

## Personal Revival from a Spiritual Recession – Ps. 119:25-32

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on October 19, 2008

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<sup>25</sup>**My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.**

<sup>26</sup>**I have told of my ways, and You have answered me;**

**Teach me Your statutes.**

<sup>27</sup>**Make me understand the way of Your precepts,**

**So I will meditate on Your wonders.**

<sup>28</sup>**My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Your word.**

<sup>29</sup>**Remove the false way from me, And graciously grant me Your law.**

<sup>30</sup>**I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances *before me*.**

<sup>31</sup>**I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame!**

<sup>32</sup>**I shall run the way of Your commandments,**

**For You will enlarge my heart.**

If you have been following the news at all in recent weeks and even this past week, you know that the word from our *world* is not very encouraging at all. The collapse of major banking institutions, worst stock market plunges since 1929, the foreboding financial recession the experts keep speaking of and warning of, etc. Where is our hope and encouragement going to be found? The news? The government? \$700 billion? The next president? New policies? Is our *spiritual* level dependent on the Dow Jones high lows or Wall Street?

What is clearer to me than ever before is that our hope must be before the throne of God above, our hope must be built on nothing less than Jesus and His righteousness. That is the solid rock we can stand on as believers, while all other ground is sinking sand.

There is still much debate and talk in the world about how to revive our economy and prevent financial recession, but I want to give you some good news for a change this morning – not from the world, but from the Word of God, where true encouragement is found for personal reviving of your soul from a spiritual recession.

Right before v. 25, your Bibles have the section title DALETH. That's the 4<sup>th</sup> letter of the Hebrew alphabet (equivalent to D in our alphabet), and each of the verses in the original text began with the letter and sound for 'D.' If we were to try and reproduce that in English, I would paraphrase or summarize the passage as follows:

v. 25 *Down and out in the dust needing revival*

v. 26 *Declaring our ways, in need of God's ways*

v. 27 *Depending on God's teaching*

v. 28 *Discouraged but praying for Scriptural encouragement*

v. 29 *Deceiving no more – give me God's truth*

v. 30 *Deciding to choose the ways of God's Word*

v. 31 *Dedicating to stick with the Word no matter what*

v. 32 *Determining to run the race before him*

This passage tells of his personal revival from a spiritual recession, how God took him from “down and out” (v 25) to “up and running” (v 32).

Psalm 119 has places where it soars in its high praise and love for the law of the Lord, but its writer also experienced the lows and ups and downs we experience, and this stanza begins with one of those downs. Other “D” words commentators use for his emotions: depressed, downcast, disheartened, disconsolate, despondent. The last verse from last week (v. 24) had him *reveling in delight*, but now v. 25 is *reeling in despair*. Other paraphrases of v. 25:

- “I am completely discouraged”
- “I am sunk to the ground under the crushing weight of trouble”
- “I’m in a spiritual recession” (on path to a spiritual great depression?)

It’s hard for a pilgrim to make progress in the slough of despond, in fact, verse 25 uses the word “cleave” – his soul is seemingly stuck in this state; his face is down to the ground and he feels stuck there, spiritually grounded, unable to move, down and out, he’s stuck. The word for “cleave” in the Greek translation of the OT was used for glue, and the Latin translation used the word *adhesit*, which we get the English words *adhesive* and *adhere* from; things that stick.

Look at v. 25 – it says “my soul cleaves to the dust.” Dust it not something normally desired to be stuck to us, for normal people (unless you’re Charlie Brown’s friend or some young kids). In fact, when Jews would *intentionally* put dust and ashes on themselves, it was a sign of devastation, mourning. I’ve read that in the old cattle drives in the American west, the last place any cowboy wanted to be was “riding drag,” that is, at the back of the herd. The dust would cover him in layers from top to toe and it would be very hard to get dust off.

Charles Bridges writes: ‘As the dust of the summer road blinds the eye . . . this earthliness of soul darken[s] the view of the Saviour [and] dim[s] the eye of faith!’<sup>1</sup>

Dust was also the language of humiliation or defeat in Bible times. Even in our day, we say “another one bites the dust” to refer to defeat. The psalmist certainly seems to feel defeated. We use the phrase “down and out” to refer to the type of discouragement the psalmist feels here, and nothing is lower than dust.

