

PSALM 119.81-88

psalm
God's Word 119

T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Psalm 119.81-88
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Introduction to Psalm 119.81-88

In the D (*keph*) stanza of 119, the psalmist expresses his deep longing for more of the salvation of the Lord. He's feeling burned-out and stressed, but he knows not to languish in that condition. Instead, he seeks the Word of the Lord for comfort and revival.

The life of faith is not all joy and peace. We expect to know trials, troubles, temptations, and tribulations in our walk with the Lord. So let's not be naïve about this. Instead, looking to the psalmist and other great teachers in the Word, let us face our afflictions in the Lord, clinging to His Word.

This stanza will help us see how we can do just that.

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We hope you find this study of Psalm 119 instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 More Salvation

Pray Psalm 119.81, 82.

My soul faints for Your salvation,
But I hope in Your word.
My eyes fail *from searching* Your word,
Saying, “When will You comfort me?”

Sing Psalm 119.81-83

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jeborah, O My Soul*)

My soul faints for Your salvation – but my hope is in Your Word!
I have searched Your Word with patience seeking comfort from You, Lord.
Like a wineskin, Lord, You test me; I am withered with despair!
Let Your statutes my sweet rest be as I call on You in prayer.

Read Psalm 119.81-88; meditate on verses 81, 82.

Preparation

1. How did the psalmist come to be?
2. To what end did he exist?

Meditation

As we begin the D (*kaph*) stanza we find the psalmist nearly worn out from seeking the Lord! Clearly, the psalmist is in distress. He’s seeking relief. He pines for the comfort of the Lord. He longs to know more of the Lord’s salvation. This seems serious. The psalmist is fainting in soul and failing in body. He is disturbed and distressed.

What could be the cause of such stressful and debilitating seeking? We will learn the answer to that in the verses that follow.

But here let’s just note that, while we may not face what the psalmist was experiencing, we are always subject to attacks against our soul which can bring our Kingdom lives to a crawl. Let’s learn from the psalmist that, whatever we must face, however many foes may array against us, our hope is in the Word of the Lord. He will never fail nor forsake us, and His Word is sufficient to sustain and equip us, come what may (v. 81). He has given us a great salvation, and though we must work at knowing more of it (v. 82), there will always be more to know (Heb. 2.3; Phil. 2.12; Eph. 3.20).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.16.

Just when we think we have come to the peak of the crisis and are ready to slide down to the finish, something else happens to our psalmist that throws him into another fit of despair. So typical. So like us! Thank You, Lord, that your word is full of real people.

His soul was “fainting” for the salvation of God, and he was still putting all his “hope” in the Word of God. Then he added that his eyes were “failing” from all the “searching” in this Word, looking for “comfort”. (Ps. 119. 81, 82) We grieve with him. We grieve with ourselves when we are in the same situation.

What is our initial response to him when we read of his dilemma? What is our initial response to ourselves?

Here are some things we know about people: “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small”

(Prov. 24.10). “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?” (Jer. 12.5) “...we are dust” (Ps. 103.13, 14).

Here is something we know about God: “The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths will faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Is. 40.28-31).

Here is something God wants us to know when we are feeling discouraged: “Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you” (Deut. 20.3, 4).

Let us not grow weary when looking for the comfort of God. He knows that we daily face a bitter enemy: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5.8).

And what are we to do when faced with this enemy who wants most of all to blow us off the right path? “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Pet. 5.9).

And what words of comfort and encouragement spur us on to hope? “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, prefect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 5.10, 11).

Salvation that encompasses all the fainting, hoping, searching, and comfort—there and then, here and now!

For reflection

1. The psalmist was feeling weary in soul and body. What makes you feel that way?
2. But he continued hoping in the Word of God. When you are down, what Scriptures do you turn to to focus on Jesus and strengthen you through your time of weariness? Why these in particular?
3. How can you prepare your heart and mind each day to take on whatever enemies might confront you?

