

Psalm 119:18 Commentary

NOTE: See Psalm 119 Commentary (under construction)

OPEN MY EYES

Psalm 119:18

Psalm 119:18 **Open** my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law.

ESV: Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.

KJV: Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.

NET: Open my eyes so I can truly see the marvelous things in Your law!

NLT Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your instructions.

This is a simple but powerful prayer for spiritual illumination, asking God by His Spirit to remove the scales from our natural, spiritually blind eyes, that we might see and receive supernatural truth. Spiritual truth cannot be apprehended in a natural way, but requires a supernatural means.

J Vernon McGee on Ps 119:18 - This is the verse I used to begin the "Thru the Bible" program years ago when I first taught it in a little weather-beaten church on the side of a red clay hill in Georgia. I used this verse as a theme for many years. This is a good one —"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law [thy word]." (Thru the Bible commentary)

The Bible is filled with spiritual truth that can only be seen with an eye opened by the Spirit of God.

Open (01540)(**galah**) means to uncover (sadly the first use = Noah uncovering himself after becoming drunk! - Ge 9:21, cp Lev 18:6 prohibiting "uncover nakedness" ~ sexual relations), to reveal (God revealed Himself to Jacob at Bethel, and thus the name El-Bethel - Ge 35:7. 2Sa 2:27), expose (Ex 20:26), open (God opened the eyes of Balaam to see the Angel of the LORD - Nu 22:31), reveal (Dt 29:29). Galah is used of not yet revealing the Word of the LORD to Samuel (1Sa 3:7) and of revealing Himself to Samuel (1Sa 3:21).

The Lxx translates **galah** in Ps 119:18 with the verb **apokalupto** in the **aoist imperative** (command - I am always amazed that finite men could in any sense "command" God which speaks of His amazing grace and incomprehensible condescension! cp Ps 8:3-6). The verb **apokalupto** (from **apó** = from + **kalúpto** = cover, conceal, English = apocalypse - see study of **apokalupsis**) literally means to remove the cover from and so the idea is to remove that which conceals something. Almost all of the NT uses have a figurative use, especially to some aspect of spiritual truth that was heretofore hidden but now has the "lid removed" so that it can be seen (understood). We are continually in desperate need for God to remove the lid from His Word, the Bible, so that we might see and understand and obey!

Moses uses this same verb to describe the opening of Balaam's eyes to spiritual realities! = "Then the LORD **opened** (**galah**; Lxx = **apokalupto**) the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the **Angel of the LORD** standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground." (Nu 22:31) While I would not advocate following most of Balaam's example, his bowing down when the truth was revealed (I think he saw the pre-incarnate Christ - **Angel of the LORD**) is a good practice for God's children to imitate. We don't worship the word revealed but we do bow down to the God Who is the Word (Jn 1:1-3)!

Galah - 167x - Usage: away into exile(2), banished(1), betray(1), captives(1), captivity(1), carried(1), carried and away(1), carried into exile(4), carried them into exile(3), carried them away into exile(2), carried them captive(1), **carried away(14)**, **carried away into exile(10)**, carried away to exile(1), carried away captive(1), carried...away into exile(4), carry them away as exiles(2), certainly go(3), certainly go into captivity(1), committed(1), depart(1), departed(3), deported(1), disappears(1), discloses(2), disclosing(1), **exile(8)**, **exiled(4)**, **exiles(1)**, expose(2), exposed(3), go from you into exile(1), go into exile(6), go exiled(1), gone into exile(1), indeed reveal(1), inform*(1), known*(2), laid bare(3), lay bare(1), led him captive(1), led away(3), led away into exile(3), led...away into exile(2), lift(1), made(1), make(2), **open(4)**, **opened(1)**, **opens(3)**, published(2), remove(1), removed(3), reported(1), **reveal(5)**, **reveal*(1)**, **revealed(12)**, **revealed*(2)**, **revealing(1)**, **reveals(4)**, revelation*(1), sent into exile(1), sent you into exile(2), set forth(1), shamelessly uncovers(1), show(1), strip off(1), stripped(1), taken(1), taken into exile(1), things revealed(1), **uncover(22)**, **uncovered(22)**, **uncovers(1)**, went into exile(1).

Ge 9:21; 35:7 (He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had **revealed** Himself to him when he fled from his brother.); Ex 20:26; Lev 18:6ff; 20:11, 17ff;
 Num 22:31 (Then the LORD **opened** the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD); Nu 24:4, 16;
 Deut 22:30; 27:20; 29:29; Jdg 18:30; Ruth 3:4, 7 (**uncover** his feet and lie down); Ru 4:4; 1Sam 2:27; 3:7, 21;
 4:21f; 9:15; 14:8, 11; 20:2, 12f; 22:8, 17; 2 Sam 6:20; 7:27; 15:19; 22:16; 2Kgs 15:29; 16:9; 17:6, 11, 23, 26ff,
 33; 18:11; 24:14f; 25:11, 21; 1Chr 5:6, 26; 6:15; 8:6f; 9:1; 17:25; 2Chr 36:20; Ezra 2:1; Neh 7:6; Esther 2:6;
 3:14; 8:13;
 Job 12:22 (He **reveals** mysteries from the darkness And brings the deep darkness into light.); Job 20:27f;
 33:16; 36:10, 15; 38:17; 41:13;
 Ps 18:15 (the foundations of the world were **laid bare** At Your rebuke); Ps 98:2 ("He has **revealed** His
 righteousness in the sight of the nations"); Ps 119:18;
 Pr 11:13 (**reveals** secrets); Pr 18:2 (only in **revealing** his own mind); Pr 20:19 (a slanderer **reveals** secrets);
 Pr 25:9 (do not **reveal** the secret of another.); Pr 26:26 (His wickedness will be **revealed** ~ exposed); Pr 27:5
 (Better is **open** rebuke), Pr 27:25; Isa 5:13; 16:3; 22:8, 14; 23:1; 24:11; 26:21; 38:12; 40:5; 47:2f; 49:9, 21;
 53:1; 56:1; 57:8; Jer 1:3; 11:20; 13:19, 22; 20:4, 12; 22:12; 24:1; 27:20; 29:1, 4, 7, 14; 32:11, 14; 33:6; 39:9;
 40:1, 7; 43:3; 49:10; 52:15, 27f, 30; Lam 1:3; 2:14; 4:22; Ezek 12:3; 13:14; 16:36f, 57; 21:24; 22:10; 23:10, 18,
 29; 39:23, 28; Da 10:1; Hos 2:10; 7:1; 10:5; Amos 1:5f; 3:7; 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11, 17; Mic 1:6, 16; Nah 2:7; 3:5

Galah is used in Amos 3:7 - "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless Here**reveals** His secret counsel (talk that is kept confidential, speaks of intimacy) to His servants the prophets."

James Swanson - (gā-lā(h))

1. **(qal) reveal**, i.e., have information be made known (1Sa 9:15); (qal pass.) be made known (Est 3:14; 8:13+); (nif) revealed, exposed, be known, reveal oneself (Ge 35:7); (piel) reveal (Job 12:22); (pual) open, known, revealed (Pr 27:5); (hitp) airing, have oneself reveal information or opinion (Pr 18:2);
2. **(nif) uncover, exposed**, i.e., pertaining to an object having no cover and so bare and exposed (Ex 20:26), note: often this "uncovering" has a focus of sexual relations; (piel) lay bare, expose, strip off (Lev 20:18); (hitp) uncover oneself (Ge 9:21);
3. **(qal) be captive**, formally, uncovered, i.e., the state or condition of being taken prisoner and deported to another country (Jdg 18:30); (pual) exiled, deported (Na 2:7); (hif) deport, exile, carry away, i.e., cause a population to dwell in another place (2Ki 15:29); (hof) exiled, deported, captive (1Ch 9:1; Est 2:6, 6; Jer 13:19, 19; 40:1, 7+);
4. **(qal) depart, remove, formally, uncover**, i.e., cause a state or condition to no longer exist possibly as a figurative extension of the laying bare or razing of a building to destruction; (piel) take away (Ps 119:22);
5. **(nif) let see**, i.e., make possible for one to see an object using sight as a perception (1Sa 14:8);
6. **(nif) free, formally, uncovered**, i.e., pertaining to being in a state or condition of not being a captive and so free to move about (Isa 49:9);
7. **(piel) destroy, formally, lay bare, uncover**, i.e., raze a building or other object and so destroy (Mic 1:6);
8. **(qal) remove, carry away, bear**, i.e., lift and carry an object away from an area or space (Pr 27:25); 9. LN 15.1–15.17 (qal) go, set out, i.e., make a linear motion in any direction or aspect of movement (Eze 12:2, 3);
10. **(qal pass.) unsealed**, i.e., pertaining to that which does not have a seal on a written document as an extension of an uncovered or revealed object (Jer 32:11, 14+);
11. **unit: (qal pass.) גָּלַהּ עֵינַי (gā-lā(h)) 'ă-yin)1 receive revelation**, be formally, eyes be opened, i.e., have information be fully known; as a figurative extension of the opening of the eyes to gain sight as a physical perception (Nu 24:4, 16+); cf. also piel Nu 22:31; Ps 119:18;
12. **unit: גָּלַהּ פְּרוּתָהּ (gā-lā(h)) 'ēr-wā(h)) have sexual relations**, formally, reveal the nakedness, i.e., have physical relations (Lev 18:6), note: in improper social contexts this refers to a dishonorable thing;
13. **unit: גָּלַהּ סוֹד (gā-lā(h) sôḏ) (piel) gossip**, formally, uncover a confidence, i.e., give information which is confidential (Pr 11:13; Pr 25:9); cf. also qal Pr 20:19;
14. **unit: גָּלַהּ (gā-lā(h)) ... אָזַן ('ō-zēn) (qal) tell, speak, make known**, formally, reveal [to the] ears, i.e., talk and give verbal information (Ru 4:4) (Dictionary of Sematic Domains: Hebrew)

While the verb **open** is in the imperative form, in context as alluded to above, it is clearly the cry of a beggar who recognizes his abject spiritual poverty and his desperate need of spiritual bread (Mt 4:4). **Do you come to read His Word with this heart attitude—desperate, hungry, impoverished?** Remember God's precious and magnificent promise that He "hears the needy (the one in want, in need of help or deliverance from trouble, cp Mt 5:3)." (Ps 69:33, cp Ps 70:5, Ps 102, 17), "the desire of the humble" (Ps 10:17, cp Ps 34:6, Ps 72:12-13)! "He will have compassion on the poor and needy, And the lives of the needy he will save." (Ps 72:13) "He raises the poor from the dust, And lifts the needy from the ash heap." (Ps 113:7) Yahweh promises "to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Isa 66:2)

Donald Williams - He must open us up and show us His wondrous things (Ps 119:18). Apart from this, in the words of Bob Dylan, "I'm a little too blind to see." (The Preacher's Commentary)

Kidner - To feel the force of this request, cf. the sight that met the opened eyes of Balaam (Num. 22:31) or of Elisha's servant (2 Kgs 6:17, using another word). (Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary)

David Guzik - This reminds us that it isn't the word that needs changing, as if it were obscure; we are the ones who are veiled and can't understand the word of God apart from the work of the Spirit. Paul's eyes were unveiled when he was converted (Acts 9:18); it was as if scales had dropped from his eyes....The Psalmist didn't need new revelation; he needed to see the revelation that was already given. He didn't need new eyes; he needed to see with the eyes he already had.

KJV Bible Commentary - As Thomas Manton observes, "The Hebrew phrase signifieth 'unveil mine eyes' ... Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: 'Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith ...' (Acts 9:18).

I love the way **John Piper** explains it "By inspiring some things hard to understand (2Pe 3:15-16), God has unleashed in the world **desperation** which leads to **supplication**—the crying out to God for help." (Ps 119:18)..."Seven times in one psalm the psalmist prays, "Teach me your statutes" (Ps 119:12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135, 171)!" ([Why God Inspired Hard Texts](#) also quoted in [Brothers, We Are Not Professionals- A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry](#)) **O beloved, how much more should we cry out for God's Spirit to illuminate the sacred pages!**

Again **Piper** comments "One of the greatest privileges of having two good eyes is that we can read God's word.**But there is another set of eyes that have to be opened if the glory of God's word is to shine in our hearts—namely, the eyes of our hearts.**" (cp Eph 1:18-19) ([The Shepherd, the Host, and the Highway Patrol](#))

Piper - The Word of God cannot be truly desired (Psalm 119:36) or spiritually comprehended (Psalm 119:18) or savingly spoken (2 Thessalonians 3:1) without the work of the Holy Spirit, whom we ask for by prayer. ([All Scripture Is Breathed Out by God and Profitable](#))

Piper - So practically we must endeavor to forsake all self-reliance as we hear the Word of God, and seek the power of the Holy Spirit—not to tell us things that aren't in the Scriptures, but to make us feel the wonder of what is in the Scriptures. "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18). We should pray for ourselves the way Paul prayed for the Ephesians: "that God may enlighten the eyes of our hearts to know what is the hope to which he has called us, and what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:18). ([The Fruit of Hope- Love](#))

Piper - The same psalmist who said "How sweet are thy words to my taste" (Ps 119:103), said earlier, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps 119:18). He prayed, because to have holy taste buds on the tongue of the heart is a gift of God. No man naturally hungers for and delights in God's wisdom. ([How to Delight in God's Word - Devotional by John Piper](#))

In his last letter Paul commanded his disciple Timothy to **Consider** (**noeo** = think carefully in the **present imperative** = make this your practice continually - the Spirit will enable you to fulfill this command in His power!) what I say, for (strategic **term of explanation**) the Lord will give you understanding in everything." (2Ti 2:7-**note**) The second clause speaks of the Holy Spirit's illumination of Biblical Revelation. However our quest for and receipt of divine illumination should never be severed from the first clause - careful consideration and reflection. The **NIV** translates **noeo** as **reflect** which suggests unhurried consideration of something recalled to the mind, and gives one the picture of meditating on these truths. Note well the order -- We are to do our part (**consider**) and we can be assured the Lord will do His part (**give understanding** or illumination).

