

Psalm 119:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

Analysis

I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly. The final verse of the Beth (ב) stanza pairs resolute obedience with desperate dependence. **I will keep** (eshmor, אֲשֹׁמֵר) means to guard, observe, protect—implying vigilant, active commitment to God's **statutes** (chuqqekha, חֻקָּה), the divinely prescribed ordinances. Yet this vow is immediately followed by the plea **forsake me not utterly** (al-ta'azveni ad-me'od, אַל-תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי עַד-מְאֹד), acknowledging that perseverance in obedience requires divine enablement.

This verse captures the paradox of sanctification: believers are commanded to obey while simultaneously recognizing their utter dependence on God's sustaining grace. The psalmist knows that without God's presence and help, even the firmest resolve will crumble. Paul would later express this same tension: 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you' (Philippians 2:12-13).

Historical Context

The fear of divine abandonment pervades the Psalms, reflecting Israel's covenant theology. God's presence was the essence of covenant blessing (Exodus 33:15-16), while His absence meant judgment and disaster. The exile had demonstrated the catastrophic consequences of God's departure from His people. This verse's plea resonates with Moses' desperate prayer in Exodus 33:15: 'If Your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.'

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you balance personal responsibility for obedience with dependence on God's empowering grace?
2. What circumstances in your life make you most acutely aware of your need for God's sustaining presence?
3. How does the assurance that God will never forsake His people (Hebrews 13:5) free you to pursue holiness without self-reliance?

Interlinear Text

את תִּתְעַזֵּב נִיְמָא עַד תְּמִימָד:
H853 thy statutes H2706 I will keep H408 O forsake H5704 me not utterly
H8104 H5800 H3966

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 71:9 (Parallel theme): Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Psalms 51:11 (Parallel theme): Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Psalms 119:176 (Parallel theme): I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

Psalms 71:18 (Parallel theme): Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

Psalms 119:106 (Parallel theme): I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Psalms 119:16 (Parallel theme): I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Joshua 24:15 (Parallel theme): And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

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