

Praying and Living a High View of God and His Word (Psalm 119:73-80)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on December 14, 2008

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A high view of God and His Word is the only way you will be able to survive and thrive spiritually through affliction and trials, as the writer of this Psalm did. If your God is small, your problems will seem very big and overpowering to you. But if your God is big, glorious, weighty, dazzling, truly sovereign, supreme, satisfying, magnificent, and massive – the God of Scripture – your problems will seem much smaller in comparison. This truth drives my life.

When we went through a series on the Attributes of God last year, I said this then and I believe it even more now as I have studied Scripture more: “The most important thing about you is what comes to your mind when you think of God.” A. W. Tozer said that in the opening line of *Knowledge of the Holy* and he went on to talk about how the level of any church or individual’s life is strong or weak in direct proportion to its view of God, and will rise and fall depending on the level of its thoughts of God. He also said:

“Nothing twists and deforms the soul more than a low or unworthy conception of God ... our Christianity is weak because our god is weak.”¹

Equally important is our view of God’s Word. What we do and how we live and how we pray and how we do ministry reveals what we *really* believe about God and His Word. Many will affirm in their doctrinal statements that the Bible is inspired and infallible and without errors and that it is sufficient and powerful, but in reality they depart from that in life and in ministry.

If I for example don’t preach Scripture verse-by-verse expositively regularly contextually faithfully, or if I substitute all kinds of things other than God’s Word and have little biblical content in my messages, I’m communicating to you that I’m not firmly convinced that God’s Word is sufficient and has the power it says it does without man’s clever ingenuity and inventions.

If you affirm the right truths yourselves about the sovereignty of God and the sufficiency of God’s Word’s, but then in difficulties you habitually and consistently turn away from those truths to other things, that’s showing where your trust and heart really is.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV) ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is [profitable – i.e., sufficient] for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This is why I am committed to expository preaching, which means taking a passage of Scripture (usually one primary passage) and studying it deeply in its context and culture, paying attention to language and grammar and every tool I can to comprehend and then communicate -- not what I think, or what it means *to me* in my subjective feelings -- but to convey as best I can the original intent by the original author to the original audience in the original language and original context, and then explaining or expounding it with elucidation, illustration, and application to our context today. That’s what I understand preaching is, or should be.

The reason I take so much time to study and pay attention to details and do word studies and look up what individual words mean is because I am convinced *all Scripture* is inspired and profitable, as God says it is. We believe in verbal-plenary inspiration (every word is inspired). Even little details like a singular instead of a plural form of a word carry significance:

Galatians 3:16 (NASB95) ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.

Even the tenses of verbs are significant to our Lord.

“*some* Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him ... But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures ... regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? [I AM not “*I was*” proves] He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” When the crowds heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching. (Matthew 22:23, 29-33)

Even to the smallest details, the smallest strokes of smallest letters:

Matthew 5:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, **one jot** or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

That statement actually ties in with our expository study of Psalm 119 bringing us to the 10th stanza, verses 73-80. The word “jot” is the Greek word *iota*, which the Hebrews may have pronounced as yoda – the corresponding Hebrew letter is yodh. YODH is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet and it begins each letter of this stanza through verse 80.

Left: the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, y (Heb. yôd, AY 'jot'). Centre and right: the letters r (Heb. rēš) and d (Heb. dālet), distinguished from each other by the addition of a 'tittle' to the latter. Hebrew script of the 1st cent. AD. (NBD p. 624)



The letter YODH may be very small, but this passage has very big truths about our God and the greatness of His inspired, infallible, inerrant, and infinitely sufficient Word

- 73 Your hands made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.
- 74 May those who fear You see me and be glad, Because I wait for Your word.
- 75 I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.
- 76 O may Your lovingkindness comfort me, According to Your word to Your servant.
- 77 May Your compassion come to me that I may live, For Your law is my delight.
- 78 May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; *But* I shall meditate on Your precepts.
- 79 May those who fear You turn to me, Even those who know Your testimonies.
- 80 May my heart be blameless in Your statutes, So that I will not be ashamed.

The writer of this Psalm prayed and lived with a high view of God and His Word, and by the inspiration of God this Psalm should instill the same in us as well.

REMEMBER WHO GOD IS (4 truths, 4 attributes of God)

1. God is Creator (v. 73)

“Your hands made me and fashioned me” – God is not only the Creator in general, He personally created and formed and fashioned each one of us, which is emphasized when it says “*Your hands.*” God’s work in creation is called “the work of His fingers.”