The psalmist sought deliverance from his sins, his foes, and his fears. Hope deferred made him faint; his eyes failed by looking out for this expected salvation. But when the eyes fail, yet faith must not. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.81, 82*

Pray Psalm 119.87, 88.

Ask the Lord to prepare you for any temptations or attacks from spiritual forces of wickedness in high places. Seek mercy and grace for revival in your soul and strength, so that you can keep God’s Word.

Sing Psalm 119.87, 88.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

For my foes would make an end to my existence on the earth.
Yet Your precepts I befriend to know the greatness of their worth.
In Your kindness, Lord revive me! In Your love, restore my soul!
Let Your Word in me alive be; I will keep it well and whole.

2 Stressed but Steady

Pray Psalm 119.83.

For I have become like a wineskin in smoke,
Yet I do not forget Your statutes.

Sing Psalm 119.81-83

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

My soul faints for Your salvation – but my hope is in Your Word!
I have searched Your Word with patience seeking comfort from You, Lord.
Like a wineskin, Lord, You test me; I am withered with despair!
Let Your statutes my sweet rest be as I call on You in prayer.

Read Psalm 119.81-88; meditate on verse 83.

Preparation

1. To what did the psalmist compare himself?
2. What did he not forget?

Meditation

Commentators are all over the board in explaining this beautiful image: “I have become like a wineskin in smoke”. Skins were used to hold wine in the psalmist’s day. Some say this refers to a discarded skin, burned up and withered in the refuse fire. Others say this is how a wineskin is prepared for use. Smoking it helps to firm it up and fill gaps in the skin. Yet another commentator suggested that this was a way of refining the wine in the skin. By holding it over smoke the skin was stressed, but the wine inside was enriched.

I vote for the last one. I think it most closely addresses the thrust of this verse. Outwardly, the psalmist was being stressed; inwardly he was holding steady with the Lord and His statutes. When trials, disappointments, dangers, or distresses assail us, we can hold firm by turning to the Word of God, hidden in our heart (Ps. 119.9-11), pervading our mind (Ps. 119.27), and settled in our conscience (Ps. 119.72). Drink deeply from its sweet, enlivening truths. Thus you can endure outward trials by drawing on unseen strengths within.

Or as Paul might have said it, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4.13).

The trials and difficulties of life are real. They can stress us out; but they can also stretch and grow us if we look not on the outward and passing things of this life, but on the inward and unseen truths of the Word of God, looking to Jesus and clinging to His Word (2 Cor. 4.18; Col. 3.1-3; Ps. 119.31, 32).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

A wineskin in smoke, for whatever reason the psalmist saw fit to use that example, bespeaks a shriveled, tenuous mess. It is not a flattering picture. Aren’t there about a thousand commercials a night on TV promoting some cream or lotion that promises to relieve that look?

But whatever look the psalmist was going for, he wasn’t really feeling on the upside of his life at that particular moment in time.

However, there is good news for us. Regardless of why we are feeling like a wineskin in smoke there are things that we can think about that will help to carry us to another thought level. And these positive truths are found in the Word of God, in His statutes and in His Law. (Ps. 119.83) And we must never forget to think about them.

So, here is the antidote for a shriveled, smoked, withered wineskin spirit:

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19.25-27)

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6.19, 20).

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” Maybe even smoked wineskins. “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from [iniquity], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Tim. 2.20, 21).

God wants us to be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...” (Eph. 3.16).

And then the real plumping power, that fills all the dried out, smoked out places in our heart... “that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3.17-19). Revived!

“Looking to Jesus and clinging to His Word.”

For reflection

1. When you feel “smoked” and “withered,” where do you turn? What Scriptures do you find especially helpful?
2. What can you do to make sure those inner resources of Word and Spirit will be there when you need them?
3. Whom will you encourage today to draw on those inner resources in their time of trial?

