

“Pray And Obey To The End”

Psalm 119:33

March 6, 2022

INTRO: **VIDEO:** *“The END – clip 1”*

- That’s Easter Sunday, 13 years ago: 2009
- That day marked the beginning of “The End”
- “The End” was a sermon series thru Revelation

T/S: Today, I hope to also connect current events...

CONTEXT:

- Current events
- Current series
- Current & eternal reality!

PRAYER

BIG IDEA: *The end is coming
sooner than you think!*

*Ignorance may be bliss... and sin may seem painless...
but that’s only going to last for a little bit longer.*

- JDP

PREVIEW: (say with repetition for emphasis :-)

1. PRAY
2. OBEY
3. REPEAT

T/S: 6 Hebrew words... teaching by touching the heart!

TEXT: Psalm 119:33

*Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
and I will keep it, to the end.*

(Pray – Obey – Repeat)

I. PRAY *Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes*

A. *Teach me,*

- i. Is that your humble prayer?
- ii. Do you WANT to be taught & changed?
- iii. This is the 3rd time “teach” used in Ps.119
- iv. Are you F.A.T.? (Faithful, Available, Teachable)
- v. Notable contrast: *“Teach ME” vs. Teach THEM*

B. *O LORD,*

- i. Don’t miss Who the Teacher will be!
- ii. See both the privilege & responsibility...
- iii. How blessed are we to BE taught by God?
- iv. How serious is disobedience to God?
- v. Go back to vv. 1-2... & *“Day of the LORD”*

C. *the way*

- i. Don't miss the exclusivity of "the way"
- ii. This is the 11th time "way" has been used
- iii. "Teach me JESUS!" (cf. John 14:6)
- iv. "*the way is NARROW & FEW find it*"
- v. Only 2 ways from Here: **HEAVEN** or **HELL**

D. *of Your statutes*

- i. First... note *OWNERSHIP* in "*Your*"
- ii. Next... remember **context** of Psalm 119
- iii. "*Statutes*" = **God's Word, will, & way(s)**
 1. Acknowledge **INSPIRATION**
 2. Accept **INERRENCY**
 3. Apply Accurate **INTERPRETATION**
- iv. Biblical, Christ-like principles & priorities:
 1. Pray, Obey, Repeat!
 2. Respond, Repent, Restore! (Repeat)
 3. God's glory, grace, and gospel!
 4. Go make D3 via H3 going L3...
 5. BE a great Church per the 5 Great C's
 6. Ekklesia in koinonia & homothoomadon
 7. Invite, Inform, Inspect, Inspire, Impact!

VIDEO: "*God's Global Gospel Perspective*"

II. **OBEY** *“and I will keep it”*

A. *“keep” = “observe, guard, OBEY”*

Are you preparing for “the end” by WANTING to keep & obey God’s Word, will, & ways?

(The end is closer than you think!)

B. Remember **John 3:3, 16, & 36!**

Don’t ever underestimate true Christian commitment & covenant keeping... neither Christ’s nor the individual Christian’s!

- JDP

C. **Pray... Obey... Repeat!!!**

***Embrace the grace**
to learn, love, & LIVE in-Christ!*

VIDEO: *“The End – clip 2”*

(The end is closer than you think!)

Don’t miss the exclusivity of The Gospel’s way...

III. REPEAT

“to the end.”

- A. This is a present & future tense commitment!
- B. To prepare *“to”* the end calls for *“about the end”*
- C. Daniel’s sermon: Zeph. 1:7-13 = current events
- D. Please check your heart... pray, obey, & repeat!

The end is closer than you think!”

VIDEO: *“The End – clip 3”*

- Please, please, please... see how serious this is!

(The end is closer than you think!”)

- Look around you...
- EVERYTHING’s screaming out biblical warnings!
- God could not be more clear &/or compassionate

REVIEW:

***Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
and I will keep it, to the end.***

1. Pray
2. Obey
3. Repeat

CLOSE:

Let us always be people who are preparing for “the end” by praying, obeying, and repeating... to the end!

- **Live a life worthy of The Gospel**
- **Live IN-Christ**
- **Live FOR-Christ**
- **Live missionally**
- **Live strategically**
- **Live fearlessly**
- **Live sacrificially**
- **Live joyfully**
- **Live INSPIRATIONALLY**

No more, no less, NO MATTER WHAT!

PRAYER

WORSHIP:

1. *I Wish We'd All Been Ready*
2. *Where Are The Christians*
3. *Where I Belong*

STUDY NOTES:

He

33 *Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;
and I will keep it to the end.*

34 *Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with
my whole heart.*

35 *Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.*

36 *Incline my heart to your testimonies,
and not to selfish gain!*

37 *Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;
and give me life in your ways.*

38 *Confirm to your servant your promise,
that you may be feared.*

39 *Turn away the reproach that I dread,
for your rules are good.*

40 *Behold, I long for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life!*



God's

Global

Gospel

Perspec^tive

Gospel

*In the beginning
God created
the heavens
and the earth*

Genesis 1:1



Perspec^tive



Gospel

*In the beginning
was the Word and the
Word was with God
and the Word
was God.* [John 1:1](#)

Perspec^tive



Gospel

*...have peace. In this
world you will have
trouble. But take heart,
I have overcome the
world.* [John 16:33](#)

Perspec^tive



Gospel

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war the way the world does.

2 Corinthians 10:3

Perspec^tive

Gospel

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

1 Timothy 6:7

Perspec^tive





Gospel

*Do not love the world
or anything in the
world. If anyone loves
the world, love for the
Father is not in them.*

1 John 2:15

Perspec^tive

Gospel

*...whoever wishes to
be a friend of the
world makes himself
an enemy of God.*

James 4:4



Perspec^tive



Gospel

*What good is it for
someone to gain the
whole world,
yet forfeit their soul?*

Mark 8:36

Perspec^tive

Gospel

*The world and its
desires pass away, but
whoever does the will
of God lives forever.*

1 John 2:17

Perspec^tive





Gospel

*Everyone born of God
overcomes the world.
This is the victory that
overcomes the world,
even our faith.*

1 John 5:4

Perspec^tive



Gospel

*Who is it that
overcomes the world?
Only the one who
believes that Jesus is
the Son of God.*

1 John 5:5

Perspec^tive



Gospel

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Perspec^tive



Gospel

Jesus said: I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

Perspec^tive



Gospel

...The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

1 John 3:1

Perspec^tive

Gospel

*Jesus said to them:
"Go into all the world
and proclaim The
Gospel!"*

Mark 16:15



Perspec^tive



Gospel

he who believes has life; he who does not obey does not have life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