John Piper commenting on 2Ti 2:7-**note** observes that "So many people swerve off the road to one side of this verse or the other. Some stress, "**Think over what I say.**" They emphasize the indispensable role of reason and thinking. And they often minimize the decisive supernatural role of God in making the mind able to see and embrace the truth. Others stress the second half of the verse: "**for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.**" They emphasize the futility of reason without God's illumining work. But Paul will not be divided that way. And this book ([Thinking, Loving, Doing](#)) is a plea to you that you not force that division either. We hope you will embrace both human thinking and divine illumination. For Paul, it was not either-or but both-and. "**Think over what I**

say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." And notice the little word "for." (Ed comment: term of explanation) This means that the promise of God to give us understanding is the ground of our thinking, not the substitute for it. Paul does not say, "God gives you understanding, so don't waste your time thinking over what I say." Nor does he say, "Think hard over what I say because it all depends on you, and God does not illumine the mind." No. He emphatically makes God's gift of illumination the ground of our effort to understand. There is no reason to believe that a person who thinks without prayerful trust in God's gift of understanding will get it. And there is no reason to believe that a person who waits for God's gift of understanding without thinking about his Word will get it either. Both-and. Not either-or." ([Thinking. Loving. Doing - John Piper and David Mathis](#))

Adrian Rogers applies Psalm 119:18 asking - Isn't that a beautiful prayer?...Have you ever prayed that? Have you ever thought, "Well, I can just go to the Bible, and I can pull the truth out of the Bible"? Let me tell you, friend: You cannot. You may know Greek and not know God; you may know Hebrew and not know Him. I don't care who you are in that seminary, or any other Sunday School class—unless you lay that intellectual pride in the dust and pray this prayer—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in thy law"—you'll not know the God of this book. I want to tell you, my friend: **It took a supernatural miracle to reveal it; it took a supernatural miracle to write it; and, it'll take a supernatural miracle for you to understand it.** Do you believe that? Do you believe that? Listen. Most of us don't believe it. If we really believed it, we would agonize before the Lord; we would pray before the Lord; and, we would be saying, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes."..."Oh, God, illumine me. Open my eyes that I might understand."...When God opens your eyes you're going to see things you never saw before, you're going to hear things you never heard before, you're going to know things you never knew before because God the Holy Spirit is going to teach you....What you need to do when you come to the Bible is to lay your pride of intellect and your brilliance of mind in the dust, and say, "Dear God, if You don't teach me, I won't understand it." You will never go into the Bible and, with a lexicon and with a mind of logic and with a callous hand, just reach in and rip the truth out of the Bible. Oh no—God's going to reveal that truth to you as you pray.....you need to pray when you open the Bible, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in Thy law. Lord Jesus, help me to see You,"....(for) in order to see Jesus in the Bible, you need light, and you need sight."....That's the first thing that will happen. Your eyes will be opened. God will help you to see things that you have never seen. **I can tell when I am walking in the Spirit when I'm reading the Word of God. There are truths that just jump up off the Bible into my heart.**"

SPIRITUAL EYES - The spiritual eyesight must be opened in order that the spiritual beauty and wisdom and glory of the Divine Word may be discovered. When the great philosopher, Sir David Brewster, was dying, he said to Sir James Simpson, "I have had the light for many years, and oh, how bright it is! I feel so perfectly sure, so perfectly happy." "Come and see." That is the short, simple, earnest common-sense appeal which is made to every honest seeker after truth, every soul troubled with a sense of sin and guilt. Come and see. ([Christian Age](#))

INCLINE MY HEART TO THY TESTIMONIES

Psalm 119:36

In a similar prayer the psalmist (many like Spurgeon think it was David, but we cannot be dogmatic as the text is silent) prays, "**Incline** (imperative mood) **my heart to your testimonies**" (Psalm 119:36). The key verb is **incline** (natah - [Strong's 05186](#)) which means to stretch out (as Moses stretched out the staff in his hand over the waters of Egypt - Ex 7:19, and over the Red Sea - Ex 14:16), to extend and then to pay attention. **Natah** can have the sense of literally turning something (e.g., Balaam's donkey "turned off from the way"). Figuratively, **natah** speaks of inclining one's heart or ear in a Godward direction (Josh 24:23, 1Ki 8:58, Ps 119:36, Isa 55:3). **Natah** was used of not inclining one's ear signifying they did not listen obediently (Jer 7:24, 26, et al). God warned Solomon that if he went after foreign women "they will surely turn (natah) your heart away after their gods." (1Ki 11:1-4, 9, cp similar sense in 2Sa 19:14) **In other words, in Ps 119:36, the psalmist is asking for God to "bend his will" toward the Word.**The truth is our old nature continually bends us away from the Word. If you are finding your desire to dive into God's Word, plead with God to incline your heart toward His Word. Notice the psalmist says his heart, not his mind or his intellect. He desires to take the truth into his heart, which is in continual need of transformation.

Martin Luther wisely advises that when we approach the Word of God for nourishment and spiritual wisdom, **You should completely despair of your own sense and reason, for by these you will not attain the goal...Rather kneel down in your private little room and with sincere humility and earnestness pray God through His dear Son, graciously to grant you His Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide you and give you understanding.** As you see, David constantly prays in the psalm..."Psalm 119:18 **Open** my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law. 27 **Make me understand** the way of Thy precepts, teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes. 34 **Give me understanding**, that I may observe Thy law. 35 **Make me walk** in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it. 36 **Incline my heart** to Thy testimonies, and not to dishonest gain. 37 **Revive** me in Thy ways." He uses many more words of this nature, although he knew the text of Moses well and that of other books besides and heard and read them daily. Yet he desires to have the real Master of Scripture in order by all means to make sure that he does not plunge into it with his reason and become his own master."

different 1 Samuel 2:32; followed by accusative adverb Psalm 142:5 (יָמִין *to the right*; כָּצָה "" (כָּצָה "" absolute Isaiah 42:18 (followed by לְרֵאוֹת of purpose); Isaiah 63:5; Habakkuk 1:5 (כָּצָה ""), so Psalm 91:8 (בְּעֵינַיָךְ), compare Proverbs 4:25, followed by לִנְכַח (subject יִשְׂרָאֵל נִגְדָהּ).

3 subject י׳: followed by מַשְׁמִימִים + לְ אֵל Psalm 102:20; followed by לָא = *look upon*, i.e. endure to see Habakkuk 1:13 (כָּצָה "" (כָּצָה ""); so followed by accusative Habakkuk 1:13, compare Habakkuk 1:3 (or *causative* Ew; "" (תִּרְאֶנִּי); followed by לְ, Psalm 104:32; Job 28:24; Psalm 74:20 (לִבְרִית); followed by accusative Isaiah 64:8 (הֵן "" (כָּצָה ""), Lamentations 3:63; Psalm 10:14 (כָּצָה "" = *regard, shew regard to*, Amos 5:22; Psalm 84:10; Lamentations 4:16, compare Psalm 13:4; followed by לָא *id.* Isaiah 66:2; absolute Psalm 94:9 i.e. *have power of sight*, Isaiah 18:4; followed by מַשְׁמִימִים Psalm 33:13; Psalm 80:15; Isaiah 63:15 (כָּצָה "" (כָּצָה ""), Lamentations 1:11 (כָּצָה ""), so Lamentations 1:12; Lamentations 2:20; Lamentations 5:1.

Gesenius Definition נִבַּט not used in Kal. Piel, נִבַּט once (Isaiah 5:30), and Hiphil הִבִּיט

(1) to look, to behold. Constr. absol. Isaiah 42:18 הִבִּיטוּ לְרֵאוֹת "look that ye may see," etc. Isaiah 63:5 אֲבִיט אֶעֱרַךְ זָאִין עֲזָר "I looked (around) but there was no helper;" Isaiah 18:4, followed by an acc. sometimes having ה local, to look at, Job 35:5 וּרְאֵה הִבִּט שָׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה "look at the heaven and see;" Psalms 142:5; Genesis 15:5 הִבִּט נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה "look now towards heaven," also followed by לְ Exodus 3:6; Numbers 21:9; Isaiah 51:2, Isaiah 51:6 לְ Psalms 104:32; Isaiah 5:30 עַל Habakkuk 2:15, of the place looked at; מִן of the place looked from, Psalms 33:13, 80:15 102:20. Followed by בְּ, it is, to look at with pleasure, Psalms 92:12 (compare בְּ No. 4, a), followed by אֶחָדִי to look at some one departing, to follow with one's eyes, Exodus 33:8, but אֶחָדִי after oneself, i.e. to look back, 1 Samuel 24:9; Genesis 19:17. Followed by מֵאֶחָדִי Genesis 19:26, וַתִּבַּט אֶשְׁתּוֹ מֵאֶחָדִי "and his (Lot's) wife looked from behind him" (her husband). In the same sense it might have been said אֶחָדִי post se, as the Vulg. has rendered it. For as the wife was commanded to follow her husband and not to look behind, she ought to have looked straight on, and to have followed her husband's back with her eyes. Figuratively

(a) to regard anything, to have respect to anything, with an acc. Amos 5:22; Psalms 84:10, 119:15 Lamentations 4:16 followed by לְ אֵל 1 Samuel 16:7; Isaiah 22:11, 66:2 Psalms 119:6 followed by לְ Psalms 74:20.

(b) to look at anything but without doing anything, e.g. as God looks at the wicked, i.e. to bear patiently (*ruhig mit ar fehn*) Habakkuk 1:3, 13 Habakkuk 1:13 (but compare Psalms 10:14).

(c) to rest one's hope in anything; followed by לְ אֵל Psalms 34:6.

(2) to see, to behold, like כָּצָה, Numbers 12:8; 1 Samuel 2:32; Isaiah 38:11.

Wondrous things ((06381)(pala) is a verb which conveys the meaning of to be wonderful or to do something wonderful. **Pala'** means to cause something wonderful, extraordinary, marvelous or amazing to happen. The first OT use means to do something "difficult" (Ge 18:14).

The Septuagint translates pala' with the adjective **thaumasios** (thauma = Wonder, admiration) which means wonderful, marvelous, excellent, remarkable, admirable, all adjectives which would an apt description of the Word of God! The idea of thaumasios pertains to that which causes wonder and which is worthy of amazement. To the Greek Church Fathers and in Modern day Greek the root word thaumata (plural) is the word for miracles (although it is not used that way in the NT).

Pala' - 68x - **Usage:** bring extraordinary(1), deal marvelously(1), difficult(5), extraordinary degree(1), fulfill a special(3), made his wonderful(1), made marvelous(1), makes a difficult(1), makes a special(1), marvelous(1), marvelously(1), miracles(5), monstrous things(1), seemed hard(1), show your power(1), things...difficult(1), things...wonderful(1), too difficult(2), wonderful(4), wonderful acts(1), wonderful deeds(3), wonderful things(2), wonderful works(2), wonders(20), wondrous deeds(3), wondrous works(3), wondrously(2), wondrously marvelous(1). Gen 18:14; Ex 3:20; 34:10; Lev 22:21; 27:2; Num 6:2; 15:3, 8; Deut 17:8; 28:59; 30:11; Josh 3:5; Jdg 6:13; 13:19; 2 Sam 1:26; 13:2; 1 Chr 16:9, 12, 24; 2 Chr 2:9; 26:15; Neh 9:17; Job 5:9; 9:10; 10:16; 37:5, 14; 42:3; Ps 9:1; 26:7; 31:21; 40:5; 71:17; 72:18; 75:1; 78:4, 11, 32; 86:10; 96:3; 98:1; 105:2; 106:7, 22; 107:8, 15, 21, 24, 31; 111:4; 118:23; 119:18, 27; 131:1; 136:4; 139:14; 145:5; Pr 30:18; Isa 28:29; 29:14; Jer 21:2; 32:17, 27; Dan 8:24; 11:36; Joel 2:26; Mic 7:15; Zech 8:6

David Guzik - There are wondrous things in Scripture; but they can only be seen when the eyes are opened by God. This means that prayer is an important (and often neglected) part of Bible study. It also means that not everyone sees the wondrous things in God's word, but that when one does see them, they should regard it as evidence of God's blessing and favor. Jesus rejoiced that God revealed His wisdom this way: At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes." (Matthew 11:25). God has given man a

sense of wonder, and there are certain things that prompt it. The new and unexpected can cause wonder; the beautiful and great and cause wonder, and the mysterious and unknown can cause wonder. We can say that God has provided for this sense of wonder by giving us His word. The Holy Spirit can make us alive to the Bible, and constantly see things that are new and unexpected; things that are great and beautiful; things that are mysterious and unknown. It is a shame to many Christians that they look for their sense of wonderful to be satisfied without looking to the Word of God. Think of all there is in the Bible that you don't see. Think of all the wonder, all the treasure that is there, but you don't see it. You can see such things, though you can't see everything, and sometimes you will think you see things that are not really there. Yet those who see more than you are not necessarily smarter or better; their eyes are just more open. "If we want to see wonderful things in the Scriptures, it is not enough for us merely to ask God to open our eyes that we might see them. We must also study the Bible carefully. The Holy Spirit is given not to make our study unnecessary but to make it effective." (Boice)

John Piper comments - "If we are going to be inclined to the Word and stay with it and delight in it and memorize it and meditate on it, we must see more than dull facts, we must see "**wonderful things**." That is not the function of the natural mind alone (1Cor 2:14-note). That is the work of the Spirit to give you a mind to see great things for what they really are. Delight-giving Bible reading and Bible meditation is a work of God on our hearts and minds. That is why **we must pray continually** for that divine work." ([Pray Without Ceasing](#))

Piper in another sermon on Ps 119:18 observes "In other words the Word of God contains **wonderful things**, but we will not see them without God's help—His **illumination** (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6); his opening our hearts like he did for Lydia (Acts 16:14); his opening our minds like he did for the apostles (Luke 24:45). And if we miss what is in the Word of God without his help, then prayer becomes the natural partner to hearing the Word. We pray, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things from your law." ([Praying for All His Purposes, Meditating on All His Word](#))

John MacArthur - The preacher must be dependent upon God the Holy Spirit for divine insight and understanding of God's Word (1Cor 2:14-15-note). Without the Spirit's illumination and power, the message will be relatively impotent. The preacher must be in constant prayerful communion with God to receive the full impact of the Word (Ps. 119:18). The obvious one to consult for clarification is the original Author. (Rediscovering Expository Preaching)

Spurgeon - If you do not understand a book by a departed writer you are unable to ask him his meaning, but the Spirit, Who inspired Holy Scripture, lives forever, and He delights to open the Word to those who seek His instruction"

Thy law - Other Bible versions translate it as - instruction (Common English Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible), teachings (Easy to Read Version, GWT, International Children's Bible).

