

Struggling Against Sin

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true victory over sin comes through fervent prayer, resolute commitment, and reliance on God's grace to maintain purity and obedience.

Scripture: Psalm 119:145-147, Matthew 5:29-30, Hebrews 12:1-2, Romans 8:13, John 15:5

Topics: "Sin and Temptation", "Prayer and Dependence on God", "Holiness and Obedience"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the intense spiritual battle against sin, emphasizing the necessity of fervent prayer, resolute commitment, and reliance on God's grace. Drawing from Psalm 119, he encourages believers to cultivate a heart that earnestly desires purity and obedience. Spurgeon challenges listeners to stand firm in holiness, avoid temptation, and trust in the transformative power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. This sermon offers practical and spiritual guidance for anyone seeking victory over sin.

Transcript

"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes. I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalm 119:145,146.

THE fear of punishment leads many people to think about their sins. And a dread of Hell in the future fills the retrospect of their past life with gloom and remorse. This is natural. It may happen to anyone, as it has happened to tens of thousands, that the peril has haunted them till at length the penalty has overtaken them. Although they have been constantly terrified with a sense of the Divine Wrath, they have never penitently looked to the Divine Mercy. Thus they have continued to despond and they have gone on to despair—and that utter desperation has curdled into a bitter remorse which has been the forecast of their eternal retribution! But it appears to me that there is a work of Grace in the heart where there is a fear of sin rather than a fear of Hell—where the desire of the soul is not so much to escape from the punishment, as to escape from the guilt which is the cause of the punishment. What thief, what murderer, when he has been arrested, convicted, sentenced and brought to the gallows, does not wish he had not committed the crime that sealed his doom? Yet there is a wide difference between a dread of suffering for the wrong you have done and a dread of doing wrong! Judge yourselves, if you are under religious impressions of any sort, whether you have merely a fear of punishment—for that is an instinct of nature—or whether you have a fear and abhorrence of sin, for that is a work of Divine Grace!

Now our text exhibits to us the frame of mind of one whose chief prayer was that he might keep God's statutes—and his chief anxiety lest he should fail to observe them. Oh, that you might be brought to this state of heart, those of you who are not saved! And may those of you who are saved have this state of heart perpetually in exercise! A tender heart, a scrupulous conscience, a tenacity of offending God in thought, in word, or in deed should hold us in check every day and every hour. Let us continually cry unto God to save us from violating His precepts and compel us to keep His testimonies. I address myself very indiscriminately to all who hear my voice, desiring that the text may prove a test whereby everyone should examine himself. Do we, or do we not, desire to get rid of every evil way? Are we anxious to be sincere and without offense, holy in our character and obedient to God's statutes in our lives? The man who really does desire this will be sure to pray for it. "I cried," says the Psalmist. And then again he says, "I cried." Moreover, he combines his prayer with strong resolution, "I cried unto You; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes." Still further he seasons his prayer with a deep sense of his own weakness, for he puts it thus, "I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your statutes." Well then—

I. EVERY MAN WHO DESIRES PURITY OF HEART AND CHARACTER WILL BETAKE HIMSELF TO PRAYER.

While struggling after purity, he will soon discover that he is unable to reach it of himself. Have you ever thought that you had destroyed an evil tendency in your disposition—and then found in an unguarded moment that you fell into the temptation from the coils of which you did suppose you had escaped? You have resolved in the morning, maybe at the hour of prayer, that throughout the day your temper should be calm and quiet. Yet very likely before breakfast was over, you were more ruffled than usual. Where you fancied you had set a double guard, there it was that you were taken by surprise! You thought yourself weak in one point, but it did not happen to be that on which you were beset! Where you said to yourself, "I am safe," there you were betrayed. You must have found this out, if you are striving against sin. When it has occurred many times, you will have a habitual mistrust of yourself. Does it happen but once, you will be dri-

ven by a sense of your own incompetence to call in the sacred might of God, that with the arms of the Eternal, you may defeat the infernal adversary, prevail over your evil passions and conquer your besetting sin. "I cried unto You," says David. Not as though it were a trifling skirmish, but as one who felt that he was perilously besieged. "I cried unto You with my whole heart, for I must vanquish this sin, or be vanquished by it! I could not conquer it by myself, so I cried to You, O my God," and I said, "Oh, display Your power, and by the Irresistible might of Your Holy Spirit, crush this dragon within my nature! Beat it down, that it may rise up no more."

