasure in owning his duty to God, and counts it the joy of his heart to be in the service of his God. Out of his condition he makes a plea, for a servant has some hold upon a master; but in this case the wording of the plea shuts out the idea of legal claim, since he seeks bounty rather than reward.

**Let my wages be according to thy goodness, and not according to my merit. Reward me according to the largeness of thy liberality, and not according to the scantiness of my service.** The hired servants of our Father have all of them bread enough and to spare, and he will not leave one of his household to perish with hunger. If the Lord will only treat us as he treats the least of his servants we may be well content, for all his true servants are sons, princes of the blood, heirs of life eternal. David felt that his great needs required a bountiful provision, and that his little desert would never earn such a supply; hence he must throw himself upon God’s grace, and look for the great things he needed from the great goodness of the Lord. He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed. “O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn.”

**“That I may live.”** Without abundant mercy he could not live. **It takes great grace to keep a saint alive. Even life is a gift of divine bounty to such undeserving ones as we are.** Only the Lord can keep us in being, and it is mighty grace which preserves to us the life which we have forfeited by our sin. It is right to desire to live, it is meet to pray to live, it is just to ascribe prolonged life to the favour of God. Spiritual life, without which this natural life is mere existence, is also to be sought of the Lord’s bounty, for it is the noblest work of divine grace, and in it the bounty of God is gloriously displayed. **The Lord’s servants cannot serve him in their own strength, for they cannot even live unless his grace abounds towards them.**

**“And keep thy word.”**

**This should be the rule, the object, and the joy of our life.** We may not wish to live and sin; but we may pray to live and keep God’s word. Being is a poor thing if it be not well-being. Life is only worth keeping while we can keep God’s word; indeed, there is no life in the highest sense apart from holiness: life while we break the law is but a name to live.

The prayer of this verse shows that it is only through divine bounty or grace that we can live as faithful servants of God, and manifest obedience to his commands.

***If we give God service it must be because he gives us grace.***

***We work for him because he works in us.***

Thus...

**we may make a chain out of the opening verses of the three first octaves of this Psalm: verse 1 blesses the holy man, verse 9 asks how we can attain to such holiness, and verse 17 traces such holiness to its secret source, and shows us how to seek the blessing.**

*The more a man prizes holiness and the more earnestly he strives after it, the more will he be driven towards God for help therein, for he will plainly perceive that his own strength is insufficient, and that he cannot even so much as live without the bounteous assistance of the Lord his God.*

## 18. *“Open thou mine eyes.”*

This is a part of the bountiful dealing which he has asked for; no bounty is greater than that which benefits our person, our soul, our mind, and benefits it in so important an organ as the eye. It is far better to have the eyes opened than to be placed in the midst of the noblest prospects and remain blind to their beauty.

## *“That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”*

Some men can perceive no wonders in the gospel, but David felt sure that there were glorious things in the law: he had not half the Bible, but he prized it more than some men prize the whole. **He felt that God had laid up great bounties in his word, and he begs for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same.**

***We need not so much that God should give us more benefits, as the ability to see what he has given.***

*The prayer implies a conscious darkness, a dimness of spiritual vision, a powerlessness to remove that defect, and a full assurance that God can remove it.*

It shows also that the writer knew that there were vast treasures in the word which he had not yet fully seen, marvels which he had not yet beheld, mysteries which he had scarcely believed.

**The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder-land; it not only relates miracles, but it is itself a world of wonders.**

Yet what are these to closed eyes? And what man can open his own eyes, since he is born blind? **God himself must reveal revelation to each heart.** Scripture needs opening, but not one half so much as our eyes do:

**...the veil is not on the book, but on our hearts.**

**What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men amongst the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness!**

The Psalmist had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were wondrous things to be seen, nor would he have prayed, "open thou mine eyes;" but what he had seen made him long for a clearer and wider sight. This longing proved the genuineness of what he possessed, for it is a test mark of the true knowledge of God that it causes its possessor to thirst for deeper knowledge.

David's prayer in this verse is a good sequel to verse 10, which corresponds to it in position in its octave: there he said, "O let me not wander," and who so apt to wander as a blind man? and there, too, he declared, "with my whole heart have I sought thee," and hence the desire to see the object of his search. Very singular are the interlacings of the boughs of the huge tree of this Psalm, which has many wonders even within itself if we have opened eyes to mark them.

**19. "I am a stranger in the earth."**

**This is meant for a plea.** By divine command men are bound to be kind to strangers, and what God commands in others he will exemplify in himself. The Psalmist was a

stranger for God's sake, else had he been as much at home as worldlings are; he was not a stranger to God, but a stranger to the world, a banished man so long as he was out of heaven. Therefore he pleads,

***“Hide not thy commandments from me.”***

If these are gone, what have I else? Since nothing around me is mine, what can I do if I lose thy word? Since none around me know or care to know the way to thyself, what shall I do if I fail to see thy commands, by which alone I can guide my steps to the land where thou dwellest?

David implies that God's commands were his solace in his exile: they reminded him of home, and they showed him the way thither, and therefore he begged that they might never be hidden from him, by his being unable either to understand them or to obey them. If spiritual light be withdrawn the command is hidden, and this a gracious heart greatly deprecates. What would be the use of opened eyes if the best object of sight were hidden from their view? While we wander here we can endure all the ills of this foreign land with patience if the word of God is applied to our hearts by the Spirit of God; but if the heavenly things which make for our peace were hid from our eyes we should be in an evil case,—in fact, we should be at sea without a compass, in a desert without a guide, in an enemy's country without a friend.

This prayer is a supplement to “open thou mine eyes,” and, as the one prays to see, the other deprecates the negative of seeing, namely, the command being hidden, and so out of sight. We do well to look at both sides of the blessing we are seeking, and plead for it from every point of view. The prayers are appropriate to the characters mentioned: as he is a servant he asks for opened eyes that his eyes may ever be towards his Lord, as the eyes of a servant should be; as a stranger he begs that he may not be strange to the way in which he is to walk towards his home. In each case his entire dependence is upon God alone.

**Note how the third of the second octave (11) has the same keyword as this third of the third octave: “Thy word have I hid,” “Hide not thy commandments from me.”** This invites a meditation upon the different senses of hiding *in* and hiding *from*.

***20. “My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.”***

True godliness lies very much in desires. As we are not what we shall be, so also we are not what we would be. *The desires of gracious men after holiness are intense*,—they cause a wear of heart, a straining of the mind, till it feels ready to snap with the heavenly pull. A high value of the Lord’s commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings. *What a blessing it is when all our desires are after the things of God.* We may well long for such longings.

God’s judgments are his decisions upon points which else had been in dispute. Every precept is a judgment of the highest court upon a point of action, an infallible and immutable decision upon a moral or spiritual question.

The word of God is a code of justice from which there is no appeal.

“This is the Judge which ends the strife  
Where wit and reason fail;  
Our guide through devious paths of life,  
Our shield when doubts assail.”

David had such reverence for the word, and such a desire to know it, and to be conformed to it, that his longings caused him a sort of heart-break, which he here pleads before God. Longing is the soul of praying, and when the soul longs till it breaks, it cannot be long before the blessing will be granted. The most intimate communion between the soul and its God is carried on by the process described in the text. God reveals his will, and our heart longs to be conformed thereto. **God judges, and our heart rejoices in the verdict.** This is fellowship of heart most real and through.

Note well that our desire after the mind of God should be constant; **we should feel holy longings “at all times.”**

Desires which can be put off and on like our garments are at best but mere wishes, and possibly they are hardly true enough to be called by that name,—they are temporary emotions born of excitement, and doomed to die when the heat which created them has cooled down. He who always longs to know and do the right is the truly right



man. His judgment is sound, for he loves all God's judgments, and follows them with constancy. His times shall be good, since he longs to be good and to do good at all times.

Remark how this fourth of the third eight chimes with the fourth of the fourth eight. "My soul breaketh;" "my soul melteth." There is surely some recondite poetic art about all this, and it is well for us to be careful in studying what the Psalmist was so careful in composing.