Law (08451)(**torah** - derives from yarah that means to shoot an arrow, for a teacher aims to hit the target and achieve specific goals in the lives of the students) is a feminine noun meaning instruction, direction, law, Torah, the whole Law. Torah basically means "teaching" whether it is the wise man instructing his son or God instructing Israel. The wise (Pr 1:8, 6:20) give insight into all aspects of life so that the young may know how to conduct themselves and to live a long blessed life (Pr 3:1ff). Thus the **torah** encompasses instructions from God to His people on how they should live so that He might be glorified. The **torah** was to be adhered to as a total way of life, to permeate every decision, every thought, etc. **Torah** was given to men to make known the way in which they should walk!

In summary, torah in this passage refers to instructions or teachings and not strictly speaking to the Law (e.g., as typified by the Ten Commandments). In Psalm 119:18 **torah** refers to our Father's instructions on how we His children are to live during our short sojourn as aliens in enemy dominated territory (1Jn 5:19).

The Septuagint translates **torah** with the noun **nomos**, which has the basic meaning of law (that which is proper).

D L Moody - We have a great many prayer-meetings, but there is something just as important as prayer, and that is that we read our Bibles, that we have Bible study and Bible lectures and Bible classes, so that we may get hold of the Word of God. When I pray, I talk to God, but when I read the Bible, God is talking to me; and it is really more important that God should speak to me than that I should speak to Him. I believe we should know better how to pray if we knew our Bibles better. (D. L. Moody Year Book)

John Newton on the **law**, the Word of God, in **Ps 119:18** - Let me suppose a person to have a curious cabinet, which is opened at his pleasure, and not exposed to common view. He invites all to come and see it, and offers to show it to any one who asks him. It is hid, because he keeps the key, but none can complain, because he is ready to open it whenever he is desired. Some, perhaps, disdain the offer, and say, "Why is it locked at all?" Some think it is not worth seeing, or amuse themselves with guessing at the contents. But those who are simply desirous for themselves, leave others disputing, go according to appointment, and are gratified. These have reason to be thankful for the favor, and the others have no just cause to find fault. **Thus the riches of Divine grace may be compared to a richly-furnished cabinet to which "Christ is the door." The Word of God likewise is a cabinet generally locked up, but the key of prayer will open it. The Lord invites all, but He keeps the dispensation in His own hand. They cannot see these things,**

except He shows them; but then He refuses none that sincerely ask Him. The wise men of the world can go no further than the outside of this cabinet; they may amuse themselves and surprise others with their ingenious guesses at what is within; but a child that has seen it opened can give us satisfaction, without studying or guessing at all. If men will presume to aim at the knowledge of God, without the knowledge of Christ, Who is the way and the door (Jn 10:7-9); if they have such a high opinion of their own wisdom (1Cor 1:18-25) and penetration as to suppose they can understand the Scriptures without the assistance of His Spirit; or, if their worldly wisdom teaches them that those things are not worth their inquiring, what wonder is it that they should continue to be hid from their eyes?

[George Morrison \(1866-1928\) Preacher](#) on "**wonderful things**" in Psalm 119:18 - True wonder is never dispelled by what we know. That alone is genuine wonder—the wonder not of ignorance but of knowledge, the wonder that does not vanish when we know but grows and deepens with everything we know. It was the wonder of the apostle Paul. It was the wonder in the heart of Jesus. And it is the wonder we will feel forever in the perfected knowledge of eternity. It is not knowledge, then, that is the foe of wonder; it is something far more commonplace than that. **The blight that wilts our faculty of wonder is the familiarity that begets contempt.** Someone has said that if all the stars were to cease shining for a hundred years and then were suddenly to flash on again, there is not an eye on earth but would be lifted heavenward and not a heart but would break forth in praise to God. But the stars were there when we were little children, and they will be shining in the heavens tonight. **And to us the spectacle is so familiar that we have lost the wonder of it all. Live forty years in such a world as this and a certain blindness falls on the eyes.** And therefore the need that when the evening falls, the morning breaks, and the summer comes again, we should pray as the psalmist prayed so long ago, "Lord, open my eyes that I may see." **May I say in passing that all great experiences tend to recreate the sense of wonder? Sickness, sorrow, death, conversion have a way of bringing new wonder into everything. And I suggest that in the will of God, which is as merciful as it is wise, that recreating of the sense of wonder may be one purpose of many an hour of discipline.** (Woe!)

ILLUSTRATION OF SEEKING ILLUMINATION - In 1787 a convention was called in the United States to revise the Articles of Confederation. For weeks delegates reviewed ancient history and analyzed modern governments, searching for insights. But nothing suited the infant nation. Finally, a distinguished gentleman named Benjamin Franklin rose and said, "In this situation of this assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth and scarce able to distinguish it when it is presented to us, how has it happened that **we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings?**" Mr. Franklin believed there was a sovereign God (**Ed**: Actually he was a **Deist** [[What is deism ? - What do deists believe?](#)]) who could provide guidance to those who sought it.

Darlene Zschech's devotional on Ps 119:18 - Two people walk down the same road. One sees the beauty and majesty of God's creation in a sunrise or sunset, in the color of the sky, in trees and plants. The other sees nothing to find joy in and grumbles. What's the difference? One had his eyes truly open. How many times do we miss blessings simply because we weren't looking for them? We get busy and distracted. We get stuck in bad moods. We think too much about ourselves—what I need and want. When our minds are stuck on all that is wrong, we miss all the wonderful things God puts in our path. There is an old Chinese proverb that says, "When the student is ready the teacher will arrive." Could this be true of God's Word? Could it be that until our eyes and hearts are open, we are going to miss the wonderful things that God has for us to learn and live? David's prayer was so simple: "Open my eyes." But it was profound. He was surrounded on every side by his enemies. What was he asking God to do? He wanted his focus to be on God's provision as found in His Word—not on his problems. Where are your eyes focused now? God's promises and provisions or your problems? (Revealing Jesus: a 365-day devotional)

[Open My Eyes, That I May See](#)

Written by Clara H Scott

[Piano rendition by Nathanael Provis](#)

[\(Beautiful!\)](#)

Open my eyes, that I may see

Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key
That shall unclasp, and set me free.

Refrain:

*Silently now I wait for Thee,
Ready, my God, Thy will to see:
Open my eyes, illumine me,*

Savior divine!

Open my ears, that I may hear

Voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave notes fall on my ear,
Ev'rything false will disappear.

Refrain

Open my mouth, and let me bear

Gladly the warm truth ev'rywhere;
Open my heart, and let me prepare
Love with Thy children thus to share.

Refrain

In A Fog - My wife Shirley and I stayed 2 full days in Interlaken, Switzerland, and yet we never saw Jungfrau, one of the highest and most beautiful peaks in the Swiss Alps. "What did you think of Jungfrau?" fellow tourists would ask. We couldn't answer because we never got a glimpse of it. How could we possibly miss such an immense and breathtaking natural wonder? Because a persistent fog had blanketed the entire peak. Sometimes we may be "in a fog" when we try to understand the Bible. We struggle and strain, but we cannot see the beautiful truths that lie within the passage. It may even seem as if God is keeping them hidden from us.

Don't forget that we always need the illuminating help of the Holy Spirit. It is not God who wants to keep us from grasping the wonderful truths of Scripture; it is His enemy. The devil knows that we can't put into practice what we don't comprehend. We need to pray as the psalmist did, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Ps. 119:18). As we seek the Holy Spirit's guidance each day, He will clear away the fog so that we can see the marvelous truths within God's Word. --D C Egner

Open my eyes, that I may see
Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key
That shall unclasp and set me free.
-Clara Scott

Without the light of God's Spirit,
we'll be in the dark about God's Word.

See sermons/short notes related to Psalm 119:18 - some of these are very insightful:

A Necessary Prayer	John Ker, D. D.
Divine Illumination	J. Foot, D. D.
Divine Revelation	Homilist
Eye-Opening	R. Tuck
God's Word Suited to Man's Sense of Wonder	John Ker, D. D.
Longing for Spiritual Sight	A. Barrett.
Moral Blindness	Homilist
Removing Obstruction to Sight	Sunday Circle
Spiritual Discernment	E. R. Conder, D. D.
Spiritual Illumination	J. O. Griffiths.
Spiritual Sight	Christian Age
Spiritual Vision	
Spiritual Vision	J. Crafts.
The Bible as Containing the Wonderful	Homilist
The Lifted Veil	H. J. Gamble.
The Need of Spiritual	W. L. Watkinson.
The Wonders of God's Law	R. Flint, D. D.

Exposition of Psalm 119:18

C H Spurgeon

Ps 119:18. Open thou mine eyes. This is a part of the bountiful dealing which he has asked for; no bounty is greater than that which benefits our person, our soul, our mind, and benefits it in so important an organ as the eye. It is far better to have the eyes opened than to be placed in the midst of the noblest prospects and remain blind to their beauty.

That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Some men can perceive no wonders in the gospel, but David felt sure that there were glorious things in the law: he had not half the Bible, but he prized it more than some men prize the whole. **He felt that God had laid up great bounties in His word, and he begs for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same. We need not so much that God should give us more benefits, as the ability to see what He has given.**

The prayer implies a conscious darkness, a dimness of spiritual vision, a powerlessness to remove that defect, and a full assurance that God can remove it. It shows also that the writer knew that there were vast treasures in the word which he had not yet fully seen, marvels which he had not yet beheld, mysteries which he had scarcely believed. The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder land; it not only relates miracles, but it is itself a world of wonders. Yet what are these to closed eyes? And what man can open his own eyes, since he is born blind? God himself must reveal revelation to each heart. **Scripture needs opening, but not one half so much as our eyes do: the veil is not on the book, but on our hearts. What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men among the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness!**

The Psalmist had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were **wondrous things** to be seen, nor would he have prayed, "open thou mine eyes"; but what he had seen made him long for a clearer and wider sight. This longing proved the genuineness of what he possessed, for it is a test mark of the true knowledge of God that it causes its possessor to thirst for deeper knowledge.

David's prayer in this verse is a good sequel to Psalms 119:10, which corresponds to it in position in its octave: there he said, "O let me not wander, "and who so apt to wander as a blind man? and there, too, he declared, "with my whole heart have I sought thee, "and hence the desire to see the object of his search. Very singular are the interlacings of the boughs of the huge tree of this Psalm, which has many wonders even within itself if we have opened eyes to mark them.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS.

Ps 119:18. Open thou mine eyes. Who is able to know the secret and hidden things of the Scriptures unless Christ opens his eyes? Certainly, no one; for "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Wherefore, as suppliants, we draw near to him, saying, "Open thou mine eyes, "etc. The words of God cannot be kept except they be known; neither can they be known unless the eyes shall be opened," hence it is written, "That I may live and keep thy word"; and then, "Open thou mine eyes." **Paulus Palanterius.**

Ps 119:18. Open thou mine eyes. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" was the gracious inquiry of the loving Jesus to a poor longing one on earth. "Lord! that I may receive my sight, "was the instant answer. So here, in the same spirit, and to the same compassionate and loving Lord, does the Psalmist pray, "Open thou mine eyes"; and both in this and the preceding petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant, "we see at once who prompted the prayer. **Barton Bouchier.**

Ps 119:18. Open thou mine eyes. If it be asked, seeing David was a regenerate man, and so illumined already, how is it that he prays for the opening of his eyes? The answer is easy: that our regeneration is wrought by degrees. The beginnings of light in his mind made him long for more; for no man can account of sense, but he who hath it. **The light which he had caused him to see his own darkness; and therefore, feeling his wants, he sought to have them supplied by the Lord. William Cowper.**

Ps 119:18. Open thou mine eyes. The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord make a plainer law, but, Lord open mine eyes: blind men might as well complain of God, that he doth not make a sun whereby they might see. The word is "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2Peter 1:19-note). There is no want of light in the Scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts; so that if in this clear light we cannot see, the defect is not in the word, but in ourselves.

The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. When God is said to enlighten us, it is not that we should expect new revelations, but that we may see the wonders in his word, or get a clear sight of what is already revealed. Those that vent their own dreams under the name of the Spirit, and divine light, they do not give you mysteria, but monstra, portentous opinions; they do not show you the wondrous things of God's law, but the prodigies of their own brain; unhappy abortives, that die as soon as they come to light. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). The light which we have is not without the word, but by the word.

The Hebrew phrase signifies "unveil mine eyes." There is a double work, negative and positive. **There is a taking away of the veil, and an infusion of light.** Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith" (Acts 9:18). First, the scales fall from our eyes, and then we receive sight. **Thomas Manton.**

Ps 119:18. The Psalmist asks for no new revelation. It was in God's hand to give this, and he did it in his own time to those ancient believers; but to all of them at every time there was enough given for the purposes of life. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. Still better does such a form of request suit us, to whom life and immortality have been brought to light in Christ. If we do not find sufficient to exercise our thoughts with constant freshness, and our soul with the grandest and most attractive subjects, it is because we want the eye sight. It is of great importance for us to be persuaded of this truth, that there are many things in the Bible still to be found out, and that, if we come in the right spirit, we may be made discoverers of some of them. These things disclose themselves, not so much to learning, though that is not to be despised, as to spiritual sight, to a humble, loving heart.