John 3:36

Perspective



THIS World

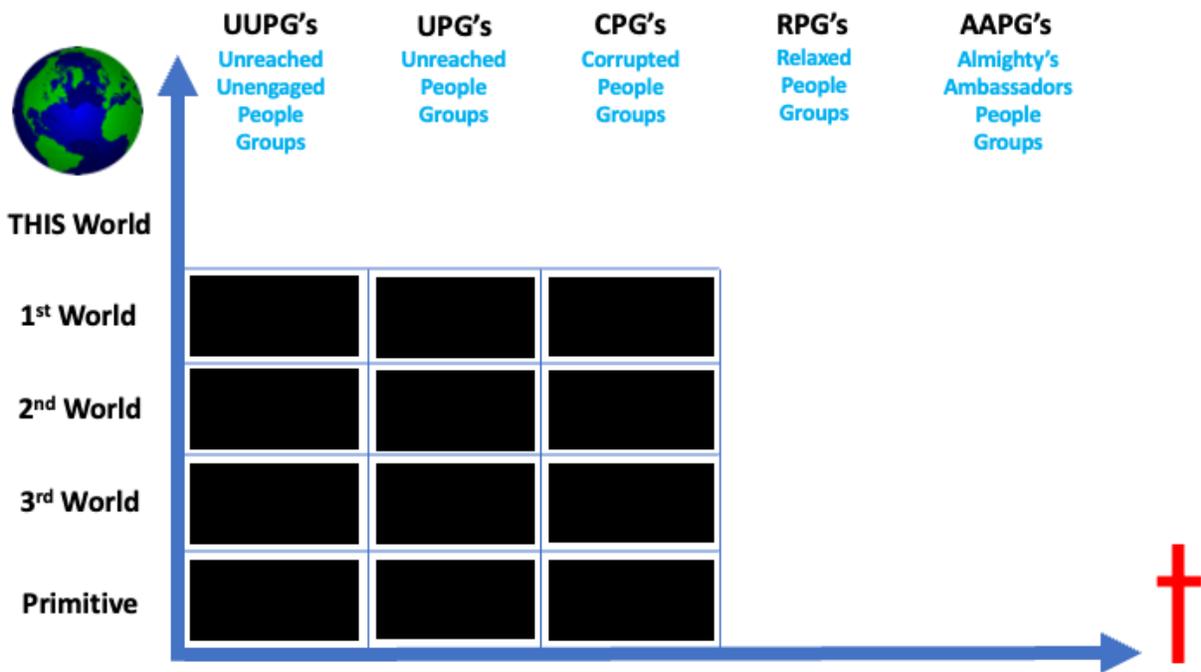
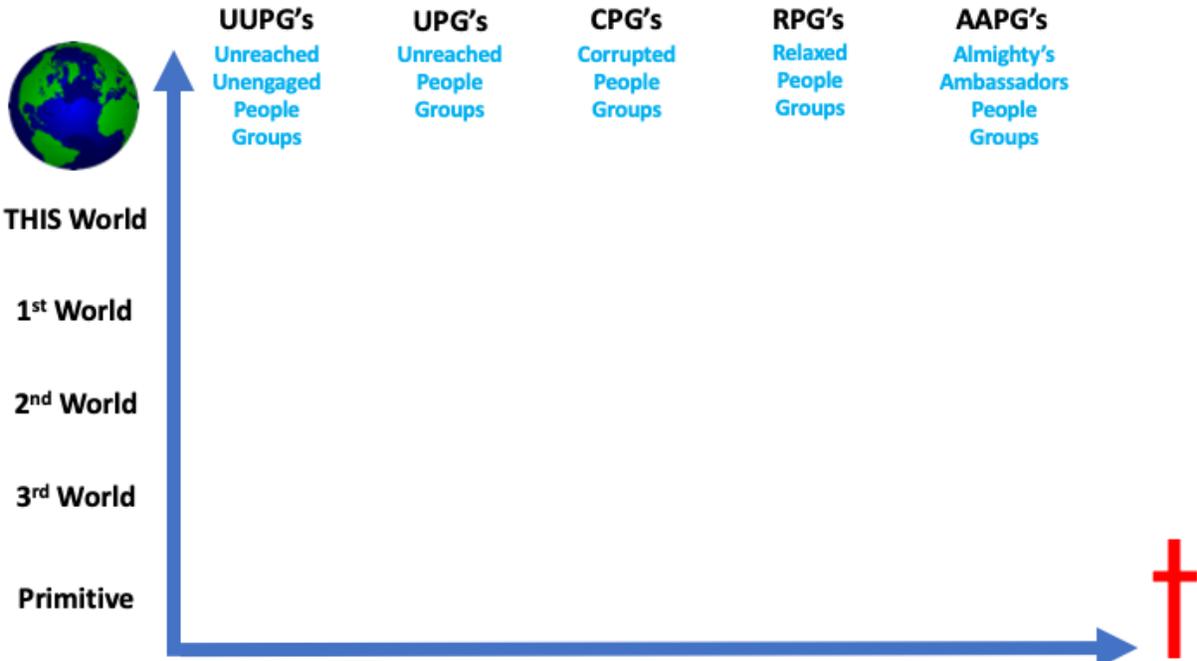
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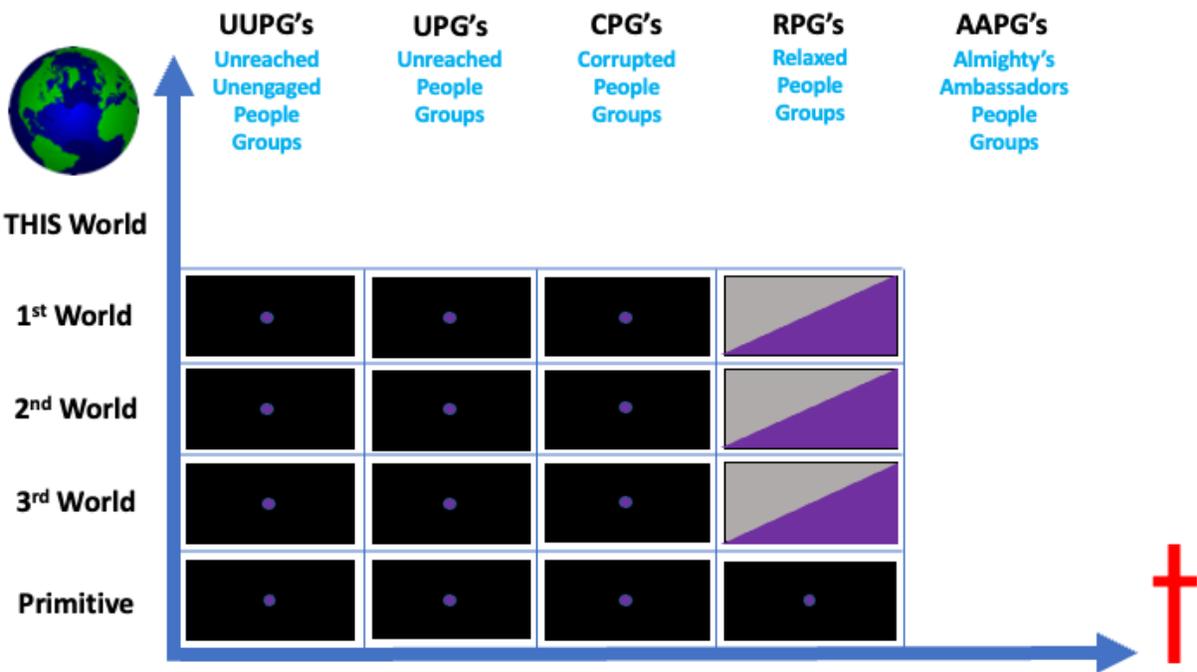
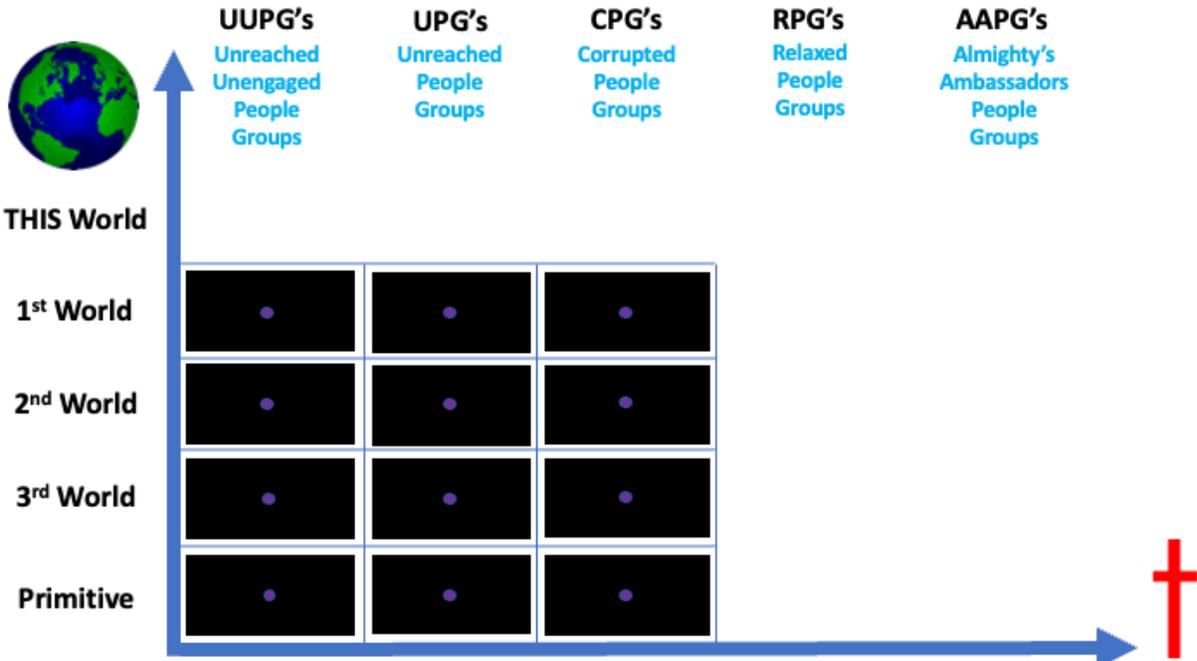
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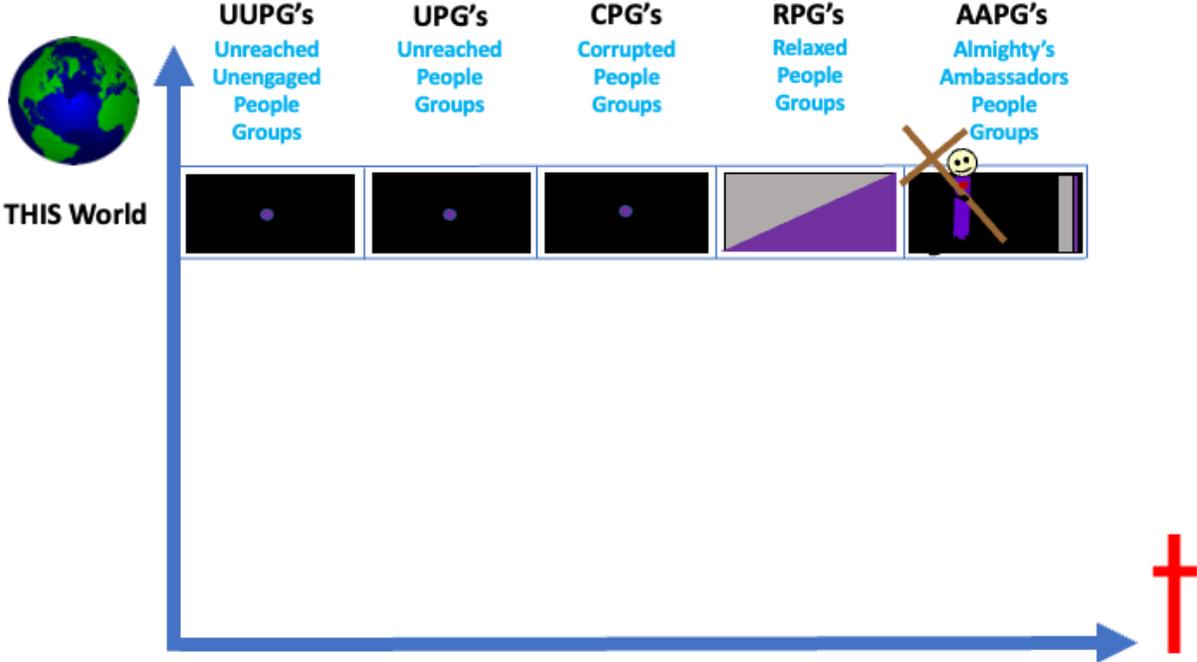
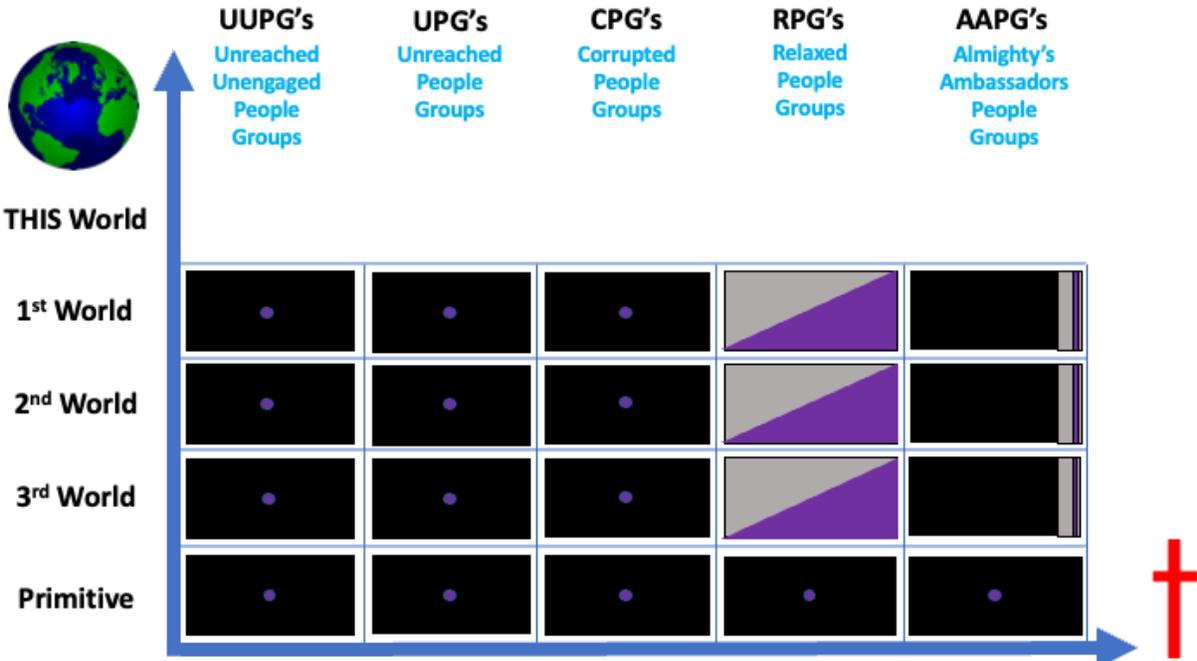
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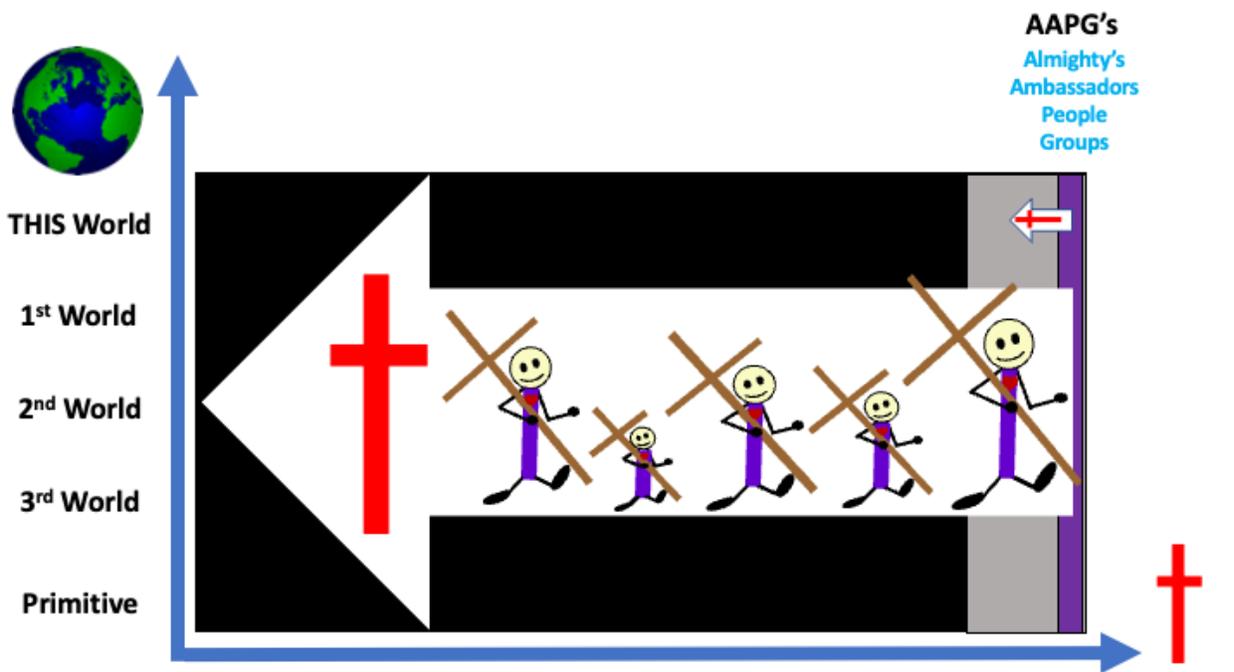
Primitive