Psalm 8:3-6 (NKJV) ³ When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained [*same word as “made” in 119:73*], ⁴ What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? ⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the angels

It makes a difference if you believe in a personal Creator or the evolutionary views of our world. I read a story about historian Thomas Carlyle when he was at a meeting of learned scholars of the world where the problem of man’s origins was being discussed, and he was asked to give his opinion. I like how he replied: “Gentlemen, you place man a little higher than the tadpole. I hold with the ancient singer: ‘You have made him a little lower than the angels.’”²

The dignity and sanctity of life’s starting point is that God is intimately involved in our formation and creation in His image.

Psalm 139:13-17 (NASB95) ¹³ For **You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb.** ¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, for **I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works,** And my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, When **I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought** in the depths of the earth; ¹⁶ Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And **in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.** ¹⁷ How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

3 Implications / Applications of God being our Creator:

He owns us

Psalm 100:3 (NASB95) ³ Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.

He is in charge of us

Amazingly, David prayed in Psalm 139 that God has a book where He has written all the days that were ordained for him before any of them had happened! Paul affirmed in Acts 17 how in charge God is: “The God who made the world and all things in it ... He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation (v. 24-26, NASB95)

God as Creator and owner of us is in control and sovereign over those details. We’re not in charge. God is God and we are not. The Bible says even before God created any of us, before the foundation of the world, He elected to save some sinners out of the world for His glory, Ephesians 1:4-6, says and v. 11 of that chapter says God sovereignly works *all things* after the counsel of His will. Here in Psalm 119:73, the word “fashioned” has to do with establishing, or constituting us; in other words God “made me what I am ... God knows us infinitely better than we know ourselves, since He has sovereignly overseen the framing of our personalities and potentialities.”³

3rd implication of Creator: We are dependent upon Him

Psalm 119:73b Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.

God did not create mankind like the beasts, which have no understanding, Scripture says God created us in His image to glorify, know and *understand God*, so here he prays for more.

- You gave me the ability to stand, please give me the ability to understand truly (including the biblical sense of “obey”)
- You fashioned this vessel, now fill it with Your knowledge
- You caused me to live, now cause me to learn Your truth.
- You made my mind, now please move my mind to understand and learn Your Word and love it more.
- You made me, now make me what I ought to be.
- Your hands had the power to make me the first time, surely You can now *remake* me to overcome the effects of sin that have ruined Your creation and which still mar Your image.
- My initial creation by you was an amazing miracle of incredible skill, continue Your work in this new creation of Yours. Continue to shape this new heart You’ve given me.
- You’re the Potter; I’m in need of a lot of finishing touches and it’s going to be through the teaching of Your Word.

Psalm 138:8 “*forsake not the work of thine own hands*” (KJV)

It was said of Queen Elizabeth that in light of this verse she prayed “Oh, look upon the *wounds* of thine hands, and forget not the *work* of thine hands.” As Christians we understand that the hands that created us were crucified for us.

Even true believers need their Savior to open their eyes and minds and to give them understanding so that they can learn and be taught deeper truths from God’s Word. Remember the disciples of Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24? The resurrected Lord opened the Scriptures to them as they talked and opened their minds to give them understanding of what those Scriptures said about Christ, even though they may have heard them many times. He opened their minds, later opened their eyes to recognize Him, and it says their hearts were burning within them as He did so.

If you’ve been a Christian any number of years, I trust you’ve experienced this many times in passages you had read many times before, that all of a sudden for the first time God opens your eyes to see a truth that has always been there but you missed it before. That’s what this psalm prays for often (ex: v. 18 “open my eyes”).

This prayer “give me understanding” is repeated 6x in this Psalm, a prayer for God to grant practical perception for real life, even in the midst of life’s many pressures. This godly believer never seems to reach the place where he doesn’t recognize his need for constant teaching and God-given understanding. He asks for understanding here, it says at the end of the verse “that I may learn Your commandments.” Again and again he writes of his need to understand, to be taught, so he can learn and live God’s good law.

“Teach me” is a phrase we see 22x in the Bible, and *half of all those occurrences are all in this one chapter!* 11x in Psalm 119, he cries out “Teach me!” Is that your cry? Are you hungry for God’s teaching? This spiritual godly man who wrote this obviously was not where he was spiritually without the teaching of God’s Word and he constantly desired more teaching every chance he got.

