

# THE VICTORY LIFE

in

## PSALM 119

by

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### CHAPTER FOUR

#### GROUNDED

#### DALETH

**“My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.  
I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.  
Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.  
My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.  
Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.**

**I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.  
I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.  
I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart”**  
(Psalms 119:25-32).

**“My soul cleaveth unto the dust”** (v. 25)

THE PSALMIST'S HEART has been challenged, his outlook changed, and his declarations registered. He knows the theory; he has witnessed the examples; he has sought divine assistance. Why is he not now entitled to sing,

“I'm pressing on the upward way;  
New heights I'm gaining every day”?

No reason at all if it is really true. Lyric and life, however, do not always coincide. Poetry is one thing; practice quite another. Advancing with God involves more than signing a card, more than simply responding to a public invitation, more than shedding a few tears over a fruitless experience.

In aeronautical parlance, our friend is now going to “take off.” He is going to soar to higher heights. This will be reality — the experience for which his heart so earnestly longs.

But he does not rise. There is no soaring. There is only breathless disappointment. He faces a sad discovery. The universal hindrance to spiritual advancement looms ominously as he laments: **“My soul cleaveth unto the dust”** (v. 25).

Here, wittingly or unwittingly, he puts his finger on the common cause of spiritual defeat. He is more deeply entrenched in willfulness than he knew. His soul is anchored to earthiness. Indeed, he is attached tenaciously despite his stated desire for heavenly things.

Compare, if you will, the testimony of Paul during a similar spiritual struggle:

**“To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not”** (Romans 7:18).

In every realm there are governing principles and inexorable laws. The engineers know at the drafting board whether or not the plane will fly, or the motor will operate, or the radio will perform. The chemist can guarantee his product if he is sure of his formula. We should never expect to get water from any combination other than two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. For, if certain fixed laws guarantee a desired end, we must abide by and submit to such laws in order to realize our desire.

This same principle operates in the spiritual realm. Yet nowhere else is this basic fact so ignored.

You may say in a moment of ecstasy, “I could walk on air.” Try it. Step out of the second floor window. The waiting earth will painfully mock you for your folly. Feelings cannot alter facts.

A fact cannot be budged. God says, **“As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.”**

*He makes a marked distinction between the holy and the unholy, between that which is of the Spirit and that which is of the flesh.*

As soon as Peter discovered he was sinking in the waves, he cried for the Lord to rescue him. As soon as the psalmist discovered he was hindered from rising because of his earthy attachments, he cried for the Lord to quicken him. And we might remind ourselves that in this Psalm he asked nine times to be quickened.

There are nine component parts to the fruit of the Spirit as recorded in Galatians 5. And what is the victorious life but the manifestation of the Spirit in the experience of a Christian. This is what he needed; this is what he sought.

Perhaps the reader will want to protest at this point, saying, “How complicated!” But not so.

Of course, the evil opposer of all that is high and holy would like to perplex us. First, he is determined that men shall not be saved. Then, when one does enter into newness of life, he vows that that one shall not proceed to the point of full enjoyment and usefulness. But God does not complicate the matter. He makes it ever so simple.

To His ancient people, the Lord God said, **“This is the way”** (Isaiah 30:21). In New Testament times, Jesus said, **“I am the way”** (John 14:6). To His covenant people, the Lord said, **“Walk ye in it”** (Isaiah 30:21), while the Master later simply instructed His own, **“Follow me”** (Matthew 4:19).

This is reducing profound matters to an irreducible minimum.

There are only two directions in which a child of God can move — forward or backward. To stand still is stagnancy, and stagnancy is death. The Lord bids His people to go onward. For example, in Psalm 55: 22, the instruction is, **“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, he shall never suffer [He never intended, never purposed] the righteous to be moved [to waver or get off the course].”**

We have the same message in Hebrews 12:1: **“Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us.”**

And again, **“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”**

**“He that doeth the will of God.”**

Ah! This is putting the whole, big matter into the simplest of terms. We have but One to please, only One to follow, simply One to serve. We need but do His will. And His will is not the elusive something that is neither here nor there when we search for it. No, He that wills to do the will of God shall know the teaching (John 7:17).

The psalmist begins at once to survey the situation. In verse 27 he admits that he does not really know God's way, even though he had made a fair display of devotion. And it is a common error to think that the Lord will place His approval upon us and bless us simply because we are adhering to some code of morals, or to some system of ethics, or to some religious exercise, or doing the best we can, while, at the same time, we are not complying with His Word.

Even an athlete argues in vain if his well-executed play is contrary to the book of rules. What God does not authorize, He cannot approve; what he cannot approve, He will not accept.

*God can only bless obedience to His will.*

The people of Hosea's day made an impressive display. **“Come, and let us return unto the Lord,”** they said in something of a concert (Hosea 6:1). The Lord answered at once saying, **“Ye have not cried unto me with your hearts.”**

It sounded good on earth to hear such professions, but it was totally unacceptable in Heaven.

We now find the psalmist noticeably disturbed about the matter. This is reflected in his humble confession: “**My soul melteth for heaviness**” (v. 28).

But how much sorrow does it require for one to come to the helpless end of self?

The Corinthian believers sorrowed unto repentance because, as Paul explained, “**Ye were made sorry after a godly manner.**” We are convinced that the sorrow in the psalmist's heart is also after the same manner. It rocked his soul and forced him to search his life for the reasons occasioning defeat.

There was perhaps nothing false about his statements, but there was something inconsistent about his course. Therefore, he entreats the Lord earnestly to “**remove from me the way of lying**” (v. 29). This is self-indictment, meaning, “I testify up here (gesturing to show the higher plane), but I live down here (gesturing to show the lower level).”