The obvious design of the Psalmist is to teach us, that, although he had been proved by severe trials, and wounded to the quick, he yet had not been withdrawn from the fear of God. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.83*

Pray Psalm 119.87, 88.

The enemy of our souls will try to distract, disappoint, and defeat you today. Prepare to fight the good fight against him in prayer, seeking the Lord’s reviving kindness and restoring love. What’s before you today for which you will especially need mercy and grace from the Lord?

Sing Psalm 119.87, 88

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

For my foes would make an end to my existence on the earth.
Yet Your precepts I befriend to know the greatness of their worth.
In Your kindness, Lord revive me! In Your love, restore my soul!
Let Your Word in me alive be; I will keep it well and whole.

3 How to Think about the Life of Faith

Pray Psalm 119.84, 85.

How many *are* the days of Your servant?
When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?
The proud have dug pits for me,
Which is not according to Your law.

Sing Psalm 119.84-86.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jeborah, O My Soul*)

Lord, how long, what shall my days be? When will You Your judgment toll?
Let my enemies disgraced be, those who persecute my soul.
All the proud dig pits to slay me, and they persecute me strong!
Let Your Word my strength and stay be: Help me, Lord, receive my song!

Read Psalm 119.81-88; meditate on verses 84, 85.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist want God to do?
2. Why did he want Him to do this?

Meditation

The psalmist's conflict with "the proud" and the afflictions he endured at their hands is a running thread throughout Psalm 119. It begins to show up in verses 10 and 11, with the psalmist's awareness that he might be tempted to "wander" from the Lord's commandments. Where would that temptation come from, if not from people who were already wandering from the Lord? The problem of "the proud", who are "wicked", emerges in verse 21. It is made more specific in verse 23 and is implied in verses 28 and 29. It takes on more more clarity in verses 41, 42, 51, and 53; and the strength of the affliction is powerfully expressed in verse 61. These wicked people are out to get the psalmist, spreading lies from their fat and greasy heart (vv. 69, 70). And the psalmist calls on God to shame them in verse 78 and to strengthen and relieve him of their pressure in verses 81-83. In verse 84 the psalmist expresses this conflict as persecution. The Hebrew verb is רָדַף, *ra-DAPH*, and means to pursue or chase. The wicked chased and pursued our psalmist relentlessly, and they are chasing and pursuing you.

And you thought Psalm 119 was all about the Word of God.

Of course, it is; but it's primarily about the life of faith, and the life of faith involves an ongoing conflict with haughtiness, lies, wickedness, deceit, and evil. We are engaged in a warfare that seeks to clamp us in chains of unbelief and disobedience by tempting us to follow the ways of wickedness and rebellion against God. The psalmist was plagued by this at a human level; we are under constant attack by spiritual forces of wickedness in high places. Don't think you're not a target in this warfare, not a terrain to be claimed and kept. You are. And, as our psalmist shows us, the only way to survive is to turn to the Lord in continuous prayer and haul out the Sword of the Spirit to overcome temptation and evil with the good works of God's Law (Rom. 12.21).

The psalmist naturally wonders how long this affliction is going to continue. The answer: As long as he is committed to serving the Lord. So beware of the pits and snares, keep focused on the pathway of God's Law, and press on in the strength of the Lord.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

On a bad day we ask: "How many are the days of Your servant?" (Ps. 119.84) Ugh. But on a good day we ask

the Lord, like Moses did, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90.12).

On a bad day we ask: “When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?” (Ps. 119.84) Soon? But on a good day we can listen as Jesus says to us: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?” (Matt. 5.44-46).

I love the way the psalmist reminds God that the perpetrators of hate are behaving in a way that is “not according to Your law” (Ps. 119.85). See that, God? See them? It’s bad. Really bad.

And although God in His majestic mercy and grace allows him to say that, and allows us to do the same, we all need to make sure that our own behavior is in line with God’s Law and that we are living according to it.

