

## **I Stand Amazed In Your Presence**

### **Psalm 119:161-168**

**Introduction:** 1) The hymn is entitled, “I Stand Amazed in the Presence.” The first stanza begins, “I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned unclean.” The chorus beautifully parallels and complements these words: “How marvelous! How wonderful! And my song shall ever be; How marvelous! How wonderful! Is my Savior’s love for me!”

2) The love of our Lord for condemned and undeserving sinners is an amazing and marvelous and wonderful reality. There is only one proper response to this love: to love Him in return as we stand in awe of his Word (v. 161) and praise Him continually throughout the day (v. 164).

3) Three times in stanza Sin and Shin the psalmist expresses his love for the Lord and His Word (vs. 163,165,167). He would be quick to affirm that his love for God and His law flows from the “hope for your salvation” (v. 166). I obey not to be accepted but because I am accepted. I obey not to be loved but because I am loved. First John 4:19 is a basic fundamental truth that runs from Genesis to Revelation and throughout Psalm 119, “We love [God and others] because he [God] first

loved us.” Such love prepares us for the realities of life we must be ready to face, realities that are sometimes painful and stressful.

## **I. Expect unjust persecution but trust the Lord**

**119:161**

- 1) Opposition and persecution of God’s children sometimes finds its origin in high places. Further, the persecution we experience may be totally unjust and unfair. Verse 161 begins with a straight forward recognition of this, “Princes have persecuted me without a cause.” Those in positions of power and leadership have mistreated me, taken advantage of me, hurt me, and there was no justification for what they did. What they did was wrong.
- 2) All over the world there are brothers and sisters in Christ who face severe persecution from evil and oppressive governments. They suffer imprisonment, torture, loss of jobs and homes. Some suffer martyrdom. Closer to home and regrettably, some may even suffer persecution in the form of abuse within the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men in power exploit the vulnerable through sexual abuse taking advantage of their position of power. Rather than serve like a shepherd, they ravage like wolves.
- 3) The psalmist knows the hope and cure for such persecution and mistreatment ultimately resides in the heart and the ministry of the Word. Thus he flees to God and His Word. He will not fear his persecutors. With boldness he

declares, “my heart fears only your word.” The ESV renders it, “my heart stands in awe of your word.” I will not tremble at my attackers, I will only tremble in awe and respect of you my Lord and your Word. Spurgeon is right when he writes, “We are not likely to be disheartened by persecution, or driven by it into sin, if the Word of God continually has supreme power over our minds” (*TOD*, vol. 3, 423). Evil men will do evil things. But, our good God will do good things in the midst of the evil (Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28). Flee to Him. Fear Him. Love Him. Trust Him. Stand in awe of Him. He will be all that you need (Phil 4:19).

## **II. Praise the Lord continually**

**119:162-164**

When our heart “fears” or “stands in awe” (*ESV*) at God’s Word, certain reactions or responses will be natural. First, we will “rejoice over [God’s] promise (*ESV*, “word”) like one who finds vast treasure” (v. 162). The word “treasure” or “spoil,” Motyer says, “points to the fruits of victory.” But then he adds a penetrating question, “Are we meant to take this seriously – that in the constant wear and tear of princely opposition, victory and its rich consequences come to the lover of God’s Word?” (Alec Motyer, *Psalms By The Day*, 362). I believe that is exactly what the psalmist is saying. In the midst of persecution, when the Word is doing its work in the heart, we

rejoice and celebrate at its amazing power like one who has discovered a great treasure.

There is a second and natural response to the work of the Word in the heart and the treasure that it is to us, “we hate and abhor falsehood, but we love the Lord’s instruction” (v. 163). Perhaps the persecution of those in power included lies, falsehoods, about the psalmist. How common, unfortunately, this is. People in power lie to further their agenda and get their way. And, they often succeed. We can be tempted to do the same thing if we are not careful. The remedy for such temptation is evident: I will love your Word which is the word of truth (v. 160). Loving your Word, I both hate and abhor falsehood. Hate and abhor are strong words of rejection. Ross notes “abhor” carries the idea of “loathing and disgust” (Ross, *Psalms*, vol. 3, 587). This reaction is one we have previously seen in Psalm 119 (vs. 113, 128). I love truth that flows from the very nature and character of my God. In contrast, I hate and loath every lie and falsehood (cf John 8:44).

