



“Favor With Men”

Study: Esther 2:12-23

Reading: Proverbs 16:7-31, Genesis 39:1-6

Memory: Psalm 119:1-16

When I first started as a substitute teacher, I often subbed the classes my children were in. At first, my kids weren't sure if they liked the idea of their dad being their sub, but pretty soon they found out that both their teachers and the students thought I was a great sub. I really didn't think I did anything that was that unique and special, but I found that many ministry opportunities started to open to me because of this favor. I still don't understand why students and teachers liked me so much, but I do attribute much of it to my desire to live the way God desired.

Today, we are going to read how Esther earned great favor in the eyes of those who were in charge of her and that favor produced great results which would one day save her people.

What Does the Bible Say?

For twelve months, the beautiful women who had been selected for a chance to be the next queen underwent various beauty treatments of the day to make them even more attractive to the king. After this twelve month period, the women would be given a chance to go spend one night with the king. The young women were allowed to take whatever items they wanted for the one night with the king. Though it is not clearly stated, most likely this one night had to do with fulfilling the king's sexual desires. After this one night, the women would be placed in the harem of the king and become one of his concubines, though she may never see the king again (vs 12-14).

When it was time for Esther to spend the night with the king, she followed the advice of Hegai who knew what the king really liked. The fact that she won his favor and the favor of the others in charge indicates that the leaders were doing all they could to help Esther become the next queen. Just as she had won the favor of the leaders, she won the favor of the king. He found her to be better than all the other virgins he had spent time with and decided that Esther was the one that he wanted to be queen.

The king threw a great feast in honor of Esther and caused a great celebration through all the land. To encourage his people to celebrate, he temporarily lowered the taxes and gave gifts throughout his kingdom (vs 15-18).

For some reason, the king chose to call for a second gathering of young virgins. Perhaps he wanted to have a backup in case something did not work out with Esther. Once again, we are told that Esther had kept the fact that she was a Jew hidden from everyone (vs 19-20).

Mordecai most likely had some type of position working for the king, and while he was near the entrance of the palace, he overheard two of the king's servants who were planning to do harm to the king. These two men were part of the king's guard and something he had done made them angry. They wanted to get back at him by killing him, but when Mordecai heard their plans, he immediately went and told Esther. Esther reported this to the king and when the king investigated the matter, he found that the men were guilty she ordered that both of the men be put to death. The acts of Mordecai were recorded in the king's records and would end up being a great benefit later on (vs 19-23).

How Does this Apply to Me?

One thing that was emphasized in this passage is that Esther earned great favor with everyone she came in contact with. This is very similar to what happened to Joseph when he was sold in slavery into Egypt. Most likely, this was a mixture of the supernatural favor of God and the natural results of a godly character. Proverbs 16:7 says, "When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." This still holds true today. By living a godly life, and with the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit, you can find yourself earning favor in your daily dealings in life. No, not everyone will love you, but when you seek the Lord and His ways, you will find favor with many of the people you spend time with on a regular basis.

Suggestions for Prayer

* *Thank God for instructing you how to live.*

* *Ask God to help you live in a way which will produce great favor.*

Thought for the day

How long were the young virgins prepared until they would meet the king (vs 12)?

What type of treatments would they have (vs 12)?

Why do you think they underwent these treatments?

What could the young women take with them (vs 13)? What types of items do you think these were?

How long would each women get to spend with the king (vs 14)?

Why do you think a different eunuch was in charge after they spent the night with the king (vs 14)?

What would happen if the king really liked his night (vs 14)?

What did Esther choose to take with her when it was her night (vs 15)? Why do you think she made this choice?

What was stated about Esther (vs 15)?

When was Esther's turn with the king (vs 16)?

How did the king respond to his night with Esther (vs 17)?

What did he choose to do (vs 17)?

Why do you think the king loved Esther so much?

What did the king do for Esther (vs 18)?

What had Esther not done (vs 19-20)?

What did Mordecai hear (vs 21)?

What did he do with the news (vs 22)?

What was the end result (vs 23)?