Perhaps nowhere else in the Scriptures is it more evident that testimony and experience can be so noticeably incompatible. Perhaps nowhere else is it so clearly demonstrated that one's affections can be so deceptive. The psalmist wants this inconsistency removed, and he knows the only way to remedy the situation is to determine first of all the contributing factors.

The remainder of this stanza finds him thus engaged. On the surface, matters seemed quite in order in his life, but the power of an overcomer is not there.

Some months ago, a friend of the family took us in his private airplane to visit relatives in another city. When we returned to the airport, the pilot made all the necessary arrangements for the take-off. Our seat belts were fastened; the instruments were tested; the starter button was pressed. The propeller began to turn rather lazily. The pilot pumped the choke with one hand and the primer with the other, but the propeller failed to gain momentum. The ignition was turned off, the cabin top pushed back, and the pilot dismounted. He lifted the hood, tested the electrical connections, then checked the carburetor and fuel supply. Returning to his position, he repeated the starting process, but with no better success.

The plane could not be taxied down the runway, much less made to soar into the sky. There was no power.

How illustrative this is of the case at hand, and perhaps of our own case. We claim the holy distinction of being Christians. With a degree of pumping and priming, we go through certain motions, but are we moving down the runway of fruitfulness? Are we gaining altitude in spiritual development? Naturally, steps were taken at once to determine the reason for the lack of power in the plane. And this is precisely what the psalmist begins to do concerning his life.

“**I have chosen the way of truth,**” he declares with certainty.

There is no question in this regard. This is a fact. He can remember how he was persuaded that God's way is the best way — indeed the only way for one to pursue with assurance.

He had made this choice. But has not every believer made the same choice? Such a choice, all-important as it is, only starts one on the right course. We must leave the elementary teachings and advance toward maturity. The psalmist here is not so advancing. This, of course, is his chief concern.

**“I have stuck unto thy testimonies”** (v. 31), he further observes with careful confidence, meaning, in all probability, that he had never questioned the full inspiration and authority of the Bible. The arguments of skeptics had never shaken his faith in the authenticity of the Scriptures. He had never been swayed by the contention that science disproves certain portions, nor had he ever been affected by the complaint that Genesis is largely mythical — the imaginative composition of Hebrew mystics. He had stuck to the Book.

We today may subscribe to the inspiration of the Scriptures, believing with our whole hearts that the Bible is God's Word, without advancing toward real victory in Christ.

We would do well to confess with this young man that power is lacking in our lives. We should be ascending to higher heights of spiritual achievement. We should be moving toward greater usefulness. We should know what it means to walk in Christ's triumphant train (II Corinthians 2:14). Even though we may have both chosen the way of God's Truth and have faithfully held that the Scriptures are final in authority, let us not stop here. The question is, Where is the power?

**“I will run the way of thy commandments”** (v. 32), he ventures to assure the Lord.

And why does he employ three different words in succession when referring to the Scriptures — **“judgments,” “testimonies”** and **“commandments”**?

Why did he use them in this particular order? A coincidence? No, the Holy Spirit moved upon these holy men of old in the production of this precious Volume. We may not always be able to detect it, but there is always a reason. Here, personal decision is made with respect to divine judgments; man's belief is attached to the Lord's testimonies; dedicated action is ever governed by sovereign commandments. There must be a careful blending of faith and obedience. We must be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

Now the false way of which he was so sorrowfully conscious in verse 29 is going to be deserted for the course of God's design.

**“I will run the way of thy commandments.”**

Nor is it an adopted policy only; it is to be the way of life for him henceforth. He will run in it, so he tells the Lord. He must understand, however, that only **“they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint”** (Isaiah 40:31). Walking is obligatory; running or mounting is optional. The psalmist chooses to run. But why the qualification — **“when thou shalt enlarge my heart”**?

Even in those moments of our strongest zeal and abounding devotion, there is always the danger of stopping short of full surrender. It is altogether too natural for one to interject a qualification.

There was that lovely young schoolteacher of our acquaintance who tearfully responded to a public challenge for missionary volunteers. She sobbed out her willingness to go for the Lord anywhere — except to Africa. Many have asserted their willingness to study the Bible more thoroughly if they had the time. Some have said that they would engage in soulwinning if they had more boldness. Others have said they would give testimonies if they were more fluent. How wretchedly deceptive are these hearts of ours (Jeremiah 17:9). They suppress faith and prevent growth.

The carriers of the Ark of the Covenant were willing to step where the Jordan had overflowed, all because God said, “Step!” Perhaps we are fearful of getting our feet wet. We would rather know what is beneath the overflowing water.

This man, and we have no question regarding his sincerity, promised to run in the way of divine commandment if God would enlarge his heart. Let us learn once for all that sovereign commandments are to be obeyed regardless.

The heart may be variously affected. It is said to dilate with joy, contract with sadness, break with sorrow and melt with discouragement. But what is “**enlargement**”?

If it is accurate to think of the heart as the seat of the affections, is this man asking the Lord to increase his love? Now, who or what increases our love for the Lord and for His way? It is true that love is of God, for God is love. It is also true that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of a believer by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). But this love must be reflected by us. We must prove it in honoring and obeying the One whose we are and whom we serve. “**Lovest thou me?**” the resurrected Saviour asked His disciple. He wants some commitment.

When a Christian sets his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth, there will be little doubt about his running in the way of the divine commandments. There will be little hesitation. Such love is quick in its willingness to offer its all. It is bold in its movements on the field of conquest. It can look at difficulties and say, “**None of these things move me.**” It can stare full-faced into the glittering flash of tempting allurements and firmly declare, “**I count not my life dear unto myself.**”

With Mr. Moody, it will volunteer with no misgivings, “Send me anywhere, but go with me. Lay upon me any burden, but sustain me. Sever from me any tie but the tie that binds my heart to Thee.”

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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