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A Psalm For Young Persons

Psalm 119:9-12

Psalm 119 is called the "Alphabet of Divine Love" because it is divided into twenty-two sections, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The one theme is the Word of the Lord. This secret ode is a little Bible. In the midst of a London season, in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, William Wilberforce writes in his diary: "Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the One Hundred Nineteenth Psalm in great comfort".

The second part (verses 9 to 16) is assigned to the young person. It is meet that it should be so. Youth is the season of impression and improvement. Young people are the future prop of society, and the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, must begin in youth.

How shall a young man make a clean way, a pure line of conduct, through this defiling world? The very inquiry shows that his heart is not in a corrupt state. Desire is present; direction is required.

By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word. Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it. A captain may watch from his deck all night; but if he knows nothing of the coast, and has no pilot on board,

he may be carefully hastening on to shipwreck. It is not enough to desire to be right; for ignorance may make us think that we are doing God service when we are provoking Him, and the fact of our ignorance will not reverse the character of our action, however much it may mitigate its criminality.

With my whole heart have I sought Thee. The surest mode of cleansing the way of our life is to seek after God Himself, and to endeavor to abide in fellowship with Him.

O let me not wander from Thy commandments. We are to be such wholehearted seekers that we have neither time nor will to be wanderers, and yet with all our whole-heartedness, we are to cultivate a jealous fear lest even then we should wander from the path of holiness. Two things may be very alike and yet altogether different. Saints are "strangers", but they are not "wanderers". They are passing through an enemy's country, but their route is direct. They are seeking their Lord while they traverse this foreign land. Their way is hidden from men, but yet they have not lost their way.

Thy Word have I hid in my heart. He did not wear a text ON his heart as a charm, but he hid it IN his heart as a rule. "This saying, to hide, importeth that David studied not to be ambitious to set forth himself and to make glorious show before men; but that he had God for a witness of that secret desire which was within him" (John Calvin).

That I might not sin against Thee. Here was the object aimed at. As one has well said: Here is the best thing - "Thy Word"; hidden in the best place - "in my heart"; for

the best of purposes - "that I might not sin against Thee".

Blessed art Thou, O Lord. Teach me Thy statutes. No sooner is the Word in the heart than a desire arises to mark and learn it. When food is eaten, the next thing is to digest it; and when the Word is received into the soul, the first prayer is - "Lord, teach me its meaning". Thou art so blessed that I am sure Thou wilt delight in blessing others, and this boon I crave of Thee that I may be instructed in Thy commands. Happy men usually rejoice to make others happy, and surely the happy God will willingly impart the holiness which is the fountain of happiness. Faith prompted this prayer and based it, not upon anything in the praying man, but solely upon the perfection of the God to Whom he made supplication.

The Psalm of the Cross (Psalm 22)

This is beyond all others "The Psalm of the Cross." It may have been actually repeated word by word by our Lord when hanging on the tree; it would be too bold to say that it was so, but even a casual reader may see that it might have been. It begins with, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and ends, according to some, in the original, with, "It is finished!" For plaintive expressions uprising from unutterable depths of woe, we may say of this Psalm, "There is none like it."

It is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours, the record of His dying words, the lachrymatory of His last tears, the memorial of His expiring joys. David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David.

Before us we have a description both of the darkness and glory of the cross; the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow. Oh, for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture it is in this Psalm.

My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? (1) I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but Thou, my God, my faithful Friend, how canst Thou leave Me? This is the worst of all, yea, worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God.

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. (2) Our Lord continued to pray even though no comfortable answer came, and in this He set us an example of obedience to His own words, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." No daylight is too glaring, and no midnight too dark to pray in; and no delay or apparent denial, however grievous, should tempt us to forbear from importunate pleading.

But I am a worm and no man. (6) This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels but even lower than men? What a contrast between "I AM," and "I am a worm!" yet such a double nature was found in the person of our Lord Jesus when bleeding on the tree. He felt Himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-trodden worm, passive while crushed and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon Him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh, and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer.

All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn. (7) Men made faces at Him before Whom angels veil their faces and adore. The basest signs of disgrace which disdain could devise were maliciously cast at Him.

Many bulls have compassed Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. (12) The mighty ones in the crowd are here marked by the tearful eye of their victim. The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan, and longed to gore Him

to death with their cruelties. Conceive of the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, cast into the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls.

They look and stare upon Me. (17) Let us blush for human nature and mourn in sympathy with our Redeemer's shame. The first Adam made us all naked, and therefore the second Adam became naked that He might clothe our naked souls.

You have answered Me. I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You. (21,22) The transition is very marked; from a horrible tempest all is changed into calm. The darkness of Calvary at length passed away from the face of nature and from the soul of the Redeemer and, beholding the light of His triumph and its future results, the Savior smiled.