In biblical language, dust was also often associated with death, lack of life. Perhaps he feels on the brink of death? Or this may refer to the spiritual deadness he feels, his diminished spiritual life. In the same way Adam was formed from the dust and dependent on God’s creative Word God for life, we are equally dependent spiritually.

This passage shows how the spiritually *down and out* are picked up, dusted off by God, and set off *up and running* again: Revival

<sup>25</sup>**My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.**

When you’re down on the ground, there’s no where to look but up. Like the hymn says “Frail children of dust and feeble as frail, in Thee (God) do we trust, nor find thee to fail.” He looks up from the dust as a needy failing soul, trusting in his unfailing Almighty God as His only hope, in the midst of a world where all else may fail around him. Whether a nation or society unravels at its seams economically or morally, what is most needed is *spiritual revival*.

We should pray for our nation, but let's start by praying for our *own souls*. This prayer "revive me" is more than just "preserve my life" (NIV). It is "give me life" (ESV), or in old English "quicken me" (KJV). He is as helpless to give himself life as Adam was, his total being is lying prostrate in the dust, but he cries to God for life.

The Bible is clear that revival is something man *can pray for* but it's equally clear man cannot *produce, predict or plan* revival – it is a sovereign work of God's sovereign grace. I know sometimes well-meaning Christians will plan "revival meetings" or say we're going to a revival tonight ... but man trying to plan a revival is kind of like man trying to plan an earthquake. There are forces we not only can't control, but we can't predict or manipulate either.

John Blanchard said it this way: "Man can no more organize revival than he can dictate to the wind."<sup>2</sup> Only King Jesus has the wind obey Him, and only He can make a true revival happen.

A revival isn't created by having a big tent meeting, or filling a stadium full of people for some Christian-sponsored event, or having famous Christians perform on stage, or celebrity Christians speaking, or having emotional music or video clips, etc. Those things may be fine and fun, but *revival* is not the right word for it.

Verse 25 prays "Revive me according to Your Word" ... so what does *revival according to God's Word* look like? This text was inspired by the Holy Spirit with an answer that question, and that's what we'll see in the rest of this passage this morning. The answer is in essence the same for a nation as it is for individuals.

**What exactly is revival?** The word "revive" is used for someone who had life and then seemed to lose it, but was revived or resuscitated, or brought back to the level of life they had before.

It's been described here as 'spiritual revitalization ... "Enliven me" ... the parameters of restoration ... extend beyond a mere survival to the scope of a meaningful "abundant life." This fullness of life in Divine favor [*BDB Lexicon*, p. 311] is undeserved although not [unavailable] in the light of the LORD's gracious promises.'<sup>3</sup>

This writer doesn't want merely survival, he asks for revival. Note the similarities with first verse of last week's stanza (v. 18) "deal bountifully ... **that I may live** and keep Your Word"

When we talk about spiritual revival, it's the re-awakening of God's people joyfully to spiritual things, as well as the awakening of many for the first time to God's saving grace in the process, after a time of spiritual dryness, dullness, deadness, even discipline

Psalm 85:4-7 (NASB95) <sup>4</sup> **Restore us**, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. <sup>5</sup> Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? <sup>6</sup> Will You not Yourself **revive us again**, That Your people may rejoice in You? <sup>7</sup> Show us Your lovingkindness, O LORD, And **grant us Your salvation**.

*What does revival according to God's Word look like?*

Today we're going to consider 4 characteristics of biblical revivals.