“*Misdirected Wrath*”

Study: Esther 3:1-11

Reading: Matthew 5:1-12, 1 Peter 4:12-19

Memory: Psalm 119:1-16

I have had the opportunity on several occasions to visit Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The name means “a memorial and a name.” This museum was built as a memorial to all those who lost their lives in the holocaust. As you walk through this memorial, you are confronted with the continual anti-semitic attitude that has existed throughout time and increased greatly under the rule of Hitler in Germany. The memorial is filled with pictures of books, magazines and articles that were written at that time depicting the Jews as Satanic. One of the reasons for this was that the Jews seemed to prosper and be successful in business wherever they lived.

Today, we will be reminded that the Jewish success was not new in the 20th century, nor was the persecution that came because of it.

What Does the Bible Say?

As time passed, Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes) appointed Haman as the second in charge of the kingdom. The king had commanded that respect be given to Haman and ordered that servants bow down to Haman. Mordecai chose not to bow down to Haman and the king’s servants questioned him about his choice to disobey. Mordecai told his fellow servants that he was a Jew, and because of that, he would not bow down. It is unclear exactly why Mordecai felt his Jewish faith kept him from bowing to Haman. Some have suggested that Haman the Agagite was a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites who lived 600 years before (1 Samuel 15:8). Others believe that Agag was a region in Persia and discount that theory. Whatever his exact reasoning, we are told that the servants told Haman about Mordecai’s lack of respect to see what Haman would do (vs 1-4).

The next time Haman passed he paid careful attention and noticed that Mordecai did not bow down. This caused Haman to be filled with anger. Haman turned his anger towards all Jews and started looking for ways that he could punish all the Jews throughout the Persian kingdom

(vs 5-6).

We know that Haman was given his position between the seventh (2:16) and twelfth year (3:7) of Artaxerxes. In this twelfth year, Haman started casting lots called “Pur.” They cast these each month for that year. This was most likely similar to the idea of rolling dice and was used in their societal superstitions to help determine when to act. Apparently, they were looking for a certain sign from the Pur to know when it was the right time for Haman to approach the king (vs 7).

Haman approached the king and described the Jews as people who lived throughout the kingdom yet chose to follow different laws rather than the laws of the king. He told the king that their choice to not follow the Persian laws was detrimental to the kingdom. In order to solve this problem, Haman offered the king 10,000 talents of silver in exchange for a decree to have the Jews killed. This would have been a massive amount of money and most likely the plan was to obtain the money from the Jews that were slaughtered. It appears that the king was not that interested in the money, after all, the Persian kingdom was extremely wealthy, but he was concerned about any type of rebellion that would threaten his kingdom. He gave permission for Haman to carry out his plan (vs 8-11).

How Does this Apply to Me?

We cannot know if the actions of Mordecai were right or wrong when he refused to bow down to Haman. What we can see is that the hatred of Jews spans their whole history. From the amount of money that would be taken from the Jews, it appears that they had become very prosperous. This is part of the blessing that God had offered to His people and can be seen throughout history as many Jews have prospered in different areas of life. Some of this prosperity has led to the great persecution they have faced over the years. The Jewish nation is a great proof of the truth and accuracy of the Bible. They are a people, though small in size, that have survived the centuries without a consistent homeland. The other point that stands out is that those who are committed to obedience to their God and how He has called them to live will, at times, stir the anger of others. Christians have faced this anger over the years because of their belief and trust in God. When you are not willing to conform to the norms of the world around you, it can cause anger at times, but God called Israel and calls us to endure for His sake.

What position was Haman (vs 1)?

What did the king's servants do (vs 2)?

What had the king commanded (vs 2)?

What did Mordecai not do (vs 2)?

What question did the servants ask Mordecai (vs 3)?

What did the servants try get Mordecai to do (vs 4)?

What did he tell them was his reason (vs 4)?

Why do you think Mordecai refused to bow down?

What did the servant tell Haman (vs 4)?

What did Haman observe (vs 5)?

How did Haman react to this (vs 5)?

Why do you think this was such a big deal to Haman?

What did Haman choose not to do (vs 6)?

What did Haman start to plot (vs 6)?

What did Haman start doing to put his plan in order (vs 7)?

What did Haman tell the king about the Jews (vs 8)?

Why would this have gotten the king's attention (vs 8)?

What offer did Haman make (vs 9)?

How did the king respond (vs 10)?

What do you think the king cared the most about (vs 11)? Why?