Exposition of Verses 33–40

TEACH me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it *unto* the end.

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

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

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

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

³⁸ Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who *is devoted* to thy fear.

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

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

A sense of dependence and a consciousness of extreme need pervade this section, which is all made up of prayer and plea.

The former eight verses trembled with a sense of sin, quivering with a childlike sense of weakness and folly, which caused the man of God to cry out for the help by which alone his soul could be preserved from falling back into sin.

33. “Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes.”

Child-like, blessed words, from the lips of an old, experienced believer, and he a king, and a man inspired of God.

Alas, for those who will never be taught. They dote upon their own wisdom; but their folly is apparent to all who rightly judge.

The Psalmist will have the Lord for his teacher; for he feels that his heart will not learn of any less effectual instructor.

A sense of great slowness to learn drives us to seek a great teacher.

What condescension it is on our great Jehovah's part that he deigns to teach those who seek him. The lesson which is desired is thoroughly practical;

the holy man would not only learn the statutes, but the way of them, the daily use of them, their tenor, spirit, direction, habit, tendency. He would know that path of holiness which is hedged in by divine law, along which the commands of the Lord stand as sign-posts of direction and milestones of information, guiding and marking our progress.

The very desire to learn this way is in itself an assurance that we shall be taught therein, for he who made us long to learn will be sure to gratify the desire.

33 *“And I shall keep it unto the end.”*

***Those who are taught of God
never forget their lessons.***

When divine grace sets a man in the true way he will be true to it. Mere human wit and will have no such enduring influence: there is an end to all perfection of the flesh, but there is no end to heavenly grace...

except its own end, which is the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Perseverance to the end is most certainly to be predicted of those whose beginning is in God, and with God, and by God; but those who commence without the Lord’s teaching soon forget what they learn, and start aside from the way upon which they professed to have entered.

No one may boast that he will hold on his way in his own strength, for that must depend upon the

continual teaching of the Lord: we shall fall like Peter, if we presume on our own firmness as he did.

If God keeps us we shall keep his way;

and...

it is a great comfort to know that it is the way with God to keep the feet of his saints.

Yet we are to watch as if our keeping of the way depended wholly on ourselves; for, according to this verse, our perseverance rests not on any force or compulsion, but on the teaching of the Lord, and assuredly teaching, whoever be the teacher, requires learning on the part of the taught one:

no one can teach a man who refuses to learn.

Earnestly, then, let us drink in divine instruction, that so we may hold fast our integrity, and to life's latest hour follow on in the path of uprightness!

If we receive the living and incorruptible seed of the word of God we must live: apart from this we have no life eternal, but only a name to live.

33. "end" is the end of life, or the fulness of obedience.

He trusted in grace to make him faithful to the utmost, never drawing a line and saying to obedience, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further." The end of our keeping the law will come only when we cease to breathe; no good man will think of marking a date and saying, "It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men."

**As Christ loves us to the end,
so must we serve him to the end.**

**The end of divine teaching
is that we may persevere to the end.**

The portions of eight show a relationship still. GIMEL begins with prayer for life, that he may keep the word (17); DALETH cries for more life, according to that word (25); and now HE opens with a prayer for teaching, that he may keep the way of God's statutes. If a keen eye is turned upon these verses a closer affinity will be discerned.

34. *“Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.”*

This is the same prayer enlarged, or rather it is a supplement which intensifies it.

He not only needs teaching, but the power to learn: he requires not only to understand, but to obtain an understanding.

How low has sin brought us; for we even lack the faculty to understand spiritual things, and are quite unable to know them till we are endowed with spiritual discernment. Will God in very deed give us understanding? This is a miracle of grace.

It will, however, never be wrought upon us till we know our need of it; and we shall not even discover that need till God gives us a measure of understanding to perceive it.

We are in a state of complicated ruin, from which nothing but manifold grace can deliver us.

Those who feel their folly are by the example of the Psalmist encouraged to pray for understanding: let each man by faith cry, “Give *me* understanding.” Others have had it, why may it not come to *me*? It was a gift to them; will not the Lord also freely bestow it upon *me*?

We are not to seek this blessing that we may be famous for wisdom, but that we may be abundant in our love to the law of God.

He who has understanding will learn, remember, treasure up, and obey the commandment of the Lord.

The gospel gives us grace to keep the law; the free gift leads us to holy service; there is no way of reaching to holiness but by accepting the gift of God.

**If God gives, we keep;
but we never keep the law in order to obtaining grace.**

The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is a devout reverence for the law and a resolute keeping of it in the heart.

The spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of his love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty; and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith.

34 *“Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.”*

The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before his supreme will. An enlightened judgment heals the divisions of the heart, and bends the united affections to a strict and watchful observance of the one rule of life. He alone obeys God who can say, “My Lord, I would serve thee, and do it with all my heart”; and none can truly say this till they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost. To observe God’s law with all our heart at all times is a great grace, and few there be that find it; yet it is to be had if we will consent to be taught of the Lord.

Observe the parallel of verses 2 and 10 where the *whole* heart is spoken of in reference to seeking, and in 58 in pleading for mercy; these are all second verses in their octonaries. The frequent repetition of the phrase shows the importance of undivided love: the heart is never whole or holy till it is whole or united. The heart is never one with God till it is one within itself. 35. *“Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.”* “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Thou hast made me to love the way, now make me to move in it. It is a plain path, which others are treading through thy grace; I see it and admire it; cause me to travel in it. This is the cry of a child that longs to walk,

but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run. It is a blessed thing to delight in holiness, and surely he who gave us this delight will work in us the yet higher joy of possessing and practising it. Here is our only hope; for we shall not go in the narrow path till we are made to do so by the Maker's own power. O thou who didst once make me, I pray thee make me again: thou hast made me to know; now make me to go. Certainly I shall never be happy till I do, for my sole delight lies in walking according to thy bidding.

The Psalmist does not ask the Lord to do for him what he ought to do for himself: he wishes himself to "go" or tread in the path of the command. He asks not to be carried while he lies passive; but to be made "to go." Grace does not treat us as stocks and stones, to be dragged by horses or engines, but as creatures endowed with life, reason, will, and active powers, who are willing and able to go of themselves if once made to do so. God worketh in us, but it is that we may both will and do according to his good pleasure. The holiness we seek after is not a forced compliance with command, but the indulgence of a whole-hearted passion for goodness, such as shall conform our life to the will of the Lord. Can the reader say, "*therein do I delight*"? Is practical godliness the very jewel of your soul, the coveted prize of your mind? If so, the outward path of life, however rough will be clean, and lead the soul upward to delight ineffable. He who delights in the law should not doubt but what he will be enabled to run in its ways, for where the heart already finds its joy the feet are sure to follow.

Note that the corresponding verse in the former eight (35) was "Make me to understand," and here we have "Make me to go." Remark the order, first understanding and then going; for a clear understanding is a great assistance towards practical action.

During the last few octaves the fourth has been *the heart* verse: see 20, 28, and now 36. Indeed in all the preceding fourths great heartiness is observable. This also marks the care with which this sacred song was composed.