‘Historically speaking, revivals have always been marked by the same spiritual characteristics, and it would do believers well to reacquaint themselves with these benchmarks. Whether it be during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah in Old Testament times or the Reformation, Puritan age, and Great Awakening in church history, revivals have always demonstrated the same qualities.’<sup>4</sup>

1. **Confession of Sin [and our personal great need]**
2. **Teaching of Scripture [High View of God & His Word]**
3. **Intercession with God [Passionate Prayer]**
4. **A Devotion to Holiness [Obeying Scripture]**

It’s interesting that Dr. Lawson listed those four basic marks of revival out of Ps. 85, because they are the same four basic marks we will see in our text today in Ps. 119, and they are also the same basic marks we see in Neh. 8-9 and another familiar OT passage:

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV) <sup>14</sup> if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

That verse contains God’s audible voice to Solomon about the people of Israel and its original context spells out what will happen if that nation turned away from God. We do not have Israel’s land promises or covenant promises with our nation in America, but the spiritual truth there has of course application to God’s true people in any age, and even to individuals. 2 Chronicles 7:14 does not apply to unbelievers gathering for a national day of prayer, it’s not about religious people lighting candles and having moments of silence like after 9/11, it’s not a promise for people of different faiths praying to whoever or whatever their God is. The One True Lord and God says: **“If my people, who are called by my name ...”**

**Will humble themselves** – there’s #1, confession of our great need

**And seek My face** – where do we seek God? #2 in Scripture and its teaching, our view of God & His Word are linked in Psalm 119

**And pray** – there’s mark #3, intercession with God

**And turn from their wicked ways**– there’s #4, devotion to holiness

Our text in Ps. 119 follows the same basic marks of revival:

1. *Confession of Sin [and our personal great need] – v. 25-26*
2. *Teaching of Scripture [High View of God & His Word] v. 27*
3. *Intercession with God [Passionate Prayer] – v. 28-29*
4. *A Devotion to Holiness [Obeying Scripture] – v. 30-32*

### **Firstly, Confession of Sin and our Personal Great Need**

When a nation is in moral recession or declension, our tendency is to bemoan the great evils around us, but this passage begins (and revival begins) when we are concerned with the evil in our own hearts, the apathy in our own hearts, when we see *our great need*.

This is what we have already seen in verse 25, as he cries out for *personal* revival as someone stuck to this world who wants to be revived and restored. This verse was the expression of Emperor Theodosius many centuries ago, when he was restored into the Church by Ambrose at Milan, after acknowledging his sin in the massacre at Thessalonica. He quoted Psalm 119:25 as his plea.

## **<sup>26</sup> I have told of my ways, and You have answered me**

Jonathan Edwards, Resolution #65 – ‘Resolved to exercise myself in this all my life long ... with the greatest openness to *declare my ways to God*, and lay open my soul to him – all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, and everything, every circumstance, according to [this vs. in Ps. 119]...

Last week I read from Psalm 32 where David reflected on the time in his life when he did not do this, but lived with un-confessed sin and resulting intense physical flattening crushing consequences he felt in both body and soul, which sound similar to how the writer of Psalm 119 felt in verses 25 and 28. Then David describes how freeing and liberating and wonderful it was when he told of his way to God, came clean and confessed and acknowledged everything in repentance, and God heard and forgave and lifted it.

This seems to be what we see in verse 26 of Psalm 119 as well, which the book *Treasury of David* describes this way: ‘Open confession is good for the soul. Nothing brings more ease and more life to a man than a frank acknowledgment of the evil which has caused the sorrow and the lethargy. Such a declaration proves that the man knows his own condition, and is no longer blinded by pride. Our confessions are not meant to make God know our sins, but to make us know them.’<sup>5</sup>

Telling God “all our ways” certainly would include our sinful ways, but as we see in the psalms frequently it is also the unloading of all our heart in all our ways acknowledging Him. It is good to get it all out, and there may be some human relief when we unburden ourselves to another human, but your fellow human often can’t do anything about your troubles. 1 Peter 5 tells us to “cast all our cares upon Jesus because He cares for you.” The fullness of our ways, the fullness of our heart and all our cares and concerns should be declared to the Lord, and this verse promises He hears His children, with fullness of care and love for you!

It’s been pointed out that, ‘Just as a physician cannot prescribe the correct cure or therapy until we tell him all our symptoms, we must declare everything before God and disclose all our sin ... How many of our emotional, psychological, and even physical ailments can be traced directly to unconfessed sin? There is simply no cure or [lasting relief] without confession of sin.’<sup>6</sup>

I don’t know exactly what the difficulties were in the life of this writer and I don’t know exactly what difficulties today you are experiencing in your life. But I can guarantee you if you are living in sin, and refusing to declare your ways to God, your misery will increase unless you confess your sin, call it what it is, and come to Christ for pardon. If you repent, like Psalm 51, you can instead of misery, experience the joy of salvation. This is where personal revival starts and you must start, instead of cleaving to this world and clinging to your sin, confess it, renounce anything you hold onto more than Christ, and come humbly for mercy, saying “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to your cross I cling.” Cleave to the cross!

