

(Sin, Shin)

161) Princes persecute me
without cause, But my heart
stands in awe of Your words.

162) I rejoice at Your word, As
one who finds great spoil.

163) I hate and despise falsehood,
But I love Your law.

164) Seven times a day I praise
You, because of Your
righteous ordinances.

165) Those who love Your law have
great peace, and nothing causes
them to stumble.

166) I hope for Your salvation, O Lord,
and do Your commandments.

167) My soul keeps Your testimonies,
and I love them exceedingly.

168) I keep Your precepts and Your
testimonies, For all my ways are
before You.

We now come to our next to the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet, which is the letter “S.” This is letter number 21 in the Hebrew alphabet; it is letter number 18 in the Greek alphabet and letter number 19 in the English alphabet.

Now in Hebrew the letter “s” is pronounced either sin or shin. The actual Hebrew “s” letter looks like a “W” in Hebrew. There is a dot that appears above the letter either on the left side or the right side. If on the letter it appears on the right side (W), it is pronounced “sh.” If on the letter it appears on the left side (W), it is pronounced “s.”

We may remember that every verse of this section will begin with the letter “s.” So each verse will begin with a word that is either an “s” sound because the dot is on the left or a “sh” sound because the dot is on the right.

The “s” sound which features the dot on the left is seen in verses **161, 162** and **166**.

The “sh” sound which features the dot on the right is seen in verses **163, 164, 165, 167, 168**.

The purpose of this Psalm is to magnify the written Word of God and to communicate that the written Word of God is to be studied systematically just as you would study an alphabet.

Now as we glance down through this section there is one verb that shows up multiple times and it is the verb “love.” That word is found in verses **163, 165, 167**. The Hebrew word “love” means to love something in the sense that you desire it and breathe after it (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 15).

The point of this section seems to be this:

THE ABILITY TO SURVIVE IN LIFE WHEN SUFFERING NEGATIVE THINGS WHICH YOU DO NOT DESERVE IS TO STAY FOCUSED ON LOVING THE WORD OF GOD.

There are times when we do things and make bad decisions and choices that lead to us suffering. In those cases we deserve to suffer. But there are also times when we suffer and we have not done anything to deserve it. This was one of those times for this writer.

As **verse 161** says, there were leaders who were persecuting him without a cause. Apparently they were powerful, high-ranking, prominent officials who were making life miserable for him. In fact, the word “persecute” means they were pursuing him and tracking him (*Ibid.*, p. 758). They would not leave him alone.

They were not justified in any way in what they were doing. There was no cause for this. Most people don’t mind if it is fair, but this was not fair. So what we see here is a critical key to coping with negative things in life and the key is love the Word of God.

There are some amazing attitudes to see here concerning the Word of God. This individual had a real passion for the Word of God. Since this is the “s” section, we will use a word that begins with that letter. This writer took a stance toward the Word of God that is impressive:

STANCE #1 – His heart stood in awe of the Word of God. **119:161**

We suspect that this was part of the reason why he was being persecuted; he had a tremendous reverence and respect for the Word of God. Notice his reverence for God came from his heart. He had a heart and mind that stood in awe of God’s Word.

The actual word “awe” is one that means he has such a reverence for God’s Word that he actually approached it with a trembling fear (*Ibid.*, p. 671). This writer not only stood in awe of God, but he stood in awe of God’s Word.

We are living in a time when most places of worship do not have this attitude toward God’s Word. They have replaced a reverence for God’s Word with plays, concerts, movies, bands and politics. But the Word of God should be revered at church and it should be carefully taught at church.

Charles Spurgeon cited a minister who said this: “I would advise you all that come to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the Word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic that remaineth upon earth, that you bring with you the fear of God and that you do it with all reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory of frivolous disputations, but to the honor of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and others” (*Psalms*, p. 564).

STANCE #2 – He found great joy in the Word of God. **119:162**

This writer found great joy in the Word of God. In fact, he was as happy to hear the Word of God as one would be who found great riches. He saw the Word of God as the most valuable thing in his life.