We have good days and bad days. And we need to dress properly for all of them: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6.11).

And a quick reality check on our status is always helpful: “LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.” “My hope is in You. Deliver me from all my transgressions...” (Ps. 39.4, 7, 8).

In Psalm 13 David asks the LORD “How long” four times.

How long will You forget me?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

How long will I have daily sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Without ever getting an answer to any of his questions he makes an important decision:

“But I have trusted in Your mercy;

my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

I will sing to the LORD,

because He has dealt bountifully with me” (Ps. 13.5, 6).

Mercy, salvation, and bountiful grace—the way to think about the life of faith.

For reflection

1. Why are conflicts, afflictions, persecutions, and the like inevitable in the life of faith?
2. What are we learning from the psalmist about how to deal with these various afflictions?
3. How will you show God that you trust Him whenever you come under trial or affliction? How will doing so help you at such times?

The Psalmist does not, then, bewail in general the transitory life of man, but he complains that the time of his state of warfare in this world had been too long protracted; and, therefore, he naturally desires that it might be brought to a termination. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.84*

Pray Psalm 119.87, 88.

Wait on the Lord in prayer to show you the day ahead. Ask Him to alert you to any temptations you might face, or any other traps or snares the devil might use against you. Call on Him to revive you throughout the day.

Psalm 119.81-88

Sing Psalm 119.87, 88

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

For my foes would make an end to my existence on the earth.

Yet Your precepts I befriend to know the greatness of their worth.

In Your kindness, Lord revive me! In Your love, restore my soul!

Let Your Word in me alive be; I will keep it well and whole.

4 You Can Count on That!

Pray Psalm 119.86.

Your commandments *are* faithful;
They persecute me wrongfully;
Help me!

Sing Psalm 119.84-86.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

Lord, how long, what shall my days be? When will You Your judgment toll?
Let my enemies disgraced be, those who persecute my soul.
All the proud dig pits to slay me, and they persecute me strong!
Let Your Word my strength and stay be: Help me, Lord, receive my song!

Read Psalm 119.81-88; meditate on verse 86.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist confess in this prayer?
2. Why was he seeking from the Lord?

Meditation

In this life we will have tribulation, Jesus explained (Jn. 16.33). Paul wrote that we only realize more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God through persecution (Acts 14.22). John identified himself as a co-sufferer with us in the tribulations we must endure as citizens of the Kingdom of God (Rev. 1.9). Our psalmist has been dealing with persecution throughout Psalm 119, as we have seen. Our brothers and sisters in Christ in other lands know persecution in ways we have not yet had to confront. Nevertheless, we know daily persecution from spiritual forces of wickedness, which confront us with lies, doubts, temptations, distractions, and troubles of various kinds.

You can count on it every day. Stay alert (1 Pet. 5.7, 8). Dress for battle (Eph. 6.10-20).

But even more reliable than persecution is the faithful Word of God – His Law, the Prophets and Wisdom literature, the Old Testament histories, the gospels, Acts, the epistles, Revelation. All faithful. All unfailing. All rich with precious and very great promises and the Presence of the very Word of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. All ready to refresh and renew your soul and strengthen your body to glorify God in everything you do.

You can count on the Word of God. Go to it daily (Ps. 1). Rejoice to feed on it (Jer. 15.16).

And cry out to God for help. Be open and honest about your needs. Bank on Him and His Word. Invest your hopes, desires, needs, and longings in the Lord's Word, and wait on Him in prayer to lift you above the fray and bring you into His peace (Phil. 4.6, 7).

You can count on Him to hear your prayers (Jer. 33.3). And to give you mercy and grace for all your times of need (Heb. 4.16).

Persecution cannot prevail against the Word of God and the prayers of His people. And yes, you can count on that, too.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Three dots, three dashes, three dots—the international Morse Code for the distress signal, SOS, to indicate dire trouble and an urgent need of rescue.