### ***There’s a second mark of revival: Teaching of God’s Word***

V. 26 ended with “Teach me” and v. 27 continues the same request in different words “make me understand.”

‘Too often we ask, “How can I get out of this trouble?” when we should be asking, “[What do You want to teach me in this? What do you want me to] get out of this experience?” In times of trouble, we need God’s wisdom lest we waste our suffering (James 1:2–8). The psalmist knew there were still lessons to learn in the school of life and he did not want to miss them. He talked to the Lord about what was happening to him, and the Lord answered by giving him wisdom and strength. By faith, he expected to see God’s wonders displayed in the midst of his battles.’<sup>7</sup>

At the end of v. 26, David prays that God will teach him His statutes. Statutes is a word emphasizing the inscribed indelible nature of God’s Word like the original tablets which God carved His Ten Commandments into the stone with His own finger – it is there to stay. The Bible is not obsolete, it is absolute truth.

J. D. Watson noted in expounding this verses that what is asked for here is ‘not want what most people today want—syrupy sentimentality, personal opinion, or relativistic propositions that change with each situation. He wanted *Truth*, Truth that is set in stone and will never change. Oh, would that we wanted that today! ... there is no way to exaggerate the vital importance of teaching in the Believer’s life! In a day when churches are built on empty entertainment, shallow sermonettes, and tainted tradition, we see a church that is anemic and even septic. The only thing that will cure it is God’s absolute Truth. Let us pray with [this verse]: teach me thy statutes.’<sup>8</sup>

Steve Lawson emphasizes that this “teaching” mark of revival is especially ‘*A Proclamation of Scripture*. Any period of revival has always been preceded by a dramatic return to the Word of God. Certainly, this was true in the revival at the Watergate under Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 8:8). The centrality of the Scripture in any revival is undisputed ... this clearly was the dynamic of the early church in Jerusalem which exploded on the scene as “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). The same was true in the days of Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield. There was a return to the divine revelation of Scripture being read, studied, taught, and preached.’<sup>9</sup>

A High View of God [His sovereignty and all His attributes] and a High View of God’s Word go hand in hand in lasting revival.

### ***There’s a third mark of revival, Intercession with God***

<sup>28</sup> My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Your word.

Sometimes weeping will accompany the teaching of God’s Word

This verse doesn’t tell us the source of this grief, and it may refer more generally to the pains and difficulties of life. Whatever the root of our problems, the remedy is passionate prayer to God.

In the margin of my Bible, it says the word “weeps” is literally *drops*. Other translations have:

“melts from heaviness” (NKJV, KJV)

“weary with sorrow” (NIV)

“melts away with sorrow” (ESV)

“I collapse from grief” (NET, footnote “or crumple”)

The word was used for being poured out or leaking. It's used, for example of a leaking roof in Ecclesiastes 10:18. The imagery has been described as a slow and steady constant dripping, 'as if the soul were dripping away or dissolving ... quiet but continuous grief that slowly wears away the soul. There are two kinds of sorrow: (a) the one represented by floods of tears, like fierce torrents that sweep all away, and are soon passed; (b) the other is the gentle dropping — the constant wearing — the slow attrition caused by inward grief, that secretly but certainly wears away the soul. The [second one probably described in this verse] is more common, and more difficult to be borne than the other.'<sup>10</sup>

The one antidote for a weak and collapsing soul is hope in a strengthening God, which is what the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse 28 models.