One sermon, one meal during a Sunday morning service once a week is not enough to sustain a soul, but that’s for many the extent of the teaching they seek during the week. Aren’t you hungry for more? There’s a lot more teaching going forth that you’re not availing yourselves of, and I don’t think we can honestly say it’s because we’re more spiritual than this writer and don’t need teaching. Sunday evenings are another opportunity for hungry believers to come back and say in effect, “teach me,” like this psalmist desired. I know not everyone can, and there are valid understandable reasons, constraints, difficulties and physical challenges for some, but I hope your attitude isn’t “Hey, I put my time in the morning, I’m good. The Lord should be thankful I gave him an hour or two before I spent the rest of the Lord’s Day doing my own thing!”

I hope your reasoning or attitude isn’t that you don’t need teaching like this psalmist because you’ve got it all together. I’m thankful that we have a decent number of people in Sunday School and in Bible studies, serving, etc.; still there’s room for more. I’m just saying I hope your desire is “teach me” and that you are seeking to learn as much as you can and that you recognize your need for teaching. We cannot overstate our need to understand God’s Word.

I’m not just talking about public teaching, but also private feeding on God’s Word. Do you read God’s Word regularly in the week? Psalm 119’s constant prayer is for God-given understand and learning, not for the mere sake of information but for application.

2. God is Consistent (v. 75)

⁷⁵ I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

Always Righteous

When he affirms in v. 75 that the Lord’s judgments are righteous, he affirms the classic statement of Abraham’s faith in Genesis 18:25 (NKJV) “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The answer is yes, God always does what is right. He is a just Judge.

One scholar translates the Hebrew text of v. 75 this way:

“Your judgments ... sovereign decisions and their execution, *are righteousness* itself, i.e., perfectly righteous.”⁴

Always Faithful

The verse goes on to affirm that God’s dealings with him come out of God’s faithfulness. Even the afflictions that come our way are proof of our Lord’s faithfulness to His promise “In this world you will have tribulation.” If we had no trouble, God would be a liar.

But this goes beyond general trouble, to personal affliction that is personally orchestrated and ordained by God personally for God’s specific purposes (some of which we saw last time). Not only was there justice in the dealings of the Lord in his life, there was an ultimate good purpose behind them from a faithful God.

Affliction is not the source of fate, but God's faithfulness. Man's affliction and God's faithfulness come together in a familiar text:

Lamentations 3:19-40 (NASB95) ¹⁹ Remember my **affliction** and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. ²⁰ Surely my soul remembers And is bowed down within me. ²¹ This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. ²² The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³ *They* are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ²⁴ "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him." ... ³¹ For the Lord will not reject forever, ³² For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion According to His abundant lovingkindness. ³³ For **He does not afflict willingly [lit. from the heart]** Or grieve the sons of men. ³⁴ To crush under His feet All the prisoners of the land, ³⁵ To deprive a man of justice In the presence of the Most High, ³⁶ To defraud a man in his lawsuit— Of these things the Lord does not approve. ³⁷ **Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? ³⁸ Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?** ³⁹ Why should *any* living mortal, or *any* man, Offer complaint in view of his sins? ⁴⁰ Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the LORD.

This leads us to the third implication of Psalm 119:75, God is:

Always Sovereign

That passage said God does not afflict willingly, in other words it does not delight His heart to do so, but He does afflict. Vs. 38 says His mouth decrees *both good and ill* to go forth. God is sovereign. God is always consistently just, consistently faithful to promises of both judgment and blessing, and he is consistently sovereign of all.

- Aaron knew this after a great afflictive calamity in his family, losing his two sons in Lev. 10 -- he held his peace knowing God had dealt justly as He said He would with sin
- Eli was another priest who similarly would lose his sons to sin, and he could say of God's just sovereignty, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him" (1 Sam 3:18)
- Job knew this truth, and could say in the greatest affliction and loss of OT times "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21)
- The Shunamite woman said "It is well" (2 Kgs 4:26) in a similar circumstance (son died in God's sovereign purpose)
- David knew this truth under affliction when he wrote in Psalm 39:9 "I do not open my mouth, Because it is You [the Lord] who have done it."
- When Isaiah prophesied calamity from God to Hezekiah, he replied "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good" (Isa 39:8). God's goodness brought comfort (ch. 40).
- Joseph knew that God not only *uses* affliction and suffering for our good, our sovereign loving God *intends* it.