The importunity of this prayer shows his estimate of the value he set on the blessing he craved. Read verses 145, 146 and 147, and you will perceive how he repeats himself—"I cried." "I cried unto You." "I rose before the dawning of the morning, and cried." Three times does he reiterate it! He was not to be put off. He felt he must get the mastery of sin. Hence, in sheer desperation, the good man cries again, and again, and again, "O God, deliver me, that I may keep Your testimonies." Pray often, Beloved, for sin will tempt often. Cry mightily, for Satan will tempt mightily. Innumerable snares will he place in your path—let your countless entreaties outnumber his devices!

The expression by which he memorializes his prayer shows us the intensity of it. "I cried." "I cried." "I cried." I do not know a better form of prayer than crying. It implies that the whole nature is full of anguish. Crying is the consequence of pain. His entire soul was stirred up. A cry is the expression of desire. It is a

natural unpremeditated utterance. There is no affectation about it. A man that knows no Latin or Greek can cry. He that cannot speak with eloquence may yet give eloquent vent to his feelings in tears and entreaties. Oh, there are some with whom prayer is a ceremony. They call the servants together—they march in, and they march out to the routine of family worship. They read out of a book some form of words, or else they compass a little piece, themselves, and say it—and that is their idea of prayer! Not so. Prayer is crying, laying hold on God and spreading our needs before Him with an earnest entreaty that He would not reject us, but would give us what we ask of Him. It is a wrestling with the Covenant Angel. It is a sacred resolve, "I will not let You go except You bless me." If you want to conquer sin, know that it cannot be overcome by cold prayers, muttered in a heartless manner—it will not yield to empty ceremonies! Sin only flies before the blood of Christ and the power of the Eternal Spirit. These come to our rescue when, with cries and tears, we importune the Lord to help us. "I cried." "I cried." "I cried." Thrice does he repeat the words. His whole heart cried to God that he might be delivered from sin!

Wherever there is a real and true prayer about this matter, it must be a prayer of faith God can, in answer to prayer, help me to conquer sin. Beloved, you pray in vain unless you steadfastly believe that there is no sin which you cannot overcome. I meet with men who say, "I can never give up drinking." My dear Friend, God can make you! I meet with a man who has a violent temper and he thinks he can never curb or subdue it. Surely you do not think of taking it to Heaven with you! They have no passionate people in that happy clime. You will have to get that anger put away, but only God can accomplish it! Do you say, "It would be like turning a lion into a lamb"? That is just what His Grace is able to do! He can bring you from darkness to light. He can work such a transformation in you that you would not know yourself if you could see yourself after you have passed under the Divine hand. Resolve in your soul that sin must be conquered—believe that it is possible—and cry to God with a full conviction that He is able to save you from it! Yet I think there are some who would not like to have their prayers answered. They ask for a humble heart. Well, I question whether they would like it, if it were given to them—whether they would not want to send it back! They pray that they may have a pure conscience, but how, then, could they carry on that business of theirs? They ask that they may be upright in God's statutes, but they know very well that they prefer following their own crooked devices! There are thousands of prayers that are insults to Heaven, but where the Spirit of God is really at work, the man who wants to be pure, prays sincerely, and cries mightily to God for purity! And nor will he be content to tolerate anything—either in his disposition or in his daily life—which would be inconsistent with the perfect holiness of God. Oh, that God might implant in all of us this desire and then set us a-praying that we might secure the blessing we crave! Now, secondly—

II. THE MAN WHO DESIRES TO WALK IN GOD'S WAY NOT MERELY PRAYS, BUT HE RESOLVES.

"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord. I will keep Your statutes." He puts his whole heart into it. His prayer is no deceit. Then he throws that same heart into a strong resolution that he will find out what God's statutes are and when he has found them, he will keep them, cost whatever it may! Need I say that nobody becomes holy against his will? No man keeps God's statutes unless he exercises a resolve to do so. The very essence of obedience to God lies in the heart, so the heart must be set upon obedience! It must be a sincere, willing, cheerful obedience, or else it is not a genuine

submission to the Almighty. Do I address anyone who is living in sin and yet saying, "I wish I could get rid of it"? I have often heard such a wish expressed by persons who must themselves have known that they were uttering a lie! A man says, "I wish I could be set free from sin tonight," and tomorrow he will mix with evil associates and loose companions, and go to places of amusement where he is as sure he will be led