“Great Wickedness”

Study: Esther 3:12-4:3

Reading: 2 Timothy 3:10-17, Romans 1:18-32

Memory: Psalm 119:1-16

Hearing stories of survival is always uplifting, and those stories seem to be amplified when they are surrounded by mass casualties. For instance, when a sole survivor is found after an airplane or bus crash, or when a person is pulled out of the rubble several days after an earthquake, there is great rejoicing. It is at these times, in the middle of great heartache, that people find great hope in the stories of survival that defy all odds.

Today, we will be reminded that we are living in a chaotic world, but we can find encouragement each day because we know that God is in control and He is watching over His children.

What Does the Bible Say?

Haman had convinced Ahasuerus to sign an edict for the annihilation of the Jews. This order was sent to every governor and official in charge of the Persian empire. This letter was sent in the first month of the year and the order was to be carried out in the twelfth month of the year. Though this may seem like a long time to us, from the order to the date of its completion, it must be remembered that the Persian kingdom was massive and it would have taken a few months for the order to get everywhere. It would also take another few months for plans to be made to carry out this order. All of the local leaders were to identify those in their territory who were Jews and attack and kill them all on the same day. We are not told the exact plan, but it makes the best sense to believe that they were to be rounded up and all be killed on the same day. All of their possessions were to be taken by the governmental leaders (vs 12-13).

These letters were sent out as quickly as possible, but as news of this reached the inhabitants of the land, it caused a great uneasiness among the people. We are not told why this caused an uproar, but most likely the news of this order was shocking. Though the Persians could be cruel at times, the thought of killing so many people on one day was most

likely overwhelming. After all, by this time many of the Jews were part of the everyday lives of the people of the land. Though this edict most likely affected the whole kingdom, we are told that it caused great confusion in the capital city of Susa (vs 14-15).

Haman probably meant for this news to be kept from the Jews, but something this large could not stay hidden from them. Mordecai found out about this order and he immediately responded by tearing his clothes and walking through the streets wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on his head. This was a traditional sign of Jewish mourning, repentance and calling out to God for deliverance. This would have been a clear sign to other Jews that something was wrong. He traveled throughout the city dressed this way and crying out with loud cries. He ended up at the entrance to the king's gate. It is thought that he served at the king's gate since the gate was mentioned many times in the book. He was not allowed to enter because of what he was wearing, but he made himself very visible. He was not the only one. Many of the Jews throughout the kingdom did the same thing when they found out about this terrible news (vs 1-3).

How Does this Apply to Me?

The wickedness and harshness of men was on full display in this passage and was clearly shown as Ahasuerus and Haman sat together leisurely drinking while the city found out about this wicked plan. Yet, you can also realize that not all men are cruel and harsh since this news did not seem to settle well with many of the citizens of the land. Every man is born with some type of sense of right and wrong, though many choose to let their selfish desires quell this sense of morality. It is easy to look at the wickedness of this world today and find yourself in despair about the great disregard for life that exists, but it is good to realize that this is nothing new. Cruelty and evil has existed since sin entered into the world and will continue until Christ returns. Though dwelling on this is not a pleasant thought, the reminder from this whole story is that God's power is always stronger than the power of evil. Just as Mordecai and Esther lived in an evil world and made a difference for good, you have been given that same ability. Do not despair over the evil, but focus on obeying God to do the good He has called you to do.

Suggestions for Prayer

* *Ask God to help you find your hope in Him.*

When were the king's scribes summoned (vs 12)?

Who was this message sent to (vs 12)?

What does this show about the spectrum of this evil plan?

Why was the fact that this was sealed with the king's ring significant (vs 12)?

What are some of the descriptive words given in verse 13?

What does this reveal about this plan?

When was this plan to be carried out (vs 13)?

Why do you think Haman planned for this to be a one day event?

What was to be taken from the people (vs 13)?

Where were copies of this letter sent (vs 14)?

Why do you think these couriers went out quickly (vs 15)?

What did Haman and the king do (vs 15)?

What happened in Susa when people started hearing about this order (vs 15)?

What did Mordecai do when he learned of this (vs 1)?

Why do you think he did this?

Where did he go to make sure he was visible (vs 2)?

What happened in all the provinces (vs 3)?

