

A Servant's Heart

Psalm 119:121-128

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Introduction: Tonight we come to the 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, “*ain*”, where each of the 8 verses start with the same letter. There are parallels in this section to the previous. As long as there is sin in the world there will be oppressors & the oppressed. We noted last week that the people of God have always had enemies. Yet the psalmist here reveals his servant's heart. In this world of good versus evil, he declares his dependence on the Lord & his devotion for the Lord (& His Word). I divide these 8 verses into 3 parts: The relationship of the servant & Master (:124-125) is sandwiched between obedience vs. oppression (:121-123) & law-breakers vs. law-keepers (:127-128). As we examine the heart of the psalmist, compare your own heart to his. Do you have evidence of a servant's heart?

I. Obedience vs. oppression (:121-123)

A. **Obedience** by the psalmist (:121a, :122a) >

1. The psalmist's conduct:

- a. “*I have done...*” – preterite tense – I have done, am doing, & will do...
- b. “The prophet is probably not so much speaking of his official, as of his personal conduct, his practical life” (Plumer).

2. The Lord's character:

- a. “*Surety*” – “Undertake for me; give pledges; answer for me; take up my cause.”
- b. “Evidently the prophet speaks of his peril as extreme (2 times), & feels that none but God can effectually defend him” (Plumer).

B. **Oppression** by the “*proud*.” (:121b, :122b) >

1. The description of the “*proud*” & “*oppressors*”:

- a. The “*proud*” are presumptuous – “Dominate pride will deceive & ruin anyone” (Plumer).
- b. The “*oppressors*” – from the verb to oppress, defraud, deceive – “Truth & fairness never enter into the work of the oppressor” (Plumer).

2. The desire of the “*proud*”: seeking to overcome & overwhelm the godly.

C. **Outcome** of the psalmist (:123) >

1. “*Eyes fail for Thy salvation...*” – about to faint waiting for his deliverance by God.
2. “*Word of Thy righteousness*” - “...is the engagement of a just God, who cannot deceive, or be indifferent to the miseries that befall His people” (Plumer). [Consider Joseph in prison]

Summary: “The promise of deliverance which Jehovah, as a righteous & therefore a faithful God, is pledged to fulfill” (Kirkpatrick).

II. Servant/Master relationship (:124-125)

A. Servant to Master > “*Deal with Thy servant according to Thy mercy...*” (:124a).

1. The psalmist is asking for “*mercy*” (covenant lovingkindness & loyalty, *hesed*), & not justice.
2. The psalmist is pleading as a servant to his master.

B. Servant to Master > “*teach me Thy statutes*” (:124b).

1. “*Teach*” suggests his humility & intense desire to learn.
2. He desires a fuller knowledge of God's Word to overcome his despondency of verse 123.

C. Servant to Master > “Give me understanding...” (:125).

1. He declares for the third time – “Thy servant” – “We who rejoice that we are sons of God are by no means the less delighted to be His servants” (Spurgeon).
2. “He makes his character of servant the ground of his plea for further instruction in the love, knowledge & practice of the truth” (Plumer).

III. Law-breakers vs. law-keepers (:126-128)

A. Law-breakers void God’s Word (:126) >

1. “Men void God’s law, or make it of none effect when they *break* it, or when they act as if it were not in existence, or as if were not law, but mere advice, or when they adopt principles of morals antagonistic to it, or principles of interpretation which subvert it” (Plumer).
2. The psalmist pleads with the LORD that it is “time” (literally, “high time” – cf. Rom. 13:11) for Him to intervene, for Him to work.

Summary: “When God’s law has been broken by His own people (Israel) & they seem to get away with it, it seems that God is inactive; this is a prayer that He would vindicate His own justice for the sake of His faithful” (ESV Study Bible note).

B. Law-keepers love God’s Word (:127-128) >

1. The psalmist loves God’s commandments (again preterite tense – past, present, future).
2. The psalmist esteems all God’s precepts (“esteem” – uniformly & impartially embrace).
3. The psalmist hates “every false way” – the path of falsehood:
 - a. He was “a good lover or a good hater, but he was never a waverer” (Spurgeon).
 - b. Do we hate the lie, that which is false? See Psalm 97:10.

Conclusion: While believers will be constantly subject to oppressors in this life, consider their lot after death. “What an awful place hell must be, where the passions of men are let loose upon each other in every form of cruelty” (Plumer). Compare that with the oft repeated “boast” about hell: “That’s where all my friends are...” The psalmist in verse one seems to suggest that he will not oppress others, desiring that they not oppress him. We need to be reminded to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44). He gladly call himself a “servant” (3 times). Compare others who declared the same or earned the title: Elisha (II Kings 3:11, “...which poured water on the hands of Elijah.); Moses (Joshua 1:2, “...Moses My servant... ”); Job (Job 1:8, “...Hast thou considered My servant Job...). It has been said, “I am a servant of the Lord, just don’t treat me like one.” The human servant needed to know what his master wanted & expected. How much more the servants of the Lord need to know about their Master – His business, mind, will, purpose – in order to complete His service. The psalmist’s prayer for God to work could be our prayer as well. Should we not also pray for Him to work in our lives & for His revival of God’s people even yet today? And note again the psalmist’s love for the Word of God, exceeding even a desire for refined gold. “The good man’s delight in God’s law is unreserved, he believes in all God’s precepts concerning all things” (Spurgeon). We should know that His way is right & it is best! Would you be considered a servant of the Lord tonight?