And this at least is certain, that we shall always find things that are new to ourselves. However frequently we traverse the field, we shall perceive some fresh golden vein turning up its glance to us, and we shall wonder how our eyes were formerly holden that we did not see it. It was all there waiting for us, and we feel that more is waiting, if we had the vision. There is a great Spirit in it that holds deeper and even deeper converse with our souls.

This further may be observed, that the Psalmist asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power which enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. In one view it is supernatural, as God is the Author of the illumination by a direct act of his Spirit; in another it is natural, as it operates through the faculties existing in a man's soul. God gives "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of man's understanding may be enlightened." (Ephesians 1:17-**note**) It is important to remember this also, for here lies our responsibility, that we have the faculty, and here also is the point at which we must begin action with the help of God. A man will never grow into the knowledge of God's word by idly waiting for some new gift of discernment, but by diligently using that which God has already bestowed upon him, and using at the same time all other helps that lie within his reach. There are men and books that seem, beyond others, to have the power of aiding insight. All of us have felt it in the contact of some affinity of nature which makes them our best helpers; the kindred clay upon the eyes by which the great Enlightener removes our blindness (John 9:6). Let us seek for such, and if we find them let us employ them without leaning on them. Above all, let us give our whole mind in patient, loving study to the book itself, and where we fail, at any essential part, God will either send his evangelist Philip to our aid (Acts 8:26-40) or instruct us himself. But it is only to patient, loving study that help is given. God could have poured all knowledge into us by easy inspiration, but it is by earnest search alone that it can become the treasure of the soul.

But if so, it may still be asked what is the meaning of this prayer, and why does the Bible itself insist so often on the indispensable need of the Spirit of God to teach? Now there is a side here as true as the other, and in no way inconsistent with it. If prayer without effort would be presumptuous, effort without prayer would be vain. The great reason why men do not feel the power and beauty of the Bible is a spiritual one. They do not realize the grand evil which the Bible has come to cure, and they have not a heart to the blessings which it offers to bestow. The film of a fallen nature, self maintained, is upon their eyes while they read: "The eyes of their understanding are darkened, being alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18-**note**). All the natural powers will never find the true key to the Bible, till the thoughts of sin and redemption enter the heart, and are put in the centre of the Book. It is the part of the Father of lights, by the teaching of his Spirit, to give this to the soul, and he will, if it humbly approaches him with this request. Thus we shall study as one might a book with the author at hand, to set forth the height of his argument, or as one might look on a noble composition, when the artist breathes into us a portion of his soul, to let us feel the centre of its harmonies of form and colour. Those who have given to the Bible thought and prayer will own that these are not empty promises. **John Ker, in a Sermon entitled, "God's Word Suited to Man's Sense of Wonder, "1877.**

Ps 119:18. O let us never forget; that the **wonderful things** contained in the divine law can neither be discovered nor relished by the "natural man, "whose powers of perception and enjoyment are limited in their range to the objects of time and sense. It is the divine Spirit alone who can lighten the darkness of our sinful state, and who can enable us to perceive the glory, the harmony, and moral loveliness which everywhere shine forth in the pages of revealed truth. **John Morison, 1829.**

Ps 119:18. Uncover my eyes and I will look at wonders out of thy law. The last clause is a kind of exclamation after his eyes have been uncovered. This figure is often used to denote inspiration or a special divine communication. **"Out of thy law, "i.e., brought out to view, as if from a place of concealment. Joseph Addison Alexander.**

Ps 119:18. Wondrous things. Many were the signs and miracles which God wrought in the midst of the people of Israel, which they did not understand. What was the reason? Moses tells us expressly what it was: "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deut 29:4). They had sensitive eyes and ears, yea, they had a rational heart or mind; but they wanted a spiritual ear to hear, a spiritual heart or mind to apprehend and improve those wonderful works of God; and these they had not, because God had not given them such eyes, ears, and hearts. Wonders without grace cannot open the eyes fully; but grace without wonders can. And as man hath not an eye to see the wonderful works of God spiritually, until it is given; so, much less hath he an eye to see the wonders of the word of God till it be given him from above; and therefore David prays, Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. And if the wondrous things of the law are not much seen till God give an eye, then much less are the wondrous things of the Gospel. The light of nature shows us somewhat of the Law; but nothing of the Gospel was ever seen by the light of nature. Many who have seen and admired some excellencies in the Law could never see, and therefore have derided, that which is the excellency of the Gospel, till God had opened their heart to understand. **Joseph Caryl, 1602-1673.**

Ps 119:18. "The word is very nigh" unto us; and, holding in our hand a document that teems with what is **wonderful**, the sole question is, "Have we an eye to its marvels, a heart for its mercies?" Here is the precise use of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts nothing new into the Bible (when we read it); He only so enlightens and strengthens our faculties, that we can discern and admire what is there already. It is not the telescope which draws out that rich sparkling of stars on the blue space, which to the naked eye seem points of light, and untenanted: it is not the microscope which condenses the business of a stirring population into the circumference of a drop of water, and clothes with a thousand tints the scarcely discernible wing of the ephemeral insect. The stars are shining in their glory, whether or not we have the instruments to penetrate the azure; and the tiny tenantry are carrying on their usual concerns, and a rich garniture still forms the covering of the insect, whether or not the powerful lens has turned for us the atom into a world, and transformed the almost imperceptible down into the sparkling plumage of the bird of paradise. Thus the **wonderful things** are already in the Bible. **The Spirit who wrote them at first brings them not as new revelations to the individual; but, by removing the mists of carnal prejudice, by taking away the scales of pride and self sufficiency, and by rectifying the will, which causes the judgment to look at truth through a distorted medium" by influencing the heart, so that the affections shall no longer blind the understanding," by these and other modes, which might be easily enumerated, the Holy Ghost enables men to recognize what is hid, to perceive beauty and to discover splendour where all before had appeared without form and comeliness; and thus brings round the result of the Bible, in putting on the lip the wonderful prayer which he had himself inspired: Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Henry Melvill, 1798-1871.**

Ps 119:18. The wondrous things seem to be the great things of an eternal world" he had turned his enquiring eyes upon the wonders of nature, sun, moon, and stars, mountains, trees, and rivers. He had seen many of the wonders of art; but now, he wanted to see the spiritual wonders contained in the Bible. He wanted to know about God himself in all his majesty, purity, and grace. He wanted to learn the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, and the glory that is to follow.

Open mine eyes. "David was not blind" his eye was not dim. He could read the Bible from end to end, and yet he felt that he needed more light. He felt that he needed to see deeper, to have the eyes of his understanding opened. He felt that if he had nothing but his own eyes and natural understanding, he would not discover the wonders which he panted to see. He wanted divine teaching" the eye salve of the Spirit; and therefore he would not open the Bible without this prayer, "Open thou mine eyes." **Robert Murray M'Cheyne, 1813-1843.**

Ps 119:18. Wondrous things. How does he this word **"wondrous"**? It is as if he would have said, Although the world takes the law of God to be but a light thing, and it seems to be given but as it were for simple souls and young children; yet for all that there seems such a wisdom to be in it, as that it surmounts all the wisdom of the world, and that therein lie hid **wonderful** secrets. **John Calvin.**

Ps 119:18. Thy law. That which is the object of the understanding prayed for, that in the knowledge whereof the Psalmist would be illuminated, is **torah**. The word signifies instruction; and being referred unto God, it is his teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself, the same which we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed they were, for distinction's sake, distributed into torah, mizmor, and nabiyim, or the "Law," the "Psalms," and the "Prophets," (Lk 24:44). Under that distribution Torah signifies the five books of Moses. But whereas these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication thereof, all the writings of it were usually called "the Law," (Isaiah 8:20). By the law, therefore, in this place, the Psalmist understands all the books that were then given unto the church by revelation for the rule of its faith and obedience. And that by the law, in the Psalms, the written law is intended, is evident from the first of them, wherein he is declared blessed who "meditates therein day and night," (Psalms 1:2; which hath respect unto the command of reading and meditating on the books thereof in that manner, Joshua 1:8. That, therefore, which is intended by this word

is the entire revelation of the will of God, given unto the church for the rule of its faith and obedience" that is, the holy Scripture.

In this law there are '**wonderful things**.' Pala' signifies to be "wonderful, "to be "hidden, "to be "great" and "high; "that which men by the use of reason cannot attain unto or understand (hence Pala' are things that have such an impression of divine wisdom and power upon them as that they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us as De 17:8, rkr Kmm alpy yk" "If a matter be too hard for thee, "hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous works of God are expressed, Ps 77:11 78:11. Wherefore, these "wonderful things of the law" are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture which are above the natural reason and understanding of men to find out and comprehend. Such are the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, especially because Christ is in them, whose name is" Wonderful, "Isaiah 9:6; for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him. **John Owen, 1616-1683.**

Ps 119:18. Wondrous things. There are promises in God's word that no man has ever tried, to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of a knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some old baronial estate that has descended to a man (who lives in a modern house) and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains, till, at last, some man says to him, "Have you been up in the country to look at that estate?" He makes up his mind that he will take a look at it. As he goes through the porch he is surprised to see the skill that has been displayed in its construction: he is more and more surprised as he goes through the halls. He enters a large room, and is astonished as he beholds the wealth of pictures on the walls, among which are portraits of many of his revered ancestors. He stands in amazement before them. There is a Titian, there a Raphael, there is a Correggio, and there is a Giorgione. He says, "I never had any idea of these before." "Ah, "says the steward, "there is many another thing that you know nothing about in the castle, "and he takes him from room to room and shows carved plate, and wonderful statues, and the man exclaims, "Here I have been for a score of years the owner of this estate, and have never before known what things were in it." But no architect ever conceived of such an estate as God's word, and no artist, or carver, or sculptor, ever conceived of such pictures, and carved dishes, and statues as adorn its apartments. It contains treasures that silver, and gold, and precious stones are not to be mentioned with. **Henry Ward Beecher, 1872.**

Ps 119:18. That I may behold wondrous things. The great end of the Word of God in the Psalmist's time, as now, was practical; but there is a secondary use here referred to, which is worthy of consideration," its power of meeting man's faculty of wonder. God knows our frame, for he made it, and he must have adapted the Bible to all its parts. If we can show this, it may be another token that the book comes from Him who made man... That God has bestowed upon man the faculty of wonder we all know. It is one of the first and most constant emotions in our nature. We can see this in children, and in all whose feelings are still fresh and natural. It is the parent of the desire to know, and all through life it is urging men to enquire. **John Ker.**

Ps 119:18. Wondrous things out of thy law. In 118 we had the "wondrous" character of redemption; in Ps 119 we have the "wonders" (Psalms 119:18; Psalms 119:27; Psalms 119:129), of God's revelation. **William Kay, 1871.**

Ps 119:18-19. When I cannot have Moses to tell me the meaning, saith Saint Augustine, give me that Spirit that thou gavest to Moses. And this is that which every man that will understand must pray for: this David prayed for; "Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wonders of the Law" and (Psalms 119:19) hide not thy commandments from me. And Christ saith, "If you, being evil, can give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" so that then we shall see the secrets of God. **Richard Stock, (1626).**

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Ps 119:18.

1. The precious casket: "Thy law."
2. The invisible treasure: "wondrous things."
3. The miraculous eyesight: "that I may behold."
4. The divine oculist: "Open thou mine eyes."

Ps 119:18. "The hidden wonders of the gospel. There are many hidden things in nature; many in our fellow men; so there are many in the Bible. The things of the Bible are hidden because of the blindness of Man.

1. **The blind man's sorrow:** "Open mine eyes." I cannot see. I have eyes and see not. The pain of this conscious blindness when a man really feels it.
2. **The blind man's conviction:** "That I may behold wondrous, "etc. There are wondrous things there to be seen. I am sure of it.

There is a wonderful view,

- (a) of sin;
- (b) of hell, as its desert;
- (c) of One ready to save;
- (d) of perfect pardon;
- (e) of God's love;
- (f) of all sufficient grace;
- (g) of heaven.

3. The blind man's wisdom. The fault is in my eyes, not in thy word. "Open my eyes, "and all will be well. The reason for not seeing is because the eyes are blinded by sin. There is nothing wanting in the Bible.

4. The blind man's prayer: "Open thou mine eyes."

- (a) I cannot open them.
- (b) My dearest friends cannot.
- (c) Only thou canst. "Lord, I pray thee, now open them." Many seek to stop such praying. Be like Bartimaeus who "cried so much the more."

5. The blind man's anticipation: "That I may behold."

- (a) The joy of a cured blind man when he is about to behold, for the first time, the beauties of nature.
- (b) The joy of the spiritually healed when they begin "looking unto Jesus."
- (c) The personal character of the joy: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold." I have hitherto had to see through the eyes of others. I would depend on other eyes no longer. The glad anticipation of Job: "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." **Frederick G. Marchant, 1882.**

Ps 119:18. God's word suited to man's sense of wonder.

1. We shall make some remarks on the sense of wonder in man, and what generally excites it. One of the first causes of wonder is the new or unexpected. The second source is to be found in things beautiful and grand. A third source is the mysterious which surrounds man" there are things unknowable.

2. God has made provision for this sense of wonder in his revealed word. The Bible addresses our sense of wonder by constantly presenting the new and unexpected to us; it sets before us things beautiful and grand. If we come to the third source of wonder, that which raises it to awe, it is the peculiar province of the Bible to deal with this.

3. The means we are to use in order to have God's word thus unfolded" the prayer of the Psalmist may be our guide" "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." **John Ker, of Glasgow, 1877.**

Ps 119:18. Wondrous sights for opened eyes.