Why do you think many of the Jews did this?

What do these verses reveal about mankind?

“For Such A Time As This”

Study: Esther 4:4-17

Reading: 1 Peter 4:7-11, 1 Timothy 4:1-16

Memory: Psalm 119:1-16

When I was an assistant pastor, the senior pastor started to experience mental health issues. He took an extended leave to deal with his mental health and during that time, I was given the privilege of leading the church. It was at that time that I knew that God had given me the ability to be a lead pastor, but it was somewhat of a let down when the pastor returned and I returned to my role as assistant. I began praying about leaving to seek a lead pastor role somewhere, but every person with whom I sought counsel encouraged me to stay. Little did I know that the pastor would soon abruptly resign, and because I did not leave, I was able to be a pretty smooth transition without being a major detriment to the church.

Though what I wanted was something different than what God wanted, I look back and see that God placed me right where He wanted me, in order to be able to accomplish His plan.

What Does the Bible Say?

Mordecai was sitting in sackcloth and ashes. Some of the eunuchs and female servants of Esther saw him and reported this news to her. Her first response was to send him clothes to replace his sack cloth, but he refused these clothes. When Esther found out that her clothes had been rejected she sent one of her servants to Mordecai to find out why he was choosing to wear sack cloth. Mordecai detailed the decree that had been sent out and made sure that Esther understood how serious the situation was. Mordecai even sent a copy of the decree to Esther so that the gravity of the situation would resonate with her. Mordecai knew that Esther was the only hope of getting this decree changed so that the Jews would be spared. He asked her to go before the king and explain the situation and plead for the king to change his mind (vs 4-9).

Esther sent word back to Mordecai describing how no one was allowed to approach the king unless they were summoned, this included her. If someone wanted to risk seeing the king without being called, they

were also risking their lives. If the king held out his scepter towards the person approaching him, that person would have their life spared and the king would hear them. It had been over 30 days since the king had called for Esther and she feared that she could lose her life if she approached the king (vs 10-11).

Though Esther feared for her life if she approached the king, Mordecai reminded her that she would not be able to escape more than any of the other Jews would. Someone would find out she was a Jew and she would also lose her life. Mordecai was convinced that God would make another way to spare His people if Esther did not speak up, though he was equally convinced that he and Esther would lose their lives if she failed to act. He then made a powerful statement to her that has given courage to countless numbers of believers throughout the centuries. Mordecai declared, “And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” He wanted her to understand that the reason she was in her privileged position was most likely to help save the Jews (vs 12-14).

Esther knew what she needed to do and asked Mordecai to gather all of the Jews in Susa and declare a time of prayer and fasting. She planned in three days to approach the king and knew that she needed the power and working of God. She was willing to put her life on the line to save her people. Mordecai did as Esther had requested and the Jews prayed for God’s help and deliverance (vs 15-17).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Where has God placed you? Do you realize that you have been put by God in your family, your neighborhood, your workplace, your position in life, and your circumstances to accomplish God’s purpose? God had blessed Esther by allowing her to become queen and giving her a privileged life, and Mordecai reminded her that she had been placed there for a greater purpose. You have a purpose for where you are today. It is easy to complain about situations you are in and it is also easy to take blessings you have been given for granted. Instead of letting your situation in life become a source of bitterness or a source of pride, you should realize that you are where you are and you have what you have because of God. He wants you to use whatever situation you are in and whatever He has given you to accomplish His plan. This will look different for every person, and God can use others to accomplish His plan, but He wants to use you.

Who noticed what Mordecai was doing (vs 4)?

What does this reveal about the privileged position of Esther?

What did Esther send to Mordecai (vs 4)?

Why do you think she did this?

What did Mordecai do with the clothes that were sent (vs 4)?

What did Esther want to know (vs 5)?

Where was Mordecai sitting (vs 6)?

What did Mordecai reveal (vs 7)?

What did Mordecai send to Esther as proof (vs 8)?

What did Mordecai want Esther to do (vs 8)?

What did the servants of the king know (vs 11)?

What made Esther afraid?

What did Mordecai say Esther would not be able to do (vs 13)?

Where did Mordecai say deliverance could come (vs 14)?

What does this reveal about his trust in God?

What did he believe would happen to him and Esther (vs 14)?

