



1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!
2 Blessed are those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!
3 They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.

4 You have commanded us
To keep Your precepts diligently.

5 Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!

6 Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.

7 I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.

8 I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!



Beth

9 How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.

Ps. 119:1-8 passage notes

Other than verse 115, verses 1-3 are the only verses of Psalm 119 that are not spoken directly to God. (“Blessed are those who keep His testimonies,” says verse 2, not “your testimonies.”) They thus form an introduction for the prayer of the rest of the chapter.

Andrew Bonar gives this section the title “The pilgrim setting out.” It’s a perfect image for the journey of the psalmist, who is about to extol the wonders of God’s word from A to Z (from *Aleph* to *Taw*, actually); for the believer, as he follows God’s law through life; and even for us, as we set out to memorize the psalm. Think of the first three verses as the words on a sign placed for motivation and exhortation at the very beginning of the trail. The image of the pilgrimage will be repeated later, most notably in verse 54: “Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” Memorization, to stick with the image, is the pilgrim’s staff; it offers the pilgrim support, and keeps him in touch always with God’s path.

There is a tight connection between verses 5 and 6. This may not seem unusual to you now, but it does not happen all that often between consecutive verses in this psalm. There is also a connection between verses 5 and 8. In verse 5, the psalmist recognizes his need to follow God’s statutes, and recognizes also his own tendency to wander from them. In verse 8 he expresses a firm decision: “I *will* keep your statutes.” With this determination to follow God, he sets out on his journey--still acknowledging, though, his tendency to wander, and pleading with God to remain with him even when he strays. “In his resolve he remembers his weakness,” notes Alexander Maclaren. And Archdeacon Aglen’s comment on verse 10 is equally applicable here: “The self-mistrust of the second clause is a proof of the reality of the first.”

“Keep your precepts” and “righteous judgements” are phrases we’ll be seeing repeatedly as we travel through the psalm.

I’ve marked the “Oh” in verses 5 and 8 because I’ve found that it’s far too easy to forget where the psalmist interjects “Oh,” “Lord,” or “Oh, Lord.” It might help to exaggerate the “Oh” as you recite the verses.

Thinking of these verses in three small groups rather than one big group should help in memorization. The first three verses form the psalm’s introduction; the last two verses are distinguished by their use of the future tense (“will praise” and “will keep”) Interestingly, in the next section, *Beth*, the future tenses occurs only in the last two verses as well.

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