1. **The wondrous things** in God's law. A wondrous rule of life. A wondrous curse against transgression. A wondrous redemption from the curse shadowed forth in the ceremonial law.
2. Special eyesight needed to behold them. They are spiritual things. Men are spiritually blind. 1Corinthians 2:14.
3. Personal prayer to the Great Opener of eyes.**C. A. D.**

Psam 119:18 The Wondrous Law James Hastings - Great Texts of the Bible

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold

Wondrous things out of thy law.

Ps. 119:18.

This is a very uncommon idea—that wonder should be the result of intellectual development or the "opening of the eyes." The prevailing notion is the reverse—that wonder belongs to the primitive age alike of the individual and of the race. We say colloquially, "I opened my eyes in astonishment"; the Psalmist's expression is the converse, "I became astonished by opening my eyes." What the Psalmist says is that the marvels of life escape us by reason of our ignorance. His prayer is just the contrary of the common prayer. The common prayer is, "Make me a simple child again that I may feel the mystery of all things and bow with reverence before them." But the Psalmist says, "Emancipate me from the ignorance of childhood, for it is only when I shall see with the eyes of a man that I shall behold the mystery, the marvel, the unfathomable depth, of that ocean on whose bosom I live and move and have my being."

¶ Do we find that the sense of wonder belongs to children? Not so. The sense of mystery is precisely what a child does not feel. He asks many questions; but he will accept the crudest answers as quite adequate explanations. He has not a consciousness of limitation. He has a feeling of power beyond his strength; he will put out his hand to catch the moon. He does not at an early date inquire where he came from. He does not ask who made a watch or who made the sun. To him the watch and the sun are both alive—moving by their own strength, upheld by their own power. His eyes are not opened, and therefore his wonder is not awake. To wake his wonder you must unbar the door of his mind. The mystery comes with his experience—not with the want of it. I do not read that man marvelled in Eden; I do that they marvelled in Galilee. Eden was as wonderful as Galilee; but the eyes were not opened. Knowledge is the parent of mystery. Experience is the forerunner of reverence. Only they who have let down the pitcher can utter the cry, "The well is deep."

¶ Mr. Morley, in his *Life of Gladstone*, speaking of his entrance into college life at Oxford, says: "It was from Gladstone's introduction into this enchanted and inspiring world that we recognize the beginning of the wonderful course which was to show how great a thing the life of a man may be made." So with Christian. Here, in the Interpreter's House, his spiritual experiences really begin. He is no longer in the outer circle of the world's empty life; he has come within the circle of God's direct purposes and protecting power. Dangers he will have to meet, trials of faith and courage; the Hill of Difficulty, the Valley of Humiliation, the Castle of Giant Despair, the struggle with Apollyon—all this is before him. But he is on the pilgrim-road to Zion. There is the sweet companionship; there are the wonders by the way—the Interpreter's House, the Cross where the burden is removed, the Palace Beautiful, the sight of the Delectable Mountains, the River of the Water of Life. So whatever might be the difficulties, Christian was on enchanted ground. He was near to God. He was on the path whose end was heaven. The wicket gate admits him to the rich field of Christian experience: the only experience that has any lasting value.

I

1. The sense of wonder is one of our most useful emotions. The mind cannot remain long in a state of monotony without something like pain, or if it does, it is a sign of the low level to which it has sunk. It has a craving after what is fresh, and God has provided for this in the form of the world. He has made the works of nature pass before us with a perpetually diversified face. He has created summer and winter, and so ordered the sun that it has probably never set with the same look since man first saw it. Those works of nature are constantly turning up new subjects of thought and study, and will do so, during the world's existence; while, at the same time, the world itself is weaving an ever-shifting and many-coloured web of history. In all this there is a stimulus to man to lead him to look and think.

¶ Not by "mathesis," not by deduction, or construction, not by measuring, or searching, canst thou find out God, but only by the faithful cry from the roadside of the world as He passes—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." In that prayer you have literally expressed to you, not in any wise as we too carelessly assume metaphorically, the two functions of the exercised senses, of which you have so often, I fear incredulously, heard me affirm the necessary connexion—the discerning of what is beautiful and of what is right. "Wondrous things out of thy law." Wondrous, not as to the uneducated senses they are in terror, but wondrous to the educated senses in gentleness and delight; so that while to the modern demonstrator of the laws of Nature they become mysterious as dreadful in their tyranny, to the ancient perceiver of the laws of Heaven they became lovely no less than wondrous: in the tenderness and the voice of the Borgo Allegri, at the feet of the Mother of Christ, was joy no less of allegiance than wonder—"Oh, how love I thy law."

2. Wonder rises into admiration as we contemplate things that are grand and beautiful. There is a chord in the human heart to which the beautiful and sublime respond, whether these appear in the material or in the spiritual world. If we could only take men away for a little out of the dull, dead round, and from the corroding and often debasing things that draw them down in their common life, there are objects such as these appealing to them daily and hourly, and asking them if they have not a soul. Rich sunsets and moonlit skies are there, only requiring eyes to see them, and acts of self-devotion and heroism are being performed, and lives of patient

suffering led, under our sight, which are as capable of thrilling us as anything recorded in history.

¶ At a later time the Maréchale delivered addresses in other cities of France—such as Nîmes, Marseilles, Havre, Rouen, Lyons—and she was everywhere astonished to find that the French, who seem the most thoughtless, are yet among the most thoughtful people in the world. The result of such Conférences as these cannot be tabulated. For one thing, they made the Maréchale more than ever a mother-confessor and spiritual director. The thoughts of many hearts were revealed to her at private interviews of which no record was kept, and in letters, one of which may be given:—

"Your marvellous faith, your simple and powerful eloquence so deeply moved me that I cannot but thank you. I thank you as an artist, as a sincere admirer of beautiful work, of great characters; I thank you as a man blasé, sceptical, benumbed and deadened. As a child I adored Jesus, and now, after having thought much and suffered infinite pains which you cannot understand, I have said adieu to faith and also adieu to hope! I have become one of those you call sceptics. Ah! do not say 'terrible' sceptic, but unfortunate, pitiable, unhappy sceptic. You are, Madame, a great, beautiful, generous heart, and if ever earnest good wishes have been worth anything, I have cherished them for you, your work, and those who fight by your side. You will believe me, an unbeliever, who envies you, admires you, and ideally loves you."

3. Wonder and admiration deepen into awe as we realize the mystery of life. A reflective mind can take but a very few steps in thinking till it comes upon this. It is not so much that there are things unknown around us as that there are things *unknowable*, that there is an infinite and a mystery in the universe which we cannot now penetrate, and which may for ever stretch beyond us. The tokens of man's highest nature lie not in his being able to comprehend but in his ability to feel that there are things which he cannot comprehend, and which he yet feels to be true and real, before which he is compelled to fall down in reverent awe. It is here, above all, that man comes into contact with religion, with a God, with an eternity; and he in whom there is little sense of wonder, or in whom it has been blunted and degraded, will have a proportionately feeble impression of these grand subjects which the soul can feel to be real but can never fully grasp.

¶ I can call my Father a brave man (ein Tapferer). Man's face he did not fear; God he always feared: his Reverence, I think, was considerably mixed with Fear. Yet not slavish Fear; rather Awe, as of unutterable Depths of Silence, through which flickered a trembling Hope. How he used to speak of Death (especially in late years) or rather to be silent, and *look* of it! There was no feeling in him here that he cared to hide: he trembled at the really terrible; the mock-terrible he cared nought for.—That last act of his Life; when in the last agony, with the thick ghastly vapours of Death rising round him to choke him, he burst through and called with a man's voice on the great God to have mercy on him: that was like the epitome and concluding summary of his whole Life. God gave him strength to wrestle with the King of Terrors, as it were even then to prevail. All his strength came from God, and ever sought new nourishment there. God be thanked for it.

II

1. There is nothing so wonderful as God's law; indeed, it may justly be said to include in itself all that is most wonderful—all that truly merits our admiration—all that will really reward our curiosity. For what is it? The Psalmist here was not thinking merely of the law given to Moses or of the words written in any book, however sacred. He was not thinking of spoken words or written characters, but of eternal realities. He was an earnest man, and his mind sought to be in contact with truth itself; he was a pious man, and his heart longed for nothing less or lower than communion with the living God. He felt himself in the Divine presence, and he felt that the Divine law was within and around him. The Bible tells us much about the law of God, but it is only by a figure of speech that we call it the law of God or even that it contains the law of God. In the Bible and other books we have the statements of God's laws, but these laws themselves are far too real to be in any book.

2. It is the law of God that keeps the stars in their courses, regulates the movements of the seas and the revolutions of the earth, develops the plant and organizes the animal, works in our instincts and guides our reason, marks out the path of humanity and determines the rise and fall, the weal and woe, of nations, and measures out to virtue and vice their due rewards in time and eternity. It is not truly separable from God Himself, but is the whole of the modes in which He manifests His power, and wisdom, and goodness in the universe,—the whole of the ways in which He operates through matter and spirit, in creation, providence, and redemption, as Father and King and Judge. Hence it is that we say it is not only most wonderful but includes in itself all that is wonderful. The wonders of physical nature, of the human soul and human history, and of redeeming love and grace, are all wonders of that law of God which the Psalmist longed and prayed to behold—that law which ruleth alike in what is least and in what is greatest, to which all things in heaven and earth do homage, the seat of which is the bosom of the Eternal, the voice of which is the harmony of the universe.

¶ I read in the Bible that God has "set his glory in the heavens," but in merely reading this I do not see that glory; it is only to be seen by "considering the heavens, which are the work of God's fingers; the moon and the stars, which he has ordained." This terrible law—"the wages of sin is death"—has been published in the Bible, but it does not exist and work in the Bible; it exists and works in the lives of sinful beings like you and me, and if we do not see it in ourselves we shall never see it at all, although we read a thousand

times the words which announce it. So with its gracious counterpart—"the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ." These blessed words point us to the most consoling law in all the universe, but they point us away from themselves; and only by our souls coming into communion with a living God through a living Saviour can they behold the wonders of mercy and truth which are in that law.

¶ Really, so far as spiritual vision is concerned, the angels must look upon this earth as a big blind asylum. We see close to us, but not afar off; we see the surface, and miss the depths; we see not as wide awake, but as those who rub their eyes hardly knowing whether they wake or sleep. Have I seen the "wondrous things" out of God's law—the things which accompany salvation. Many feel the intellectual interest of God's Word, enjoy its eloquence, extol its moral worth, or they appreciate its prudential wisdom, like Napoleon, who put it in the political section of his library; but they do not grasp its spiritual, saving message. They gather shining pebbles and painted shells, and overlook the pearl of great price. Oh! to see the wondrous depths of redeeming love! Whilst I study systems of theology and search the commentaries of exegetes do I sufficiently remember the promised Revealer and wait His illumination? "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things."

III

1. The most wonderful of all laws are God's moral and spiritual laws. They are the laws of God in a far higher sense than other laws. The laws of the physical world might have been quite different from what they are. God made them to be what they are by making the physical world itself what it is. If He had made quite a different material world with quite other laws, He would have been none the less God, the true object of our worship. But He did not make the fundamental laws of moral life to be what they are by any mere forthputting of His will. They are eternal and unchangeable. That God should alter them would be for Him to cease to be wise and righteous and holy and loving. It would be for Him to cease to be God. The wonders of these laws are thus the wonders of the Divine nature, and far greater, therefore, than any wonders of created nature. At the same time, these laws are the laws of our natures, of our spirits, of what is much higher and much more wonderful than anything else to be beheld in nature. "On earth," it has been said, "there is nothing great but man, and in man there is nothing great but mind." And certainly a soul is a far more wonderful thing than even a star, a spiritual being than a material world, and its laws are far more wonderful. It is spiritual law that determines men's relations to their God and to one another, and it is on obedience or disobedience to it that the weal or woe of individuals or societies chiefly depends, so that all the marvels and mysteries of human nature and destiny gather round it.

¶ I am not quite sure that the sole, or even chief, end of punishment is the reformation of the offender. I think a great deal *of law*. Law rules Deity; and its awful majesty is above individual happiness. That is what Kant calls "the categorical imperative," that is, a sense of duty which commands categorically or absolutely—not saying "it is better," but "thou shalt." Why? Because "thou shalt," that is all. It is not best to do right—thou must do right; and the conscience that feels that, and in that way, is the nearest to Divine humanity. Not that law was made, like the Sabbath, for man, but man was made for it. He is beneath it, a grain of dust before it; it moves on, and if he will not move before it, it crushes him; that is all, and that is punishment. I fancy that grand notion of law is what we have lost, what we require to get, before we are in a position to discuss the question of punishment at all, or to understand what it is.

2. To behold fully how wonderful the law is—how sacred God regards it to be—how terrible disobedience to it is—it is to the cross we must look; to the cross, towering high above all other subjects, in the midst of the ages, in the presence of the nations, to show sin in all its hideousness and righteousness in all its perfections. If we can see no wonders in the law which Christ died to satisfy and glorify, if we do not see it to be unspeakably more wonderful than all the other laws, assuredly our blindness is great indeed, and we cannot too earnestly cry to a merciful God, "Open Thou mine eyes."

¶ In a letter to her father Miss Nightingale says:

"What I dislike in Renan is not that it is fine writing, but that it is all fine writing. His Christ is the hero of a novel; he himself, a successful novel-writer. I am revolted by such expressions as *charmant, delcieux, religion du pur sentiment*, in such a subject.... As for the 'religion of sentiment,' I really don't know what he means. It is an expression of Balzac's. If he means the 'religion of love,' I agree and do not agree. We must love something loveable. And a religion of love must certainly include the explaining of God's character to be something loveable—of God's 'providence,' which is the self-same thing as God's Laws, as something loving and loveable. On the other hand I go along with Christ, not with Renan's Christ, far more than most Christians do. I do not think that 'Christ on the Cross' is the highest expression hitherto of God—not in the vulgar meaning of the Atonement—but God does hang on the Cross every day in every one of us; the whole meaning of God's 'providence,' *i.e.* His laws, is the Cross. When Christ preaches the Cross, when all mystical theology preaches the Cross, I go along with them entirely. It is the self-same thing as what I mean when I say that God educates the world by His laws, *i.e.* by sin—that man must create mankind—that all this evil, *i.e.* the Cross, is the proof of God's goodness, is the only way by which God could work out man's salvation without a contradiction. You say, but there is too much evil. I say, there is just enough (not a millionth part of a grain more than is necessary) to teach man by his own mistakes,—by his sins, if you will—to show man the way to perfection in eternity—to perfection which is the only happiness."