## **21. "Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed."**

This is one of God's judgments: he is sure to deal out a terrible portion to men of lofty looks. God rebuked Pharaoh with sore plagues, and at the Red Sea "the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord." In the person of the haughty Egyptian he taught all the proud that he will certainly abase them. **Proud men are cursed men: nobody blesses them, and they soon become a burden to themselves.**

In itself, **pride is a plague and torment**. Even if no curse came from the law of God, there seems to be a law of nature that proud men should be unhappy men. This led David to abhor pride; he dreaded the rebuke of God and the curse of the law. The proud sinners of his day were his enemies, and he felt happy that God was in the quarrel as well as he.

***"Which do err from thy commandments."***

**Only humble hearts are obedient**, for they alone will yield to rule and government. Proud men's looks are high, too high to mark their own feet and keep the Lord's way.

**Pride lies at the root of all sin: if men were not arrogant they would not be disobedient.**

God rebukes pride even when the multitudes pay homage to it, for he sees in it rebellion against his own majesty, and the seeds of yet further rebellions. It is the sum of sin. Men talk of an honest pride; but if they were candid they would see that it is of all sins the least honest, and the least becoming in a creature, and especially in a fallen creature: yet so little do proud men know their own true condition under the curse of God, that they set up to censure the godly, and express contempt for them, as may be seen in the next verse. They are themselves

contemptible, and yet they are contemptuous towards their betters. We may well love the judgments of God when we see them so decisively levelled against the haughty upstarts who would fain lord it over righteous men; and we may well be of good comfort under the rebukes of the ungodly since their power to hurt us is destroyed by the Lord himself. "The Lord rebuke thee" is answer enough for all the accusations of men or devils.

In the fifth of the former octave the Psalmist wrote, "I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth, and here he continues in the same strain, giving a particular instance of the Lord's judgments against haughty rebels. In the next two portions the fifth verses deal with lying and vanity, and pride is one of the most common forms of those evils.

**22. "Remove from me reproach and contempt."** These are painful things to tender minds. David could bear them for righteousness' sake, but they were a heavy yoke, and he longed to be free from them. **To be slandered, and then to be despised in consequence of the vile accusation, is a grievous affliction.**

**No one likes to be traduced, or even to be despised. He who says, "I care nothing for my reputation," is not a wise man, for in Solomon's esteem "a good name is better than precious ointment."**

**The best way to deal with slander is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove the sting from it.**

Our own attempts at clearing ourselves are usually failures; we are like the boy who wished to remove the blot from his copy, and by his bungling made it ten times worse. When we suffer from a libel it is better to pray about it than go to law over it, or even to demand an apology from the inventor. O ye who are reproached, take your matters before the highest court, and leave them with the Judge of all the earth. God will rebuke your proud accuser; be ye quiet and let your advocate plead your cause.

***"For I have kept thy testimonies."***

Innocence may justly ask to be cleared from reproach. If there be truth in the charges alleged against us what can we urge with God? If, however, we are wrongfully accused our appeal has a *locus standi* in the court and cannot be refused.

*If through fear of reproach we forsake the divine testimony we shall deserve the coward's doom; our safety lies in sticking close to the true and to the right.*

God will keep those who keep his testimonies. A good conscience is the best security for a good name; reproach will not abide with those who abide with Christ, neither will contempt remain upon those who remain faithful to the ways of the Lord.

This verse stands as a parallel both in sense and position to verse 6, and it has the catchword of "testimonies," by which it chimes with 14.

### **23. "Princes also did sit and speak against me."**

David was high game, and the great ones of the earth went a hawking after him. Princes saw in him a greatness which they envied, and therefore they abused him. On their thrones they might have found something better to consider and speak about, but they turned the seat of judgment into the seat of the scorner. Most men covet a prince's good word, and to be spoken ill of by a great man is a great discouragement to them, but **the Psalmist bore his trial with holy calmness. Many of the lordly ones were his enemies, and made it their business to speak ill of him:** they held sittings for scandal, sessions for slander, parliaments of falsehood, and yet he survived all their attempts upon him.

### **"But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes."**

This was brave indeed. He was God's servant, and therefore he attended to his Master's business; he was God's servant, and therefore felt sure that his Lord would defend him. He gave no heed to his princely slanderers, he did not even allow his thoughts to be disturbed by a knowledge of their plotting in conclave. Who were these malignants that they should rob God of his servant's attention, or deprive the Lord's chosen of a moment's devout communion. The rabble of princes were not worth five minutes' thought, if those five minutes had to be taken from holy meditation.

*It is very beautiful to see the two sittings:  
the princes sitting to reproach David, and  
David sitting with his God and his Bible,  
answering his traducers by never answering  
them at all.*

**Those who feed upon the word grow strong and  
peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from  
the strife of tongues.**

Note that in the close of the former octave he had said, "I will meditate," and here he shows how he had redeemed his promise, even under great provocation to forget it. It is a praiseworthy thing when the resolve of our happy hours is duly carried out in our seasons of affliction.

**v.24. "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my  
counsellors."**

*They were not only themes for meditation, but  
"also" sources of delight and means of guidance.*

While his enemies took counsel with each other the holy man took counsel with the testimonies of God. The fowlers could not drive the bird from its nest with all their noise.

**It was *their* delight to slander and *his* delight to meditate.**

**The words of the Lord serve us for many purposes; in our sorrows they are our delight, and in our difficulties they are our guide; we derive joy from them and discover wisdom in them. If we desire to find comfort in the Scriptures we must submit ourselves to their counsel, and when we follow their counsel it must not be with reluctance but with delight. This is the safest way of dealing with those**

who plot for our ruin; let us give more heed to the true testimonies of the Lord than to the false witness of our foes.

## *The best answer to accusing princes is the word of the justifying King.*

In verse 16 David said, “I will delight in thy statutes,” and here he says “they are my delight:” thus resolutions formed in God’s strength come to fruit, and spiritual desires ripen into actual attainments. O that it might be so with all the readers of these lines.

## Spurgeon’s collected Notes on Verses 17–24

**Verse 17.**—“*Deal bountifully with thy servant,*” etc. These words might be—Render unto thy servant, or upon thy servant. A deep signification seems to be here involved. The holy man will take the responsibility of being dealt with, not certainly as a mere sinful man, but as a man placing himself in the way appointed for reconciliation. Such we find to be the actual case, as you read in the 16th verse, in the Part immediately preceding—“I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word.” Now, the statutes of the Lord referred pre-eminently to the sacrifice for sin, and the cleansings for purifications that were prescribed in the Law. You have to conceive of the man of God as being in the midst of the Levitical ritual, for which you find him making all preparations: 1 Chron. 22, 23, 24. Placing himself, therefore, upon these, he would pray the Lord to deal with him according to them; or, as we, in New Testament language, would say,—placing himself on the great atonement, the believer would pray the Lord to deal with him according to his standing in Christ, which would be in graciousness or bounty. For if the Lord be just to condemn without the atonement, he is also just to pardon through the atonement; yea, he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.—*John Stephen.*

*Verse 17.*—“*Deal bountifully,*” etc. O Lord, I am constantly resolved to obey and adhere to thy known will all the days of my life: O make me those gracious returns which thou hast promised to all such.—*Henry Hammond.*

*Verse 17.*—“*Deal bountifully ... that I may keep thy word,*” etc. **A faithful servant should count his by-past service richly rewarded by being employed yet more**

in further service, as this prayer teacheth; for David entreats that he may live and keep God's word.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 17.—“*Bountifully*.” And indeed, **remembering what a poor, weak, empty, and helpless creature the most experienced believer is in himself, it is not to be conceived that anything short of a bountiful supply of grace can answer the emergency.**—*Charles Bridges*.

Verse 17.—“*Thy servant*.” That he styles himself so frequently the servant of God notes the reverent estimation he had of his God, in that **he accounts it more honourable to be called the servant of God who was above him than the king of a mighty, ancient, and most famous people that were under him.** And indeed, since the angels are styled his ministers, shall men think it a shame to serve him? and especially since he of his goodness hath made them our servants, “ministering spirits” to us? Should we not joyfully serve him who hath made all his creatures to serve us, and exempted us from the service of all other, and hath only bound us to serve himself?—*William Cowper*.

Verse 17.—“*That I may live*.” As a man must “*live*” in order to work, the first petition is, that God would “*deal with his servant,*” according to the measure of grace and mercy, enabling him to “*live*” the life of faith, and strengthening him by the Spirit of might in the inner man.—*George Horne, 1730–1792*.