That is what the psalmist is sending out in this verse. Only the distress signal is being sent to God. “My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121.2).

In previous verses the psalmist has owned up to his faults, confessed them, and turned his feet in a different direction. “I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments” (Ps. 119.59, 60).

But now he is pleading with God to rescue him because he is being persecuted wrongfully. And he cries out, “Help me!” (Ps. 119.86) As David prayed in Psalm 109. 1-5:

“Do not keep silent, O God of my praise! For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.”

The apostle Paul also suffered much from trials, physical pain and affliction, and false accusers. He sent out many an SOS to God throughout his time on earth, and his words of teaching and comfort are helpful for us as we sort through our own troubled situations:

1. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10.13).
2. Jesus said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” And then Paul responded with these words of faith and courage, “Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12.9-11).

Is it truly possible to be glad about our troubles, or at least experience peace through them? Paul would answer yes. And if he answered yes, then it is possible for us to answer in the same way (1 Cor. 11.1).

For God does not show partiality... “in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10.34, 35). And those who believe in Him are “all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2.4). We all have access to the same Spirit, and to the same amount of the Spirit, “for God does not give the Spirit by measure” (Jn. 3.34). For the Kingdom of God is full of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14.17). So, whatever worked for Paul, can surely work for us. We are filled with the same Spirit and the same amount of the Spirit. We can be victorious in the face of persecution.

As Jesus assured us, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (Jn. 14.26 27).

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, is in us and with us, to rescue us and help us. To give us courage and peace. On that truth we can depend.

For reflection

1. Three certainties are mentioned in verse 86. What are they, and how do you experience these?
2. How do prayer and the Word of God work to sustain us in times of trial?

3. What is our duty toward our fellow believers who are going through affliction?

In this verse he again confirms the statement, That, in whatever ways he was afflicted, his mind had not been distracted by various devices, because, trusting in the word of God, he never doubted of his assistance. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.86

Pray Psalm 119.81-83.

Pray for a greater measure of God's salvation today – that you might realize, in every area of your life, how good and faithful is God, and how reliable is His Word.

Sing Psalm 119.81-83.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

My soul faints for Your salvation – but my hope is in Your Word!

I have searched Your Word with patience seeking comfort from You, Lord.

Like a wineskin, Lord, You test me; I am withered with despair!

Let Your statutes my sweet rest be as I call on You in prayer.

5 Hold on to God's Word

Pray Psalm 119.87.

They almost made an end of me on earth,
But I did not forsake Your precepts.

Sing Psalm 119.87, 88.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

For my foes would make an end to my existence on the earth.
Yet Your precepts I befriend to know the greatness of their worth.
In Your kindness, Lord revive me! In Your love, restore my soul!
Let Your Word in me alive be; I will keep it well and whole.

Read Psalm 119.81-88; meditate on verse 87.

Preparation

1. How serious were his enemies' attacks?
2. What kept him going?

Meditation

How bad can persecution get?

Those who persecute the followers of Christ will go as far as they can to be rid of us. In some countries of the world, being a Christian means being under a perpetual death sentence, to be carried out when it suits the whims of the enemies of the faith.

Are you ready to hold fast to the Word of God and your faith in Christ, even to the end?

On a more practical note, the devil and his minions want to rob you of the full and abundant life of Jesus every moment of every day. They suggest alternatives to following His Word, offer opportunities for self-indulgence, and urge us on to seek our own interests rather than those of the Lord. Their objective is to keep us from that fullness of joy that overflows in witness for the Lord. The power we need for resisting their attacks is in the Word (precepts, Law, commandments, judgments, testimonies) of the Lord.

Cling to the Word (v. 31). Delight in it (v. 35). Long for it (v. 40). Trust it; hope in it; seek to know more of it (vv. 42-45). Always remember it (vv. 52, 61, 83). Hang out with those who fear the Lord (v. 63). Remember all His goodness to you and the goodness promised in His Word (vv. 65-72). Learn as much as you can from Him (vv. 73, 82).