Psalm 42:5-11 (NASB95) <sup>5</sup> Why are you in **despair [or downcast], O my soul?** And *why* have you become **disturbed** within me? **Hope in God**, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence. <sup>6</sup> O my God, **my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You** from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. <sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me. <sup>8</sup> The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, **A prayer to the God of my life ...** <sup>11</sup> Why are you in **despair**, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? **Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.**

Temptations to despair and spiritual depression are not often talked about in Christian circles, but they have been the struggles of some great Christians in church history, and even authors of psalms like this. We need to stop listening to ourselves and preach to ourselves to hope in God and God alone, look to God in prayer for strength.

*When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within upward I look and see Him there who put an end to all my sin.*

Charles Spurgeon battled spiritual depression for much of his ministry, so he speaks from experience when he writes on this text:

His hope in his state of depression lies not in himself, but in his God; if he may be strengthened from on high he will yet shake off his heaviness and rise to joy again ... God strengthens us by infusing grace through his word: the word which creates can certainly sustain. Grace can enable us to bear the constant fret of an abiding sorrow, it can repair the decay caused by the perpetual tear drip, and give to the believer the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Let us always resort to prayer in our desponding times, for it is the surest and shortest way out of the depths. In that prayer let us plead nothing but the word of God; for there is no plea like a promise, no argument like a word from our covenant God.<sup>11</sup>

He also added: "There is one good point in this downcast state ... it's better to be melted with grief than to be hardened by sin."

Jesus said "Blessed are they who mourn [over their sin, and pray to God for help, humbly, poor in spirit] for they shall be comforted." This is the type of comforting strength the writer of Psalm 119 wanted and received.

STRENGTHEN ME – when we are powerless, God’s power will strengthen all who humbly call out in faith. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. We can endure all things through Christ who strengthens us, but without a relationship with Christ, we will (as Paul says) grieve like the rest of the world which has no hope.

Christians grieve, but are not hopeless. We may be discouraged and even depressed and downcast at times, but we do not despair utterly if God is within us. If you don’t have God in you and Jesus as your Lord, your misery will continue and be far worse eternally.

As Christians, we don’t just pray “strengthen me” and leave God’s Word closed – this verse prays “strengthen me according to Your Word.” It’s a prayer with open Bible that God blesses, studying prayerfully specific promises and precious truths that strengthen us

The request for strength in v. 28 is literally, “cause me to stand / stand me up.” Establish me, give me new strength to stand or rise, give me spiritual support and reinforcement. Pick me up as I read your Word, open my eyes to the wonderful things that are here.

Jonathan Edwards was used of God mightily in the greatest revival on our shores, the Great Awakening in the 1700s, in the early colonies of America. He knew much about revival first-hand and saw as clear as anyone the connection with revival and this third point we’re looking at today, intercession with God (passionate prayer). He wrote: “When God has something very great for His church, it is His will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of His people.”<sup>12</sup>

On the back of your note sheet is another quote from him along these lines: “When God is about to do a great work, he pours out a spirit of supplication.”<sup>13</sup>

**<sup>29</sup>Remove the false way from me, And graciously grant me Your law.**

True revival in God’s truth makes the revived want to be free from all that is false. The way of lying or deceit or the “false way” he prays for God to remove. This may refer to falsehood of others, or his own falsehoods, or both. He wants to be free from anything false, whether false statements or even false motives, false religion, a false heart himself (hypocrisy), false notions of his own spiritual condition before God, false assessments of himself or others, false teaching – any falsification, delusion, deception, manipulation of the truth.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:<sup>14</sup>

- 1) How honest are we before ourselves and God about the depths of our own sin? Do we ever weep before God in grief over our sin? Do we practice open confession where we declare all of our ways?
- 2) When we are down and depressed where do we turn for the lifting of our spirits? Do we practice denial and feed our fleshly appetites with food or drink, with entertainment, with activity? Do we give in to despair and become paralyzed as we pity our sorry lot? Or do we turn to God’s Word and allow God to revive our hearts?
- 3) How determined and dedicated are we in terms of choosing “the faithful way”? [look v. 30 “I have chosen the faithful way”]

***This leads us to the 4<sup>th</sup> and final mark of revival that God produces: A Devotion to Holiness (Obeying Scripture)***

Lasting revival is not marked by numbers or emotions or feelings in the moment of a summer camp or a big crusade or meeting, but by changed lives that now pursue obedience to Scripture and are devotion to holiness, being set apart, sanctified by grace, different.