Verse 17.—“*That I may live, and keep thy word*.” David joins here two together, which whosoever disjoins cannot be blessed. He desires to live; but so to live that he may keep God's word. To a reprobate man, who lives a rebel to his Maker, it had been good (as our Saviour said of Judas) that he had never been born. The shorter his life is, the fewer are his sins and the smaller his judgments. But ***to an elect man, life is a great benefit; for by it he goes from election to glorification, by the way of sanctification. The longer he lives, the more good he doth, to the glory of God***, the edification of others, and confirmation of his own salvation;

making it sure to himself by wrestling and victory in temptations, and perseverance in well doing.—*William Cowper.*

**Verse 18.**—“*Open thou mine eyes.*” Who is able to know the secret and hidden things of the Scriptures unless Christ opens his eyes? Certainly, no one; for “No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” Wherefore, as suppliants, we draw near to him, saying, “*Open thou mine eyes,*” etc. The words of God cannot be kept except they be known; neither can they be known unless the eyes shall be opened,—hence it is written, “*That I may live and keep thy word;*” and then, “*Open thou mine eyes.*”—*Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 18.—“*Open thou mine eyes.*” “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” was the gracious inquiry of the loving Jesus to a poor longing one on earth. “Lord! that I may receive my sight,” was the instant answer. So here, in the same spirit, and to the same compassionate and loving Lord, does the Psalmist pray, “*Open thou mine eyes;*” and both in this and the preceding petition, “Deal bountifully with thy servant,” we see at once who prompted the prayer.—*Barton Bouchier.*

**Verse 18.**—“*Open thou mine eyes.*” If it be asked, seeing David was a regenerate man, and so illumined already, how is it that he prays for the opening of his eyes? The answer is easy: that our regeneration is wrought by degrees. The beginnings of light in his mind made him long for more; for no man can account of sense, but he who hath it. The light which he had caused him to see his own darkness; and therefore, feeling his wants, he sought to have them supplied by the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 18.—“*Open thou mine eyes.*” The *saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord make a plainer law, but, Lord, open mine eyes:* blind men might as well complain of God, that he doth not make a sun whereby they might see.

The word is “a light that shineth in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19). There is no want of light in the Scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts; so that if in this clear light we cannot see, the defect is not in the word, but in ourselves.

The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. When God is said to enlighten us, it is not that we should expect new revelations, but that we may see the wonders in his word, or get a clear sight of what is already revealed.

Those that vent their own dreams under the name of the Spirit, and divine light, they do not give you *mysteria*, but *monstra*, portentous opinions; they do not show you the wondrous things of God’s law, but the prodigies of their own brain; unhappy abortives, that die as soon as they come to light. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

The light which we have is not without the word, but by the word.

The Hebrew phrase signifieth “*unveil mine eyes.*” There is a double work, negative and



positive. There is a taking away of the veil, and an infusion of light.

Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith" (Acts 9:18). First, the scales fall from our eyes, and then we receive sight. — Thomas Manton.

Verse 18.—The Psalmist asks for no new revelation. It was in God's hand to give this, and he did it in his own time to those ancient believers; but to all of them at every time there was enough given for the purposes of life. **The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses.** Still better does such a form of request suit us, to whom life and immortality have been brought to light in Christ. If we do not find sufficient to exercise our thoughts with constant freshness, and our soul with the grandest and most attractive subjects, it is because we want the eyesight. It is of great importance for us to be persuaded of this truth, that there are many things in the Bible still to be found out, and that, if we come in the right spirit, we may be made discoverers of some of them.

*These things disclose themselves, not so much to learning, though that is not to be despised, as to spiritual sight, to a humble, loving heart.*

And this at least is certain, that we shall always find things that are new to ourselves. However frequently we traverse the field, we shall perceive some fresh golden vein turning up its glance to us, and we shall wonder how our eyes were formerly holden that we did not see it. It was all there waiting for us, and we feel that more is waiting, if we had the vision. There is a great Spirit in it that holds deeper and even deeper converse with our souls.

This further may be observed, that the Psalmist asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power which enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. In one view it is supernatural, as God is the Author of the illumination by a direct act of his Spirit; in another it is natural, as it operates through the faculties existing in a man's soul.

God gives “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of man's understanding may be enlightened.” (Eph. 1:17.) It is important to re-remember this also, for

here lies our responsibility, that we have the faculty, and here also is the point at which we must begin action with the help of God. A man will never grow into the knowledge of God's word by idly waiting for some new gift of discernment, but by diligently using that which God has already bestowed upon him, and using at the same time all other helps that lie within his reach. There are men and books that seem, beyond others, to have the power of aiding insight. All of us have felt it in the contact of some affinity of nature which makes them our best helpers; the kindred clay upon the eyes by which the great Enlightener removes our blindness (John 9:6). Let us seek for

such, and if we find them let us employ them without leaning on them. Above all, let us give our whole mind in patient, loving study to the book itself, and where we fail, at any essential part, God will either send his evangelist Philip to our aid (Acts. 8) or instruct us himself. But it is only to patient, loving study that help is given. God could have poured all knowledge into us by easy inspiration, but it is by earnest search alone that it can become the treasure of the soul.

But if so, it may still be asked what is the meaning of this prayer, and why does the Bible itself insist so often on the indispensable need of the Spirit of God to teach? Now there is a side here

as true as the other, and in no way inconsistent with it. If prayer without effort would be presumptuous, effort without prayer would be vain.

**The great reason why men do not feel the power and beauty of the Bible is a spiritual one. They do not realize the grand evil which the Bible has come to cure, and they have not a heart to the blessings which it offers to bestow.**

The film of a fallen nature, self-maintained, is upon their eyes while they read: "The eyes of their understanding are darkened, being alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18). All the natural powers will never find the true key to the Bible, till the thoughts of sin and redemption enter the heart, and are put in the centre of the Book. It is the part of the Father of lights, by the teaching of his Spirit, to give this to the soul, and he will, if it humbly approaches him with this request. Thus we shall study as one might a book with the author at hand, to set forth the height of its argument, or as one might look on a noble composition, when the artist breathes into us a portion of his soul, to let us feel the centre of its harmonies of form and colour. Those who have given to the Bible thought and prayer will own that these are not empty promises.—*John Kerr, in a Sermon entitled, "God's Word Suited to Man's Sense of Wonder," 1877.*

Verse 18.—O let us never forget, that the wonderful things contained in the divine law can neither be discovered nor relished by the "natural man," whose powers of perception and enjoyment are limited in their range to the objects of time and sense. It is the divine Spirit alone who can lighten the darkness of our sinful state, and who can enable us to perceive the glory, the harmony, and moral loveliness which everywhere shine forth in the pages of revealed truth.—*John Morison, 1829.*

Verse 18.—“Uncover my eyes and I will look—wonders out of thy law.” The last clause is a kind of exclamation after his eyes have been uncovered. This figure is often used to denote inspiration or a special divine communication. “Out of thy law,” i.e., brought out to view, as if from a place of concealment.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 18.—“Wondrous things.” Many were the signs and miracles which God wrought in the midst of the people of Israel, which they did not understand. What was the reason? Moses tells us expressly what it was: “Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day” ([Deut. 29:4](#)).

They had sensitive eyes and ears, yea, they had a rational heart or mind; but they wanted a spiritual ear to hear, a spiritual heart or mind to apprehend and improve those wonderful works of God; and these they had not, because God had not given them such eyes, ears, and hearts.

*Wonders without grace cannot  
open the eyes fully;  
but grace without wonders can.*

And as man hath not an eye to see the wonderful works of God spiritually, until it is given; so, much less hath he an eye to see the wonders of the word of God till it be given him from above; and therefore David prays, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” And if the wondrous things of the law are not much seen till God give an eye then much less are the wondrous things of the Gospel. The light of nature shows us somewhat of the Law; but nothing of the Gospel was ever seen by the light of nature. Many who have seen and admired, some excellencies in the Law could never see, and therefore have derided, that which is the excellency of the Gospel, till God had opened their heart to understand.—*Joseph Caryl, 1602–1673*.

Verse 18.—“The word is very nigh” unto us; and, holding in our hand a document that teems with what is wonderful, the sole question is:

“Have we an eye to its marvels,  
a heart for its mercies?”