IV

Man's eyes are veiled, so that he sees but a little way into God's law. Our intellectual perception of law is one thing and our spiritual perception of God in law is a very different thing. To see law itself we need only a clear and disciplined understanding. To see God in law we need spiritual discernment. The eye sees only what it brings with it the power of seeing. And neither mere bodily vision nor mere intellectual vision will enable us to behold spiritual reality. The things of the spirit must be spiritually discerned.

¶ When on a serene night millions of stars sparkle in the depths of the sky, any man who has bodily eyes, although he may have no talent and culture, has only to raise them upwards to embrace at a glance all the splendours of the firmament, and thereby to receive into his soul, at least in some measure, the impressions which so sublime a spectacle is fitted to produce. But there may stand beside him one whose intellectual ability is far greater, and who has improved that ability to the utmost by diligent and carefully directed exercise, yet if Providence have denied to him the blessing of sight, in vain for him will there be all magnificence. There is another sky, and one far grander than the azure vault which is stretched over our heads, and this mystic sky is filled with the stars of Divine truth, the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of infinite wisdom, the bounties of Divine beneficence, the beauties of absolute holiness, the marvels of redeeming love, the riches of the Godhead, the glories of Father, Son, and Spirit, shining far more bright and pure than the sun at noonday. And yet to great men, to the wise of this world, to the most scholarly and the most scientific of men, they may be quite invisible, although they are lighting up with their Divine radiance the path of the simple peasant and causing his heart to leap and sing with joy as he beholds them.

¶ I remember very well when Sir Redvers Buller came home from South Africa, in almost the first speech he made after landing at Southampton, he drew attention to the immense superiority of the Boer over the Briton in the matter of vision. Accustomed to the clear atmosphere and vast distances of South Africa, the Boer had brought his sight faculty to such a pitch of perfection that he could see a moving object a mile or two farther off than the average Englishman could, with the result that he was aware of the approach of the English soldier long before the Englishman became aware of his nearness. And Sir Redvers did not hesitate to set down some of our calamities and disasters and defeats to this cause.

1. One cause of this blindness is a *hereditary defect in the unbelieving heart*, a natural congenital blindness, which the lapse of years has not cured. We are all born blind, and remain blind to moral and spiritual truth long after birth. Discernment between right and wrong, a sense of duty, a sense of failure and secret shame in consequence, is a state or faculty into which we can grow only after we have lived as mere animals about four or five years. It takes some years longer before we grow into knowledge of the ideas of character, of trustworthiness in parents, of their unselfish love, and of the intense kindness of that discipline which at first we resisted and resented. Before that development we were blind, we could not discern spiritual things; we could not know what true love is, for love is the most spiritual of all human faculties. It crowns the climax of all strictly human qualities. But, though it seems incredible, it is true that some men and women have grown up without any moral sense being developed, and also without any knowledge or sense of true love.

¶ I came across a man well advanced in years who confided to me that he believed neither in God nor in a future life. I at once asked him: "Did you ever really love any one in the world?" After some days' reflection, he replied to me: "No, I don't think I ever did love anybody—at least, not as you define true love." Now, if you cannot get as far as love in human development, you must, of course, be blind to God. You cannot see Him, cannot take any pleasure in the thought of Him, but must be practically dead towards Him.

2. Another cause of blindness is to be found *in the conditions of life which are either forced upon us or have been chosen by ourselves*. The worst and most widespread of these conditions is absorption in the concerns and pleasures of this life. Rich and poor alike suffer from this absorption, yet the rich suffer from it far more than the poor. Want and distress may open our eyes to God, fulness and luxury never. So long as our hearts are fixed wholly on worldly good and animal indulgence, our souls are utterly blind to God and to all spiritual things.

¶ Christian saw in Interpreter's House two boys, Passion and Patience. Passion had a bag of gold in his hand, but Patience was willing to take his Governor's advice and wait for his good things till the next year. And these two boys, says John Bunyan, are typical of the worldly man and the true Christian. The worldly man, with his favourite proverb of "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," wants his good things at once; he wants his bag of gold in the hand, not seeming to realize that his money must perish with him; but the Christian is willing to do without this world's wealth, because he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

¶ A scientist delivered a lecture a little time ago in which he maintained, on the basis of studies started by the observation of the eye of a wounded bird, that all diseases of the body register themselves in the eye, that it was even possible to judge the location of the disease by the part of the pupil affected. Whether this can be demonstrated or not, there is no doubt that the eye has its connexion with organs of the body that are less honourably placed, and is affected by their accidents and disquietudes. Diseases of the blood and of the digestive functions cloud and vex the sight. You shall not be careless of your eating and drinking and maintain clear vision. The mists and the filmy globes which float before the eye are the indices of things wrong in parts of the system that are

remote from the eye itself, and to be remedied by neither eye-lotions nor glasses. So neglect of the spiritual life results in blurred spiritual vision.

3. Above and beyond these things which naturally darken our souls, there lie *the conditions which we may create for ourselves*. Not knowing anything about the soul and the spiritual life, some steep themselves in studies and occupations which prevent all entrance of light into their minds concerning God and His ways. They keep the company of irreligious and unbelieving men like themselves. They pore over essays and volumes which not only throw not a gleam of light upon the spiritual world, but are purposely written to shut it out, to make it more and more difficult to see God, to deepen the darkness in which they started on their search for what they call "Truth." Thus, blind at the beginning, they take for their guides men and books still more blind than themselves, and flounder on with ever less and less power to recover their sight. And all the while they studiously neglect those means by which their eyes may be opened. They never lift up their hearts to God. They avoid all thoughts of religion unless only to sneer at it, or to look down upon it with supercilious curiosity. They never attend public worship or put themselves in the way of hearing what they never have heard. "What is the use," cry the more intelligent among them—"what is the use of praying to a God who is absolutely unknowable?" But they forget that God is unknowable only to those who think Him to be so, to those who never pray. If they did but confer with those who have lifted up their hearts to God and have found Him, they might be brought to go down upon their knees to pray, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes that I may see."

¶ A little steam vessel in which I was sailing round the coast of Arran, emitted such a thick pall of smoke as to blot out the vision of Goat Fell. And sometimes our souls create those obscuring clouds and hide the glory of God. It may be the vapour of pride. It may be the steam of unclean passion. It may be the smoke of timidity and fear.

O may no earth-born cloud arise

To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.

Night comes; soon alone shall fancy follow sadly in her flight

Where the fiery dust of evening, shaken from the feet of light,

Thrusts its monstrous barriers between the pure, the good, the true,

That our weeping eyes may strain for, but shall never after view.

Only yester eve I watched with heart at rest the nebulæ

Looming far within the shadowy shining of the Milky Way;

Finding in the stillness joy and hope for all the sons of men;

Now what silent anguish fills a night more beautiful than then:

For earth's age of pain has come, and all her sister planets weep,

Thinking of her fires of morning passing into dreamless sleep.

In this cycle of great sorrow for the moments that we last

We too shall be linked by weeping to the greatness of her past:

But the coming race shall know not, and the fount of tears shall dry,

And the arid heart of man shall be arid as the desert sky.

So within my mind the darkness dawned, and round me everywhere

Hope departed with the twilight, leaving only dumb despair.

V

The Psalmist does not ask for a new faculty, but for clearer vision. The eyes are there already; they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power that enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. A man will never grow into the knowledge of God's Word by idly waiting for some new gift of discernment, but by diligently using that which God has already bestowed upon him, and using at the same time all other helps that lie within his reach. There are men and books that seem, beyond others, to have the power of aiding insight. All of us have felt it in the contact of some affinity of nature which makes them our best helpers; the kindred clay upon the eyes by which the great Enlightener removes our

blindness (John 9:6). Let us seek for such, and if we find them let us employ them without leaning on them. Above all, let us give our whole mind in patient, loving study to the book itself, and where we fail, at any essential part, God will either send His evangelist Philip to our aid (Acts 8) or instruct us Himself. But it is only to patient, loving study that help is given. God could have poured all knowledge into us by easy inspiration, but it is by earnest search alone that it can become the treasure of the soul.

1. If we are to get spiritual sight our prayer must be sincere. The old Hebrew poet, speaking with a true insight confirmed by experience, says: "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; yea, if thou seek him diligently with thy whole heart." That is the secret. It will not do to be seeking God with a heart looking back to the idol which had taken His place. It will not do to be wanting to have God and the idol at one and the same time. God has made that to be impossible for the soul of man. One God or idol at a time, or not God at all. And while any lingering love for the idol remains, there is no room for God to enter in. It is not His fault, or His unwillingness, or His jealousy. But it is our own Divine incapacity to trifle or dissemble with Him; it is our own Divine necessity for wholeness, for uprightness and sincerity, that makes any attempt at double-mindedness futile.

¶ An old colleague and friend of Denholm Brash writes:—

"Chief among my impressions of his excellences is that of his utter sincerity. It was so invariable that it bewildered the average man. He never troubled about maintaining any position he might have taken up yesterday. He told you what he thought to-day; every passing mood was faithfully reflected in his words; the fleeting opinion or feeling was not concealed. You were allowed to trace processes in his thought which most men hide from view... I have seen him confound an old fox of a man by sheer candour. He left the enemy breathless with surprise at a simplicity he had thought faded out of the world with Eden. The man's arts would have been a match for any arts they encountered, but artlessness dumbfounded him. The armour of light not only defended the wearer, but dismayed the assailant. Never was this servant of truth 'off duty,' and with the audacious simplicity of love he would attack an apparently impregnable fortress, and with one well-planted shot would bring a whole pile of hypocrisies toppling down. He had a short method with some of these Goliaths which worked wonders."

2. We must bring our hearts into harmony with the law. At South Kensington there is a clock made above 500 years ago under the hammer of a Glastonbury monk. It has measured out the moments of fifteen generations of men. That piece of mechanism has done and is still doing its maker's will. It has served its maker's purpose. It fulfils his praiseworthy intention and so praises him. Every stroke of its pendulum is to the glory of the Glastonbury smith. The thing has done good and done right. It keeps (so to say) its maker's commandment. What he meant it to do it has done well and truly. Perhaps it may seem a little strained to apply such phraseology to a piece of inanimate mechanism, but it will surely aid us in seeing what the moralist means by telling men to live as they were meant to live. Think of this clockwork of the brain, this delicate mechanism of thought and feeling. Year in, year out, the restless wheels of desire and feeling, of thought and passion, play into one another and mark results on the solemn dial of life. Matters may be so mismanaged as to put the machinery into a whirl of wild confusion. It is, on the other hand, possible to secure such inward adjustment, such balance, such regulative control, such true impulse, as to make the soul a splendid harmony and the life a utility which men acknowledge with reverence and benediction. With God's works as with man's the essential thing is to be true to the Maker's purpose. There is a commandment, a Divine intention, to which every one must be true. "Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandment."

¶ The Lord will draw us and securely lead us to Himself, in a way contrary to all our natural will, until He have divested us thereof, and consumed it and made it thoroughly subject unto the Divine will. For this is His will: that we should cease to regard our own wishes or dislikes; that it should become a light matter to us whether He give or take away, whether we have abundance or suffer want, and let all things go, if only we may receive and apprehend God Himself; that, whether things please or displease us, we may leave all things to take their course and cleave to Him alone. Then first do we attain to the fulness of God's love as His children, when it is no longer happiness or misery, prosperity or adversity, that draws us to Him, or keeps us back from Him. What we should then experience none can utter; but it would be something far better than when we were burning with the first flame of love, and had great emotion but less true submission; for here, though there may be less show of zeal, and less vehemence of feeling, there is more true faithfulness to God. That we may attain thereunto, may God help us with His grace. Amen!

3. In proportion as we love and obey the law, its wonders unfold themselves to our cleansed vision. Emerson says in his essay on Nature, "The health of the eye seems to demand a horizon. We are never tired so long as we can see far enough." It is quite true that wide vision is refreshing. We have all been more depressingly tired in our own houses than on the broad upland and under the open sky. The mountaineer in his loftiest adventure knows no such oppressive weariness as the woman who sits "in unwomanly rags plying her needle and thread." The man with the widest and furthest vision is the man with the most exuberant energy. Jesus, even with Gethsemane and Calvary before Him, is not so weary of life as Judas. St. Paul in labours more abundant is never so jaded as Nero. The early Christian martyrs, with their vision of the Name, amid all the unspeakable horror of their torture, were not so weary of their sufferings as their persecutors were weary of their persecution. They might still sing, as Chesterton splendidly puts it in the "Ballad of the White Horse,"

That on you is fallen the shadow,
And not upon the Name;
That though we scatter and though we fly
And you hang over us like the sky,
You are more tired of victory
Than we are tired of shame.
That though you hunt the Christian man
Like a hare on the hill side,
The hare has still more heart to run
Than you have heart to ride.
That though all lances split on you,
All swords be heaved in vain,
We have more lust again to lose
Than you to win again.

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John Piper - [Open My Eyes That I May See](#) Psalm 119:17-24

Psalm 119:17 Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word. 18 Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law. 19 I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me. 20 My soul is crushed with longing After Your ordinances at all times. 21 You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, Who wander from Your commandments. 22 Take away reproach and contempt from me, For I observe Your testimonies. 23 Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes. 24 Your testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors.