into sin as he would be sure that his coat would burn if he put it into the fire! He goes into the middle of the mischief—he takes the tinder of his heart where he knows there are sparks, and he says, "There will come no harm of it." He puts a candle near the gunpowder and he hopes he will not be blown away! That is what he says—but it cannot be so. If you do not want to be besmeared, do not go among the pitch and the tar. If you do not want to be defiled, avoid all ungodly fellowship. The man who means to conquer sin and resolves to conquer it, will keep himself out of mischief's way, that he may be clean before the living God! Such a man will give up everything that tempts him. If there is anything in which he knows he has weak point, he will mortify himself rather than offend his conscience. He cuts off his right arm and plucks out his right eye, according to the Gospel, which means, I suppose, whatever he is fond of, if it becomes a temptation to sin, he will forthwith have done with it once and for all. It does not matter what it is—whether it is drunkenness or gluttony, or lust—whatever is his besetting sin! He just says, "No. This may be allowable to some men to go just so far, but I cannot go as far without going further. Therefore, I will have nothing to do with it." He is ready to deny himself anything and everything. He completely reforms his habits, lest he should be led into sin. "I will keep Your testimonies."

Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man really resolves to do this! When he says, "I will keep out of the way of temptation and I will deny myself that which tempts me, lest by any means I grieve the Holy Spirit of God," he will be sure, if his resolution is of the true metal, to follow that which helps it. He knows that to hear the Gospel helps it—therefore, he will not waste the morning hours of the Lord's-Day in slothful sleep, but he will welcome the assembly of the saints and rejoice in the preaching of the Word! He knows that reading good books will often be helpful to him, so he prefers them to light literature. He knows that association with Christian people will help him, so he likes to get among them. He knows that to lift up his heart in prayer to God, not occasionally, but regularly at set intervals, has often proved a help to him—and he accordingly endeavors to maintain such engagements as strictly as he finds it possible. If there is anything of good repute to help him to get rid of sin, he seeks after it! And when he prays to God to keep him pure, he takes care to choose all such means as God may put in his way to resist evil, and to follow after holiness!

Such a man will achieve his purpose. You may laugh at him for being too precise. His heart will not be wounded by your ridicule. He will lose the Sunday trade if, thereby, he loses half his living, rather than break God's Command. It may be that his association with some worldly persons contributed much to his prosperity, though it involved him in serious temptations—he falters not, for he would sooner run the risk of losing all the world than stake his reputation, or jeopardize his soul, for he is bent upon getting rid of sin! Sin is the plague he hates! He would sooner be poor as Lazarus, and even covered with sores, and licked by dogs, than have the sins of the rich man upon him! He wants to be clean delivered from every foul being and every false way! One thing has he asked of the Lord, and that one thing has he set his heart upon—that he may possess himself in righteousness, that he may be without offense and that he may maintain his integrity. To obtain this, through the power of the Holy Spirit, being cleansed by the blood of Jesus, he will cheerfully suffer any imaginable privation!

Do observe how David sought after a thorough allegiance and a perfect conformity to the will of God. He says, "I cried with my whole heart; I will keep Your statutes"—not some of the statutes that were agreeable to him, but all of the statutes that had the Divine sanction. I do not intend to be uncharitable when I suspect that some Christians do not wish to know too much, or to enquire too minutely into the Lord's demands upon their resources. I have noticed a great many people lately who have looked upon perfection as a prize within their reach and even as an attainment to which they have already come! This is getting rather

common. They profess to be perfectly sanctified. But what can I think of some of them who, to the best of my belief, are possessed of fortunes to the extent of two or three hundred thousand pounds? Were they perfectly sanctified, could they look on the outlying world, living in vice and ignorance, out of which a chosen people are being saved by the Gospel, without supporting those agents and agencies that have the Divine blessing manifestly resting upon them to the utmost of their ability? They should come nearer to the kind of consecration which was manifested in that poor widow who gave "all her living" to the Lord's treasury! I do not believe in a perfect sanctification which allows a man to lay up so much treasure on earth, while so many works for the Lord Jesus need his help. Systematic hoarding of wealth, to my mind, does not indicate a perfect character! I am not judging ordinary Christians, but only those who talk of full consecration—and I will never believe in it till I see their gold, and their silver dedicated to a larger degree, yes, to a perfect degree! Do not let them boast, but give. As to those who are satisfied that they are perfect in spirit, soul and body, we wait for their last testament—to see what their wills look like when they die! A man who is perfect before the Lord lays out his substance for God's cause, depend on that! He does not merely attend conferences, and talk of good things, of spirituality of mind and sanctification by faith, and all those glittering subjects, but he lives for Jesus in some practical work and gives himself up—and his substance, too—for the honor of the Redeemer's name and the diffusion of the glorious Gospel! I have no leading one of these Brothers in my mind's eye, but certain of their disciples—and I do not even condemn those—but I do ask them to reconcile their large wealth with their still larger professions of perfect consecration!

