

“The Word of God” (Ps. 119)

ALEPH (1-8) (Begin part 1)

1. Structure
 - a. Greatest Alphabetic Acrostic Psalm
 - b. It's the Hebrew alphabet (22 letters) which each have 8 lines (verses) (octonaries) for each letter.
2. Content
 - a. Theme is God's Word
 - b. As there are 8 lines for each Hebrew letter, there are 8 predominant terms used to describe a facet, emphasis, or characteristic of God's revealed Word.
 - c. Briefly, they are as follows:
 - i. Law – or here in verse 1, ‘teaching’ (yarah) similar to Torah. It is generally speaking God's revealed instruction.
 - ii. Testimony – witness i.e. God's own personal witness about himself! We can read God's Word for information and instruction but supreme is the intent to know Him! *Longing.
 - iii. Precepts – detailed application of His Word
 - iv. Statutes – permanence of His Word
 - v. Commandments – issued for obedience
 - vi. Ordinances – Judgments i.e. righteous principles which command adherence. Vs. 7b judgments & righteousness = principles and practice of them.
 - vii. Word – the revealed truth of YHWH spoken by YHWH himself
 - viii. Promise – also translated as ‘word.’ However, promise (imrah) is different form “word” (dabhar). See e.g. v. 11. From the root verb “to say.” Everything God says (His Word) is purely true and hence a promise!
 - d. Of course there are other terms to describe God's revelation and others are found in this Psalm.
 - e. It is the longest Psalm and it is as weighty as it is bulky, as noted in the commentary “The Treasury of David Vol. 3” Spurgeon. Though His Word to us has been rightly canonized, it is paradoxically eternal. And though this may be the a-z Psalm of His Word; it is like a “sea of glass before the eternal throne, it yet contains within its depths an ocean of fire, and those who devoutly gaze into it shall not only see the brightness, but feel the glow of sacred flame” (noted in same commentary).
 - f. What is of more urgency than to know thy Creator? And we can only know Him via His revealed Word. Therefore, this is not merely to receive instruction but to learn of the One behind the Word and who is the WORD!
3. Practice (Objective)
 - a. The Word is not stagnant nor dead but alive and interactive. We thus read the Word (God to us) and then pray the Word (us to God). Prayer is thus an exercise which is largely dependent upon us knowing the Word because we are speaking with the Word! Therefore we can and should pray the Psalter and more Scripture back to God. After all God does not verbally answer us but He has given us His Revelation! What can we say or pray that is wiser than His Word?
 - b. Not mere Information but Transformation!
 - i. To see God more clearly
 - ii. Follow God more nearly
 - iii. Love God more dearly

iv. Trust God more freely

(BEGIN PART 2)

4. Integrated Righteousness (vv. 1-2)
 - a. Begins not unlike Psalm 1 – a beatitude of delighting in the Law of God.
 - b. And though it begins with the blessed proclamation this first octonary ends with a plea of reception.
 - c. Thus beginning with God – pure perfection – the Law of His Word is rightly acknowledged as the standard. And because His Word is pure, we ought love and embrace it even though we fall enormously short of it.
 - d. But the more we go from acknowledging it to embracing it, the more blessed we are. Blessed are those who are ‘integrated’ in the way (of God’s teaching). Integrated means wholly/fully (whole sale – full scale) integrity w/ regard to it – integrity.
 - e. “Preserving” seems to indicate from acknowledgement to embracing and from embracing to expressing (promoting/preserving). The ‘walk’ is a steady progress (more like a stock market line graph w/ a staggering yet upward trajectory). It is an oft unseen quiet advance in the immediate.
 - f. Such a beatitude is indicative of the integrated life; a life where one is integrated into his intended purpose. And such a blessedness supposes that the precepts are not irksome or grievous. Although honesty is not easy, it is the best policy and those who walk in it never regret doing so!
 - g. The relationship of verses 1 & 2 regarding God’s Law (or literally, ‘teaching’) is that it is first accepted (heart) and then expressed (walk). It is internal and external – an integration. The ‘heart’ and the feet that ‘walk,’ are not unlike other couplets in Scripture sighting the head and hands indicative of internal and external marks of integration.
 - h. “Seeking” whole heartedly (2) connotes frequenting self where God is known to be found! When one is serious, he will not merely play a game of ‘going to church’ but go to God’s Word and where it is faithfully preached.
 - i. Alec Motyer worded it this way, “‘Preserving his testimonies’ is not putting them into the freezer! It is finding them a succulent meal whereby we ‘feed on his word.’”
 - j. It is easy to even study God’s Word and yet remain distant from Him. Technicality must yield to communion. This is where mere information becomes transformation. Where acknowledging or even embracing becomes natural expression. Seeking as it were a treasure. And, of course, there is no greater treasure than knowing God!
 - k. Whole hearted seeker is the one who has encountered God. No one has sought God and all have gone astray says the same author (see. Ps. 14:1-3). No one can keep the commandments until they have met the One who issued them. Israel was first delivered and then given the Law.
 - l. After Spurgeon (in his own way) wrote of the above reality (paradox of first being blessed before seeking blessing), he offered this pithy phrase; “a heart may be divided and not broken, and it may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole, and it never can be whole until it is broken.”
5. Ideal Resolve (vv. 3-4)
 - a. The negative (3) and the positive (4). The blessed ones are those who refrain from deviance, lies, perversion (3) and to walk (live/dwell) in the positive “ways.”

