

Women's Bible Study

Psalm 119:161-162

Ps 119:161-162 Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of Thy words. 162 I rejoice at Thy word, as one who finds great spoil.

Verse 161 begins our twenty-first section of Psalm 119. As there are only twenty-two sections, we are turning the corner to completion of this Psalm! The general theme throughout Psalm 119 is God's Word – His commands, testimonies, ordinances, laws, and truths given to us through the careful and inspired writings of God's children. God's word is used as instruction and encouragement, as reminder and conviction. Our Psalmist, David, shares his struggles and his victories, always attesting to the value and need of God's word in his life.

We move on to verse 161 which begins with the twenty-first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter SCHIN. This verse starts off with a negative followed by a positive.

First, "Princes persecute me without cause" is the complaint we read from our Psalmist. Truly, if anyone has ever been attacked, David can claim to be among the elite of that group. Earlier in Psalm 119:23 we read the same thought, "Even though princes sit and talk against me" and in verse 157 – "Many are my persecutors and my adversaries". We see the addition of the phrase "without cause" in verse 161.

CONSIDER. It is one thing to experience hostility toward yourself when you understand what you have done to offend others. It is quite another thing to have hostility directed toward yourself when you truly have done nothing to warrant a negative reaction. Our Psalmist is proclaiming his innocence. The wages of war against him are without reason on his part. This is difficult. You can almost hear the questions that may be going through David's mind, 'Why is this happening?' and 'What have I done?'

In *Adam Clarke's Commentary* this explanation is given: "In reference to David, the plotting against him in Saul's court, and the dangers he ran in consequence of the jealousies of the Philistine lords while he sojourned among them, are well known". David did not give any cause for Saul to act against him but he was seen as a traitor and an enemy to the government which led to his persecution. Not only did the Psalmist have the king plotting to destroy him, but those who were in authority under the king and Saul's army were employed in David's demise.

Our expectation is that the government or those in authority would protect the innocent. It was not the case then and often it is not the case now. Corruption preys upon those who are weak and guiltless. Read Jesus's words in John 15:25 – "But [they have done this] in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE'".

Phillip Doddridge was a theologian and preacher born in the 18th Century. Here are his words contained in the *Treasury of David* in regards to the innocent persecution of saints: "Without a cause. I settle it as an established point with me, that the more diligently and faithfully I serve Christ, the greater reproach and the more injury I must expect. I have drank deep of the cup of slander and reproach of late, but I am in no wise discouraged; no, nor by, what is much harder to bear, the unsuccessfulness of my endeavours to mend this bad world".

John 15 tells those who live for Christ to expect persecution and insult and hate from those who do not know Him. Beginning in verse 18, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before [it hated] you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

Back to Psalm 119:161. Here we have written for us the complaint of David as he is unjustly attacked by the governing authority in the land. David proclaims his innocence. He has a choice to make. Either he can fight and avenge himself or he can turn his eyes toward God who is in control of all things and who is more powerful than any rulers who have been appointed. The second part of Psalm 119:161 records for us David’s response and our example to follow – “**But my heart stands in awe of Thy words**”.

‘**But my heart**’ – everything about me, my heart, my will, my intellect, my feelings and my understanding.

‘**Stands in awe**’ – exactly what it says – an overwhelming feeling of wonder or admiration; a feeling of profound respect for someone or something; fear; reverence.

John Wesley’s Notes on the Old and New Testaments explains awe as fearing God’s offence and displeasure more than man’s wrath.

‘**Of thy word**’ – God’s spoken word, His actions, His commandments, His counsel, His glory, His judgment, His manner; anything and everything pertaining to God; His promises, His power, His provision, His purpose and His work.

Bottom line – David fears God more than man! The Psalmist had an opportunity to end his plight from Saul’s pursuit. Recorded for us in 1 Samuel, we see the choice David made was to honor God and do what was right rather than avenge himself and end his own misery.

1Sa 24:10-11 "Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but [my eye] had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD'S anointed. "Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it."