Here is the precise use of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts nothing new into the Bible; he only so enlightens and strengthens our faculties, that we can discern and admire what is there already. It is not the telescope which draws out that rich

sparkling of stars on the blue space, which to the naked eye seem points of light, and untenanted: it is not the microscope which condenses the business of a stirring population into the circumference of a drop of water, and clothes with a thousand tints the scarcely discernible wing of the ephemeral insect. The stars are shining in their glory, whether or no we have the instruments to penetrate the azure; and the tiny tenantry are carrying on their usual concerns, and a rich garniture still forms the covering of the insect, whether or no the powerful lens has turned for us the atom into a world, and transformed the almost imperceptible down into the sparkling plumage of the bird of paradise.

Thus the wonderful things are already in the Bible. The Spirit who indited them at first brings them not as new revelations to the individual; but, by removing the mists of carnal prejudice, by taking away the scales of pride and self-sufficiency, and by rectifying the will, which causes the judgment to look at truth through a distorted medium,—by influencing the heart, so that the affections shall no longer blind the understanding,—by these and other modes, which might be easily enumerated, the Holy Ghost enables men to recognize what is hid, to perceive beauty and to discover splendour where all before had appeared without form and comeliness; and thus brings round the result of the Bible, in putting on the lip the wonderful prayer which he had himself inspired: *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,”*— **Henry Melvill, 1798–1871.**

Verse 18.—The *“wondrous things”* seem to be the great things of an eternal world—he had turned his enquiring eyes upon the wonders of nature, sun, moon, and stars, mountains, trees, and rivers. **He had seen many of the wonders of art; but now, he wanted to see the spiritual wonders contained in the Bible.** He wanted to know about God himself in all his majesty, purity, and grace. He wanted to learn the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, and the glory that is to follow.

*“Open mine eyes.”* — David was not blind—his eye was not dim. He could read the Bible from end to end, and yet he felt that he needed more light. He felt that he needed to see deeper, to have the eyes of his understanding opened. He felt that if he had nothing but his own eyes and natural understanding, he would not discover the wonders which he panted to see. He wanted divine teaching—the eye-salve of the Spirit; and therefore he would not open the Bible without this prayer, *“Open thou mine eyes.”*—**Robert Murray M’Cheyne, 1813–1843.**

*Verse 18.—“Wondrous things.”* Wherefore useth he this word *“wondrous?”* It is as if he would have said, Although the world taketh the law of God to be but a light thing, and it seemeth to be given but as it were for simple souls and young children; yet for all that there seemeth such a wisdom to be in it, as that it surmounteth all the wisdom of the world, and that therein lie hid wonderful secrets.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 18.—“Thy law.”* That which is the *object* of the understanding prayed for, that in the knowledge whereof the Psalmist would be illuminated, is תּוֹרָה. The word signifies instruction; and being referred unto God, it is his teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself, the same which we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed they were, for distinction’s sake, distributed into תּוֹרָה, כְּתוּבִים and נְבִיאִים, or the “Law,” the “Psalms,” and the “Prophets,” Luke 24:44. Under that distribution *Torah* signifies the five books of Moses. But whereas these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication thereof, **all the writings of it were usually called “the Law,” Isaiah 8:20. By the law, therefore, in this place, the Psalmist understands all the books that were then given unto the church by revelation for the rule of its faith and obedience.**

And that by the *law*, in the Psalms, the written law is intended, is evident from the first of them, wherein he is declared blessed who “meditateth therein day and night,” Ps. 1:2; which hath respect unto the command of reading and meditating on the *books thereof* in that manner, Josh. 1:8. That, therefore, which is intended by this word is the entire revelation of the will of God, given unto the church for the rule of its faith and obedience—that is, the holy Scripture.



In this law there are נִפְלְאוֹת “wonderful things,” פְּלֵאָ signified to be “wonderful,” to be “hidden,” to be “great” and “high;” that which men by the use of reason cannot attain unto or understand (hence נִפְלְאוֹת are things that have such an impression of divine wisdom and power upon them as that they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us; as Deut. 17:8, כִּי יִפְלֵא מִמֶּךָ רָרָר—“If a matter be too hard for thee,” hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous works of God are expressed, Ps. 77:11, 78:11. Wherefore, these “wonderful things of the law” are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture which are above the natural reason and understanding of men to find out and comprehend. Such are **the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, especially because Christ is in them, whose name is “Wonderful,” Isa. 9:6;** for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him.— *John Owen, 1616–1683.*

Verse 18.—“Wondrous things.” There are promises in God’s word that no man has ever tried to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some old baronial estate that has descended to a man who lives in a modern house, and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains, till, at last, some man says to him, “Have you been up in the country to look at that estate? “He makes up his mind that he will take a look at it. As he goes through the porch he is surprised to see the skill that has been displayed in its construction: he is more and more surprised as he goes through the halls. He enters a large room and is astonished as he beholds the wealth of pictures on the walls, among which are portraits of many of his revered ancestors. He stands in amazement before them. There is a Titians, there a Raphael, there is a Correggio, and there is a Giorgione. He says, “I never had any idea of these before.” “Ah,” says

the steward, “there is many another thing that you know nothing about in the castle,” and he takes him from room to room and shows carved plate, and wonderful statues, and the man exclaims, “Here I have been for a score of years the owner of this estate, and have never before known what things were in it.” But no architect ever conceived of such an estate as God’s word, and no artist, or carver, or sculptor, ever conceived of such pictures, and carved dishes, and statues as adorn its apartments. It contains treasures that silver, and gold, and precious stones are not to be mentioned with.—*Henry Ward Beecher, 1872.*

*Verse 18.*—“*That I may behold wondrous things.*” The great end of the Word of God in the Psalmist’s time, as now, was practical; but there is a secondary use here referred to, which is worthy of consideration,—its power of meeting man’s faculty of wonder. God knows our frame, for he made it, and he must have adapted the Bible to all its parts. If we can show this, it may be another token that the book comes from Him who made man.... That God has bestowed upon man the faculty of wonder we all know. It is one of the first and most constant emotions in our nature. We can see this in children, and in all whose feelings are still fresh and natural. It is the parent of the desire to know, and all through life it is urging men to enquire.—*John Ker.*

*Verse 18.*—“*Wondrous things out of thy law.*” In 118 we had the “wondrous” character of redemption; in 119 we have the “wonders” (verses 18, 27, 129), of God’s revelation.—*William Kay, 1871.*

*Verses 18, 19.*—When I cannot have Moses to tell me the meaning, saith Saint Augustine, give me that Spirit that thou gavest to Moses. And this is that which every man that will understand must pray for: this David prayed for;—“*Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wonders of the Law;*” and (verse 19) “*hide not thy commandments from me.*” And Christ saith, “If you, being evil, can give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” so that then we shall see the secrets of God.—*Richard Stock (–1626).*

**Verse 19.**—“*I am a stranger in the earth.*” David had experience of peace and war, of riches and poverty, of pleasure and woe. He had been a private and public person; a shepherd, a painful calling; a soldier, a bloody trade; a courtier, an honourable slavery, which joineth together in one the lord and the parasite, the gentleman and the drudge; and he was a king,—a glorious name, filled up with fears and cares. All these he had passed through, and found least rest when he was at the highest, less content on the throne than in the sheepfolds. All this he had observed and laid up in his memory, and this his confession is an epitome and brief of all; and in effect he telleth us, that whatsoever he had seen in this his passage, whatsoever he had enjoyed, yet he found nothing so certain as this,—that he had found nothing certain, nothing that he could abide with or would abide with him, but that he was still as a passenger and “*stranger in the earth.*”—*Anthony Farindon, 1596–1658.*

Verse 19.—“*I am a stranger in the earth,*” etc. As a sojourner, he hath renounced the world, which is therefore become his enemy; **as “a stranger” he is fearful of losing his way**; on these accounts **he requesteth that God would compensate the loss of earthly comforts by affording the light of heaven; that he would not “hide his commandments,” but show and teach him those steps, by which he may ascend toward heaven, rejoicing in hope of future glory.** — **George Horne, 1730–1792.**