What did he say that motivated Esther (vs 14)?

What did Esther tell Mordecai to do (vs 16)? Why?

How do you see the godly actions of both Mordecai and Esther in this passage?

“Mighty Answers”

Study: Esther 5:1-14

Reading: Jeremiah 33:1-9, Luke 11:1-13

Memory: Psalm 119:1-16

Yesterday, I opened with an illustration of my time as an assistant pastor. During the time I was praying about what God would have me to do, I also took 40 days to fast and pray. During that time, God did an incredible work on me and it wasn't long after this time of prayer and fasting that God led the senior pastor to resign and directed me into the senior pastor role. I would never have guessed that it would end up the way it did, but God did a mighty work in my heart and the hearts of many others at that time.

Today, we are going to read how God answered the prayers of His people in a powerful way, and we will be reminded how God wants to answer your prayers.

What Does the Bible Say?

Esther, Mordecai and many Jews had been fasting for three days in preparation for Esther's time to approach the king. She put on her royal robes and went to the inner court of the palace where she stood in front of the king's quarters. The king was sitting on his throne when he saw the queen approaching. He chose to hold out his scepter towards her which indicated that it was okay to approach his throne. God had answered the prayers and the king not only offered to hear Esther, but was eager to grant whatever request she was asking of him. She asked the king if he and Haman would come to a feast that she had prepared. The king appeared to be delighted at this offer and requested that Haman join them for this feast. While at the feast, the king once again asked Esther what she wanted. He said he would give her up to half the kingdom if that is what she desired. For whatever reason, she chose not to reveal the real request to the king, but invited both him and Haman to join her for a feast again the next day. The king was more than happy to yield to that request (vs 1-8).

Haman was thrilled that he had been invited to be a part of this feast and the next one that was going to take place. He left the palace in a

jovial mood. His gladness quickly fled away when he saw Mordecai sitting outside the gate in his sack cloth. Mordecai refused to give any honor to Haman. This turned his joy to wrath, yet he refrained from doing anything right there. Instead, he went home and called his family and friends to join him and he proceeded to tell them how he was invited to the feast with the queen and king. Though he was thrilled to be invited again for the next feast, he just couldn't get over the fact that Mordecai refused to bow down to him. He didn't think he could enjoy himself as long as Mordecai was still alive and treating him with dishonor. Haman's friends and family told him to build a large gallows so Haman could ask the king for the life of Mordecai. A gallows was a large pole in which men would be impaled and left there to die. The plan was for him to talk to the king in the morning and take care of business before the feast (vs 9-14).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you trusting God to answer your prayers? Esther was given great boldness to be able to approach the king. It is easy to forget Esther was a real person with real emotions. She must have been extremely nervous when approaching the king, knowing that she could lose here life if the king refused to see her. Yet, she chose to put her nerves aside and to boldly go to the king. I believe God was giving her the strength that she needed and was also working on the king's heart at the same time. Not only did he receive her, but he received her with open arms, offering to grant whatever request she asked. When you pray, and enlist others to join you, God will give you the power to do what you need to do and will work in the situation in ways that you could never imagine.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for hearing and answering your prayers.*
- * *Ask God to help you to boldly carry out your mission in life.*
- * *Praise God because He can do the impossible.*

Thought for the day

What did Esther choose to do (vs 1)?

Why do you think this would have taken great courage?

What happened when the king saw Esther (vs 2)?

Why do you think the king welcomed Esther though he had not seen her in 30 days?

What did the king say to Esther (vs 3)?

Do you think this is what she expected? Explain.

What request did she give the king (vs 4)?

How did the king respond (vs 5)?

What did the king want to know (vs 6)?

What request did Esther give the king (vs 7-8)?

Why do you think she waited another day?

What was Haman's attitude (vs 9)?

What changed his attitude (vs 9)?

Who did Haman tell his story to (vs 10-11)?

Why was he full of pride (vs 11)?

Why did Haman think he was privileged (vs 12)?

What continued to bother Haman (vs 13)?

What did his family and friends suggest (vs 14)?

What did Haman choose to do (vs 14)?