Genesis 45:4-8 (NASB95) ⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for **God sent me before you to preserve life.** ⁶ "For the famine *has been* in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷ "**God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive** by a great deliverance. ⁸ "Now, therefore, **it was not you who sent me here, but God;** and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Genesis 50:19-20 (NASB95) But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰ "As for you, you meant evil against me, **but God meant it for good** [!] in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive

Jay Adams writes that Psalm 119:75 (and many texts make) ‘clear that, though He may use human instrumentality, ultimately the affliction comes from God. Some . . . struggle with that fact. But [to the biblical writers] that is not a problem; it is the solution to one. There is no impersonal, chance that for no good reason has brought affliction into his life. If that were so, the universe would be out of control and would have little or no meaning. Prayer would be ridiculous! No, prayer is meaningful because God is sovereign. He is the One Who is engineering all that happens – including affliction – for the good of [His children who love Him].’⁵

This high view of God is essential to perseverance – God’s sovereignty does not negate the responsibility of sinners who are secondary causes, but ultimately even the most sinful acts are ordained and orchestrated by the primary cause, God Himself. Even His own Son God ultimately afflicted for the greatest good.

Acts 4 (NASB95) ²⁷“For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel [human instruments / secondary causes], ²⁸ to do whatever **Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.**

God’s providential predestinating purpose is our source of comfort.

3. God is Comforter (v. 76)

These verses are not the way you will find unbelievers talking or even understanding someone who talks this way. The pagan Philistines couldn’t understand Samson’s riddle, and neither can the world understand our trust in God’s mysterious providence.

...in faithfulness You have afflicted me. O may Your lovingkindness comfort me

The One who brings us discomfort is also the One we look to for our true comfort. He prays that God would comfort him by God’s lovingkindness, the LORD’s covenant loyal love and mercy. He also recognizes that God’s comfort will be through, according to God’s Word. What other book or religion can give this comfort?

One writer asks: ‘In ancient times, could a person find comfort in Baal worship, which demanded human sacrifice to appease him? Is there today comfort in any religion, such as Islam or Jehovah’s Witness, that says that if we do enough works we will go to [paradise], not knowing how many works are enough? Is there any comfort in a religion, such as Hinduism, that tells people that they will be reincarnated as many times as it takes to rid them of their sin? Is there any comfort in Roman Catholicism, which tells its followers that untold thousands of years in Purgatory awaits them after death where the remainder of their sins will be burned off?’⁶

Do you want to realize the comfort of God, Charles Bridges asks. ‘Then seek to approach your God by the only way of access . . . Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:6; Comp. John 14:6.) Guard against looking for comfort from any other source. Beware especially of that satisfaction in . . . cisterns which draws you away from "the fountain of living waters." . . . Only let us see to it, that [Christ] is the first, the habitual object of our contemplation, the satisfying wellspring of our delight— that he is the one desire, to which every other is subordinate, and in which every other is absorbed.’⁷

4. God is Compassionate (v. 77a)

⁷⁷May Your compassion come to me that I may live ...

It's important we have a balanced well-rounded view of God. Not only is He sovereign, but He is good and loving and compassionate and by nature a Savior, and yet He is holy and must punish sin. We don't presume on, but we pray with passion for God's compassion (v. 77) as if our very life depends on it - and in a real sense it does!

The word for "compassion" or "tender mercy" in v. 77 comes from a root word that 'refers to deep love (usually of a "superior" for an "inferior") rooted in some "natural" bond ... used for the deep inward feeling we know variously as compassion, pity, mercy. The depth of this love is shown by the connection of this word with *reḥem/raḥam* [i.e., "womb"]. Compare Isaiah (49:15) who uses it of a mother's love toward her nursing baby ["Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you"]. It can also refer to a father's love (Ps 103:13). Apparently, this verb connotes the feeling of mercy ... most easily prompted by small babies (Isa 13:18) or other helpless people ... [esp.] the strong tie God has with those whom he has called as his children (Ps 103:13). God looks upon his own as a father looks upon his children; he has pity⁸

***Message of First half of the text: Remember Who God Is.
Second Half: Respond appropriately through His Word***

*There were four truths about God we saw among other attributes: God is Creator, He's Consistent, Comforter, and Compassionate.
Now four appropriate responses for us through His Word.*

1. We should be making our delight in Scripture (v. 77b)

The fact that God is the sustaining source of all good as sovereign Lord never negates our responsibility. Notice how his dependence in the first half of v. 77 flows naturally to his active delighting:

May Your compassion come to me that I may live, For Your law is my delight.