Verse 19.—“*I am a stranger in the earth.*” This confession from a solitary wanderer would have had little comparative meaning; but in the mouth of one who was probably surrounded with every source of worldly enjoyment, it shows at once the vanity of “earth’s best joys,” and the heavenly tendency of the religion of the Bible.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 19.—“*I am a stranger in the earth,*” etc. 1. Every man here upon earth (especially a godly man) is but a stranger and a passenger. 2. It concerns him that is a stranger to look after a

better and a more durable state. Every man should do so. ***A man’s greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore eternity should be his scope. A godly man will do so.***

Those whose hearts are not set upon earthly things, they must have heaven. The more their affections are estranged from the one, the more they are taken up about the other (Col. 3:2); heaven and earth are like two scales in a balance, that which is taken from the one is put into the other. 3. There is no sufficient direction how to obtain this durable estate, but in the word of God. Without this we are but like poor pilgrims and wayfaring men in a strange country, not able to discern the way home. A blessed state is only sufficiently revealed in the word: ***“Life and immortality is brought to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).***

The heathens did but guess at it, and had some obscure sense of an estate after this life; but as it is brought to light with most clearness in the word, so the way thither is only pointed out by the word. It is the word of God makes us wise to salvation, and which is our line and rule to heavenly Canaan; and therefore it concerns those that look after this durable state to consult with the word. 4. There is no understanding God's word but by the light of the Spirit. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). Though the word have light in it, yet the spirit of man cannot move till God enlightens us with that lively light that makes way for the dominion of the truth in our hearts, and conveyeth influence into our hearts. This is the light David begs when he says, "*Hide not thy commandments from me.*" David was not ignorant of the Ten Commandments, of their sound; but he begs their spiritual sense and use. 5. If we would have the Spirit we must ask it of God in prayer; for God gives the "Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13); and therefore:

**we must say, as David, "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles" (Psalm 43:3).— Thomas Manton.**

Verse 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. When a child is born, it is spoken of sometimes under the designation of "a little stranger!" Friends calling will ask if, as a privilege, they may "see the little stranger." A stranger, indeed! come from far. From the immensities. From the presence, and touch, and being of God! And going—into the immensities again—into, and through all the unreckonable ages of duration. But the little stranger grows, and in a while begins to take vigorous root. He works, and wins, and builds, and plants, and buys, and holds, and, in his own feeling, becomes so "settled" that he would be almost amused with anyone who should describe him as a stranger now. And still life goes on, deepening and widening in its flow, and holding in itself manifold and still multiplying elements of interest. Increasingly the man is caught by these—like a ship, from which many anchors are cast into the sea. He strives among the struggling, rejoices with the gay, feels the spur of honour, enters the race of acquisition, does some hard and many kindly things by turns; multiplies his engagements, his relationships, his friends, and then—just when after such preparations, life ought to be fully beginning, and opening itself out into a great, restful, sunny plain—lo! the shadows begin to fall, which tell, too surely, that it is drawing fast to a close. The voice, which, soon or late, everyone must hear, is calling for "the little stranger," who was born not long ago, whose first lesson is over, and who is wanted now to enter by the door called death, into another school. And the stranger is not ready. He has thrown out so many anchors, and they have taken such a fast hold of the ground that it will be no slight

matter to raise them. He is *settled*. He has no pilgrim's staff at hand; and his eye, familiar enough with surrounding things, is not accustomed to the onward and ascending way, cannot so well measure the mountain altitude, or reckon the far distance. The progress of time has been much swifter than the progress of his thought. Alas! he has made one long mistake. He has "looked at the things which are seen," and forgotten the things which are not seen. And "the things which are seen" are temporal, and go with time into extinction; while "those which are not seen, are eternal." And so there is hurry, and confusion, and distress in the last hours, and in the going away. Now, all this may be obviated and escaped, thoroughly, if a man will but say—"I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me."—Alexander Raleigh, in *"The Little Sanctuary, and other Meditations."* 1872

Verse 19.—"I am a stranger in the earth," etc. In the law, **God recommends strangers to the care and compassion of his people; now David returns the arguments to him, to persuade him to deal kindly with him.**—*Robert Leighton, 1611–1684.*

Verse 19.—"In the earth." He makes no exception here; the whole earth he acknowledged a place of his pilgrimage. **Not only when he was banished among the Moabites and Philistines was he a stranger; but even when he lived peaceably at home in Canaan, still he thinks himself a stranger.** This consideration moved godly Basil to despise the threatening of Modestus, the deputy of Valens the emperor, when he braved him with banishment. *Ab exilii metu liber sum, unam hominum cognoscens esse patriam, paradisum omnem autem terram commune naturæ exilium.* And **it shall move us to keep spiritual sobriety in the midst of pleasures, if we remember that in our houses, at our own fireside, and in our own beds, we are but strangers from which we must shortly remove, to give place to others.**  
—*William Cowper.*

Verse 19.—"Hide not thy commandments from me." **The manner of David's reasoning is this. I am here a stranger and I know not the way, therefore, Lord, direct me.**

The similitude is taken from passengers, who coming to an uncouth country where they are ignorant of the way, seek the benefit of a guide. But the dissimilitude is here: in any country

people can guide a stranger to the place where he would be; but the dwellers of the earth cannot show the way to heaven; and therefore David seeks no guide among them, but prays the Lord to direct him.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse 19.*—“*Hide not thy commandments from me.*” There is a hiding of the word of God when means to hear it explained by preachers are wanting; and there is a hiding of the comfortable and lively light of the Spirit, who must quicken the word unto us. From both those evils we may, and we should, pray to be saved.—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 20.**—“*My soul breaketh,*” etc. Here is a protestation of that earnest desire he had to the obedience of the word of God; he amplifies it two ways: first, it was no light motion, but such as being deeply rooted made his heart to *break* when he saw that he could not do in the obedience thereof what he would. Next, it was no vanishing motion, like the morning dew; but it was permanent, *omni tempore*, he had it *at all times*.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse 20.*—“*My soul breaketh for the longing,*” as one that with straining breaks a vein.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse 20.*—“*My soul breaketh,*” etc. This breaking is by rubbing, chafing, or crushing. The spirit was so fretted with its yearning desire after the things which Jehovah had spoken, that it was broken as by heavy friction. The “longing” to find out and follow the hidden wonders was almost unbearable. This longing continued with the Psalmist “at all times,” or “in every season.” Prosperity could not make him forget it; adversity could not quench it. In sickness or health, in

## happiness or sadness, in company or alone, nothing overcame that *longing*.

“*The wondrous things*” were so wonderful, and still so hidden. To see a little of “the beauty of the Lord” is to get to know how much there is which we fail to see, and thus to *long* more than ever. He who pursues ardently the wonders of the word of the Lord, will never set that *longing* at rest as long as he remains “in the earth.” It is only when we shall “be like him,” and “shall see him as he is,” that we shall cry “Enough, Lord!” “I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.”—*F. G. Marchant*.

Verse 20.—“*My soul breaketh for the longing.*” For the earnest desire. “That it hath *unto thy judgments at all times.*” Thy law; thy commands. **This was a constant feeling. It was not fitful, or spasmodic. It was the steady, habitual state of the soul on the subject. He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the wants of his nature were satisfied,** or that he could see and know no more; he had seen and felt enough to excite in him an ardent desire to be made fully acquainted with *all* that there is in the law of God.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 20.—“*My soul breaketh for the longing,*” etc. The desire after God’s appointments becomes painfully intense. **A longing—an intense longing—for the judgments of the Lord at all times. These are the particulars of his breaking soul. His whole mind is toward the things of God.** He prays that he may behold the wondrous things of Jehovah’s law, and that he may not hide his commandments from him; and here his soul breaks for longing towards his judgments at all times. The state of the Psalmist’s mind would not lead us here to suppose that he was awaiting the manifestation of the Lord’s judgments in vindicating his cause against ungodly men, or that he was longing for opportunity of fulfilling all the deeds of righteousness towards his fellow-men; for this he was doing to the utmost. Evidently he is intent upon the ordinances of religion, which were called “*judgments*” in reference to the solemn sanctions with which they were enjoined. The man of God so longed to join with the Lord’s people in these, that his heart was ready to break with desire, as he was forced from place to place in the wilderness. **The renewed heart is here. Another might long to be delivered from persecution, to be at rest, to be restored to home, relations, and comfort. The man of God could not but desire those**

natural enjoyments; but, over all, his holy mind longed with ardour for the celebration of Jehovah's worship.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 20.—“*Thy judgments.*” God's judgments are of two sorts: first, his commands; so called because by them right is judged and discerned from wrong. Next, his plagues executed upon transgressors according to his word. David here refers to the first. Let men who have not the like of David's desire, remember, that **they whose heart cannot break for transgressing God's word because they love it, shall find the plagues of God to bruise their body and break their heart also.** Let us delight in the first sort of these judgments, and the second shall never come upon us.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 20.—Mark that word, “***at all times.***” ***Bad men have their good moods, as good men have their bad moods.***