Parallel Rails for the Track of Our Souls

As we begin 1998, God's aim for us is that we be set on a two-railed train track in the direction of holiness and love and mission and heaven. The two rails of this train are prayer before the throne of God and meditation on the Word of God. Some of you may remember the second page of our Mission Statement booklet, "The Spiritual Dynamic." It says,

We join God the Father in magnifying the supremacy of His glory through our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, by

treasuring all that God is, loving all whom he loves, praying for all his purposes, meditating on all his word, sustained by all his grace.

Praying before the throne of God and meditating on the Word of God are like parallel rails that enable the train of our souls to stay on the track that leads to holiness and heaven. We need to renew our zeal for prayer and Bible meditation at the beginning of the year. Everything gets old and worn and weak without re-awakening and renewal and restoration. So during Prayer Week every year we rivet our attention on these great and precious things in order to rekindle our passion for prayer and the Word.

Three Things to Learn from Psalm 119:18

This year the two messages that sandwich Prayer Week grow out of Psalm 119:18. "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." This verse combines prayer and the Word, and we need to see how, so that we can combine them this way in our lives and in our church. There are three things that we learn from this verse.

One is that there are **wonderful things** in the Word of God. "**Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.**" The word "**law**" is "**Torah**" and means "instruction" or "teaching" in this psalm. There are wonderful things in God's teaching to us. In fact, they are so wonderful that when you really see them, they change you profoundly and empower holiness and love and missions (2 Corinthians 3:18-note). Which is why reading and knowing and meditating on and memorizing the Word of God is so crucial.

The second thing we learn from this verse is that no one can see these wonderful things for what they really are without God's supernatural help. "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." If God does not open our eyes, we will not see the wonder of the Word. We are not naturally able to see spiritual beauty. When we read the Bible without the help of God, the glory of God in the teachings and events of the Bible is like the sun shining in the face of a blind man. Not that you can't construe its surface meaning, but you can't see the wonder, the beauty, the glory of it such that it wins your heart.

Which leads to the third thing we learn from this verse, namely, that we must pray to God for supernatural illumination when we read the Bible. "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." Since we are helpless in ourselves to see spiritual beauty and the wonder of God in the teachings and events of the Bible without God's gracious illumination, we should ask him for it. "Open my eyes."

A Three-Step Truth

Next week I plan to focus on the wonderful things in the Word of God and practically how we get them into our head and heart. But today I focus on prayer. I want us to see this profound three-step truth: The Word is crucial for living a Godward life that leads to heaven and has power and meaning on earth. We cannot even see what the Word really is without God's supernatural help. And therefore we need to be a people of daily prayer that God would do whatever he must do to get the wonders of the Word into our hearts and into our lives.

Let's take these three steps one at a time and see them confirmed and illustrated in other parts of the Bible.

1. The Word is crucial to a life of holiness

The first point is that seeing the Word and knowing it and having it in us is crucial to living a life of holiness and love and power for the purposes of God.

Look back at verse 11, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you." How then are we to avoid sin in our lives? By treasuring the Word of God in our hearts. O how many people mess up their lives by not meditating on and loving and memorizing the Word of God! Do you want to be holy, that is, do you want power to overcome sin and live a life of radical godliness and sacrificial love and utter devotion to the cause of Christ? Then get on the track. God has ordained a way to godliness and power: and it is the way of treasuring up the Bible in our hearts.

I say it to the old and I say it to the parents of the young. Meditate on and memorize and cherish the commandments and warnings and promises of God in the Scriptures. No, I do not say it is easy, especially when you are old. But most things worth doing are not easy. Making a fine piece of furniture, making a good poem, making a great piece of music, making a special meal or celebration - none of them is easy. But they are worth doing. Is not a good life worth doing?

Talitha is now two. She is beginning to learn Bible verses by heart. She is also learning the forms of prayer. Why? Why go to the trouble of taking time and effort to repeat over and over the Bible to her? Very simple - when she is a teenager I want her to be godly and pure and holy and loving and humble and kind and submissive and wise. And the Bible says, as plain as day, this comes by treasuring up the Word of God in your heart. "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you."

Jesus put it like this in his great prayer for us in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." "Sanctify" is a Biblical word for making a person holy or godly or loving or pure or virtuous or spiritually wise. And these things I want for myself and for my children and for you. So what then should we do this year? If we are sanctified by the truth, and the Word of God is truth, what

should we do?

If a doctor says, "You're very sick and may die of your sickness, but if you will take this medicine, you will get well and live," and you neglect to take the medicine - too busy, the pills are big and hard to swallow, just forgetful - you are going to stay sick and you may die. That's the way it is with sin and spiritual immaturity. If you neglect what God tells you will sanctify you and make you mature and strong and holy, then you will not be mature and strong and holy. Reading, and meditating on and memorizing and cherishing the Word of God is God's appointed way of overcoming sin and becoming a strong, godly, mature, loving, wise person.

There are wonderful things to be seen in the Word of God that will transform you deeply if you really see them and treasure them in you.

2. We cannot see without God's help

The second point in the text is that we are not able to see these wonderful things in the Word for what they really are without God's supernatural help.

The reason is that we are fallen and corrupt and dead in sin and therefore blind and ignorant and hard. Paul described us like this in Ephesians 4:18-**note** - we are "darkened in [our] understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in [us], because of the hardness of [our] heart."

Here's the way Moses wrote about this problem in Deuteronomy 29:2-4, "And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, 'You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt . . . those great signs and wonders [i.e., "wonderful things"]. Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.'" Notice: you have seen . . . but you cannot see without God's supernatural work.

That is our plight. We are guilty and corrupt and hard and ignorant and blind without the awakening, enlivening, softening, humbling, purifying, enlightening work of God in our lives. We will never see the beauty of spiritual reality without God's illumination. We will never see the wonder and glory of what the Word teaches without God's opening the eyes of our hearts and giving us a spiritual sense of these things.

The point of teaching this and knowing this is to make us desperate for God and hungry for God, and to set us to pleading and crying out to God for his help in reading the Bible.

(On Point 2 see also: Matthew 16:17 with 11:4; and Luke 24:45; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16; John 3:6-8; Romans 8:5-8.)

3. We need to pray for God to help us see

Which leads to the last point: if knowing and treasuring the truth of God's Word is crucial to being holy and loving and mature and heavenbound, and if we by nature cannot see the wonders of God's Word and feel the attraction of its glory, then we are in a desperate condition and need to pray for God to help us see. "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law."

In other words, prayer is essential to Christian living, because it is the key to unlocking the power of the Word in our lives. The glory of the Word is like the shining of the sun in the face of blind man unless God opens our eyes to that glory. And if we don't see the glory, we won't be changed (2 Corinthians 3:18; John 17:17), and if we are not changed, we are not Christians.

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays this way. He says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling . . ." In other words, "I've taught you these things and you have received them with your external senses, but unless you perceive the glory of them with your spiritual sense ("the eyes of your heart") you will not be changed. (See also Ephesians 3:14-19; Colossians 1:9 with 3:16). Now these are Christians he is writing to, which shows that we need to go on praying until we get to heaven for spiritual eyes to see.

Seven Kinds of Prayer to Soak our Bible Reading

But since our text is Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law," we should let this psalmist show us how he prays more generally about his reading of the Word of God. So let me close with a little tour of Psalm 119, and show you seven kinds of prayer with which you can soak your Bible reading this year.

We should pray . . .

That God would teach us his Word. Psalm 119:12b, "Teach me Your statutes." (See also Ps 119:33, 64b, 66, 68b, 135). True learning of God's Word is only possible if God himself becomes the teacher in and through all other means of teaching.

That God would not hide his Word from us. Psalm 119:19b, "Do not hide Your commandments from me." The Bible warns of the

dreadful chastisement or judgment of the Word of God being taken from us (Amos 8:11). (See also Ps 119:43).

That God would make us understand his Word. Psalm 119:27, "Make me understand the way of Your precepts" (Ps 119:34, 73b, 144b, 169). Here we ask God to cause us to understand - to do whatever he needs to do to get us to understand his Word.

That God would incline our hearts to his Word. Psalm 119:36, "Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to [dishonest] gain." The great problem with us is not primarily our reason, but our will - we are disinclined by nature to read and meditate and memorize the Word. So we must pray for God to incline our wills.

That God would give us life to keep his Word. Psalm 119:88, "Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, so that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth." He is aware that we need life and energy to give ourselves to the Word and its obedience. So he asks God for this basic need. (See also Ps 119:154b)

That God would establish our steps in his Word. Psalm 119:133, "Establish my footsteps in Your word." (Ed: Cp Ps 119:38) We are dependent on the Lord not only for understanding and life, but for the performance of the Word. That it would be established in our lives. We cannot do this on our own.

That God would seek us when we go astray from his Word. Psalm 119:176, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant." It is remarkable that this godly man ends his psalm with a confession of sin and the need for God to come after him and bring him back. This too we must pray again and again.

The Word, our Treasure

I conclude that as we enter 1998 and long to be holy and loving and radically committed to God's purpose in the city and the nations, we must be people who treasure the Word in our hearts, but more - people who know our desperate condition apart from God and that he has appointed prayer as the way that our eyes will be opened to see wonder in the Word and so be changed. "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law. "

How earnest was he in these kinds of prayers? How earnest should we be? One answer is given in Psalm 119:147, "I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words." He gets up early! This is top priority. Would you make it that?

Wonderful Things from Your Word

John Piper

Psalm 119:18

**Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.
Our Desperate Need for God's Illumination**

The three points we saw in this verse last week were: 1) there are wonderful things in the Word of God; 2) no one can see these wonderful things for what they really are without God's supernatural help; and 3) therefore we must pray to God for supernatural illumination when we read the Bible.

So the stress last week was on prayer and our desperate need for God's supernatural illumination to see spiritual things—to see God's glory and beauty and excellence. You can see many things when you come to the Word without God's opening the eyes of your heart. You can see words and grammatical constructions. You can see logical connections. You can see historical facts. You can see an author's rational intention. You can see some human emotions. None of that requires that God open your eyes in a special spiritual way.

But what you cannot see is the spiritual beauty of God and his Son and their work in the world. You cannot see that God is infinitely desirable above all things. A blind person cannot see the sun, though he can know many facts about the sun and pass a test in astronomy with a score higher than a person who can see the sun. Knowing about and knowing by sight are not the same. Knowing that honey is sweet and tasting honey are not the same.

Let me read again Paul's fullest description of our condition apart from God's special, saving illumination. In Ephesians 4:17b-18-**note** Paul mentions five terrible traits of the human condition that necessitate divine intervention if we are to see spiritual reality. He says that the gentiles (in other words, the ordinary world of men among the nations, apart from grace) live "in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." Reading backwards we can say that there is in all of us, apart from the mighty grace of God, a hardness of

heart that leads to ignorance that leads to alienation from God that leads to darkness that leads to futility of knowledge and life.

So last week's point was: if there is any hope of our seeing wonderful things in the Word of God, we will have to have a divine, supernatural capacity given to us by God that we do not have by nature. And therefore we must pray for it—"Open my eyes." And if we would stay alive in God and be real and authentic and intense in our love for him, we must be desperate to have this enabling every day. So pray, pray, pray. Read Psalm 119 and see how many times he prays for divine help in knowing God and his ways.

Beholding is Becoming

But today I have a different point to make. But before I say what that is, let me make sure you realize why this is important. It's important because being changed into the likeness of Jesus happens by seeing the beauty and worth and excellence of God and his Son and their words and ways. In 2 Corinthians 3:18-note Paul says, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." Beholding is becoming.

This is the only Christian way to change behavior so that it honors God. We change because we have seen a superior beauty and worth and excellence. If you look into the face of Christ and then look into Sports Illustrated or Glamour and are not moved by the superior beauty and worth and excellence and desirability of Christ, then you are still hard and blind and futile in your thinking. You need to cry out, "Open my eyes to see wonderful things out of your Word!" And your life will show it. Where your treasure is—your desire, your delight, your beauty—there will your heart be also—and your evenings and your Saturdays and your money. We are changed by seeing the glory of God in the Word of God. If God is not more glorious to you and more compelling to you than the luster and glory of the world, you haven't seen him. 3 John 11 says, "The one who does evil has not seen God" (see also 1 John 3:6).

So all this is important because all true life-change that honors God and has a spiritual worth to it comes from seeing the glory of God, not from making religious lists of behaviors and trying to copy them.

God Reveals Christ's Beauty Through His Word

Today's point from the text is this: God shows the beauty and excellence of Christ only to those who look into the Word of God. This is why true spiritual change comes from reading and pondering and memorizing the Bible. It's not because you learn rules to obey. It's because that is the place the Lord reveals the beauty and excellence of Christ.

Let me put a sharper point on this. Suppose you heard last week's message that we must see the glory of God to be changed, but we can't see it because of our deadness and hardness and blindness, and that we must therefore pray for God to make alive and soften and open our eyes. And suppose that you conclude: Well, then, I must devote myself to prayer and not to study or reading or memorizing the Bible because mere human seeing and reasoning can't see what needs to be seen. That would be a terrible conclusion to draw from what I said and from this text.

The point is: God opens the eyes of the blind to see the glory of God in his Word when they are looking at the Word. Suppose you wanted to see the glory of the Grand Canyon, but were blind. And suppose God said to you, Call on me and come and pray to me and I will open your eyes to see the glory of the Grand Canyon. Would you move from Arizona to Florida to pray? Or would you use every muscle and sense God gave you to get to the Grand Canyon and set your eyes toward what God had promised? My point is: he will not show you the glory of the Grand Canyon if you insist on living by the Everglades, no matter how much you pray.

Let me say it another way. God has ordained that the eye-opening work of his Spirit always be combined with the mind-informing work of his Word. His aim is that we see the glory of His Son (and be changed). So he opens our eyes when we are looking at the Son—not at soaps or sales. The work of the Spirit and the work of the Word always go together in God's way of true spiritual self-revelation. The Spirit's work is to show the glory and beauty and value of what the mind sees in the Word.