Do not forsake God's Word, and it will keep you even to the point of – and if necessary, beyond – death (v. 87).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Grieved. Our psalmist is feeling the awful pain of betrayal, of being lied about, of having his love rejected, and of feeling like the end is near. And if it isn't near, he would prefer that it would be. His spirits are down. He is depressed. And sad. The only thing that gives him hope is the Word of God.

He knows that "every word of God is pure" and that "He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him" (Prov. 30.5). And that is exactly where he is turning for help.

When we are in the same situation, feeling sad and almost done in, there are some truths we know that will

help us to cope with the troubles we face.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17.15). It helps to know that God dislikes our enemies’ behavior as much as we do.

“Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them” (Prov. 28.4). We are contending with evil people, simply when we keep God’s Law.

“An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, and he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked” (Prov. 29.27). Again, just keeping the Law of God is a way for us to contend with our enemies; and we can be an abomination too.

Life can be very difficult. We have been warned by our Savior Jesus that it would be: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16.33). But oh my, it is hard when those troubles come.

Jesus never preached an “easy life” or a “health and wealth gospel”. He warned us to count the cost. He said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9.23).

But He also wanted us to know that He would be with us, to help us carry the heavy load that life sometimes dumps on us. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11.28-30).

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...” (Is. 53.4).

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Ps. 23.5, 6).

We are invited to a dinner party with the LORD. A true abomination to our enemies! Hold on to God’s Word. It is the best way to contend with the wicked.

For reflection

1. What is it about the Word of God that makes it so helpful in dealing with trials and afflictions?
2. Why do we need our fellow believers to help us in our times of trial?
3. What can you do, day by day, to make sure you will trust in God’s Word at all times?

... this wonderful strength of the prophet is worthy of more special notice, who, although almost reduced to death, yet never ceased to revive his courage by continual meditation on the law. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.87

Pray Psalm 119.81-86.

Call on the Lord to strengthen you, soul and body, for His service today. Set your day before Him, and call on Him to bless you with Kingdom progress. Put on the whole armor of God to fight against spiritual forces of wickedness in high places.

Psalm 119.81-88

Sing Psalm 119.81-86.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jeborah, O My Soul*)

My soul faints for Your salvation – but my hope is in Your Word!
I have searched Your Word with patience seeking comfort from You, Lord.
Like a wineskin, Lord, You test me; I am withered with despair!
Let Your statutes my sweet rest be as I call on You in prayer.

Lord, how long, what shall my days be? When will You Your judgment toll?
Let my enemies disgraced be, those who persecute my soul.
All the proud dig pits to slay me, and they persecute me strong!
Let Your Word my strength and stay be: Help me, Lord, receive my song!

6 The Need for Revival

Pray Psalm 119.88.

Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.

Sing Psalm 119.87, 88.

(Ripley: Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul)

For my foes would make an end to my existence on the earth.
Yet Your precepts I befriend to know the greatness of their worth.
In Your kindness, Lord revive me! In Your love, restore my soul!
Let Your Word in me alive be; I will keep it well and whole.

Read Psalm 119.81-88; meditate on verse 88.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist ask of the Lord?
2. Why did he want that?

Meditation

Psalm 119 leads us to seek the Lord for revival nine times. Nine times the psalmist called on God to revive him, because he knew he needed revival if he was going to endure the afflictions that were upon him. Only God can revive us (Jn. 6.63), and when He does, we know it by what the Spirit does in us.

Here is clear evidence of our being revived: receiving and keeping the testimonies of God's Word. It will do us no good to pray for revival if we do not desire this, if we are not hungering and thirsting for the Word of God, to understand and obey it. When God revives us, He makes our mind eager to know Him and to understand His will. He quickens our heart with excitement and delight to feed on His Word and walk His paths. He settles receiving and keeping the Word as the highest priority and value in our conscience, so that, treasuring His Word, our will, choices, and actions all become submissive to it.

