

Psalm 119:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Establish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

Analysis

Establish thy word unto thy servant (עֲשֵׂה בְּדָבָר אֶמְתָּה) —Qum (to arise, establish, confirm) requests God make His imrah (word, utterance) stand firm in the psalmist's life. The phrase 'thy servant' (avdekha) grounds the request in covenant relationship—God owes no obligation except His own promise to those who serve Him. **Who is devoted to thy fear** (אֲשֶׁר לִירָאְתָּה) —Yirah (fear, reverence) is the foundational Hebrew virtue: awe-filled worship that produces obedience. The relative clause 'who is devoted' describes the servant's character—the word is established to those who fear God.

This prayer recognizes that possessing Scripture isn't enough—God must establish (make stand, confirm, fulfill) His word experientially in the believer's life. This means both understanding it intellectually and seeing it proven true practically. The connection to fear shows proper worship creates receptivity for God's word to take root and bear fruit. Jesus's parable of the sower illustrates this: only certain soils (hearts) allow the word to be established and produce fruit.

Historical Context

Ancient covenants required both parties to establish (fulfill) their commitments. The psalmist appeals to God's covenant faithfulness, asking Him to confirm His promises to those who maintain reverent fear. In Israel's history, God repeatedly established His word to servants who feared Him: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does it mean for God to 'establish' His word in your life beyond merely reading it—how have you experienced this?
2. How does 'fear of the LORD' create the soil where God's word can be established and bear fruit in your life?
3. Which promises of Scripture do you need God to establish (confirm, make real) in your experience right now?

Interlinear Text

לְרִאָתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר אַמְרָתָ בְּלַעֲבֹד בְּרִאָתֶךָ
Establish unto thy servant thy word who is devoted to thy fear

H6965 H5650 H565 H834 H3374

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 147:11 (Parallel theme): The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (Parallel theme): For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Psalms 103:17 (Parallel theme): But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

Psalms 103:13 (Parallel theme): Like as a father pitith his children, so the LORD pitith them that fear him.

Psalms 103:11 (Parallel theme): For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Psalms 119:49 (Word): Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Psalms 145:19 (Parallel theme): He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.