<sup>30</sup>**I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed your ordinances *before me***

<sup>31</sup>**I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame!**

<sup>32</sup>**I shall run the way of Your commandments, For You will enlarge my heart.**

The psalmist is not passive but is pursuing godly choices and commitment to God's Word, taking personal responsibility for obedience and holiness, but he is still utterly dependent on, and doing this in, God's strength, not his own. Notice the end of v. 32; his ability to do this is because, or "For You will enlarge my heart"

Sin makes our heart narrow and small, whereas grace-enabled obedience and love enlarges our hearts so we can follow Christ. We sang earlier "I have decided to follow Jesus" and in verse 28 he says "I have chosen the faithful way." Those types of statements of course do not refer to what we do apart from God's grace. It's not because of what we did unaided by human will-power, we then initiate God's grace. Actually, it is God's heart-enlarging enabling grace that initiates whatever good we do, not the other way around.

We do have to decide daily to follow Christ, we are responsible to choose God's ways, not ours, but when we do so, we know that we pursue God because He pursues us, or as the Scripture says, we love Him because He first loved us, or as v. 32 says, we run in obedience to His commands because of the heart He gives us.

It is when God give us big hearts, not big heads, that we will live for God, choosing to keep His commandments, by His grace alone.

Verse 30 says "I have chosen the faithful way" - *way* is a key word in this section for the path and pattern of life: "my ways" (v. 26), "the way of Your precepts" (v. 27), "the false way" (v. 29), "the faithful way" (v. 30), "the way of Your commandments" (v. 32).

V. 29 has the way of lying; v. 20 has the way of truth / faithfulness.

The word for **faithful / truth** in v. 30 is a rich OT word meaning firmness, steadfastness, fidelity, reliability, truthfulness. This is one of the few Hebrew words that transliterates into English as well as Greek – it's the word *amen*. In Revelation 3:14 when Jesus speaks, it uses this as a proper name for our Lord: "**The Amen, the faithful and true Witness** . . . says this" – God is the source of this faithful way, and God the Son in particular is portrayed there as the personification of all fidelity, constancy, and reliability of what this word "Amen" meant in that memorable passage in Revelation.

It's sometimes hard to get presidential candidates to answer yes and no questions or for us to even be confident we're hearing the whole truth when they speak, but that's not the case with God or His Word, whether the written Word or Christ the Incarnate Word.

2 Corinthians 1:18-20 (NASB95) <sup>18</sup> But as **God is faithful**, our word to you is not yes and no. <sup>19</sup> For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. <sup>20</sup> For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also **through Him is our Amen** to the glory of God through us.

Christ is our Amen – Amen means “Yes, it is true.” This word *amen* sums up who God is, and should make us want to say Amen and glorify God at His faithful Word when it is communicated faithfully. The word “Amen” is what believers of both OT & NT times would say to affirm when something said was faithful and true to Scripture. For some reason, many conservative congregations don’t vocalize “amen” much to agree with songs or statements that they find to be faithful or true to scripture – maybe we think it’s somehow more spiritual to never respond at all but to be completely motion-less and quiet and restrained and always have the same facial expression. I think we’ve lost what was happening in Nehemiah 8 and we need to regain some of that! God’s Word should impact us more than it does! It is unfortunate and unbiblical when we can remain unmoved by the unfathomably wonderful words of our God!

If we are going to choose the way of truth to live, as v. 30a says, we need to daily put God’s truth before us (v. 30b). We need to read and not only read, v. 31 goes beyond reading to cleaving to Scripture. This uses the same word from v. 25 and he has now come full circle from clinging to the dust of this world to clinging to the Divine Word of God. 31b prays *Do not put me to shame* (which dust may symbolize in v. 25)

He chose / committed to God’s ways (v. 30) and now he’s sticking to it in verse 31. The Bible is his story and he’s sticking to it.

He clings like bone to skin, as this same word is used in Genesis 2 for the one flesh union of man and woman in marriage. As intimate lovers are one, the believer is intimately and inextricably bound to Scripture and is one with it, there’s an inseparable unbreakable commitment of love in the context of a covenant relationship. This word in the original language was used in Deuteronomy with obeying God’s voice (30:20), serving him (10:20, 13:4), and walking in his ways (11:22).