A third response is seen in v. 164. “I praise you seven times a day for your righteous judgment.” This is a beautiful and poetic way of saying I praise you all day long and continually throughout the day for the righteous character of your words, laws, judgments. Praise is my weapon against my persecutors. Praise for your Word that I love and that fills my heart is my

victory song when others do me wrong. I am in awe of your Word. I rejoice at your Word! I love your Word. I praise you for your Word. Oh how great is the Word of God!

### **III. Enjoy the peace the Lord gives to those who love Him 119:165-166**

The praise of our lips (v. 164) will give way to peace in our hearts (v. 165) and hope in our souls (v. 166). Because I “love your instruction,” great or abundant peace is mine. Immediately my mind goes to Phil. 4:6-7, “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” And, because my heart is at peace, at rest, “nothing can make my stumble.” Your Word clears my path so that I walk safely and securely, even when I am persecuted and people spread lies about me. I do not retaliate against them. I trust the God whose Word I love. I will make good decisions in the right way at the right time and for the right reasons because I love and I am led by the Word of God.

Peace in our heart and confidence in our walk now gives way to hope in our salvation, hope in our deliverance and rescue. There is a confident expectation that God will come through in the most difficult and painful situations. The proof or evidence of this confidence is provided at the end of

verse 166, “I carry out your commands.” Spurgeon says, “Those who place least reliance upon good works are very frequently those who have most of them” (*TOD*, vol. 3, 424). Knowing what salvation promises, I delight in doing what the Word commands. William Van Gemeren puts it like this, “In anticipation of that great day of “salvation,” the psalmist gives himself to hopeful waiting (Gen 49:18) and to the practice of godliness” (*Psalms*, EBC, 888).

#### **IV. Keep the Lord’s Word with all your soul**

**119:167-168**

Verses 167-168 provide a fitting summation to stanza Sin and Shin. For the third time the psalmist affirms his love for the Word of God (vs. 163, 165, 167). There is also a two-fold concluding pledge to “obey” or “keep” (*ESV*) God’s Word. Living in abundance of God’s *hesed*, his “faithful love” (v. 159), the psalmist declares 1) “I obey your decrees” (v. 167) and 2) “I obey your precepts and decrees” (v. 168). Why does he make such a promise to the Lord? The answer is also two-fold: 1) “I love your decrees greatly” (v. 167, *ESV* “exceedingly”) and 2) “for all my ways are before you.” The psalmist knows “that everything he does and everywhere he goes is fully known to God” (Ross, *Psalms*, vol. 3, 589). Every action, every word, every thought and every emotion is before the watchful eye of an omnipresent and omniscient God (Job 34:21). And, he is at peace before the Lord because he

loves the Lord's Word with all his heart (v. 161) and soul (v. 167). He rejoices in the Word (v. 162) and obeys the Word (vs. 166, 167, 168). He hopes in the Lord's salvation and is certain he will experience it to the fullest measure. His is not an arrogant posture but rather a humble walk before an awe inspiring God. Thomas Manton's insights on this verse are quite worthy of our careful mediation, "You are in the sight of God, whether you think so or not....What a noble thing it is always to live in the sight of God...The profit is exceedingly great; by conversing with God often, we become like him" (*Psalm 119*, vol. 3, 437).

### **Conclusion**

It is a song I remember from the time I was a small boy. I loved it from the beginning of my life and I pray it will be my song until the very end. It captures well the heart of this text. It captures well the essence of the Christian life.

“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way! Let us do His good will;  
He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, For there's no other way,  
To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.”