The true seeker for holiness is one who, while he resolves on obedience to God, will dare to be singular, if no man will accompany him in it. "I cried with my whole heart: I will keep Your statutes." He meant to do it, though he should be without companions. He was prepared to stand alone! I always admire that speech of Athanasius, when he, seeing others had turned aside to Arianism, said, "I, Athanasius, against the world." He is a true man who can be a true man by himself! Give me no semidetached cottage, but a house that stands compact on its own foundation! And give me such a man as can let the wind blow all round him and yet stand upright. He will hold his own whether men will bear or forbear! Let his fellow creatures applause or hiss him, he will remain true to his own convictions. If they bear him on their shoulders in triumph, it is the truth he has espoused they honor—or if they trample him under their feet in contempt, it is for righteousness' sake he suffers! But, like Luther, he will defy devil, death, and Hell to hold to his purpose to keep God's statutes! Now the Word of God animates a man's soul and the work of God is the enterprise of his life when this is the strong desire of his spirit. He prays to God and invokes His aid, yet at the same time he records his vow with a mind that is not given to vacillate. He has put his foot down where he meant to stand. He has knit his brow and closed his teeth and set all his features to the aspect of defiance, for he means to hold out till he achieves the victory! He is not going to compromise himself, nor to tolerate any wrong thing. He will foil temptation, master evil propensities and slay the sin that offends, and aggrieves, and harasses him! In the armor of God he arrays himself and, through the Grace of God, he will prevail!

The man who is thus seeking purity, while he prays and resolves, if he is really wise and taught of the Spirit— III. WILL HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF HIS OWN WEAKNESS AND DEPRAVITY.

Therefore, he supplicates the Lord in the language of the 146th verse—"I cried unto You; hear me; I shall keep Your testimonies." His tender misgivings are an incentive to his restless importunities. As though he should say, "Oh, Lord, I am praying and resolving, but my prayers need Your answers, and my resolutions need Your might to fulfill them. My prayers—what are they? My resolves—what can they do? I am a frail leaf and I bend before the wind of temptation! My righteousness is like the sere leaf of autumn—it is soon

carried away—yes, it is like a filthy rag that ought to be set aside and hidden from view! My God, I need sifting, I need sifting! Oh, save me, and then I shall keep Your testimonies." There is no holiness in any man by nature and never will be! Some ingenious author has said that man is not dead like a stone, but dead like an egg. There was some disposition to life in him that needed brooding over to develop. Well, I should not like to be the hen that had to sit on that egg till it has hatched! That a long eternity of disappointed hopes would spread out before me, I am quite certain. It is a stone egg, this humanity of ours! There is no real spiritual life whatever in it. Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. And they may sit on that unclean egg as long as they like, but a vile, unclean chick will be the only result of it. Before ever we can keep God's testimonies, we must be saved! We must be saved, first, from the guilt of the past. By Substitution, by Redemption, by the application of the precious blood of Jesus, by that expiatory Sacrifice in which our blessed Lord bore for us the vengeance of God that was due to our sin, must our salvation be procured!

Sinner, you will never go out of the Egypt of your bondage to sin till the blood of the Paschal Lamb has been sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts. You may strive against sin as you will, but you will never overcome it except through the blood of the Lamb. Enquire of those in Heaven who have conquered sin and do now wear the snow-white garments—

"I asked them whence their victory came?"

They, with united breath, Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb, Their triumph to His death."

Never till you see a bleeding Savior will you be able to put your sins to death! They must be crucified on the Cross. They will die nowhere else than there! "Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies."