*A bad man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, or the fears of hell, or when he is sermon sick, cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness; but he is the only blessed man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness at all times.*

— ***Thomas Brooks, 1608–1680.***



Verse 20.—“*At all times.*” Some prize the word in adversity, when they have no other comfort to live upon; then they can be content to study the word to comfort them in their distresses; but when they are well at ease, they despise it. But David made use of it “*at all times;*” in prosperity, to humble him; in adversity, to comfort him; in the one, to keep him from pride; in the other, to keep him from despair in affliction, the word was his cordial; in worldly increase, it was his antidote; and so at all times his heart was carried out to the word either for one necessity or another. — *Thomas Manton.*

Verse 20.—“*At all times.*” How few are there even among the servants of God who know anything of the intense feeling of devotion here expressed! *O that our cold and stubborn hearts were warmed and subdued by divine grace, that we might be ready to faint by reason of the longing which he had “at all times” for the judgments of our God.* How fitful are our best feelings! If to-day we ascend the mount of communion with God, to-morrow we are in danger of being again entangled with the things of earth. How happy are they whose hearts are “*at all times*” filled with longings after fellowship with the great and glorious object of their love!—*John Morison, 1829.*

Verse 20.— If you read the lives of good men, who have been, also, intellectually great, you will be struck, I think, even to surprise, a surprise, however, which will not be unpleasant, to find them, at the

close of life, in their own estimation so ignorant, so utterly imperfect, so little the better of the long life-lesson. Dr. Chalmers, after kindling churches and arousing nations to their duties, summed up his own attainments in the word “desirousness,” and took as the text that best described his inner state, that passionate, almost painful cry of David, “My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments.” But how grand was the attainment! To be in old age as simple as a little child before God! To be still learning at threescore years and ten! How beautiful seem the great men in their simplicity!

— *Alexander Raleigh, in “The Little Sanctuary,” 1872.*

**Verse 21.**—“*Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.*” If the proud escape here, as sometimes they do, hereafter they shall not; for, “*the proud man is an abomination to the Lord;*” Prov. 16:5. *God cannot endure him;* Ps. 101:5. And what of that? *Tu perdes superbos,* Thou shalt destroy the proud. The very heathens devised the proud giants struck with thunder from heaven. And *if God spared not the angels,* whom he placed in the highest heavens, *but* for their pride *threw them down headlong to the nethermost hell,* how much less shall he spare the proud dust and ashes of the sons of men, but shall cast them from the height of their earthly altitude to the bottom of that infernal dungeon! “Humility makes men angels; pride makes angels devils;” as that father said: I may well add, makes devils of men. Αλαζονείας οὔτις εκφευγει δικήν, says the heathen poet, Menander; “Never soul escaped the revenge of pride,” never shall escape it. **So sure as God is just, pride shall not go**

**unpunished.** I know now we are all ready to call for a basin, with Pilate, and to wash our hands from this foul sin. Honourable and beloved, this vice is a close one; it will cleave fast to you; yea, so close that ye can hardly discern it from a piece of yourselves: this is it that aggravates the danger of it. For, as Aquinas notes well, some sins are more dangerous, *propter vehementiam impugnationis*, “for the fury of their assault;” as the sin of anger: others for their correspondence to nature; as the sins of lust: other, *propter latentiam sui*, “for their close skulking” in our bosom; as the sin of pride. Oh, let us look seriously into the corners of our false hearts, even with the lanthorn of God’s law, and find out this subtle devil; and never give peace to our souls till we have dispossessed him. Down with your proud plumes, O ye glorious peacocks of the world: look upon your black legs, and your snake-like head: be ashamed of your miserable infirmities: else, God will down with them and yourselves in a fearful vengeance. There is not the holiest of us but is this way faulty: oh, let us be humbled by our repentance, that we may not be brought down to everlasting confusion: let us be cast down upon our knees, that we may not be cast down upon our faces. For God will make good his own word, one way; “A man’s pride shall bring him low.”—*Joseph Hall*, 1574–1656.

*Verse 21.*—“*Thou hast rebuked the proud.*” Let the histories of Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod, exhibit the proud under the rebuke and curse of God. He abhors their persons and their offerings: he “knows them afar off:” he “resisteth them:” he scattereth them in the imaginations of their hearts.” Yet more especially hateful are they in his sight, when cloaking themselves under a spiritual garb,—“which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.” David and Hezekiah are instructive beacons in the church, that God’s people, whenever they give place to the workings of a proud heart, must not hope to escape his rebuke. “Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions:” Ps. 99:8.—*Charles Bridges*.

*Verse 21.*—“*Thou hast rebuked the proud.*” David addeth another reason whereby he is more enflamed to pray unto God and to address himself unto him to be taught in his word; to wit, when he seeth that he hath so “*rebuked the proud.*” For the chastisements and punishments which God layeth upon the faithless and rebellious should be a good instruction for us; as it is

said that God hath executed judgment, and that the inhabitants of the land should learn his righteousness. It is not without cause that the prophet Isaiah also hath so said; for he signifieth unto us that God hath by divers and sundry means drawn us unto him, and that chiefly when he teacheth us to fear his majesty. For without it, alas, we shall soon become like unto brute beasts; if God lay the bridle on our necks, what license we will give unto ourselves experience very well teacheth us. Now God seeing that we are so easily brought to run at random, sendeth us examples, because he would bring us to walk in fear and carefully.—*John Calvin*.

*Verse 21.*—“*The proud.*” This is a style commonly given to the wicked; because as it is our oldest evil, so is it the strongest and first that strives in our corrupt nature to carry men to transgress the bounds appointed by the Lord. From the time that pride entered into Adam’s heart, that he would be higher than God had made him, he spared not to eat of the forbidden tree. And what else is the cause of all transgression, but that man’s ignorant pride will have his will preferred to the will of God.—*William Cowper*.

*Verse 21.*—“*The proud.*” Peter speaks of the proud, as if they did challenge God like champions, and provoke him like rebels, so that unless he did resist them, they would go about to deprive him of his rule, **as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram undermined Moses. Numbers 16.**

For so the proud man saith, I will be like the highest, Isa. 14, and, if he could, above the highest too. This is the creature that was taken out of the dust, Gen. 2:7, and so soon as he was made, he opposed himself against that majesty which the angels adore, the thrones worship, the devils fear, and the heavens obey. How many sins are in this sinful world! and yet, as Solomon saith of the good wife, Prov. 31:29, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou surmountest them all;” so may I say of pride, many sins have done wickedly, but thou

surmountest them all; for *the wrathful man, the prodigal man, the lascivious man, the surfeiting man, the slothful man, is rather an enemy to himself than to God; but the proud man sets himself against God, because he doth against his laws; he maketh himself equal with God, because he doth all without God, and craves no help of him; he exalteth himself above God, because he will*

have his own will though it be contrary to God's will.

As the humble man saith, Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory, Ps.

115:1; so **the proud man saith, Not unto Him, not unto Him, but unto us give the glory.**

Like unto Herod which took the name of God, and was honoured of all but the worms, and they showed that he was not a god, but a man, Acts 12:21.