Back in this time when one conquered something, they typically would take the spoils. The concept of “spoils” came to refer to accumulating wealth or treasure. Now don’t miss the adjective. This writer viewed the Word of God like “great” spoil.

He viewed it as the greatest treasure on this earth. He found great joy in the Scriptures. Now his circumstances were not joyful, but the Scriptures were. He found great joy in the Word of God and he viewed it as one would view gaining great treasure.

STANCE #3 – He hated and despised that which was false because of God’s Word. **119:163a**

One who loves God and loves God’s Word develops a proper hatred for that which is false. God hates liars, and godly people think the same way God does. We may recall from verse 160 that “the sum of Your word is truth.” Everything in the Word of God is truth. From beginning to end, it is all truth.

This writer loved God’s truth, but he hated and despised that which was false. Mr. Spurgeon said, “Falsehood in doctrine, in life, or in speech, falsehood in any form or shape, had become utterly detestable to the Psalmist” (*Psalm*, p. 565).

That kind of hatred will exist in all who love truth. Falsehood is utterly and totally offensive and detestable to God. God will grant His grace and mercy to those who admit truth, but He hates those who are false. Both the O.T. and the N.T. speak to the fact that God hates lying and liars.

One admonition after another such as “thou shalt not bear false witness” and “do not lie to one another.” One commentator said he who lives God’s law must hate lying and liars.

STANCE #4 – He loved the Word of God. **119:163b**

The writer hated liars and lying, but he loved God’s Word. God’s Word tells the truth about sin and about salvation.

STANCE #5 – He praised God because of the Word of God. **119:164**

Now when we read this verse, let’s remind ourselves that this writer was being persecuted by enemies; but he was still praising God. The cause of the praise was the Word of God. He knew of the righteous ordinances of God that does promise deliverance for His people who love Him and His Word.

Now the text says he praised God “seven times a day.” Probably this was literally true in that seven times a day he thought about God and praised God. We also know the number seven is the number of completion, so he also could mean that every day my life was lived in complete praise to God because of the true, straight, just, right and righteous Word of God.

STANCE #6 – He found great peace in loving the Word of God. **119:165a**

Those who are dedicated to God’s written Word have a peace that is great. It is an internal peace regardless of the externals. Now this specific peace is given to one who loves God and loves God’s Word (Prov. 3:2; John 14:27). The Bible is very clear that there is no peace for the wicked (Is. 57:21).

Those who love the Word will find great peace.

STANCE #7 – He did not stumble because of the Word of God. **119:165b**

The idea behind the word “stumble” is the idea of falling to the point where one is ruined (*Ibid.*, p. 473). God is promising that those who love His Word will never stumble. He will never fall to the point that he is ruined.

When God permits one to be ruined, we may be certain He has sovereign reasons for it. We also may be certain that if God’s hand is causing it, the individual did not love God or His Word. If one loves God and His Word, God will never let that one be ruined. Solomon said exactly the same thing in Proverbs 2:10-22.

STANCE #8 – He found his hope for God’s salvation in the Word of God. **119:166**

In the midst of the storms, the writer kept hoping and obeying. Notice he realizes that salvation is God’s salvation. In spite of all of the pressure and problems he faced, he stayed faithful. Even though he was being persecuted without a cause, he kept his faith and he did not lose hope.

When we are surrounded by problems, we often cannot get away from them, but we can maintain our hope in the Lord.

STANCE #9 – His soul kept God’s Word. **119:167a**

He loved the Scriptures and he obeyed the Scriptures and he protected and guarded the Scriptures and he guarded his soul.

God could look into the soul of David and see his reverence (**161**), his rejoicing (**162**), his love (**163b, 165**), his praise (**164**) and his commitment to righteousness (**164b**).

God knew the real truth of David’s soul and he sees the real truth about ours as well.

STANCE #10 – He loved God’s Word. **119:167b**

He loved God’s Word at a great level. His soul was dedicated to the Scriptures.

STANCE #11 – He lived God’s Word knowing he lived before God. **119:168**

This writer stayed dedicated to protecting and keeping God’s Word because he knew that “all my ways are before You.”

He knew that “all” of his ways were before the seeing eye of God.