36. "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" Does not this prayer appear to be superfluous, since it is evident that the Psalmist's heart was set upon obedience? We are sure that there is never a word to spare in Scripture. After asking for active virtue it was meet that the man of God should beg that his heart might be in all that he did. What would his goings be if his heart did not go? It may be that David felt a wandering desire, an inordinate leaning of his soul to worldly gain,—possibly it even intruded into his most devout meditations, and at once he cried out for more grace. The only way to cure a wrong leaning is to have the soul bent in the opposite direction. Holiness of heart is the cure for covetousness. What a blessing it is that we may ask the Lord even for an inclination. Our wills are free, and yet without violating their liberty, grace can incline us in the right direction. This can be done by enlightening the understanding as to the excellence of obedience, by strengthening our habits of virtue, by giving us an experience of the sweetness of piety, and by many other ways. If any one duty is irksome to us it behoves us to offer this prayer with special reference thereto: we are to love all the Lord's testimonies, and if we fail in any one point we must pay double attention to it. The leaning of the heart is the way in which the life will lean: hence the force of the petition, "*Incline my heart.*" Happy shall we be when we feel habitually inclined to all that is good. This is not the way in which a carnal heart ever leans; all its inclinations are in opposition to the divine testimonies.

“And not to covetousness.” This is the inclination of nature, and grace must put a negative upon it. This vice is as injurious as it is common; it is as mean as it is miserable. It is idolatry, and so it dethrones God; it is selfishness, and so it is cruel to all in its power; it is sordid greed, and so it would sell the Lord himself for pieces of silver. It is a degrading, grovelling, hardening, deadening sin, which withers everything around it that is lovely and Christlike. He who is covetous is of the race of Judas, and will in all probability turn out to be himself a son of perdition. The crime of covetousness is common, but very few will confess it; for when a man heaps up gold in his heart the dust of it blows into his eyes, and he cannot see his own fault. Our hearts must have some object of desire, and the only way to keep out worldly gain is to put in its place the testimonies of the Lord. If we are inclined or bent one way, we shall be turned *from* the other; the negative virtue is most surely attained by making sure of the positive grace which inevitably produces it.

37. *“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.”* He had prayed about his heart, and one would have thought that the eyes would so surely have been influenced by the heart that there was no need to make them the objects of a special petition; but our author is resolved to make assurance doubly sure. If the eyes do not see, perhaps the heart may not desire; at any rate, one door of temptation is closed when we do not even look at the painted bauble. Sin first entered man’s mind by the eye, and it is still a favourite gate for the incoming of Satan’s allurements; hence the need of a double watch upon that portal. The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as *“turned away;”* for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects. Perhaps we are now gazing upon folly, we need to have our eyes turned away; and if we are beholding heavenly things we shall be wise to beg that our eyes may be kept away from vanity. Why should we look on vanity?—it melts away as a vapour. Why not look upon things eternal? Sin is vanity, unjust gain is vanity, self-conceit is vanity, and, indeed, all that is not of God comes under the same head. From all this we must turn away. It is a proof of the sense of weakness felt by the Psalmist and of his entire dependence upon God that he even asks to have his eyes turned for him; he meant not to make himself passive, but he intended to set forth his own utter helplessness apart from the grace of God. For fear he should forget himself and gaze with a lingering longing upon forbidden objects, he entreats the Lord speedily to make him turn away his eyes, hurrying him off from so dangerous a parley with iniquity. If we are kept from looking on vanity we shall be preserved from loving iniquity.

“And quicken thou me in thy way.” Give me so much life that dead vanity may have no power over me. Enable me to travel so swiftly in the road to heaven that I may not stop long enough within sight of vanity to be fascinated thereby. The prayer indicates our greatest need—more life in our obedience. It shows the preserving power of increased life to keep us from the evils which are around us, and it, also, tells us where that increased life must come from, namely, from the Lord alone. Vitality is the cure of vanity. When the heart is full of grace the eyes will be cleansed from impurity. On the other hand, if we would be full of life as to the things of God we must keep ourselves apart from sin and folly, or the eyes will soon captivate the mind, and, like Samson, who could slay his thousands, we may ourselves be overcome through the lusts which enter by the eye.

This verse is parallel to verses 21 and 29 in the previous eights: “rebuke,” “remove,” “turn away;” or “proud,” “lying,” “vanity.”

38. *“Stablish thy word unto thy servant.”* Make me sure of thy sure word; make it sure to me and make me sure of it. If we possess the spirit of service, and yet are troubled with sceptical thoughts we cannot do better than pray to be established in the truth. Times will arise when every doctrine and promise seems to be shaken, and our mind gets no rest: then we must appeal to God for establishment in the faith, for he would have all his servants to be well instructed and confirmed in his word. But we must mind that we are the Lord’s servants, for else we shall not long be sound in his truth. Practical holiness is a great help towards doctrinal certainty: if we are God’s servants he will confirm his word in our experience. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine;” and so know it as to be fully assured of it. Atheism in the heart is a horrible plague to a God-fearing man, it brings more torment with it than can well be described and nothing but a visitation of grace can settle the soul after it has been violently assailed thereby. Vanity or falsehood is bad for the eyes, but it is even worse when it defiles the understanding and casts a doubt upon the word of the living God.

“Who is devoted to thy fear,” or simply—*“to thy fear.”* That is, make good thy word to godly fear wherever it exists; strengthen the whole body of reverent men. Stablish thy word, not only to me, but to all the godly ones under the sun. Or, again, it may mean—*“Stablish thy word to thy fear,”* namely, that men may be led to fear thee; since a sure faith in the divine promise is the fountain and foundation of godly fear. Men will never worship a God in whom they do not believe. More faith will lead to more godly fear. We cannot look for the fulfilment of promises in our experience unless we live under the influence of the fear of the Lord: establishment in grace is the result of holy watchfulness and prayerful energy. We shall never be rooted and grounded in our belief unless we daily practise what we profess to believe. Full assurance is the reward of obedience. Answers to prayer are given to those whose hearts answer to the Lord’s command. If we are devoted to God’s fear we shall be delivered from all other fear. He has no fear as to the truth of the word who is filled with fear of the Author of the word. Scepticism is both the parent and the child of impiety; but strong faith both begets piety and is begotten of it. We commend this whole verse to any devout man whose tendency is to scepticism: it will be an admirable prayer for use in seasons of unusually strong misgivings.

39. *“Turn away my reproach which I fear.”* He feared just reproach, trembling lest he should cause the enemy to blaspheme through any glaring inconsistency. We ought to fear this, and watch that we may avoid it. Persecution in the form of calumny may also be prayed against, for it is a sore trial, perhaps the sorest of trials to men of sensitive minds. Many would sooner bear burning at the stake than the trial of cruel mockings. David was quick tempered, and he probably had all the greater dread of slander because it raised his anger, and he could hardly tell what he might not do under great provocation. If God turns away our eyes from falsehood, we may also expect that he will turn away falsehood from injuring our good name. We shall be kept from lies if we keep from lies.

“For thy judgments are good.” Therefore he is anxious that none may speak evil of the ways of God through hearing an ill report about himself. We mourn when we are slandered; because the shame is cast rather upon our religion than ourselves. If men would be content to attribute evil to us, and go no further, we might bear it, for we are evil; but our sorrow is that they cast a slur upon the word and character of God, who is so good, that there is none good in comparison with him. When men rail at God’s government of the world it is our duty and privilege to stand up for him, and openly to declare before him, *“thy judgments are good;”* and

we should do the same when they assail the Bible, the gospel, the law, or the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we must take heed that they can bring no truthful accusation against us, or our testimony will be so much wasted breath.

This prayer against reproach is parallel to verse 31, and in general to many other of the seventh verses in the octaves, which usually imply opposition from without and a sacred satisfaction within. Observe the things which are good: “*thy judgments are good;*” “*thou art good and doest good*” (68); “*good for me to have been afflicted*” (71); “*teach me good judgment*” (66).

40. “*Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.*” He can at least claim sincerity. He is deeply bowed down by a sense of his weakness and need of grace; but he does desire to be in all things conformed to the divine will. Where our longings are, there are we in the sight of God. If we have not attained perfection, it is something to have hungered after it. He who has given us to desire, will also grant us to obtain. The precepts are grievous to the ungodly, and therefore when we are so changed as to long for them we have clear evidence of conversion, and we may safely conclude that he who has begun the good work will carry it on. “*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*” Give me more life wherewith to follow thy righteous law; or give me more life because thou hast promised to hear prayer, and it is according to thy righteousness to keep thy word. How often does David plead for quickening! But never once too often. We need quickening every hour of the day for we are so sadly apt to become slow and languid in the ways of God. It is the Holy Spirit who can pour new life into us; let us not cease crying to him. Let the life we already possess show itself by longing for more.

The last verses of the octaves have generally exhibited an onward look of resolve, hope, and prayer. Here past fruits of grace are made the plea for further blessing. Onward in the heavenly life is the cry of this verse.

Special Notes on Verses 33–40

Upon this Octonary the Notes furnished by Mr. Marchant, one of the Tutors of the Pastors’ College, are so excellent that we give them entire.

SECTION ה, HE.

SUBJECT: THE LAW OF JEHOVAH TO BE SET BEFORE THE EYES, THE MIND, THE FEET, AND THE HEART.

Key phrase: אֶמְרֶתְךָ לְעֵבְדֶךָ אֶקֶם. “*Set up before thy servant thy word*” (ver. 38).

Verse 33.—THE WORD SET UP BEFORE THE EYES. “*Teach me;*” literally, “point out,” “indicate to me.” יָרָה, as used here, means “*to send out the hand,*” especially in the sense of pointing out.

Hence “to show,” “to indicate,” “to teach.”

The Psalmist here prays for direction in its more superficial form. Many paths were before his eyes, leading down to death: one path was before him, leading unto life. He here asks to be shown which is Jehovah’s way.

If the Lord will ever show his eyes which way is the right way, then he will keep it unto the end.

Here is light wanted for the eyes.

As the Indian pursues his trail with unerring eye and unfaltering step, so, watching for every deviation which might take us astray, we should pursue the way which leadeth unto life.

Verse 34.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE MIND. “Give me understanding.” The word used here refers to mental comprehension, as distinguished from the mere direction, or pointing out, asked for in the previous verse. Here the prayer is, “Make me to discern,” “Cause me to perceive,” i.e., with the understanding. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The outer senses must first see the way, then the mind must understand it, then, with faith and love, the heart should follow it. Thus, too, the Psalmist, if God will cause him to understand the law, will keep it with all his heart, Still, the heart is prone to lean to things earthly and sinful, and divine help has presently to be invoked for that also.

Verse 35.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE FEET. The word הִדְרִיכֵנִי is from דָּרַךְ “to tread with the feet,” “to trample.” Hence, “Make me to go,” alludes here to the very act of walking in the divine way,

in distinction from mere perception of the way with the eyes and with the understanding. It is in this matter of practical walking that the actual difficulties of the way seem to come more forcibly into sight; hence we no longer have דָּרַב used (as in verse 33) which may mean a broad open way, but דָּרַבִּיב , which (says Gesenius) “never denotes a public and royal road, such as was raised up and formed by art, but always a footpath.” So the younger Buxtorf renders the word by *Semita*. When the feet really come to tread it, the way of truth is ever found to be “the narrow way.”