The Spirit, working with the Word of God, thoroughly reconfigures our soul, so that, in our daily life, we find Jesus being more fully formed in us (2 Cor. 3.12-18), and we live in a manner consistent with that transformation, loving God and our neighbors with renewed strength and consistency. When we pray for revival, this is what we must seek.

And we should pray for revival daily, because we need it every day and all day long. God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5.17). He has given us His Spirit as a fountain of living water to refresh and revive us, and to overflow from us with grace and truth to the people in our Personal Mission Field (Jn. 7.37-39). Seek revival and renewal, and mission will follow.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"Seek revival and renewal, and mission will follow." But we always have options. That's the scary thing about free will.

Here is the flip side of seeking revival and living according to God's Law.

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power...always learning and never able

to come to the knowledge of the truth...these also resist the truth..." (2 Tim. 3.1-8). Nobody benefits.

Or, we can pray with the psalmist:

"Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,
so that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth" (Ps. 119.88). Everybody benefits.

The choice is yours:

"...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24.15).

But I must add in this tender thought: Jesus wants us to follow Him. (Matt. 9.9)

And God wants us to choose life. As Moses wrote:

"...therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days..." (Deut. 30.19, 20).

Choose wisely.

But if I might add: choose revival, renewal, and mission. For your own benefit and the benefit of those in your Personal Mission Field.

For reflection

1. What do we mean by "revival"? What does revival look like?
2. How should you pray for revival? How would you encourage your fellow believers to pray for revival?
3. If we choose not to seek revival – as by praying for it and living by God's Law – to what will that lead?

We should depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work. The surest token of God's goodwill toward us, is his good work in us. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.88

Pray Psalm 119.84-86.

Commit this day and all its work to the Lord, to serve Him according to His Word. Pray that He will keep you alert to temptation and help you resist the devil throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 119.84-86.

(Ripley: Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul

Lord, how long, what shall my days be? When will You Your judgment toll?

Let my enemies disgraced be, those who persecute my soul.

All the proud dig pits to slay me, and they persecute me strong!

Let Your Word my strength and stay be: Help me, Lord, receive my song!

7 Faith for the Real World

Pray Psalm 119.81-83.

My soul faints for Your salvation,
But I hope in Your word.
My eyes fail *from searching* Your word,
Saying, “When will You comfort me?”
For I have become like a wineskin in smoke,
Yet I do not forget Your statutes.

Sing Psalm 119.81-83.

(Ripley: Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul)

My soul faints for Your salvation – but my hope is in Your Word!
I have searched Your Word with patience seeking comfort from You, Lord.
Like a wineskin, Lord, You test me; I am withered with despair!
Let Your statutes my sweet rest be as I call on You in prayer.

Read Psalm 119.81-88; meditate on verse 88.

Preparation

1. What was the psalmist experiencing?
2. Where did he turn for relief?

Meditation

The testimony of Scripture, both the New Testament and the Old, is that it’s not easy being saved. And the troubling part about that is many Christians don’t want to face up to or prepare for that reality.

Our psalmist understood this, and he knew where to turn for comfort, guidance, courage, and strength. So intently and earnestly did he cling to the Word of God that his eyes grew weary even as his longing for God’s salvation increased. Being saved wasn’t easy for him, and we need to realize that it won’t be easy for us, either.

Some years ago I taught a seminar on the Scripture’s teaching about elders as shepherds. I began with the example of Jesus, went back throughout the Old Testament, then concluded with the teaching of Paul and Peter about shepherding God’s flock. During a break, one of the participants took me aside and said, “You know T. M., this is really powerful stuff you’re teaching us today.” I knew what was coming next: “But we live in the real world...” I cut him off right there and said, “No, we do not live in the real world. We live in the *unreal* world of wrong belief, misguided faith, and a misunderstood Gospel. The real world is the Kingdom of God, and it is *that* world we intend to realize through faith and shepherding.”