Therefore:

*proud men may be called God's enemies, because as the covetous pull riches from men, so the proud pull honour from God.*

Beside, the proud man hath no cause to be proud, as other sinners have; the covetous for riches, the ambitious for honour, the voluptuous for pleasure, the envious for wrong, the slothful for ease; but the proud man hath no cause to be proud, but pride itself, which saith, like Pharaoh, "I will not obey," Exod. 5:2.—*Henry Smith, 1560–1591.*

*Verse 21.*—"Proud that are cursed."—Proud men endure the curse of never having friends; not in prosperity, because they know nobody; not in adversity, because then nobody knows them.—*John Whitecross, in "Anecdotes illustrative of the Old Testament."*

*Verse 21.*—This use of God's judgments upon others must we make to ourselves; first, that we may be brought to acknowledge our deserts, and so may fear; and, next, that we may so behold his justice upon the proud that we may have assurance of his mercy to the humble. This is hard to flesh and blood; for some can be brought to rejoice at the destruction of others, and cannot fear; and others, when they are made to fear, cannot receive comfort. But those which God hath joined together let us not separate: therefore let us make these uses of God's judgments.—*Richard Greenham.*

**Verse 22.**—"Remove from me reproach and contempt," Here David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that they might be removed, or, as the word is, rolled from off him. This intimates that they lay upon him, and neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being

libelled and lampooned: some despise him and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious.

***It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill spoken of.***

It intimates, that this burden lay heavy upon him. Hard words indeed and foul words break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit: therefore David prays, Lord, “*remove*” them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from any duty, or discouraged in it.—**Matthew Henry**.

Verse 22.—“*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*” etc. *In the words (as in most of the other verses) you have,—1. A request: “Remove from me reproach and contempt.” 2. A reason and argument to enforce the request: “For I have kept thy testimonies.”*

First, for the request, “*Remove from me reproach and contempt;*” the word signifies, Roll from upon me, let it not come at me, or let it not stay with me. And then the argument: “*for I have kept thy testimonies.*” The reason may be either thus: (1) He pleads that he was innocent of what was charged upon him, and had not deserved those aspersions. (2) He intimates that it was for his obedience, for this very cause, that he had kept the word, therefore was reproach rolled upon him. (3) It may be conceived thus, that his respect to God’s word was not abated by this reproach, he still kept God’s testimonies, how wicked soever he did appear in the eyes of the world. It is either an assertion of his innocency, or he shows the ground why this reproach came upon him, or he pleads that his respect to God and his service was not lessened, whatever reproach he met with in the performance of it.

**The points from hence are many.** 1. It is no strange thing that they which keep God’s testimonies should be slandered and reproached. 2. As it is the usual lot of God’s people to be reproached; so it is very grievous to them, and heavy to bear. 3. It being grievous, we may lawfully seek the removal of it. So doth David, and so

may we, with submission to God's will. 4. In removal of it, it is best to deal with God about it; for God is the great witness of our sincerity, as knowing all things, and so to be appealed to in the case. Again, God is the most powerful asserter of our innocency; he hath the hearts and tongues of men in his own hands, and can either prevent the slanderer from uttering reproach, or the hearer from the entertainment of the reproach. He that hath such power over the consciences of men can clear up our innocency; therefore it is best to deal with God about it; and prayer many times proves a better vindication than an apology. 5. In seeking relief with God from this evil, it is a great comfort and ground of confidence when we are innocent of what is charged. In some cases we must humble ourselves, and then God will take care for our credit; we must plead guilty when, by our own fault, we have given occasion to the slanders of the wicked: so, "Turn away my reproach which I fear; for thy judgments are good" (Ps. 119:39). "My reproach," for it was in part deserved by himself, and therefore he feared the sad consequences of it, and humbled himself before God. But at other times we may stand upon our integrity, as David saith here: "Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good."—Thomas Manton.

**Verse 23.**—"*Princes also did sit,*" under the shadow of justice, "*and speak against me.*"

*Now this was a great temptation to David, that he was not only mocked and scorned at the taverns and inns, being there blazoned by dissolute jesters and scoffers, and talked of in the streets and market-place; but even in the place of justice (which ought to be holy); it could not therefore be chosen but that they also would utterly defame and slander him, and condemn him to be, as it were, a most wicked and cursed man.*

When David then did see that he was thus unjustly entreated and handled, he maketh his complaint unto God and sayeth, “O Lord, the princes and governors themselves do sit and speak evil against me; *and yet for all that I have kept thy testimonies.*” Here in sum we are to gather out of this place, that if it so fall out, when we have walked uprightly and in a good conscience, that we are falsely slandered, and accused of this and that whereof we never once thought; yet ought we to bear all things patiently; for let us be sure of that, that we are not better than David, whatever great protestation of our integrity and purity we may dare to make.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 23.—“*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*” As husbandmen, when their ground is overflowed by waters, make ditches and water-furrows to carry it away; so, when our minds and thoughts are overwhelmed with trouble, it is good to divert them to some other matter.

But every diversion will not become saints, it must be a holy diversion: *“In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul” (Psalm 94:19).*

The case was the same with that of the text, when the throne of iniquity frameth mischief by a law; as you shall see here, when he had many perplexed thoughts about the abuse of power against himself. But now where lay his case in diversion? Would every diversion suit his purpose? No; “*Thy comforts,*”—comforts of God’s allowance, of God’s providing, comforts proper to saints. Wicked men in trouble run to their pot and pipe, and games and sports, and merry company, and so defeat the providence rather than improve it: but David, who was **God’s servant, must have God’s comforts.**

So, elsewhere, when his thoughts were troubled about the power of the wicked: *“I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end” (Psalm 73:17).* He goeth to divert his mind by the use of God’s ordinances, and so cometh to be settled against the temptation.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 23.—“*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*”

—**Perceive here the armour by which David fights against his enemy.** *Arma justi quibus omnes adversariorum repellit impetus,*  
**his weapons are the word and prayer.**



He renders not injury for injury, reproach for reproach. It is dangerous to fight against Satan or his instruments with their own weapons; for so they shall easily overcome us. Let us fight with the armour of God—the exercises of the word and prayer: for a man may peaceably rest in his secret chamber, and in these two see the miserable end of all those who are enemies to God’s children for God’s sake.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse 23.*—“*Thy statutes.*” It is impossible to live either *Christianly* or *comfortable* without the daily use of Scripture. It is absolutely necessary for our direction in all our ways before we begin them, and when we have ended them, for the warrant of our approbation of them, for resolving of our doubts, and comforting us in our griefs. Without it our conscience is a blind guide, and leadeth us in a mist of ignorance, error, and confusion. Therein we hear God speaking to us, declaring his good will to us concerning our salvation, and the way of our obedience to meet him in his good will. What book can we read with such profit and comfort? For matter, it is wisdom: for authority, it is divine and absolute: for majesty, God himself under common words and letters expressing an unspeakable power to stamp our heart. **Where shall we find our minds so enlightened, our hearts so deeply affected, our conscience so moved, both for casting us down and raising us up? I cannot find in all the books of the world, such an one speak to me, as in Scripture, with so absolute a conquest of all the powers of my soul.**

Contemners of Scripture lack food for their souls, light for their life, and weapons for their spiritual warfare; but the lovers of Scripture have all that furniture. Therein we hear the voice of our Beloved, we smell the savour of his ointments, and have daily access unto the art of propitiation. If in our knowledge we desire divinity, excellency, antiquity, and efficiency, we cannot find it, but in God’s word alone. It is the extract of heavenly wisdom, which Christ the eternal Word brought out of the bosom of his Father.—*William Struther, 1633.*

**Verses 23, 24.**—The two last verses of this section contain two protestations of David’s honest affection to the word. The first is, that albeit he was persecuted and evil spoken of, and that by great and honourable men of the world, such as Saul, and Abner, and

Ahithophel; yet did he still meditate in the statutes of God. **It is a hard temptation when the godly are troubled by any wicked men; but much harder when they are troubled by men of honour and authority.** And that, first, by reason of their *place*: the greater *power* they have, the greater *peril* to encounter with their displeasure; therefore said Solomon, “The wrath of a king is as messengers of death.” Next, because authorities and powers are ordained by God, not for the terror of the good, but of the evil: Rom. 13:3. And therefore it is no small grief to the godly, when they find them abused to a contrary end: that where a ruler should be to good men like rain to the fields new mown, he becomes a favourer of evil men and a persecutor of the good. Then justice is turned into wormwood; that which should bring comfort to such as fear God, is abused to oppress them. And therefore it should be accounted a great benefit of God, when he gives a people good and religious rulers.—**William Cowper.**

*Verses 23, 51.*—If the 119th Psalm came from the pen of David, as multitudes believe, then I do not wonder that many have connected its composition with his residence in the school of the prophets of Naioth. The calm in which he then found himself, and the studies which he then prosecuted, might well have led his musings in the direction of that alphabetic code, while there are in it not a few expressions which, to say the least, may have particular reference to the dangers out of which he had so recently escaped, and by which he was still threatened. Such, for example, are the following: “*Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*” “*The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.*”—William M. Taylor, in “*David King of Israel; his Life and its Lessons.*” 1880.