“*You Will Not Overcome*”

Study: Esther 6:1-13

Reading: Romans 8:18-39

Memory: Psalm 119:1-16

Several years ago when my wife and I were greatly struggling with our finances which led to struggles in our marriage, God was working in executives at Hobby Lobby, directing them to open a store in Traverse City. When my wife and I heard about this, I encouraged her to apply for a job since I knew she loved that store very much. She agreed, and ended up working there for a few years. That job helped save our finances and actually did wonders for our marriage.

I am not saying that the only reason the Hobby Lobby in Traverse City exists is for our good, but I do know that God was at work answering our prayers for help by opening that store. Today, we will read how God is at work doing many things that you don't know He is doing and may never find out in your time on this earth.

What Does the Bible Say?

As God worked in the heart of the king, giving him a willingness to offer half the kingdom to Esther, God also caused the king not to be able to sleep. He decided to have one of the books of the history of the kingdom read to him. During this reading, the events in which Mordecai spared the life of the king were recounted. There was no mention of any reward given to Mordecai and when the king enquired about this, he discovered that Mordecai had not been properly thanked. Right when this conversation finished, Haman entered the king's court and was about to ask him to have Mordecai hanged. The king asked Haman how great honor could be bestowed on a man who the king found favor in. Haman thought that the king must surely be talking about him and he told the king that the man should be paraded in the streets with royal robes so that the city could praise this individual. You can only imagine the thrill of excitement that must have been going through the mind of Haman as he described this to the king (vs 1-9).

The king really liked this idea and ordered Haman not to delay in taking royal robes and a horse from the king's stable to Mordecai.

Mordecai was to get the special treatment that Haman described and Haman was to be one of the nobles that led him through the streets. Haman had to publicly proclaim that Mordecai was the one whom the king greatly delighted in (vs 10-11).

Once this was finished and Mordecai was dropped off at the king's gate, Haman quickly went home to tell his wife of the great disgrace he had experienced. He had covered his head on his way home to avoid any further embarrassment. At home, things did not get much better. After explaining everything to some of the wise men of the land and to his wife, they declared to him that he would not succeed because Mordecai was a Jew. The wise men were well studied in history and at least one of them must have understood the world history of the Jewish people. Perhaps he had read the stories of Daniel or how God had caused Nebuchadnezzar to act like an animal. Whatever the case, these wise men clearly understood that if Haman was trying to fight against a Jew that he would fail. Though it is not said, it is directly implied that the God of the Jews was too great to overcome (vs 12-13).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you understand the mighty protection you have when God is on your side? The wise men who spoke to Haman delivered him the bad news telling him that he was going to be in trouble if he tried to stand against a Jew. They understood the power of the God of the Jews. Though we have plenty of instances in Scripture where the followers of God were killed for their faith, the Bible clearly reveals that the only reason that happens is because God allowed it. The power was not Mordecai's heritage, but the power came from God. God has that same power today and wants you to trust Him to take care of you. The great thing to realize about this narrative is that Mordecai had no idea what was taking place behind the scenes. He chose to pray and fast and was not humanly responsible for this great victory. God will do the same for you and will work in ways that you may never know. Remember that He is constantly at work for His children.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for working things out for your good.*
- * *Ask God to help you trust Him to do the right thing for you.*
- * *Praise God because He has the power to deliver you from trouble.*

What couldn't the king do (vs 1)?

Why do you think He wasn't able to sleep?

What did he ask for (vs 1)?

What account stuck out to the king (vs 2)?

What did the king ask (vs 3)?

What happened right when this was occurring (vs 4)?

What was Haman planning to talk to the king about (vs 4)?

What question did the king ask Haman (vs 6)?

Why did this question excite Haman (vs 6)?

What suggestion did Haman give the king (vs 7-9)?

Why do you think Haman wanted such an elaborate reward given?

What does this request reveal about Haman?

What was Haman instructed to do (vs 10)?

Why do you think Haman chose to obey this order? What do you think he felt?

What did Haman do when this time of exaltation was finished (vs 12)?

What did Haman do after this humiliating event (vs 13)?

What powerful statement did the wise men make (vs 12)?

What does this reveal about the power of God?

Why is it important to realize that this same God is on your side?

Memory Verse:

Psalms 119:1 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, 3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! 4 You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! 6 Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. 7 I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. 8 I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me! 9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. 12 Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! 13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. 14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. 16 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!