And the work of learning, loving, delighting in, searching, keeping, and sharing the Word of God.

Which is to say, *you* are the real world, my believing friend. The world of your Personal Mission Field is flooded with lies and the flotsam and jetsam of wrong belief. Go today and bring a little more of the real world to the people to whom Jesus has sent you (Jn. 20.21). Cling to the Word. Trust the Lord for comfort and strength amid afflictions. Look to Him for revival so you may keep the testimony of *His* mouth, living and speaking the real world into the crazy world around you.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Nothing about life is easy. We sometimes seem to spend our days struggling to keep afloat. We are pummeled on all sides: either the Lord is chastening and teaching us, or we are being afflicted by enemies. Either way, it

doesn't always feel too good.

The apostle Paul spoke words of truth to Timothy that are pure and sure words of guidance for our days on planet earth. They teach us how to think about and handle much of what confronts us and tries to steal our peace. He longs for us to be prepared for every good work and to experience the joy of the Lord. Ready?

1. Flee youthful lusts.
2. Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
3. Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, know that they generate strife.
4. Don't be quarrelsome. A servant of the Lord must be gentle to all.
5. Learn how to be a patient teacher.
6. Be humble when correcting those who are in opposition to you.
7. If we can manage to do these things through the power of the Holy Spirit it is possible that our enemies will be encouraged to seek repentance from God, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil. Sadly, at this point, they have been taken captive by the devil to do his will. But look at the good things that may happen if we do what we are called to do (2 Tim. 2.22-26).

When we can look beyond ourselves, first to the Triune God, then to what He has called us to do in our Personal Mission Field, our spirits are lifted out of the unreal world and plopped down firmly into the real world of the Kingdom of God. It is what we should seek first (Matt. 6.33). And when we do, we have the trusted promise of God that He knows all the things that we need: love, comfort, security, righteousness, peace, and joy. And these He will gladly add to our lives in His way and in His time.

Faith for the real world. God's world. It's what keeps us afloat.

For reflection

1. What do we mean by saying that this fallen world is not the real world?
2. What makes the Kingdom of God the real world?
3. What do we mean by "faith for the real world"? What is the role of God's Word in this?

The psalmist sought deliverance from his sins, his foes, and his fears. Hope deferred made him faint; his eyes failed by looking out for this expected salvation. But when the eyes fail, yet faith must not. His affliction was great. He was become like a leathern bottle, which, if hung up in the smoke, is dried and shriveled up. We must ever be mindful of God's statutes. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.81-88

Pray Psalm 119.81-88.

Wait on the Lord in silence, reflecting on the words of Psalm 119.81-88. Do you feel some of this weariness? Roll it onto the Lord! Do you fear that people might persecute you if you were more outspoken for the Lord? Call on Him for strength and courage! Are you facing troubles and temptations? Ask the Lord to give you strength to cling to His Word!

Sing Psalm 119.84-88.

(Ripley: Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul)

Lord, how long, what shall my days be? When will You Your judgment toll?
Let my enemies disgraced be, those who persecute my soul.
All the proud dig pits to slay me, and they persecute me strong!
Let Your Word my strength and stay be: Help me, Lord, receive my song!

For my foes would make an end to my existence on the earth.
Yet Your precepts I befriend to know the greatness of their worth.
In Your kindness, Lord revive me! In Your love, restore my soul!

Psalm 119.81-88

Let Your Word in me alive be; I will keep it well and whole.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why should we as believers expect conflict and affliction in this world?
2. What does it mean for us to remember (v. 83) and keep (v. 88) the Word of God?
3. Realistically, what kind of opposition should you expect as you become more consistent in living and more outspoken in sharing the Good News of Jesus? How should you prepare for this each day?
4. Why do we say that believers represent the *real* world?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this part of our study of Psalm 119?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.