Verse 36.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE HEART. “*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*” It is nothing for the eyes to see, for the mind to understand, nor even for the feet to be made to go in the way of truth, if the heart be not inclined thereunto also. It is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness. To be without love is, according to 1 Cor. 13, to be without everything. Thus the sense of these four methodical petitions in this section is as follows: Make me to see, make me to understand, make me to go in, and make me to love to go in, the beaten and narrow path of thy testimonies. So far as I gather, Luther gives almost the exact sense of the foregoing exposition; for he translates the opening words of verses 33, 34, 35, and 36 by terms signifying respectively, “Point out to me,” “Explain to me,” “Lead me,” and “Incline (bend, slope) my heart,” etc.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes,*” etc. Literally, “*Make mine eyes to pass from seeing vanity;*” as though he would pray, Whatever is of vanity, make me to pass without seeing it. The sentiment is strikingly like that in our Lord’s prayer: “Lead us not into temptation.” Having prayed for what he wanted to see, the Psalmist here prays for the hiding of what he would not see.

Verse 38.—“*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*” In view of the exposition of the previous verses of the section this would be more correctly rendered, “*Hold up thy word before thy servant;*” *i.e.*, hold it up to my eyes, to my mind, to my steps, and to my heart. Make all that is vain to pass, so that I see it not; but let thy word be so set up before my whole being that I shall always see it, and thus, by it, see my way to thee.

Verse 39.—“*Turn away my reproach which I fear.*” “*Cause to pass my reproach which I feared.*” This also, like the vanity spoken of in verse 37, the Psalmist prays that he may not see. He would have the gaze of his whole manhood bent only on the word. The reproach which he feared is that to which he had already referred in verses 21, 22, and perhaps again in verse 31. The proud had erred from the commandments, and had inherited rebuke; it was the reproach and shame which were theirs that the Psalmist would have to be turned aside, so that they should not be seen. “*For thy judgments are good.*” This is given as a reason why the reproach should be thus turned aside. The proud had thought lightly and contemptuously on the divine judgments, hence their reproach; the Psalmist held those judgments to be good, and thus hoped that he might not see reproach.

Verse 40.—“*Behold, I have longed after,*” etc. This is given as an intenser form of the statement which he had just made, that he esteemed the judgments to be good. They were so good that he longed after them. Not only so, but he desired to long after them even more. Thus he prays for even more life and vigour in pursuing the path which they pointed out—“*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*” He who really longs after divine truth, mourns that he does not long more. When the heart has no love, the mind has no light, and can only judge the precepts

erroneously. “The pure in heart” see better with the mind than can the impure. “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.” Love so enlarges discernment that he who really loves often finds that his judgment of the blessedness of truth has outstripped even his longing for it. Hence it is the quick who cry, “*Quicken me;*” it is those who have living desires who pray for yet more life in the way of righteousness.

Notes on Verses 33–40

Verses 33–40.—In this Octonarius, **now and again, the same prayer is repeated, of which several times mention has before been made.** For he prays that he may be divinely taught, governed, strengthened, and defended against the calumnies, reproaches, and threatenings of his enemies.

And...

the prayer is full of the most ardent longings, which is manifest from the same resolve being so frequently repeated.

For the more he knows the ignorance, obscurity, doubts, and the imbecility of the human mind, and sees how men are impelled by a slight momentum, so that they fall away from the truth and embrace errors repugnant to the divine word, or fall into great sins, the more

ardently and strongly does he ask in prayer that he may be divinely taught, governed, and strengthened, lest he should cast away acknowledged truth, or plunge himself into wickedness. And by his example he teaches that we, also, against blindness born with us, and the imbecility of our flesh, and also against he snares and madnesses of devils should fortify ourselves with those weapons; namely, with the right study and knowledge of the divine Word, and with constant prayer. For if so great a man, who had made such pre-eminent attainments, prayed for this, how much more ought they to do so, who are but novices and ignorant beginners. This is the sum of this Octonarius. –D. H. Mollerus.

Verses 33–40.—

In this part, nine times does the Psalmist send up his petition to his God, and six of these he accompanies with a reason for being heard....

These petitions are the utterances of a renewed heart; the man of God could not but give utterance to them—such was the new refining process that had taken place upon him....

The outline runs thus:

1. Petitions are offered for Instruction (33) and
2. Understanding (34), and likewise for
3. Spiritual Ability (35) and
4. Inclination (36). These are followed by petitions for
5. Exemption from the Spirit of Vanity (37), and for
6. Divine Quickening (37). The Lord is besought to
7. make good his Word of Promise to his servant (38), and to
8. deliver him from Feared Reproach.
9. Last of all, the man of God places his prayer for quickening upon the ground of the Divine Righteousness (40).

May the Divine Spirit teach us to compare ourselves with what we find here, as we would see the salvation of our God!— *John Stephen.*

Verses 33–40.—I observe that in this one octonary which is not to be found in any of the rest, namely, that in every several verse there is a several prayer. In the first whereof he prayeth to be taught, and then promiseth to take in that which God shall teach him. He had before resolved to run in this way; but he felt forthwith his own natural aberrations, and therefore he cometh to this guide to be taught.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 33

Verse 33.—*“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes,”* etc.

Instruction from above is necessary for the children of God, while they continue in this world. The more we know, the more we shall desire to know; we shall beg a daily supply of grace, as well as of bread; and a taste of “the cluster of Eshcol” will make us long after the vintage of Canaan (Numb. 13:23).

Religion is the art of holy living, and then only known when it is practised; as **he is not a master of music who can read the notes which compose it, but he who has learnt to take a lesson readily from the book, and play it on his instrument; after which the pleasure it affords will be sufficient motive for continuing so to do.**— *George Horne.*

Verse 33.—“*Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes,*” etc.

In the sincerity of your hearts go to God for his teaching. God is pleased with the request. “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? **And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing**” (1 Kings 3:9, 10).

Oh, beg it of God, for these three reasons—

- 1. The way of God’s statutes is worthy to be found by all.*
- 2. It is hard to be found and kept by any.*
- 3. It is so dangerous to miss it,*

...that this should quicken us to be earnest with God. —*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 33.—“Teach me, O LORD,” etc.

“He who is his own pupil has a fool for his master.” - S. Bernard

A soldier who enters on a march does not settle for himself the order of his going, nor begin the journey at his own will, nor yet choose pleasant short-cuts, lest he should fall out of rank, away from the standards, but gets the route from his general, and keeps to it; advances in a prescribed order, walks armed, and goes straight on to the end of his march, to find there the supplies provided by the commissariat. If he goes by any other road, he gets no rations, and finds no quarters ready, because the general's orders are that all things of this kind shall be prepared for those who follow him, and turn not aside to the right hand or the left. And thus he who follows his general does not break down, and that for good reasons; for the general consults not for his own convenience, but for the capability of his whole army. And this, too, is Christ's order of march, as he leads his great host out of the spiritual Egypt to the eternal Land of Paradise.—*Ambrose, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 33.—“Teach me, O LORD, the way,” etc.

It should never be forgotten, as this fifth section teaches us, that there is a way marked out by God's own appointment for all his people to walk in, and in which to persevere.

Others lay down a path each for himself, and keeping to it think they are safe.

David did not trust to anything of this kind; he was only desirous of being found in the way of God's ordinance, and to be so taught of God as to keep it to the end; or as the original reads, keep it the end, the end of his profession, the salvation of his soul.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 33.—“*Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it,*” etc.
If thou continue a teacher of me, saith David, I shall continue a servant to thee.

Perseverance cannot be, unless continual light and grace be furnished to us from the Lord. As the tree which hath not sap at the root may flourish for a while, but cannot continue; a man, whose heart is not watered with the dew of God's grace continually, may for a time make a fair show of godliness, but in the end he will fall away.

We bear not the root, but the root bears us: let us tremble and fear.

If we abide not in our Lord, we become withered branches, good for nothing but the fire.

Let us always pray that he would ever abide with us, to inform us by his light, and lead us by his power, in that way which may bring us to himself.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 33.—“*Statutes*,” from a word signifying to *mark, trace out, describe* and *ordain*; because they *mark out* our way, *describe* the line of conduct we are to pursue, and *order* or *ordain* what we are to observe.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 33.—God’s “*statutes*” declare his authority and power of giving us laws.—*Matthew Pool*, 1624–1679.

Verse 33.—“*Unto the end*,” or, *by way of return, or reward, or gratitude* to thee; God’s mercy in *teaching* being in all reason to be *rewarded* or answered by our *observing* and taking exact care of what he teaches. Or else by analogy with Psalm 19:11, where the *keeping* his *commandments* brings *great reward* with it: it may here be rendered עֲקֵב (understanding the preposition לְ) *for the reward*, meaning the present joy of it, verse 32, not excluding the future crown.—*H. Hammond*.

Verse 33.—“*Unto the end*.”

Quite through; the Hebrew is, to the heel. The force of the words seems to be “Quite through, from head to foot.”

—*Zachary Mudge, 1744*.

Verses 33, 34.—“*Unto the end*.” He will be no *temporizer*; he will keep it “*to the end*.”

**He will be no hypocrite; he will keep it
“with his whole heart.”**

—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 34.—“*Give me understanding*.” The Psalmist goes to the root of the matter; he is taught to do so by the Spirit of all teaching. He would not merely be taught, as a master would teach, but he would have his mind remoulded and informed as only the Creator could do. The words imply as much. “*Give me understanding*”—make me to understand. Not merely did he want to know a thing—the general nature of it; but he wished to understand the beginning, the outgoing and the end of it. He wanted to attain the power of distinction between right and wrong—spiritual discernment that so he might discern the right, and, at the same time, all that was contrary to it; he wanted understanding, that so he might know, and discern, and prize the truth, the true way of God, carefully avoiding all that would be aside from it.—*John Stephen*.