We must not make the mistake of thinking that what we need from God's Spirit is some new information. We already have a thousand times more information about God in the Bible than we can fathom or enjoy. What we need is to see with the eyes of our hearts! Any addition of information by the Spirit to what we can see of Christ in the Word would not make us one ounce more spiritual, or pleasing to God.

Suppose the Spirit revealed to you the new information that your barren friend was going to get pregnant. You tell her this, and when it happens, you and she are blown away with excitement at the miracle of prophecy and pregnancy. What have you gained spiritually? Nothing, unless you turn to the Word and see—with the eyes of the heart—the glory and the beauty of the Christ portrayed in the Bible—Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen to save sinners and to glorify God who has thus blessed you. Religious excitement in the presence of miracles is a natural thing and has no necessary spiritual or supernatural dimension. The gifts of the Spirit are precious, but infinitely more important is the eye-opening illumination of the Holy Spirit so that we see the glory

of Christ in the Word.

It is not new information that we need; it is new eyes to see what has been revealed to us in God's Word. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things out of your Word!

Don't Pray and Drift

Let me draw out some implications of this.

The first is that when you pray for eyes to see, you must not shift your mind into neutral. Don't assume that the indispensability of prayer means the dispensability of focused thought on the word of God. When you pray to see the glory of Christ, don't drift or coast mentally. Don't just wait, doing nothing. This is a huge mistake, and comes from Eastern spirituality, not the Bible. What is unique about Christianity is that it is historical and particular. Jesus lived in a time and place. God's design is to open your eyes to see the spiritual beauty and value of this particular man just as he is revealed in the Word. If we pray to see it, but mentally drift away from it, then we will not see it. So don't pray and drift.

What Then?

1. Pray and Read

Read the Word! What a privilege! And what an obligation! And what a potential for seeing God! Look at Ephesians 3:3b-4 **note**. Paul writes, "By revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." When you read! God willed that the greatest mysteries of life be revealed through reading. (**Ed: THE BIBLE, NOT DEVOTIONALS, NOT COMMENTARIES, NOT SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, ETC...THE BIBLE! NOTHING ELSE IS SUPERNATURAL!**)

Then compare Eph 1:18 **note** where Paul says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling." So Ephesians 3:4 says that the mystery is known by reading. And Ephesians 1:18 says that for us to know what we need to know, **God must open our eyes in answer to prayer**. Yes, we must pray. Yes, we are blind without God's help. But the point this week is: we must read.

"When you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." **Praying cannot replace reading. Praying may turn reading into seeing.** But if we don't read, we will not see. The Holy Spirit is sent to glorify Jesus, and the glory of Jesus is portrayed in the Word. Read. Rejoice that you can read.

2. Pray and Study

2Timothy 2:15 **note**: "**Be diligent** (or: "study" KJV) to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth." God gave us a book about himself not so that we might read in any old careless way we wished. Paul says, "Be diligent to ... accurately handle the Word of truth." That means work at the Word if you want the most from it.

The pendulum swings back and forth. Some say pray and pray and don't lean on the unspiritual, human work of study. Others say, study and study because God is not going to tell you the meaning of a word in prayer. But the Bible will not have anything to do with this dichotomy. We must study and accurately handle the Word of God, and we must pray or we will not see in the Word the one thing needful, the glory of God in the face of Christ (2Corinthians 4:4, 6 **note**).

Benjamin Warfield, a great studier of the Bible, wrote in 1911, "Sometimes we hear it said that ten minutes on your knees will give you a truer, deeper, more operative knowledge of God than ten hours over your books. 'What!' is the appropriate response, 'than ten hours over your books, on your knees?' " ("The Religious Life of Theological Students," in Mark Noll, ed., The Princeton Theology, [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983], p. 263). This captures the Biblical spirit. Yes, we must pray. We will not see wonderful things out of God's Word if he doesn't open our eyes. But praying cannot replace studying, because Paul says, "Be diligent—study—to handle the Word accurately."

3. Pray and Ransack

Our approach to the Bible should be like a miser in the gold rush, or a fiancée who has lost her engagement ring somewhere in the house. She ransacks the house. That is the way we seek for God in the Bible.

Proverbs 2:1–6 **note** says, My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, 2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; 3 For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; 4 If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Receive, treasure, be attentive, incline your heart, cry out, lift your voice, seek as for silver, search as for hidden treasures. This is ransacking the Bible for all that it is worth. If there are hidden treasures, act like it. If there is silver, act like it. By all means pray (as verse 3 says) but don't substitute prayer for ransacking. God ordains to give to those who seek with all their heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

4. Pray and Think

Consider 2 Timothy 2:7-**note**. The NASB has "**Consider** (command, not a suggestion) what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." Literally it is, "Think about (noei) what I say." Does this mean that understanding Paul's teaching is simply a human, natural enterprise of thinking? No. The end of the verse says (**for = term of explanation**), "**The Lord will give you understanding.**" It is not you who can see it on your own. **Spiritual apprehension is a gift of God**

But God has ordained to give the gift of supernatural light through thinking. "Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." So by all means pray and ask God to give you the light you need. But don't replace thinking with praying. Think and pray. Pray and think. This is the way God has set it up. A historical Christ. A book of preservation and revelation. All of that says: read and study and ransack and think. But all is in vain without prayer. Both-and, not either-or.

5. Pray and Speak

God means for the written Word to become the spoken word in preaching and in the mutual exhortation and rebuke and warning and encouragement and counsel of his people. Colossians 3:16-**note** says, "Let the Word of Christ richly **dwell** (**present imperative = command to make this our day long habit!**) within [or among] you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another ..." The Word of Christ to us becomes our word to each other.

I preach. This is God's will for his Word to be heralded afresh over and over. And you speak to each other the Word of God. This is one of the fundamental reasons for small groups in the church—to make the Word of God **to** us into the Word of God **through** us. **Speak it to each other. (Ed: This begs the question - Is this what you do when you meet with your small group? If not, you may be getting some "good," but beloved, you are indubitably missing the " best !" Let me suggest that you memorize one Scripture each meeting. Internalize it word perfect. Utilize it in your prayers for one another during the week. In 52 weeks, you have 52 verses -- Nothing is as safe and secure for "the grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God stands forever." Isaiah 40:8)**

Does this mean that we can do away with prayer in those moments—that we can somehow open the eyes of the heart to see wonderful things out of God's Word because we are speaking it with conviction or persuasive argument or creative turns of phrase? That's not what Paul teaches. In that same book (Colossians 1:9-10-**note**) he prays—prays!—"We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding ... increasing in the knowledge of God."

If knowing God and having spiritual wisdom and understanding were automatic when the Word of Christ dwells richly among us, then Paul would not need to pray earnestly for God to give it to us.

The Word and Prayer Together

So we have seen over and over: **Prayer is indispensable if we would see the glory of God in the Word of God.** But we have also seen that reading and study and ransacking and thinking and speaking the Word is also necessary. God has ordained that the eye-opening work of his Spirit always be combined with the mind-informing work of his Word. His aim is that we see the glory of God and that we reflect the glory of God. And so he opens our eyes when we are looking at the glory of God in the Word.

Read, study, ransack, think, speak, listen—and pray, "Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your Word."

(For further reflection, see Luke 24:45; Acts 16:14; 2 Kings 6:17; Matthew 16:17; 11:2–6; 11:27.)

Exposition of Psalm 119:18 Charles Bridges

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.

In order to **keep** God's word, must we not **pray** to understand it? What then is the prayer? Not—give me a plainer Bible—but open my eyes to know my Bible. **Not**—show me some new revelations beside the law—**but** make me behold the wonders of the law. David (Bridges thinks the author of Ps 119 is David and that could be the case, but it is not clearly stated) had acquired in the Divine

school "more understanding than all his teachers;" yet he ever comes to his God under a deep sense of his blindness. Indeed those who have been best and longest taught, are always the most ready to "sit at the feet of Jesus," (Lk 10:39) as if they had everything to learn. It is an unspeakable mercy to know a little, and at the same time to feel that it is only a little. We shall then be longing to know more, and yet anxious to know nothing, except as we are taught of God. (Ed: Note repetition of the cry "Teach me" - Ps 119:12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171 -- this is amazing in light of the wisdom that the psalmist gives us in this psalm! He is ever hungry for more of God, and we should imitate his example! Heb 6:11-12-note).

There are indeed in God's law things so wondrous, that "the angels desire to look into them." (1Pe 1:12-note) The exhibition of the scheme of redemption is in itself a world of wonders. The display of justice exercised in the way of mercy, and of mercy glorified in the exercise of justice, is a wonder, that must fill the intelligent universe of God with everlasting astonishment. And yet these "**wondrous things**" are hidden from multitudes, who should be most deeply interested in the knowledge of them. They are "hidden," not only from the ignorant and unconcerned, but "from the wise and prudent; and revealed" only "to babes" (cp the psalmist's cry in Ps 119:19)—to those who practically acknowledge that important truth, that a man "can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." (Jn 3:27) **External knowledge is like the child spelling the letters without any apprehension of the meaning** It is like reading a large and clear print with a thick veil before our eyes. Oh! how needful then is the prayer—"Unveil," "Open my eyes:" let the veil be taken away from the law, that I may understand it; and from my heart, that I may receive it (cp 1Thes 2:13-note, James 1:21-note)!

But do not even Christians often find the Word of God to be as a sealed book? They go through their accustomed portion, without gaining any increasing acquaintance with its light, life, and power, and without any distinct application of its contents to their hearts. And thus it must be, whenever reading has been unaccompanied with prayer for Divine influence. For we not only need to have our "**eyes opened to behold**" fresh wonders, but also to give a more spiritual and transforming perception of those wonders, which we have already beheld.

But are we conscious of our blindness? Then let us hear the counsel of our Lord, that we "anoint our eyes with eye-salve, that we may see." (Rev 3:18-note) The recollection of the promises of Divine teaching is fraught with encouragement (cp 2Pe 1:4-note). The Spirit is freely and abundantly promised in this very character, as "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God." (Eph 1:17-note) If, therefore, we desire a clearer insight into these "**wondrous things**" of revelation—if we would behold the glorious beauty of our **Immanuel** (God With Us)—if we would comprehend something more of the immeasurable extent of that love (Eph 3:16-19-note), with which "God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son," (Jn 3:16) and of that equally incomprehensible love, which moved that Son so cheerfully to undertake our cause—we must make daily, hourly use of this important petition, "**Open my eyes!**" ([Psalm 119 Exposition Charles Bridges](#))

Eye-opening Psalm 119:18 R. Tuck Pulpit Commentary

Open thou mine eyes. This figure of speech is a familiar Eastern one. It is based on the observed fact that the eye, as an organ, is dependent on the mind and the will. Men have to be helped to see everything that is really worth seeing; and if they are to apprehend Divine and spiritual things, it can only be with Divine illuminations. He who sees the unseen must have come into the eye-opening power of God. The servant of Elisha, with the partly closed eyes, could see nothing but the chariots and horsemen of Syria. With opened eyes he saw all round the hills the chariots and horsemen of God (2Ki 6:16-18). Our Lord opened the blind bodily eyes of men in order to illustrate his gracious work in souls (Mt 9:30, Mt 20:33-34, Lk 24:31=figurative). And the living Lord counsels his half-blinded Church at Laodicea, "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." (Rev 3:18) The opening of the soul-eyes is a figure of speech for the quickening of the spiritual discernment. Nothing do we need more than keen sensitiveness to Divine and eternal things; insight of the Divine will; the sharpness of vision that can detect at once the pointing of the Divine finger. The prayer of the text implies -

I. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DIMNESS OF OUR SPIRITUAL VISION. Our Lord reproached the Pharisees because they were blind, yet thought they saw with unusual clearness. "Ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth." (Jn 9:41) There is no prayer in the man who thinks he sees. There is no conscious want to find expression. It is not merely that the vision is distorted by the self-willed spirit; it is that in the godly life things seen and temporal have the power to dim and darken the vision of things unseen and eternal. If humility proves mightier than self-satisfaction, the sense of dimness is a constant source of anxiety; but that is an anxiety which is altogether healthy.

II. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR THE CLEARING OF OUR SPIRITUAL VISION A man may feel

the imperfectness of his soul-vision, but think to clear it himself. It is not always duly considered that the idea of self-help spoils the religious life as truly as it prevents our entering the religious life. It may have to come through a bitter experience, but it must come somehow, that we may discover the helplessness of self-help for clearing the soul-vision; and then we pray to God, "Open thou mine eyes." - R.T.

**"Wondrous Things."
Psalm 119:18
C. Short Pulpit Commentary**

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law. "Law" is the will of God expressed in man, in nature, and in history.

I. THE WILL OF GOD IS THE LAW OF MAN'S LIFE.

1. A law that reaches to every part of man's nature. To the inward and outward life. A law that claims to rule over reason and affection and conscience.

2. A law that guides by aiming at the renewal of our nature. In this respect how different from all human law! "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." This Law not merely bids us obey, but urges us by grand arguments of love and obligation. And helps us by the energy of the Holy Spirit, which it promises and gives.

II. THIS "LAW" CONTAINS WONDROUS THINGS.

1. Wonders of doctrine. Forgiveness through Christ. Demands the perfection of our nature. An immortal and blessed life.

2. Wonders of precept. Supreme love to God and man. No one can love God with all his soul and mind and strength without loving his neighbor as himself, any more than the earth can gravitate towards the sun without attracting toward itself the moon by the same force of gravity.

3. Wonders of promise. In personal union with Christ we find the fulfillment of all Divine promise.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT MUST GIVE US TO DISCERN THESE WONDERS.

The best Christians feel that our perceptions of spiritual truth are infirm and obscure; but things are greater than we see them - more wonderful than they now appear. Hence this prayer, for the opening the eyes of the heart and soul. To be a philosopher, or artist, or orator, there must be two things - some genius for it, or natural capacity; and training, or instruction and discipline. To be a Christian there must be spiritual eyesight - the gift of God's Spirit. "Open thou mine eyes." And trained and disciplined insight - the work also of the Spirit, our Teacher. - S.