

Psalms 119:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

Analysis

Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

Opening the Gimel (ג) stanza, this verse links divine blessing to obedient living.

Deal bountifully (gemol, גמול) means to reward, repay, or show generous kindness—treating someone better than they deserve. The psalmist identifies as **thy servant** (avdekha, עבדך), acknowledging covenant relationship and dependent status. He asks not for luxury but for life itself: **that I may live** (echyeh, אֶחְיֶה).

The purpose clause reveals that life's goal is obedience: **keep thy word** (eshmerah devarekha, אֶשְׁמְרָה דְּבָרְךָ). This is not salvation by works but recognition that God sustains our lives so we might serve Him faithfully. Physical life, spiritual vitality, and obedient living are interconnected. Jesus declared, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4), and promised, 'I am come that they might have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10)—life for the purpose of following Him.

Historical Context

The servant language recalls Israel's self-designation as Yahweh's servant-nation (Isaiah 41:8-9). Individual Israelites participated in this corporate identity. The request for bountiful dealing reflects the covenant blessings promised in Deuteronomy 28—life, prosperity, and protection contingent on obedience. Yet the psalmist recognizes that even the capacity to obey requires God's enabling grace.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does viewing yourself as God's servant shape your expectations and requests in prayer?
2. In what ways do you need God to 'deal bountifully' with you to sustain your spiritual life and obedience?
3. What is the relationship between God's gracious provision and your responsibility to keep His Word?

Interlinear Text

גִּמֵּל ל	עַל	עַבְדְּךָ	אֲחִי ה	וְאֶשְׁמְרֶה
GIMEL Deal bountifully	H5921	with thy servant	that I may live	and keep
H1580		H5650	H2421	H8104
דְּבָרְךָ:				
thy word				
H1697				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 13:6 (Parallel theme): I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

Psalms 119:124 (Parallel theme): Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

Psalms 119:65 (Word): Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Psalms 116:7 (Parallel theme): Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

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