Our part is empowered by God's part, but it is still essential. Biblical love and delight is not merely automatic or spontaneous feelings, it takes actions of commitment, pursuit with God's help. All believers should have a measure of this delight, but all can grow more in it. Charles Bridges writes 'God never has our hearts, until something of this delight is felt and enjoyed. But do we complain of the dulness of our hearts, that restrains this pleasure? Let us seek for a deeper impression of redeeming love. This will be the spring of grateful obedience and holy delight. Let us turn our complaints into prayers, and the Lord will quickly turn them into praises. Let us watch against everything, that would intercept our communion with Jesus. Distance from him [will bring us] poverty of spiritual enjoyment.'⁹

How can we make ourselves delight more? From the source.

Psalm 36:8-9 (NASB95) ⁸ They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. ⁹ For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

How can we remain in His light and life and increase our delight? Pray like the rest of that psalm:

Psalm 36:10-11 (NASB95) ¹⁰ O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. ¹¹ **Let not the foot of pride come upon me,** And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

Pray “Protect me from pride. Decrease my natural love for self and replace it with an increased love for You and Your Word.”

J. Vernon McGee once said: ‘Does it give you joy to read the Word of God? Do you love the Bible? If you don’t love God’s Word, ask Him to give you a love for it. I did that for years. I prayed, “Lord, give me a love for your Word.”’¹⁰

2. We should be meditating on the Word, not on the wicked

⁷⁸ May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; *But* I shall meditate on Your precepts.

He is determined to meditate on God’s precepts, not man’s persecution. They distort the truth, but he will devote to the truth. It would be very easy for us to focus our attention and energies on sinners who the original language of v. 78 pictures as those who “bend what we say, twist our words, pervert our intentions, and outright lie about us to further themselves and subvert the Truth.”

Someone has asked: ‘Why do they do such things? What is the real driving force behind the deal perversely? For example, what motivates that ungodly university professor who mocks a young Christian in front of the whole class and tries to make him or her look like imbecile for believing the Bible? What makes the political liberal in America mock Christians who stand for basic, moral family values and try to pain such Christians as homophobes? Why? Because they are proud. A principle that is woven into the very fabric of Scripture is that pride is at the root of all sin. Pride is what keeps people lost as they trust only in themselves, in their own intellect, experience, or education. There are several Hebrew words translated proud in the Old Testament. The one used here is *zēd*, which appears some thirteen times, most often in the Psalms. Its basic idea is “pride and a sense of self-importance, which often is exaggerated to include defiance and even rebelliousness.”¹¹

We shouldn’t be ashamed before sinners like that, they should be ashamed for their sin. That’s what he prays for. But we need to be careful in praying this verse about the proud being put to shame, and make sure that we are the truly saved and humble, and earnestly fighting pride in our own heart, fleeing like a plague that deadly sin of pride that brings so many down to everlasting shame.

“There but for the grace of God go I.” So he dedicates his mind to God’s Word, not the wicked. The second half of the verse has this force in the Hebrew: “As for me, I meditate (characteristically, customarily, as the pattern of my life) on Your precepts.” The word meditate includes the idea of communing, contemplating, pondering, praying, and it implies a spirit of devotion.¹²

In the end of v. 78, notice he doesn't take matters into his own hands, with these lying enemies, as we often might desire to do.

Charles Spurgeon had such adversaries, but he said like this verse: 'leave the proud in God's hands, and give ... self up to holy studies and contemplations. To obey the divine precepts we have need to know them, and think much of them. Hence this persecuted saint felt that meditation must be his chief employment. He would study the law of God and not the law of retaliation. The proud are not worth a thought. The worst injury they can do us is to take us away from our devotions; let us baffle them by keeping all the closer to our God when they are most malicious in their onslaughts.'¹³

v. 134 Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Your precepts.

v. 136 My eyes shed streams of water, Because they do not keep Your law.

83:16 Fill their faces with shame, That they may seek Your name, O Lord.

3. We should be mindful of other believers, not just us

⁷⁹May those who fear You turn to me even those who know Your testimonies

God doesn't want our mind to focus on unbelievers and their ungodliness, but he does want us to be mindful of other believers around us who fear God rather than man, as we can have a positive or negative impact on their godliness (and they to us as well).

It's implied that these God-fearing Bible-believing people had turned away, perhaps because they listened to some of the lies of his adversaries. We don't ultimately know, but we do know that he prays for them to turn to him. He has learned some truths in his affliction and wants to pass them on to others about the importance of a high view of God and His Word to help persevere in trials.

