

Ps 119:153-156 Look upon my affliction and rescue me, for I do not forget Thy law. Ps 154 Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Thy word. 155 Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek Thy statutes. 156 Great are Thy mercies, O LORD; revive me according to Thine ordinances.

Review from the beginning of the twentieth section. Verse 153 is a request for God's understanding and help as the Psalmist resolves to remember God's word. Verse 154 is a request for God defense and power from the word. In verse 155 and 156, we see a comparison between those who do not follow God and the mercies available to those who do. As we move to verse 157, we are reminded of the tense situation our Psalmist is in as he recalls those against him. Then, once again, he resolves to remain faithful to God.

**Ps 119:157-159 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, [Yet] I do not turn aside from Thy testimonies. 158 I behold the treacherous and loathe [them], because they do not keep Thy word. 159 Consider how I love Thy precepts; revive me, O LORD, according to Thy lovingkindness.**

Psalm 119:157 begins with the statement, "Many are my persecutors and my adversaries".

Throughout this Psalm we see numerous references to the persecution of the writer. The word used in the beginning of verse 157 give us the scope in number – many persecutors. You and I may have felt at one time or another that someone is against us, maybe perhaps even a few individuals were making life difficult. David has an entire army pursuing him with orders from their king to do him harm. Persecutors are those who have hostile intent toward another, chasing after, and hunting down their target. Those against the Psalmist are also described as adversaries – enemies and opponents seeking to cause trouble. This is certainly more than someone not liking us! It is active employment towards the harm of another. A picture of pursuit to do damage is painted. We are hardly able to understand the scope of fear that our Psalmist is feeling.

However, in spite of the Psalmist's circumstances, we are consistently reminded that David remains steadfast in following God's word. Most of us are unable to relate to the type and severity of danger described in this verse. Few of us have experienced a direct personal assault simply because of who we are and where God has placed us. The example of our writer is to look towards God even in his extreme affliction. The example we have is not just one of David hiding and waiting until danger passes, he is actively aware of his dependence on God. Those who are after him are not going to cause the Psalmist to change his thoughts or loyalty or purpose.

You have heard the idiom, 'go with the flow'. *Urbandictionary.com* defines this term as not having a particularly strong opinion on something, and thus following the majority. *The Cambridge Dictionary* gives this interpretation of the phrase: to do what other people are doing or to agree with other people because it is the easiest thing to do.

**Is it possible to be tempted to concede your loyalty for the sake of peace or 'getting along with others'? In all circumstances do we remain steadfast in *our* commitment to God in thought, word and *action*?**

Ps 44:18 Our heart has not turned back, and our steps have not deviated from Thy way,

Ps 119:51 The arrogant utterly deride me, [Yet] I do not turn aside from Thy law.

### **Which is greater – those who are against you or the power of God?**

The Psalmist goes on to write the following words in verse 158.

**Ps 119:158 I behold the treacherous and loathe [them], because they do not keep Thy word.**

**What is your reaction when you see someone acting carelessly?** We have all seen someone not pay attention when they drive, we may be guilty of this ourselves. I am guilty of running into an individual in the grocery store with my cart because I was not paying close attention. These instances however, are accidental. The situation David is referring to is purposeful, choosing to reject rules. In general, it pains us to witness rebellion. Laws are put in place for our safety. When they are not followed, it discredits those who are in authority. Spiritually, when God's law is discarded, we take a personal affront because God is holy and we understand His love. Casting aside God's truths brings dishonor to His name. **Are you grieved when God's glory is treated with no regard?**

The 'treacherous' in this verse are transgressors. *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary* defines this word using the words 'to act covertly'. These are men having no regard for the law, they are deceitful, and they are traitors to the Truth.

*Matthew Henry's Commentary* says, "Those that hate sin truly hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God and a violation of His word".