Verse 34.—“Give me understanding.” This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for “the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding (1 John 5:20).—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 34.—“Understanding.” The understanding is the pilot and guide of the whole man; that faculty which sits at the stern of the soul: but as the most expert guide may mistake in the dark, so may the understanding, when it wants the light of knowledge. “Without knowledge the mind cannot be good” (Prov. 19:2); nor the life good; nor the external condition safe (Eph. 4:18). “My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

It is ordinary in Scripture to set profaneness, and all kinds of miscarriages, upon the score of ignorance. Diseases in the body have many times their rise from distempers in the *head*; and exorbitances in practice, from errors in the judgment. And, indeed, in every sin, there is something both of ignorance and error at the bottom: for did sinners truly know what they do in sinning, we might say of every sin what the Apostle speaks concerning that great sin, “Had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). Did they truly know that every sin is a provoking the Lord to jealousy, a proclaiming war against heaven, a crucifying the Lord Jesus afresh, a treasuring up wrath afresh unto themselves against the day of wrath; and that if ever they be pardoned, it must be at no lower a rate than the price of his blood—*it were scarce possible* but sin, instead of alluring, should affright, and instead of tempting, scare.—*From the “Recommendatory Epistle prefixed to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.”*

Verse 34.—“My whole heart.” The whole man is God’s by every kind of right and title; and therefore, when he requireth the whole heart, he doth but require that which is his own. God gave us the whole by creation, preserveth the whole, redeemeth the whole, and promiseth to glorify the whole. If we had been mangled in creation we would have been troubled; if born without hands or feet. If God should turn us off to ourselves to keep that part to ourselves which we reserved from him, or if he should make such a division at death, take a part to heaven, or if Christ had bought part: “Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Cor. 6:20). If you have had any good work upon you, God sanctified the whole in a gospel-sense, that is every part: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:23). Not only conscience, but will and affections, appetite and body. And you have given all to him for his use: “I am my beloved’s!” not a part, but the whole. He could not endure Ananias that kept back part of the price; all is his due. When the world, pleasure, ambition, pride, desire of riches, unchaste love, desire a part in us, we may remember we have no affections to dispose of without God’s leave. It is all his, and it is sacrilege to rob or detain any part from God. Shall I alienate that which is God’s to satisfy the world, the flesh, and the Devil?—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 34, 35.—“Give me understanding.” “Make me to go.” The understanding which he seeks leads to going, and is sought to that end. God’s teaching begets obedience; he showeth us the path of life, and he maketh us to go in it. It is such instruction as giveth strength, that exciteth the sluggish will, and breaketh the force of corrupt inclinations; it removeth the darkness which corruption and sin have brought upon the mind, and maketh us pliable and ready to obey; yea, it giveth not only the will, but the deed; in short, it engageth us in a watchful, careful, uniform, and constant obedience.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 35.—“*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments.*” David, in the former verses, had begged for light, now for strength to walk according to this light. We need not only light to know our way, but a heart to walk in it. Direction is necessary because of the blindness of our minds; and the effectual impulsions of grace are necessary because of the weakness of our hearts. It will not answer our duty to have a naked notion of truths, unless we embrace and pursue them. So, accordingly, we need a double assistance from God; the mind must be enlightened, the will moved and inclined. The work of a Christian lies not in depth of speculation, but in the height of practice. The excellency of Divine grace consisteth in this,—That God doth first teach what is to be done, and then make us to do what is taught: “*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments.*”—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 35.—“*The path of thy commandments.*” They are termed “*the paths,*” because paths are narrow, short, straight, clean passages for people on foot only, and not for horses and carriages; and such is the way of the Lord, as compared with that of the flesh and of the world, all the ways of which are broad, filthy, and crooked, trodden by the brute beasts, the type of carnal, animal man. He assigns a reason for being heard when he says, “*For this same I have desired*”; because, through God’s grace, I have chosen this path, and desired to walk in it, and it is only meet that he who gives the will should give the grace to accomplish, as St. Paul says, “*Who worketh in you both to will and to do.*”—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 35.—“*The path*” is “*the path of thy commandments.*” Not any new way, but the old and pathed way wherein all the servants of God have walked before him, and for which the Grecians (as Euthymius noteth) called it τριβον, *quasi viam tritam*. But howsoever this way be pathed, by the walking and treading of many in it, yet he acknowledgeth it is but one, yea, and a narrow and difficult path to keep, and therefore seeks he to be guided into it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 35.—“*The path.*” It is a “*path,*” not a public road; a path where no *beast* goes, and *men* seldom.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 35, 37.—“*The path.*” “*Thy way.*” The Hindus call *panth* or *way* the line of doctrine of any sect followed, in order to attain to *mukti*, or deliverance from sin. *Way* signifies the chief means to an end, and is applied to the Scriptures, Ps. 119:27, to God’s counsels, to God’s works. This spiritual way is—(1) *easy* to find, Isa. 35:8; (2) *clean*, no mud of sin; (3) never out of *repair*—Christ the same as 6,000 years ago; (4) no *lion* or wild beasts on; (5) *costly*, the blood of Christ made it; (6) not *lonely*, many believers on it, Heb. 12:1; (7) no *toll*, all may come; (8) *wide*. The way to the cities of refuge was forty-eight feet wide. The map of the Bible shows this path; (9) the *end* pleasant—Heaven.—*J. Long, in “Eastern Proverbs and Maxims illustrating old Truths,” 1881.*

Verses 35, 36.—“*Therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*” A child of God hath not the bent of his heart so perfectly fixed towards God but it is ever and anon returning to its old bent and bias again. The best may find that they cannot keep their affections as loose from the world when they have houses, and lands, and all things at their will, as they could when they are kept low and bare. The best may find that their love to heavenly things is on the wane as worldly things are on the increase. It is reported of Pius Quintus that he should say of himself that, when he first entered into orders, he had some hopes of his salvation; when he came to be a cardinal, he doubted of it; but since he came to be pope, he did even almost despair. Many may find a very great change in themselves, much decay of zeal for God’s glory, and love to and

relish of God's word, and mindfulness of heavenly things, as it fares better with them in the world. Now it is good to observe this before the mischief increaseth. Look, as jealousy and caution are necessary to prevent the entrance and beginning of this mischief, so observation is necessary to prevent the increase of it. When the world doth get too deep an interest in our hearts, when it begins to insinuate and entice us from God, and weaken our delight in the ways of God and zeal for his glory, then we need often to tell you how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 36.—“*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*” We must be convinced that covetousness, I mean that our covetousness, is a vice; for it holds something of a virtue, of frugality, which is not to waste that which one hath: and this makes us entertain thoughts that it is no vice; and we often say that it is good to be a little worldly; a little covetousness we like well; which shows that we do not indeed and in heart, hold it to be a sin. For if sin be naught, a little of sin cannot be good. As good say, a little poison were good, so it be not too much. And so we find, that men will rate at their children for spending, and are ready to turn them out of doors, if they be given unto waste; but if they be near and pinching then we like that too much; and I scarce know a man who doth use to call upon his children that they spare not, save not. I know youth is rather addicted the other way, and is more subject to waste and consume, by reason that the natural heat is quick and active in them; and therefore indeed there is more fear and danger that they prove prodigal and turn wasters, and therefore the more may be said and done that way to youth. But the thing I press is, that in case we see our children in their youth to begin to be covetous and worldly, we call them good husbands, and are but too glad to see it so, and are too much pleased with them for it. Little do they think that worldliness is a most guiltful sin in respect of God, and most hurtful in respect of men. Hark what the word of God saith of it, Ephesians 5:5: *It is idolatry*, and idolatry is the first sin of the first table. *It is the root of all evils*, 1 Tim. 6:10. There is no evil but a worldly man will do it to save his purse. Thus David: “*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness*”: he saith not, this or that testimony, but (as including all the laws of God) he saith “*testimonies*”; to show us that covetousness draws us away, not from some only, but from all God's commandments. So St. Paul: where covetousness is, there are “*many lusts*,” 1 Tim. 6:9, and “*many sorrows*,” 1 Tim. 6:10. “*It drowns men in perdition and destruction*,” 1 Tim. 6:9. And the Greek word signifies such a drowning as is almost past all hope and recovery. It is the bane of all society: men cry out of it, because they would have none covetous, none rich but themselves. A hater he is of mankind; he hates all poor, because they would beg something of him; and all rich, because they have riches which he would have. A covetous man would have all that all have. Thus speaks a noble father.* Such believe not the word, they trust neither God nor man. For he that trusts not God, cannot trust man. It robs God of that confidence we should have in him, and dependence we owe unto him; it turns a man from all the commandments. Hence the prophet David prays God to turn his heart to his commandments, “*and not to covetousness.*” For not only we *ought* not, but as the phrase is, “*we cannot serve God and mammon*,” Luke 16:13.—*Richard Capel, in “Tentations: their Nature, Danger, Cure.” 1655.*

Verse 36.—“*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*” Without a restraining hand the heart is prone to turn aside into the byeways of petty love of pelf. The remedy must be from above. Heavenly aid is therefore sought.—*Henry Law*.

Verse 36.—“*Incline my heart.*” Were we naturally and spontaneously inclined to the righteousness of the law, there would be no occasion for the petition of the Psalmist, “*Incline my heart.*” It remains, therefore, that our hearts are full of sinful thoughts, and wholly rebellious until God by his grace change them.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 36.—“*Incline my heart.*” In the former verses David had asked understanding and direction to know the Lord’s will; now he asketh an inclination of heart to do the Lord’s will. The understanding needs not only to be enlightened, but the will to be moved and changed. Man’s heart is of its own accord averse from God and holiness, even then when the wit is most refined, and the understanding is stocked and stored with high notions about it: therefore David doth not only say, “Give me understanding,” but, “*Incline my heart.*” We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be holy and heavenly of ourselves; that must be asked of him who is the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. They that plead for the power of nature, shut out the use of prayer. But Austin hath said well, *Natura vera confessione non falsa defensione opus habet*: we need rather to confess our weakness, than defend our strength. Thus doth David, and so will every broken-hearted Christian that hath had an experience of the inclinations of his own soul, he will come to God, and say, “*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*”—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 36.—“*Incline.*” Then shall I not decline.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 36.—“*Unto thy testimonies.*” The contrast is most striking. There are the *divine testimonies* on the one hand, and there is “*covetousness*” on the other. God stands on one side, the world on the other. The renewed man chooses between the two; he does not require long to think, and God is his choice.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 36.—“*Not to covetousness.*” He prays in particular that his heart may be diverted from covetousness, which is not only an evil, but as saith the Apostle, “the root of all evil.” David here opposes it as an adversary to all the righteousness of God’s testimonies: it inverts the order of nature, and makes the heavenly soul earthly. It is a handmaid of all sins; for there is no sin which a covetous man will not serve for his gain. We should beware of all sins, but specially of mother-sins.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 36.—“*Covetousness,*” or rather, “gain unjustly acquired.” ... The Hebrew word *רָצַע* can only mean *plunder, rapine, unjust gain.*—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 36.—“*Covetousness.*”—S. Bonaventura, on our Psalm, says *Covetousness* must be hated, shunned, put away: must be hated, because it attacks the life of nature: must be shunned, because it hinders the life of grace: must be put away, because it obstructs the life of glory. Clemens Alexandrinus says that covetousness is the citadel of the vices, and Ambrose says that it is the loss of the soul.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 36.—“*Covetousness.*” I would observe to the reader, and desire him duly and seriously to consider, that although this commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” is placed the last in number, yet it is too often the first that is broken, man’s covetous heart leading the van in transgression.—*William Crouch, in “The Enormous Sin of Covetousness detected,”* 1708.