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- b. The Instruction of God’s Word is not just prohibition but promotion for there are both sins of commission and omission. A monk may be blameless regarding commission, but we are called to a great commission of good – not mere omission of evil. God requires not just passive obedience but active righteousness.
 - c. In fact, it has been said that the surest way to abstain from evil is to be fully occupied in doing good.
 - d. It is thus, here in verse four that ‘total keeping’ is seen. The blessed one is in route to keep to the full brim of each precept of the Law. Isn’t this seen in Jesus? How He kept it to the full (Mat. 5:17-20 cf. Jn. 5:19).
 - e. You may say, at this point (if not already) who else can do such? Well, here is where the Psalmist does just that. →
6. Impactful Recognition (v. 5)
- a. “Oh that” is a term of longing in severity. It is the one who has already been set on the path of righteousness who sees clearly how sinful and short he falls of obedience. Isn’t this our longing?
 - b. Don’t we long, to long to walk blameless? It is the One whose standard is perfect who is the One to whom the Psalmist requests patience for his failures (v. 8).
 - c. It is only the child of God who rightly sees what true righteousness is and though she falls short of it – upholds it in proclamation, admiration, and seeks conformation to it.
 - d. It should also be noted that when others affirm a subpar standard and excuse us or themselves that we should hold fast to the truth of righteousness. If others are not ashamed, I will be ashamed of myself when I do iniquity; said Spurgeon. He went on paradoxically: “No shame in the presence of man will hinder us when the fear of God has taken full possession of our minds.” →
 - e. This, Spurgeon wrote, because where others may excuse sin, we will continue to call it out and even be reviled for certain righteous actions. It isn’t hard to see where true believers are condemned for standing on the precepts of God. Too many (masses) of churches have lessened God’s precepts and testimonies so as to be relevant and culturally – if not politically correct – sadly enough!
 - f. If we truly long to keep the King’s statutes, we will certainly not be ashamed of them! To dishonor the King’s word is to dishonor the King Himself!
7. Ideal Results (vv. 6-7)
- a. “Then I would not be embarrassed.” Isa. 28:16 cf. Ro. 10:11.
 - b. God’s Law of man’s law? Which is our delight?
8. Intimate Reality (v. 8)
- a. Determined to keep God’s statutes (a) yet a plea to not be forsaken (b).
 - b. There is seen the realistic and necessity of both resolution and dependency.
 - c. It is pointed out that verse one begins rather confident and committed whilst verse 8 ends with the horror of potential abandonment. Oh what an urgent proclamation!
 - d. This is why I focus on preaching the Word and nothing else! Either we acknowledge, embrace, and express the truth or we have abandoned it and thus ourselves from the Creator.
 - e. But to those who trust in Him, He will never leave or forsake (Deut. 31:6, 8; Heb. 13:5).
 - f. Our lives are like the paradoxical octonary. “I have determined to trust your Word” yet, “I have failed to live it in full.” Even the great Apostle Paul lamented and celebrated the paradox that is the life of God’s child (Ro. 7:15-25). Christ is the answer to the paradox.
9. Identified Recap

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- a. As Alec Motyer often (if not always) rightly discerned, he titled each section respectively:
 - i. Integrated Life (1-2)
 - ii. Moral Conformity (3-4)
 - iii. Longing (5) *which he also entitles the octonary. Others have titled is “Blameless” or “Undivided Heart.”
 - iv. Rewards (6-7)
 - v. Commitment (8)
- b. I sure don’t disagree as He always conveyed the intent of the text so faithfully but I may infuse a nuance viz. results = rewards and provision of commitment (Christ).