To be grieved means we react with sorrow towards those who do not follow God. Imagine for a moment the purpose for your life as God's child. His truth is what drives you, His truth brings comfort and joy, His truth gives understanding and purpose. Take these blessings away and we have a life with no purpose except self. There is no hope for any lasting comfort in troubles, no joy amidst difficult circumstances, and no understanding of who God is and what He has done for His children. This is a description of an empty and unfulfilled life, a life that is at the mercy of sin's reign and power.

Earlier in this Psalm, we read how David was moved to tears knowing that individuals were not observing God's ways (Ps 119:136).

Remember the account in the book of Mark where Jesus was grieved as He looked around at the hardness of the hearts of those watching as He cured the leper's hand (Mark 3:5).

There is real grief in knowing others choose to deny Christ. Their choices will lead them to ruin. The Psalmist's reaction is not born out of sorrow for the mistreatment of himself but rather the neglect of God's word. In other words, our concern for others is not because they don't believe us, rather because they don't believe God. We don't hate the individual, we hate the sin against God.

Read the charge below, written in the 1600's, regarding the sorrow for the lost.

"Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? You need not go far to find objects for your pity: look but into your streets,

or into the next house to you, and you will probably find some. Have you never an ignorant, an unregenerate neighbour that sets his heart on things below, and neglects eternity? What blessed place do you live in, where there is none such? If there be not some of them in thine own family, it is well; and yet art thou silent? Dost thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them; and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? If thou knewest but a remedy for their diseases thou wouldst tell it them, or else thou wouldst judge thyself guilty of their death." --Richard Baxter (1615--1691), in *"The Saints' Everlasting Rest."*

Here is a summary portion of Psalm 119:158 found in the *Treasury of David*. "A righteous man cannot but be grieved at the sins of the wicked. He sees in them, 1. The violation of the divine law which he loves, 2. Ungrateful rebellion against the God he worships, and 3. Contempt for the gospel of salvation and the blood of Christ.

Certainly we are caused to ask ourselves if our sorrow over the lost has moved us to action in the words we share and the encouragement we offer to others. I think of God's immeasurable patience towards us and can't help but realize I often lack in patience towards others. **Do we give up easily or does our grieving heart cause us to remain steadfast in trying to share with those we love?** It can be awkward sharing with family and friends, especially when they have previously voiced their disinterest in spiritual things. We may be uncomfortable, it may not be the most enjoyable thing we look forward to. **CONSIDER. Was someone willing to step forward and share Truth with you?**

The Psalmist is being persecuted because he has stepped forward as God's child, a follower of God's Truth. It can be easy to lose heart as we witness sin around us. It can be discouraging even as we see our own fight with sin. But, we can remember God's promises and be refreshed to continue forward. The Psalmist, after acknowledging his grief over the rejection of God from others, goes back to the truth of his own love for God's word. It is because of God's power in his life that David is able to follow God. He continually focuses on God's lovingkindness.

**Ps 119:159 Consider how I love Thy precepts; revive me, O LORD, according to Thy lovingkindness.**

God's mercy towards us should be an encouragement in all circumstances. The God of gods and Lord of lords has reached down to His children in love and showers them with His favor. In Christ, we have the promise of salvation and the power to please Him through obedience to His word.

Notice the Psalmist repeats the request for God to lift Him out of discouragement throughout this Psalm. The need to be revived, strengthened, and quickened paints a picture of someone who is fully dependent on God's mercy. **What can we learn from this example?**

The Psalmist's request is not for his own pursuits or pleasures but always for the benefit of God's glory. We cannot make a plea to God because of our merit, but we can approach God because of Jesus' sacrifice and our love for Him.

**When we feel attacked, do we remain faithful? Do we sorrow for those who are unsaved? When we are weak, where do we go for strength?**

Ps 119:157-159 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, [Yet] I do not turn aside from Thy testimonies. <sup>158</sup> I behold the treacherous and loathe [them], because they do not keep Thy word. <sup>159</sup> Consider how I love Thy precepts; revive me, O LORD, according to Thy lovingkindness.

God will give us what we need to continue to move forward in our relationship with Him, all for His glory.