Verse 36.—“*Covetousness*” is an immoderate desire of riches, in which these vices concur. *First,* An excessive love of riches, and the fixing of our hearts upon them. *Secondly,* A resolution to become rich, either by lawful or unlawful means, 1 Tim. 6:9. *Thirdly,* Too much haste in gathering riches, joined with impatience of any delay, Prov. 28:20, 22, and 20:21. *Fourthly,* An

insatiable appetite, which can never be satisfied; but when they have too much, they still desire more, and have never enough, Eccles. 4:8. Like the horseleech, Prov. 30:15; the dropsy, and hell itself, Prov. 27:20. *Fifthly*, Miser-like tenacity, whereby they refuse to communicate their goods, either for the use of others, or themselves. *Sixthly*, Cruelty. Prov. 1:18, 19, exercised both in their unmercifulness and oppression of the poor. Covetousness is a most heinous vice; for it is idolatry, and the root of all evil, Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10; a pernicious thorn, that stifles all grace and choketh the seed of the word, Matt. 13:22, and pierceth men through with many sorrows, 1 Tim. 6:10, and drowneth them in destruction and perdition.—*James Usher*, 1580–1655.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes,*” etc. Having prayed for his heart, he now prayeth for his eyes also. *Omnia à Deo petit, docens illum omnia efficere.* By the eyes oftentimes, as by windows, death enters into the heart; therefore to keep the heart in a good estate three things are requisite, First, a careful study of the senses, specially of the eyes; for it is a righteous working of the Lord, *ut qui exteriori oculo negligenter utitur, interiori non injusté cæcetur*; that he who negligently useth the external eye of his body, should be punished with blindness in the internal eye of his mind. And for this cause Nazianzen, deploring the calamities of his soul, wished that a door might be set before his eyes and ears, to close them when they opened to anything that is not good; *malis autem sua sponte utrumque clauderetur.* The second thing is, a subduing of the body by discipline. And the third is, continuance in prayer.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*” Notice this, that he does not say, I will turn away mine eyes; but, “*Turn away mine eyes.*” This shows that it is not possible for us sufficiently to keep our eyes by our own caution and diligence; but there must be divine keeping. For, first, wheresoever in this world you turn yourself provocations to evil are met with. Secondly, with the unwary, and with far different persons, the eyes, the servants of a corrupt heart, wander after the things which are vanities. Thirdly, before you are aware, the evil contracted through the eyes creeps in to the inmost recesses of the heart, and casts in the seeds of perdition. This the Psalmist himself had experienced, not without the greatest trouble both of heart and condition.—*Wolfgang Musculus*, 1497–1563.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*” It may seem a strange prayer of David, to say, “*Turn away mine eyes from seeing vanity;*” as though God meddled with our looking; or that we had not power in ourselves to cast our eyes upon what objects we list. But is it not, that what we delight in, we delight to look upon? and what we love, we love to be seeing? and so to pray to God, that our eyes may not see vanity, is as much as to pray for grace, that we be not in love with vanity. For, indeed, vanity hath of itself so graceful an aspect, that it is not for a natural man to leave looking upon it; unless the fairer aspect of God’s grace draw our eyes from vanity, to look upon itself; which will always naturally be looking upon the fairest. And as David here makes his prayer in the particular, against temptations of prosperity, so Christ teacheth us to make our prayer in the general, against the temptations, both of prosperity and adversity, and very justly. For many can bear the temptations of one kind, who are quickly overcome by temptations of the other kind. So David could bear persecution without murmuring, but when he came to prosperity he could not turn away his eyes from vanity.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*” An ugly object loses much of its deformity when we look often upon it. Sin follows this general law, and is to be avoided

altogether, even in its contemplation, if we would be safe. A man should be thankful in this world that he has eyelids; and as he can close his eyes, so he should often do it.—*Albert Barnes*.
Verse 37.—“*Turn away,*” then “*quicken,*” etc. The first request is for the removing the impediments of obedience, the other for the addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another; unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract deadness of heart. Nothing causeth it so much as an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities; when our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God, therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things, the more lively and cheerful in the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed, and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued. Sin dieth, and our senses are restored to their proper use.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*” That sin may be avoided we must avoid whatsoever leads to or occasions it. As this caused Job (ch. 31:1) to covenant strongly with his eyes, so it caused David to pray earnestly about his eyes. “*Turn away mine eyes (or as the Hebrew may be rendered, make them to pass,) from beholding vanity.*” The eye is apt to make a stand, or fix itself, when we come in view of an ensnaring object; therefore it is our duty to hasten it away, or to pray that God would make it pass off from it.... He that feareth burning must take heed of playing with fire: he that feareth drowning must keep out of deep waters. He that feareth the plague must not go into an infected house. Would they avoid sin who present themselves to the opportunities of it?—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes.*” Lest looking cause liking and lusting; 1 John 2:16. In Hebrew the same word signifieth both an *eye* and a *fountain*; to show that from the eye, as from a fountain, floweth much mischief; and by that window Satan often winds himself into the soul. This David found by experience, and therefore prays here, “*Turn away,*” transfer, make to pass “*mine eyes,*” etc. He knew the danger of irregular glancing and inordinate gazing.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*” It is a most dangerous experiment for a child of God to place himself within the sphere of seductive temptations. Every feeling of duty, every recollection of his own weakness, every remembrance of the failure of others, should induce him to hasten to the greatest possible distance from the scene of unnecessary conflict and danger.—*John Morison*.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*” From gazing at the delusive *mirages* which tempt the pilgrim to leave the safe highway.—*William Kay*.

Verse 37.—Is it asked—“What will most effectually turn my eyes from vanity?” Not the seclusion of contemplative retirement—not the relinquishment of our lawful connexion with the world—but the transcendent beauty of Jesus unveiled to our eyes, and fixing our hearts.—*Charles Bridges*.

Verse 37.—“*Turn away mine eyes,*” etc. The fort-royal of your souls is in danger of a surprise while the outworks of your senses are unguarded. Your eyes, which may be floodgates to pour out tears, should not be casements to let in lusts. A careless eye is an index to a graceless heart. Remember, the whole world died by a wound in the eye. The eyes of a Christian should be like sunflowers, which are opened to no blaze but that of the sun.—*William Secker, 1660*.

Verse 37.—“*Vanity,*” in Hebrew usage, has often special reference to idols and the accompaniments of idol worship. The Psalmist prays that he may never be permitted even to see such tempting objects.—*Henry Cowles*.

Verse 37.—“*Quicken thou me.*” Every saint is very apt to be a sluggard in the way and work of God. “*Quicken me,*” says one of the chiefest and choicest of saints, “*in thy way*”; and it is as much as if he should say in plain terms, “Ah, Lord! I am a dull jade, and have often need of thy spur, thy Spirit.” This prayer of David seems proof enough to this point; but if you desire farther confirmation, I shall produce an argument *instar omnium*, “that none shall dare to deny, nor be able to disapprove”; and that is drawn from the topic of your own experience; and this is *argumentum lugubre*, like a funeral anthem, “very sad and sorrowful.” Do you not feel and find, to the grief of your own souls, that, whereas you should weep as if you wept not, rejoice as if you rejoiced not, and buy as if you were possessed not; *inverso ordine*, [“inverting this order,”] you weep for losses as if you would weep out your eyes; you rejoice in temporal comforts as if you were in heaven; and you buy as if it were for ever a day (Ps. 49:11). But *e contrario*, [“on the contrary,”] you pray as if you prayed not; hear as if you heard not; work for God as if you worked not. Now, we know, *experto credas*,* a man that sticks fast in a ditch needs no reason to prove he is in, but remedies to pull him out. Your best course will be to propose the case how you may get rid of this unwelcome guest, spiritual sloth: it is a case we are all concerned in. *Asini aures quis non habet?** Every man and mortal hath some of the ass’s dulness and sloth in him.—Mr. Simmons in “*The Morning Exercises,*” 1661.

Verse 37.—“*Quicken thou me.*” Another quickening ordinance is *prayer*. How often doth David pray for quickening grace? five or six times in one Psalm. He begins many a prayer with a heavy heart, and before he hath done he is full of life. Therefore, pray much, because all life is from God, and he quickens whom he will. Only let me add this caution, before I let this pass,—Be sure thy understanding and affection go along together in every ordinance, and in every part of the ordinance, as thou wouldst have it a quickening ordinance.—Matthew Lawrence, in “*The Use and Practice of Faith,*” 1657.

Verse 37.—“*Thy way,*” by way of emphasis, in opposition to and exaltation of, above, all other ways. There is a fourfold way:—1. *Via mundi*, the way of the world; and that is *spinosa*, thorny. 2. *Via carnis*, the way of the flesh; and that is *insidiosa*, treacherous. 3. *Via Satana*, the way of the devil; and that is *tenebricosa*, darksome. 4. *Via Domini*, the way of God; and that is *gratiosa*, gracious.—Simmons.

Verses 37, 38.—Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God’s word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again. Know, Christian, thou hast law on thy side. Bills and bonds must be paid. David prays against the sins of a wanton eye and a dead heart: “*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way*”; and see how he urgeth his argument in the next words,—“*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*” A good man is as good as his word, and will not a good God be so? But where finds David such a word for help against these sins? Surely in the covenant. It is in the magna charta. The first promise held forth thus much,—“The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.”—William Gurnall.

Verse 38.—“*Stablish thy word unto thy servant,*” etc.—Well, but here is a strange thing—a man who is a true “*servant of God,*” “*devoted to his fear,*” praying for what he surely must already have, else how could he be a servant? or be living in Jehovah’s fear? He seems to assume, clearly and without any doubt, his own personal consecration, and then he prays for that which must surely be, at least in considerable measure, assumed and comprehended in the very idea of a true personal consecration. Unless God’s word is made sure to a man he will never become his servant. If he *is* his servant, why should he pray, “*Stablish thy word*”? Why, too, should he

say in the thirty-fifth verse, “*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight*”? “Therein do I delight. It is the way of my choice, of my joy!” And yet, “Make me to go in it,” as if I were unwilling. This apparent contradiction or discrepancy is easily solved in a true experience, and can be, in fact, solved in no other way. Is not this the very condition of many and many a one? “*Stablished,*” yet moved; “*devoted,*” yet uncertain; “*servant*” God truly, yet looking and longing for clear warrant, and higher sanction, and more inward grace, to make the service better; “*believing,*” yet crying, sometimes, “with tears, Help thou mine unbelief!” — *Alexander Raleigh.*

Verse 38.—“*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*” Why doth David pray thus, “*Stablish thy word to me;*” since God’s word is most certain and so stable in itself that it cannot be more so? (2 Pet. 1:19). “We have a more sure,” or a more stable, “word of prophecy,” as the word signifies. How can the word be more stable than it is? I answer, it is sure in regard of God from whom it comes, and in itself. In regard of the things propounded it cannot be more or less stable, it cannot be fast and loose: but in regard of us, it may be more or less established. And that two ways,—1. By the inward assurance of the Spirit increasing our faith. 2. By the outward performance of what is promised.