We need to be saved, however, not only from the guilt of sin, but saved from our sinful selves. We, whose nature is evil, cannot do much with so bad a nature to baffle all our efforts to cleanse our way. This nature must be removed and a new nature implanted, or else, while the old nature is extant, the old evil will assert itself! There are different ways of treating diseases. A man has a bad malady upon him and it breaks out in his flesh. He goes to a quack who gives him an ointment which he applies outwardly to heal the sore till the morbid appearance vanishes. And he congratulates himself on the cure and commends the charlatan for his skill. "What a capital doctor he is, and how well my money was expended," he says, "he has taken away all that eruption." By-and-by, the man is lying so grievously sick and ill that he does not know what to do. "Oh," he thinks to himself, "have I made a mistake?" And when a true physician comes, he says, "What have been your symptoms?" He tells the tale of an eruption on his skin and the remedies he resorted to. "Ah," says the physician, "the disease is driven inwards! You have taken the wrong course—your present symptoms are fatal. You will die. It was well that it should come out on your flesh, seeing it lurked in your constitution. When you have a disease, you had need lay the axe at the root, and not at the branches. It is not the disfigurement of the skin that is so alarming, as the blood-poisoning that caused it." Forthwith he begins to deal with the real evil.

So, my dear Friends, you are only tinkering with the symptoms, the mere eruption on the skin, while you aim at outward reformation! You must be born-again! That is the only cure for the leprosy of sin. I am glad to hear of people insisting on the importance of reforming every kind of vicious custom and evil habit, but they do not go to the root of the upas tree unless they resort to the Gospel—which lays the axe right at the root of all manner of sin and blasphemy with its imperative demand that you repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out! This is the vital and vitalizing process that will turn out to be a radical

blessing. Lord, save me, save me! Change my heart! Renew my spirit! Make the fountain clean! Set the mainspring right! Oh, Holy Spirit, regenerate me! And if You do this, then, not till then, shall I keep Your testimonies!

The same is true in respect to every Christian, Beloved. We require God to keep on sifting us. Unless His spiritual work shall be carried on every day in us, we shall be unable to keep His testimonies. We are to be resolved against sin—I have told you that. We are to pray against it—I have enlarged upon that. Still, we must fall back upon the naked fact that a real conquest of sin is the work of God, Himself! "I cried unto You; hear me: I shall keep Your testimonies."

Brothers and Sisters, beloved in Christ, live near to God! Live at the foot of the Cross! Go every day to Jesus. Never get away from the spot on which you stood when you first believed. Then and there you looked, as sinners, to find everything in Him and nothing in yourselves. Do not expect to overcome sin by any other means but by faith in the atoning blood. Do not seek anything like perfection apart from Jesus Christ who, "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Oh, I would charge upon the members of this Church to labor after holy walking. It cuts me to the quick when I hear it said of any one of the members of this Church, "Well, they may be professors of religion, but they are not honest in their dealings, or they are not choice in their language, or they do not govern their tempers. They may be saints at the Prayer Meeting, but they are devils at home! They may look very amiable at the Communion Table, but they are very cross at their own tables." Do not let it be so! Give no cause for such an evil report, I pray you! I invite all that attend my ministry, who are truly converted, to cast in their lot with us and join the Church, for so you ought to do, but oh, do not bring dishonor—I will not say upon us—that is of small consequence. Do not bring dishonor upon the Gospel that we preach and the Christ whom we love!

The world will not say, "There, that is a false professor." They ought to say it. And if they were honest, that is how they would put it, but, in general, they will say, "That is your religion!" And the Cross of Christ will be evilly spoken of and many a poor Believer who has trouble enough as it is, finds it more difficult to give an answer to the scoffer through having the inconsistencies of others thrown in his teeth. Better die than deny the Savior! Better that we lie sick at home, covered with boils, than that we go about the world grieving the Holy Spirit and putting an evil word into the mouth of the ungodly! Follow after holiness, I charge you. You are not saved by works! We give no uncertain sound about that

