

## **THE PROMISE TO OBEY**

### **PSALM 119: 57-64**

Introduction:

I wonder how many promises I have made to God—and not kept. More than I want to remember. The young psalmist in the Great Psalm is wiser than I have been in my promises. He made his promise out of better motives than mine. He had his eyes wide-open to the hindrances that he would encounter. He also offered a sincere prayer when he made the promise. He made the promise with a keen awareness of just how difficult obedience can be.

Let us learn about these things from this young Hebrew. We are like our God in our inclination to make promises, but unlike him in our record of keeping our promises. But such promises are good in that they give voice to inner desire and intention. It is fairly certain that there will not be obedience to the things of the Lord until there is a strong desire and a firm intention. It is surely better to have promised, and to have failed, than to never have promised at all.

#### **I. THE MOTIVES FOR THE PROMISE.**

The young psalmist did not make his promise as an attempt to manipulate God—to avert some judgment that his behavior deserved. When we are

fearful of being punished for some wrong we have done, we are inclined to make promises that we cannot keep. This is not an example of that kind of promise. Rather this promise is rooted in a deeper understanding of the things of God. There are at least three motives suggested in this stanza.

1. Satisfaction (v. 57)

“You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep your words.” It is an awareness of just how much he has in the Lord that prompts the promise. The Lord is his “inheritance”. He is like the Levites who received the Lord as their inheritance. The blessedness of such a condition moves him to make his promise.

2. Consideration (v. 59)

“I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies.”

3. Gratitude (v. 63, 64)

“At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments.”

“The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy.”

II. THE HINDRANCES TO THE PROMISE (V. 61)

1. The inner inclination toward disobedience. (v. 58)

“I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; Be merciful to me according to Your word.” Even as he made the promise he was aware of the inclination of

his own heart toward disobedience. If he was to keep the promise, he would need to the mercy of the Lord.

2. The outer snares of the world (v. 61)

“The cords of the wicked have bound me, But I have not forgotten Your law.” This world in which we live is not a friend of obedience. Rather it inclines to bind us into sinful patterns, and to ensnare us with bondage. He was painfully aware of the nature of the world, and the dangers that were there. We must never forget these hindrances when we make our promises.

III. THE PRAYER WITH THE PROMISE (V. 58, 64)

The young psalmist did more than promise—he prayed. He prayed earnestly and wisely.

1. The prayer for divine assistance (v. 58)

“I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; Be merciful to me according to Your word.”

2. The prayer for divine instruction (v. 64)

“Teach me Your statutes.” If he is to obey, he needs all of the light he can get. He needs inner illumination of the ways of the Lord so he can walk in the light.