1st, By the inward assurance of the Spirit, by which our faith is increased. Great is the weakness of our faith, as appears by our fears, doubts, distrusts, so that we need to be assured more and more. We need say with tears as he doth in the gospel: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24); and to cry out with the apostles, “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). There is none believeth so, but he may yet believe more. And in this sense the word is more established, when we are confirmed in the belief of it, and look upon it as sure ground for faith to rest upon. 2ndly, By actual performance, when the promise is made good for us. Every event which falls out according to the word is a notable testimony of the truth of it, and a seal to confirm and strengthen our faith. Three ways may this be made good.

1. The making good of some promises at one time strengthens our faith in expecting the like favour at another. Christ was angry with his disciples for not remembering the miracle of the loaves, when they fell into a like strait again. “Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves?” (Matt. 16:9). We are to seek upon every difficulty; whereas former experience in the same kind should be a means of establishment to us: “He hath delivered, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2 Cor. 1:10). In teaching a child to spell we are angry, if, when we have showed him a letter once, twice, and a third time, yet when he meets with it again still he misseth: so, God is angry with us when we have had experience of his word in this, that, and the other providence, yet still our doubts return upon us.

2. The accomplishment of one promise confirms another; for God, that keepeth touch at one time, will do so at another: “I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:17, 18). In such a strait God failed not, and surely he that hath been true hitherto will not fail at last.

3. When the word is performed in part, it assureth us of the performance of the whole. It is an earnest given us of all the rest: “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen” (2 Cor. 1:20). A Christian hath a great many promises, and they are being performed daily; God is delivering, comforting, protecting him, speaking peace to his conscience; but the greater part are yet to be performed. Present experiences do assure us of what is to come. Thus, “*Stablish*

thy word," that is, make it good by the event, that I may learn to trust another time either for the same, or other promises or accomplishments of thy whole word.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 38.—“*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*” Confirm it; make it *seem* firm and true; let not my mind be vacillating or sceptical in regard to thy truth. This seems to be a prayer against the influence of doubt and scepticism; a prayer that doubts might not be suffered to spring up in his mind, and that the objections and difficulties of scepticism might have no place there. There is a class of men whose minds are naturally sceptical and unbelieving, and for such men such a prayer is peculiarly appropriate. For none can it be improper to pray that the word of God may always seem to them to be true; that their minds may never be left to the influence of doubt and unbelief.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 38.—“*Who is devoted to thy fear.*” The word may be rendered either *which* or *who*; as relating either to thy word or to thy servant. 1. Thy word; for in the original Hebrew the posture of the verse is thus, “Stablish to thy servant thy word, which is to the fearing of thee,” or, “which is given that thou mayest be feared;” there being in the word of God the greatest arguments and inducements to fear, to reverence, and to obey him. The word of God was appointed to plant the fear of God in our hearts, and to increase our reverence of God; not that we may play the wantons with promises, and feed our lusts with them. 2. I rather take our own translation, and it hath such a sense as that passage, “But I give myself unto prayer” (Psalm 119:4). In the original it is, “But I prayer.” So in this place it may be read, Stablish thy word to thy servant, “Who is to thy fear.” Our translators add, to make the sense more full, addicted, or “devoted to thy fear,” that is, who makes it his business, care, and desire to stand in the fear of God.

Now this is added as a true note and description of God’s servants, as being a main thing in religion, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10), it is the first in point of order, and it is the first thing when we begin to be wise, to think of God, to have awful thoughts of God, it is a chief point of wisdom, the great thing that makes us wise to salvation. And it is added as an argument of prayer, “O Lord, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name” (Neh. 1:11). The more any are given to the fear of God, the more assurance they have of God’s love, and of his readiness to hear them at the throne of grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 38.—“*Who is devoted to thy fear.*” He who hath received from the Lord grace to fear him may be bold to seek any necessary good thing from him; because the fear of God hath annexed the promises of all other blessings with it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 38.—He that chooses God, devotes himself to God as the vessels of the sanctuary were consecrated and set apart from the common to holy uses, so he that has chosen God to be his God, has dedicated himself to God, and will no more be devoted to profane uses.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 39.—“*Turn away my reproach,*” etc. In these words you have,—1. A request, “*Turn away my reproach.*” 2. A reason to enforce it. “*For thy judgments are good.*”

First, for the request. “*Turn away,*” roll from upon me, so it signifies. He was clothed with reproach; now roll from me “*my reproach.*” Some think he means God’s condemnatory sentence, which would turn to his reproach, or some remarkable rebuke from God, because of his sin. Rather, I think, the calumnies of his enemies; and he calls it “*my reproach,*” either as deserved by himself, or as having personally lighted upon him, the reproach which was like to

be his lot and portion in the world, through the malice of his enemies: "*the reproach which I fear,*" that is, which I have cause to expect, and am sensible of the sad consequences of it. Secondly, for the reason by which this is enforced: "*for thy judgments are good.*" There are different opinions about the form of this argument. Some take the reason thus: Let me not suffer reproach for adhering to thy word, thy word which is so good. But David doth not speak here of suffering reproach for righteousness, sake, but such reproach as was likely to befall him because of his own infirmities and failings. Reproaches for righteousness' sake are to be "rejoiced in;" but he saith, this I "*fear,*" and therefore I suppose this doth not hit the reason. Neither do I accept the other sense,—Why should I be looked upon as an evil-doer as long as I keep thy law, and observe thy statutes? Others judge badly of me, but I appeal to thy good judgment.

By "*judgments*" we may understand God's dealings. Thou dost not deal with men according to their desert. Thy dispensations are kind and gracious. Better still: by "*judgments*" are meant the ways, statutes, and ordinances of God called judgments, because all our words, works, thoughts are to be judged according to the sentence of the word: now these, it is a pity they should suffer in my reproach and ignominy. This is that I fear more than anything else that can happen to me. I think the reason will better run thus: Lord, there is in thy law, word, covenant, many promises to encourage thy people, and therefore rules to provide for the due honour and credit of thy people.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 39.—"Turn away my reproach." In the Hebrew it is, "*Take away my rebuke;*" as if he should have said, O Lord, I may commit some such evil against thy good law, yea, some such notorious transgression, as may tend to my shame; I beseech thee, take it away. Or else he meaneth, I have already, O Lord, by divers sins, and by name through adultery and murder brought shame and rebuke upon myself among men; I entreat thee to remove this shame and rebuke.

Out of the first exposition we learn, First, that the godly are subject unto notorious sins. Secondly, that those sins will cause shame in them, though the wicked will not be ashamed. Thirdly, that God only can take away this shame. Fourthly, that we may pray for the removing of shame even amongst men, especially that which may bring with it some dishonour to God. Fifthly, that the godly are most jealous over themselves. Sixthly, the way to avoid sin is ever to be afraid lest we should sin.

Out of the second exposition note, that the remembrance of our former sins must draw out of us prayers unto God, that for them we may not be rebuked in displeasure in this life, nor confounded and abashed in the life to come.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 39.—"My reproach" is the reproach which the world casts on the God-fearing. This is dreaded as a great temptation to apostasy.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 39.—"For thy judgments are good." One would have expected him to say—For thou art merciful—Cause my reproach which I fear to pass over from me, for thou art merciful. No, he does not add this as his present reason, but "*Thy judgments are good.*" We should catch the meaning at once, were the words these—For thy judgments are *awful*—"Turn away my reproach which I fear," for thy judgments are awful. But as the words are—"For thy judgments are *good,*" we find he verily takes refuge in the "*judgments*"—viz., that the Lord would vindicate him against all the unjust judgments of men; and as to judgment with God, since he

took refuge in the atonement which the Lord had appointed, the Lord would vindicate him there also.—*John Stephen*.

Verse 39.—“*For thy judgments are good.*” The judgments of the wicked are bad judgments, but the judgments of God are good; I pray against those, I appeal to these: I fear the one, I approve the other. Now the judgments which God pronounceth in his word, be they threatenings in the law, or consolations in the Gospel, yea, and those also which he executeth in the world, whether upon the godly or godless, they must needs be good. 1. Because God is goodness itself. 2. He cannot be deceived. 3. He will not be bribed. 4. He alone is no respecter of persons, but judgeth according to every man’s work.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 39.—The “*reproach*” which the poet fears in this verse is not the reproach of confessing, but of denying God.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 39.—“*For thy judgments are good.*” This reason shows he feared God’s rebuke. Man’s “*reproach*” comes from a corrupt judgment, he condemns where God will absolve, I pass not for it; but I know thy rebuke is always deserved, “*for thy judgments are good.*”—*William Nicholson*.

Verse 40.—“*I have longed after thy precepts.*” We are sometimes unconsciously led to “*long*” after the promises, more than “*after the precepts*” of God; forgetting that it is our privilege and safety to have an equal regard to both—to obey his precepts in dependence on his promises, and to expect the accomplishment of the promises in the way of obedience to the precepts.—*Charles Bridges*.

Verse 40.—“*Precepts,*” from a word which means to *place in trust*, mean something entrusted to man, “that which is committed to thee”; appointments of God, which consequently have to do with the conscience, for which man is responsible as an intelligent being. The precepts are not so obviously apprehended as the law and the testimonies. They must be sought out.

“*Behold, my desire is for thy precepts*” (ver. 40). “*Thy precepts I seek*” (ver. 45). “*Thy precepts I have sought*” (ver. 94)... They are a law of liberty: “*And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts*” (ver. 45).—*John Jebb*.

Verse 40.—“*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*” He said before, “*Quicken me in thy word,*” here, “*in thy righteousness*”; all is one; for the word of God is the righteousness of God, in which is set down the will of righteousness. In this the prophet desires to be quickened, that is, to be confirmed, that in cheerfulness and gladness of spirit he might rely upon the word of God.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 40.—“*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*” The petition is for liveliness in the knowledge and practice of holiness, according to the tenor of God’s word and by its operation on the heart. If any prefer by “*righteousness*” to understand the faithfulness or justice of God, whereby he has bound himself to give grace to those who trust in him, there is no objection to such an interpretation. It is in fact implied in the others. Whoever can truly use the language of this verse is regenerate. Before renewing grace the law was a dead letter. It was more; it was a hated letter. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. A sinner desires no restraint from the divine precepts.—*William S. Plumer*.¹

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [*The Treasury of David: Psalms 111-119*](#), vol. 5 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 208–225.