**Verse 24.**—*Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*” His delight and his counsellors, that is, his delight *because* his counsellors; his counsellors, and therefore his delight. **We know how delightful it is to any to have the advantage of good counsel, according to the perplexities and distractions in which they may be.** “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel,” says Solomon, Prov. 27:9. Now this is the sweetness of Divine communion, and of meditation on God and his word; it employs a man with *seasonable counsel*, which is a very great refreshment to us. —**T. Horton, 1673.**

Verse 24.—“Thy testimonies also are my delight;” etc. *Those that would have God’s testimonies to be their delight, must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them; and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking, take them for their delight in comfortable walking.* — *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 24.—“Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.” What could we want more in a time of difficulty than comfort and direction? David hath both these blessings. **As the fruit of his “meditation in the Lord’s statutes,” in his distress they were his “delight;” in his seasons of perplexity they were his “counsellors,” directing his behaviour in the perfect way.**—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 24.—“My counsellors.” In the Hebrew it is, “the men of my counsel,” which is fitly mentioned, for he had spoken of princes sitting in council against him. Princes do nothing without the advice of their Privy-Council; a child of God hath also his Privy-Council, God’s testimonies. On the one side there was Saul and his nobles and counsellors; on the other side there was David and God’s testimonies. Now who was better furnished, think you, they to persecute and trouble him, or David how to carry himself under this trouble? Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked who were the best counsellors? answered, “The dead (meaning books), which cannot flatter, but do without partiality declare the truth.” How of all such dead counsellors, God’s testimonies have the pre-eminence. A poor, godly man, even then when he is deserted of all, and hath nobody to plead for him, he hath his senate and his council of state about him, the prophets and apostles, and “other holy men of God, that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” A man so furnished, is never less alone than when alone; for he hath counsellors about him that tell him what is to be believd or done; and they are such counsellors as cannot err, as will not flatter him, nor applaud him in any sin, nor discourage or dissuade him from that which is good, whatever hazard it expose him to. And truly, **if we be wise, we should choose such counsellors as these: “Thy testimonies are the men of my counsel.”**—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 24.—“My counsellors.” See here a sentence worthy to be weighed of us, when **David calleth the commandments of God his “counsellors.”** For, in the first place, he meaneth that he might scorn all the wisdom of the most able and most expert men in the world, since he was conducted by the word of God, and governed thereby. In the second place, he meaneth that when he shall be so governed by the word of God, he would not only be truly wise, but that it would be as if he had all the wisdom of all the men in the world, yea, and a great deal more.— *John Calvin*.<sup>3</sup>

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17. *That I may live* is the first of many such prayers (cf. 3. c, above). While some of them could refer simply to surviving an illness or an attack, others are clearly qualitative, speaking of life that is worthy of the name, or in our terms, spiritual life, found in fellowship with God: e.g. verses 37, 50, 93, 144, and probably others. It is a familiar Old Testament concept (cf. e.g. Pss 16:11; 36:9; Deut. 8:3).

18. **To feel the force of this request, cf. the sight that met the opened eyes of Balaam (Num. 22:31) or of Elisha’s servant (2 Kgs 6:17, using another word). The metaphor here and in the Balaam story is of removing a veil or covering (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14–18).**

23, 24. See section 3. d, above.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Spurgeon, C. H. (n.d.). *The treasury of David: Psalms 111-119* (Vol. 5, pp. 171–188). Marshall Brothers.

<sup>4</sup> Kidner, D. (1975). *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary* (Vol. 16, pp. 459–460). InterVarsity Press.

# The ESV Translation Committee Debates the Translation of “Slave”

BY  
JUSTIN TAYLOR  
NOVEMBER 7, 2011

When the ESV (English Standard Version) Translation Oversight Committee met in the summer of 2010 (at [Tyndale House](#) in Cambridge, England), the BBC stopped by to film a segment on the discussion of how best to translate the Hebrew word *‘ebed* and the Greek word *doulos*. It was a fascinating discussion of lexicography, biblical theology, ancient culture, and modern culture. The four-minute clip condenses hours of discussion based on hundreds of hours of research:

Speaking in the video are C. John Collins (Covenant Theological Seminary), Peter Williams (Tyndale House, Cambridge), Gordon Wenham (Trinity College, Bristol), Paul House (Beeson Divinity School), Wayne Grudem (Phoenix Seminary), and Lane Dennis (Crossway Books & Bibles).

The resolution to this discussion is reflected in [the latest preface to the ESV](#):

A particular difficulty is presented when words in biblical Hebrew and Greek refer to ancient practices and institutions that do not correspond directly to those in the modern world. Such is the case **in the translation of *‘ebed* (Hebrew) and *doulos* (Greek), terms which are often rendered “slave.” These terms, however, actually cover a range of relationships that require a range of renderings—either “slave,” “bondservant,” or “servant”—depending on the context.**

Further, the word “slave” currently carries associations with the often brutal and dehumanizing institution of slavery in nineteenth-century America. For this reason, the ESV translation of the words *‘ebed* and *doulos* has been undertaken with particular attention to their meaning in each specific context. Thus, in Old Testament times, one might enter slavery either voluntarily (e.g., to escape poverty or to pay off a debt) or involuntarily (e.g., by birth, by being captured in battle, or by judicial sentence). Protection for all in servitude in ancient Israel was provided by the Mosaic Law. In New Testament times, a *doulos* is often best described as a “bondservant”—that is, as someone bound to serve his master for a specific (usually lengthy) period of time, but also as someone who might

nevertheless own property, achieve social advancement, and even be released or purchase his freedom. The ESV usage thus seeks to express the nuance of meaning in each context. Where absolute ownership by a master is in view (as in Romans 6), “slave” is used; where a more limited form of servitude is in view, “bondservant” is used (as in 1 Corinthians 7:21-24); where the context indicates a wide range of freedom (as in John 4:51), “servant” is preferred. Footnotes are generally provided to identify the Hebrew or Greek and the range of meaning that these terms may carry in each case.

You can read more about the ESV 2011 text update in this [note](#) from Crossway President Dr. Lane T. Dennis:

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Thank you for your love for God’s Word and for your interest specifically in the ESV Bible.

As the publisher of the ESV, I want to let you know that a small number of word changes are being incorporated into the ESV Bible text, as we reprint and publish new editions of the ESV in 2011.

The extent of the word changes is comparatively small, involving about 275 verses and less than 500 words out of more than 750,000 words in the Bible text. To put this into perspective, the changes to the ESV are about one one-hundredth of the changes made recently in other leading Bible translations.

A few examples are changes from “yourself” to “you”; from “servant” to “worker”; from “has not” to “does not have”; from “young man” to “boy”; from “capital” to “citadel”; from “bondage” to “slavery”; from “nor” to “or”; from “trustworthy” to “faithful”; from “competent” to “sufficient”; from “everyone” to “each one.” [A complete list of changes](#), shown in the context of each verse, is provided [here](#). You can also [download a copy of the ESV preface](#), for further explanation of the ESV translation philosophy, principles, and legacy.

This list of 2011 changes was reviewed and discussed over the last five years by the thirteen-member ESV Translation Oversight Committee (TOC). The TOC then met in the Summer of 2010, and finalized the list in the Spring of 2011. The changes were then approved by the Crossway Board of Directors in April 2011. Editions of the ESV with the 2011 text changes include the following notice on the copyright page: “ESV Text Edition: 2011.”

Most changes to the ESV text were made to correct grammar, improve consistency, or increase precision in meaning. In making these changes, the Committee was deeply conscious of the enormous responsibility entrusted to it—to translate the very words of

God, with the greatest possible accuracy and precision, depth of meaning, and literary excellence.

I would be grateful for your prayers and support for the ministry that the Lord has entrusted to all of us at Crossway—that we may faithfully serve our Lord and his church, and that he alone may be glorified in all we do.

On behalf of the ESV Bible Translation Oversight Committee and the Crossway Board of Directors,

Lane T. Dennis, PhD

Crossway President and  
ESV Translation Oversight Committee Chair