teaching! We have told you and we constantly do tell you, that you are only to be saved by the blood of Jesus! But, remember, Jesus came to save us from our sins. If we hug our sins, we cannot have Christ for our Savior! Christ and you must part, unless you and your sins part. Jesus Christ will take any sinner to Heaven, but He will not take any sin to Heaven. He will spare the sinner, but He will not spare his sin! If you want to spare your own sins, depend upon it, you will lose your souls! Watch, I pray you, against what are called "little" sins! Remember, when thieves want to get into the house, if they cannot find a ready entrance, they will often put a child through a little window—and then he opens the front or the back door. So a little sin will often open the door to a big sin. Watch, I pray you—watch against secret sins! We have heard of some who barred the doors at night and fastened the windows, but there was a thief under the bed! Mind that it is not so with you—some hidden evil—some secret lust. Watch, pray, resolve, but still come back to this—"Lord, help me; Lord, save me; Lord, keep me." The old plowman whom I sometimes used to talk with before he went to Heaven said to me, "Depend upon it, if you and I get one inch above the ground, we shall be that inch too high." There is much truth in his plain remark. If we get any high notions of what we are, we shall soon sink below what we should be. Lie low! Aspire high! Be nothing!

Take Christ to be your All-in-All! Renounce self-confidence and have faith in God! In this way you shall conquer sin, your prayers shall be accepted, your resolutions shall be carried out and the purpose of your heart shall be verified. "I will keep Your statutes." May it be so with everyone of us! Amen, and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM119:145-168.

Verse 145. I cried with my whole heart: hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your statutes. In the time of trouble there is no resort like that of prayer, but it must be intense and earnest. "I cried with my whole heart." And sometimes it should be accompanied with a resolve to profit by the affliction. "I will keep Your statutes." As the child under the rod prays to be spared because he hopes in future to be obedient, so does the Psalmist here say, "Hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes." This ought to be the effect of every affliction—to make us more careful in our obedience. It is not always so, but so it ought always to be.

146. I cried unto You: save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies. As if he felt that the force of gratitude would compel him to obedience. He did not merely promise it, but he prophesied it as a matter of certainty that he would keep the Lord's testimony.

147. I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help. I hope in Your Word. Early prayers seem seasonable. Before we have gone into the world, should we not first go to our God? Prayer ought to be the key of the morning to open it, as well as the key of the night to close it. And notice what should always be associated with prayer, namely, hope. "I hope in Your Word." There is no prayer like a hopeful prayer, in which a man hopes, believes, expects that God will send him a blessing!

148. My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate on Your Word. Before the watchman can cry the hour of night, my eyes are upon the Word of God, and I am studying it. Oh, it is well when we prove our love to the Word of God by our meditation upon it, our constant searching into it.

149. Hear my voice according unto Your loving kindness. Not according to my earnestness, much less according to my merit, but, "Hear my voice according to Your loving kindness." Oh, what a large measure is this, for who can tell how boundless is the loving kindness of God? Such is the answer to my prayer, O my Lord.

149. O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment As You try me, quicken me. Just as You see I have need of it, give me more spiritual life.

150. They draw near that follow after mischief they are far from Your Law. Dogs are at my heels! I have heard them long ago pursuing me, but now they are getting nearer to me than ever.

151. You are near, O LORD. Is not that a blessed sentence, that when the adversaries are near, the Friend of friends is near, too? What if he is like a hunted stag, and the dogs are at his heels, yet the Omnipotent Lord, the Interposer, can come between and save His darling from the power of the dogs!

151, 152. And all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever. It is an old story with me that Your love is without beginning, Your Covenant from all eternity,

your Grace Immutable, not fickle, nor changeable as if it were founded yesterday upon the sand, but, "You have founded them forever."

153-155. Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forget Your Law. Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to Your Word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes. If they sought that salvation, they would cease to be wicked—they would find salvation—but while they follow out their wicked ways, they get further and further away from anything like salvation.

156-158. Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to Your judgments. Many are my persecutors and my enemies; yet do I not decline from Your testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Your Word. It is enough to make any man grieve that the Word of God, which is so right, so just, so good, should be despised! What madness is this which is in the hearts of men, that they despise the best of the best?

159. Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your loving kindness. It is a fair argument. As one friend may say to another, "Consider how I love you." As a child might say to his angry father when he is about to chasten him, "My father, I love you, although I have transgressed. Look at my heart and see how I love you, notwithstanding all the mistakes of my character and even the faults that I have committed."

160, 161. Your Word is true from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your Word. "Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart stands in awe of—them? No, but, "of Your Word."

162-166. I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil. I hate and abhor lying: but Your Law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments. Present duty, future expectation. It is no use our hoping for great things unless we cultivate good things. God will make tomorrow bright— let us make today holy.

167, 168. My soul has kept Your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You

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