Lu 12:4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

Are we steadfast in keeping our focus on God when we are mistreated or feel threatened? Do we honor God even above our own safety? Do we look to God for help and deliverance rather than trying to find our own solution?

Ps 119:86 All Thy commandments are faithful; they have persecuted me with a lie; help me!

Earlier in Psalm 119 David claims boldness in his speech, even before those who are against him. He doesn’t just tolerate their persecution and remain silent hoping for the circumstance to pass. He speaks of God’s truth.

Ps 119:46 I will also speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be ashamed.

God is jealous for His children. Let our resolve be to fear God more than man.

“Every gracious soul stands in awe of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so nothing appears, in the power and wrath of man, at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world. The heart that stands in awe of God's word is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.” *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*

“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.” *Treasury of David*

It is all too common for us to find a ‘reason’ for why we act in a way that is against God. We are all familiar with trying to explain away an angry word or action, a bad attitude or feeling of dislike against someone, and a general disposition of impatience with those who ‘bug’ us. In all areas we would do well to consider that when we sin, we smite God. Put in the proper perspective, when our ‘heart stands in awe of God’s words’, we will be reminded to keep God first in our thoughts, actions and words.

Ps 119:162 I rejoice at Thy word, as one who finds great spoil.

The word rejoice means to be bright, to be cheerful, to be glad, joyful, and to make mirth. Consider when something is bright, light is reflected. This is not a picture of a dim light but it is a brilliant light such as the afternoon sun shining in through a window. It makes me think of a feeling also of the sun as winter begins to turn into spring. Our dogs love to bask in the sun, soaking in all of its warmth.

Mirth is an uncommon word. Its meaning is great merriment, gleefulness and hilarity. Overall when combining these definitions, we get the idea of great happiness. God’s word causes great joy just as when you find treasure! The writer of this Psalm is able to proclaim his joy in God’s commands even while he is feeling distress.

We do not typically associate someone who is rejoicing with someone who is experiencing difficulties. Yet, this is the picture painted for us. Joy in the midst of trial. In the book of Matthew we read that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure that, when found, produces joy (Matthew 13:44). One commentary states there is peace found in truth and freedom from temptation also (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*)

When we are busy sincerely seeking God’s Word, we are unlikely to follow sin. Do we rejoice in God’s Word? Do we take pleasure in discovering the truths that have been written for us to understand? There is an active element in Psalm 119:162. It speaks of ‘finding’ great spoil. Consider what it means to find something. Searching involves determination. We read God’s Word, we hear it and we think about it when we seek to understand it and find the treasures within.

Ps 119:72 The law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver [pieces].

Ps 119:111 I have inherited Thy testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

Jer 15:16 Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

These words are from the *Treasury of David*: “He trembled at the word of the Lord, and yet rejoiced at it. He compares his joy to that of one who has been long in battle, and has at last won the victory and is dividing the spoil...Whether we come by the truth as finders or as warriors fighting for it, the heavenly treasure should be equally dear to us”.

“Then how much more apt and apposite are these high praises to the book of God, rightly called the Bible or the book as if it were, as indeed it is, both for fitness of terms and

fullness of truth, the only book to winch (as Luther saith) all the books in the world are but waste paper. It is called the word, by way of eminency." (*Thomas Adams*)

Read Psalm 119:161-162 again.

["Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of Thy words. I rejoice at Thy word, as one who finds great spoil".](#)

The word of God is to be feared more than the actions of men. At all times we can find exceeding joy in God's truth. What does this mean for us today? Perhaps we do not need to be so concerned what others may think of us or even what they may do to us. The important factor in our thoughts and actions should be the reverence we have for God's word. This reverence will be evident in our thoughts, actions and words. We will be kept from discouragement when others speak or act poorly against us; we will avoid acting in a manner of retaliation toward unfairness; and we will speak with words that are true and helpful. Seeking to live in a way that honors God above all else will cause us to have joy in all circumstances. The joy we find in pleasing God will permeate our lives. We have a priceless treasure in the word of God!