Verse 32 moves from walking in God’s ways to running in them. He started down and out, now he’s up and running. A former Master’s Seminary professor wrote: ‘With confidence in a gracious response on the part of his LORD, [he] regains his spiritual second wind and concentrates on the “race set before him.” Previous occurrences of the metaphor of *walking* (e.g., vv. 1, 3, etc.) now accelerate to *running*. He is determined to run the course ... “I shall run” ... His determination, however, is predicated upon a divinely mediated stamina: “when” or “because You enlarge my heart” [make it] *grow wide, or large* ... “when his heart is set free from the cramping constraint of trouble and anxiety [i.e. v. 32b], the Psalmist will use his liberty for more energetic service” [i.e. v. 32a] ... “The feet should follow the heart.”<sup>15</sup>

Those who want to be obedient and holy should pray “Lord, make my heart bigger so I can fit more of your Word into it that I might be better equipped to run the race you have laid out for me.”

The imagery and movement of personal revival is resurrecting:

- v. 25 laying in the dust, praying for life by the Word
- v. 28 he prays, “raise me up by the Word”
- v. 30 I have chosen the way of the Word – metaphor for walking
- v. 32 Now he’s running the way of God’s Word, with a full heart pumping with life

This is what God can do with individuals, and with nations (Nehemiah 8)

These are the basic marks of revival from a spiritual recession:

1. Confession of Sin [and our personal great need]
2. Teaching of Scripture [High View of God & His Word]
3. Intercession with God [Passionate Prayer]
4. A Devotion to Holiness [Obeying Scripture]

Nehemiah 8 (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that *was* in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to **bring the Book** of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. <sup>2</sup> So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who *could* hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> Then he read from it in the open square that *was* in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and **the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book** of the Law. <sup>4</sup> So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose ...

<sup>5</sup> And **Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people**, for he was *standing* above all the people; and **when he opened it, all the people stood up**. <sup>6</sup> And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, “**Amen, Amen!**” while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and **worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground**. <sup>7</sup> Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, **helped the people to understand the Law**; and the people *stood* in their place. <sup>8</sup> **So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading**. <sup>9</sup> And Nehemiah, who *was* the governor, Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day *is* holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep.” For **all the people wept, when they heard the words** of the Law ...

<sup>18</sup> Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, **he read from the Book of the Law of God**. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *there was* a sacred assembly, according to the *prescribed* manner.

Nehemiah 9 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and **with dust on their heads**. <sup>2</sup> Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and **confessed their sins** and the iniquities of their fathers. <sup>3</sup> And they **stood up** in their place and **read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God**. <sup>4</sup> Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani stood on the stairs of the Levites and **cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God**. <sup>5</sup> And the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, *and* Pethahiah, said: “**Stand up and bless the LORD your God Forever and ever!**” “Blessed be Your glorious name, Which is exalted above all blessing and praise! <sup>6</sup> You alone *are* the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You ...

May we join Israel here and the host of heaven in worshipping the same Great God by exalting and honoring this Great Book, with a great devotion to holiness and obedience, recognizing our great need for humbling ourselves, confessing our great sins and interceding for his great grace, praying passionately the great prayer of Psalm 85:6 “Will You not Yourself **revive us again?**”

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Bridges, *Psalm 119*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold*, p. 544.

<sup>3</sup> George Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God*, p. 118-119.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58-59.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, Hendrickson, n.d., 3:190.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.thescripturealone.com/Psalm119-6.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Warren Wiersbe, (2004). *Be exultant* (1st ed.). Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook Communications Ministries, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.thescripturealone.com/Psalm119-6.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Steve Lawson, *Psalms 76-150*, Broadman and Holman, 44.

<sup>10</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, 119.28.

<sup>11</sup> Spurgeon, 3:191.

<sup>12</sup> As cited by Lawson, 44.

<sup>13</sup> As cited by Blanchard, 544.

<sup>14</sup> <http://bibleoutlines.com/library/pdf/psalms.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Zemek, 128-29.