This turning is probably 'a turning towards him for the purpose of learning: may their knowledge be enriched from his experience.'¹⁴

If God has given him understanding in answer to verse 73, God doesn't intend we keep it to ourselves. Others need to see the sufficiency of God's Word manifested by his life as well as his lips

He needs their support and encouragement, and he wants to mutually do the same for them as well. Godly God-fearing friends are greatly needed, even for the best of believers.

⁷⁴May those who fear You see me and be glad, Because I wait for Your word.

We should see ourselves in this verse. We should be among those who are glad as we see the work of God's Word in this man's life, even though we don't know him personally, we are getting to know him in the pages of this psalm. Most fear affliction, but if we fear God, seeing the writer of this psalm as he hopes in God's Word makes us glad, encouraged, that God can do the same for us.

Psalm 34:2-3 (NASB95) ² My soul will make its boast in the LORD; The humble [*another term for God-fearers*] will hear it and rejoice. ³ O magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together.

Psalm 40:3 (NASB95) ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD.

Psalm 142:7 (NASB95) ⁷ “Bring my soul out of prison, So that I may give thanks to Your name; The righteous will surround me, For You will deal bountifully with me.”

His attitude in Psalm 119:74 has been described as a desire ‘that the open book of his life would be read by others in the family of faith as a volume about *the Book* and patience under pressure.’¹⁵

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 (NASB95) ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

When Paul wrote to those who were trusting in and applying God’s Word like this verse, it gave him great joy and gladness.

Is the open book of your life an encouraging message or is it discouraging? Are people happy to see us arrive or are they happier when we leave? When our friends and acquaintances have burdens, do they turn to us for help, or do we add to their burdens?

Spurgeon wrote: ‘A hopeful man is a God send when things are declining or in danger. When the hopes of one believer are fulfilled his companions are cheered and established, and led to hope also. It is good for the eyes to see a man whose witness is that the Lord is true; it is one of the joys of saints ... Hopeful men bring gladness with them. Despondent spirits spread the infection of depression, and [so] few are glad to see them, while those whose hopes are grounded upon God’s word carry sunshine in their faces, and are welcomed by their fellows.’¹⁶

I was challenged by this challenge: ‘Here is a most challenging verse. Think of it! People were glad to see the Psalmist; just his walking in the door cheered and encouraged them. How about us? Do we spread gladness or gloom? Do we walk about with a scowl or a smile? Do we encourage others or discourage them? And what causes such cheer? Our hope in God’s Word. If it drives us in every area of life, we will, indeed, bring cheer to other believers.’¹⁷

4. We should be moving towards a blameless life

⁸⁰ May my heart be blameless in Your statutes, So that I will not be ashamed.

None of us will be perfect in this life, but we should be praying for and pursuing a heart that is blameless. He doesn’t want to be ashamed like the proud sinners of v. 78 should be, so he prays that God would make his heart sound or blameless. What does a blameless person look like? Job 1:1 gives us one snapshot:

“There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was **blameless [same root], upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.**”

Genesis 6:9 says “*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time. Noah walked with God.*” Ps. 15:2 has the same Heb word:

² He who **walks with integrity**, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. ³ He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; ⁴ In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the LORD; He swears to his own hurt and does not change ...

The first verse of Psalm 119 says that these *blameless* ones are also the *blessed* ones, the truly happy ones. True joy and happiness is found in God's Word for those whose heart is free from blame and therefore their life is free from shame.

This psalmist has said several times he delights in Scripture, loves Scripture, finds joy in Scripture more than any portion or riches – he lives and prays with a high view of God and His Word, and has high affections for God in His Word. He understands his chief purpose to glorify God and enjoy God and he does so in the Word. He knows the supremacy of God and the supreme sufficiency and soul-satisfying and joy-producing nature of God's Word. May we know it as well.

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous*, 13.

² Cited in Helmut Thielcke, *Man In God's World* (Cambridge, England: James Clarke and Co., 1987), p. 91.

³ George Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God*, 196.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵ Jay Adams, *Counsel from Psalm 119*, p. 66

⁶ J. D. Watson, *The Sufficiency of God's Word - An Exposition of Psalm 119*,

<http://www.thescripturealone.com/PS119.html>

⁷ Charles Bridges, *Psalm 119*, p. 198-200.

⁸ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2:840-41.

⁹ Bridges, 118

¹⁰ J. Vernon McGee, 1981. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2:848.

¹¹ Watson, *Ibid.*

¹² Zemek, 203.

¹³ Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 3:289.

¹⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, Vol. 5.

¹⁵ Zemek, 197

¹⁶ Spurgeon, 3:288.

¹⁷ Watson, *Ibid.*