



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 119:81-160

Monday 21st September - Psalm 119:81-96

Kaph

81 My soul longs for your salvation;

I hope in your word.

82 My eyes long for your promise;

I ask, "When will you comfort me?"

83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,

yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

84 How long must your servant endure?

When will you judge those who persecute me?

85 The insolent have dug pitfalls for me;

they do not live according to your law.

86 All your commandments are sure;

they persecute me with falsehood; help me!

87 They have almost made an end of me on earth,

but I have not forsaken your precepts.

88 In your steadfast love give me life,

that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

Lamedh

89 Forever, O Lord, your word

is firmly fixed in the heavens.

90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;

you have established the earth, and it stands

fast.

91 By your appointment they stand this day,

for all things are your servants.

92 If your law had not been my delight,

I would have perished in my affliction.

93 I will never forget your precepts,

for by them you have given me life.

94 I am yours; save me,

for I have sought your precepts.

95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,

but I consider your testimonies.

96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,

but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

When a kid ask "Are we there yet?" they're often not asking if we're literally about to arrive. They're expressing the desire for the suffering of this car trip to be over!

It seems that the Psalmist is expressing something similar here when he asks "When will you comfort me?" (v. 82) He's not asking for a time frame, but for God to comfort and save right now! The image of a wineskin in the smoke is strange, but seems to point to the Psalmist feeling like he's shrivelling away. He's persecuted (v. 84-86) and nearly dead (v. 87).

Yet this Psalm shows us a means of maintaining hope in the midst of sorrows. The Psalmist clings to the promises of God in His word (v. 81-82). In the next section, we see that God's word is fixed (certain) and trustworthy because God himself is faithful (v. 90). Delighting in God's word creates and preserves life (v. 92-93).

So here are two things worth reflecting on. Firstly, faithfulness to God does not mean life will be easy. In fact, sometimes (often!) life is very difficult and our own faithfulness can even make us question God. These words are here to prepare us. But they also teach us.

And this brings us to the second thing to reflect on: the Psalmist models for us the importance of clinging to the words and promises of God in the midst of life's difficulties. It's worth considering: am I building a foundation for my life on the words and promises of God? Am I feeding my soul with God's word so that when (not if) suffering comes, I'm prepared to hold onto Him? Am I reminding myself regularly of His promises so that in my sorrows I turn to Him in hope and prayer? Not only that, they teach us that we can cry out to God; this Psalm invites us to call out to Him in faith. And because of Jesus, we have even better promises to remember and cling to!

Father, help me to remember and trust in your promises so that I might be faithful to you in all things and cling to you in the midst of the difficulties and sorrows of life.

James

Tuesday 22nd September - Psalm 119:97-112

Mem

97 Oh how I love your law!

It is my meditation all the day.

98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,

for it is ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,

for your testimonies are my meditation.

100 I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.

101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.

102 I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.

103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104 Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.

Nun

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to keep your righteous rules.

107 I am severely afflicted;

give me life, O Lord, according to your word!

108 Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord,
and teach me your rules.

109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.

111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever,
for they are the joy of my heart.

112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

What do you meditate on and daydream about? What do we hunger for and long to taste in our souls? For the author of Psalm 119, the answer is the Word of God. John Piper says, "Never reduce Christianity to a matter of demands, resolutions and willpower. It is a matter of what we love, what we delight in, what tastes good to us."

Just like the Psalmist, we talk, think and dream about what we love, and this affects how we live. Because of God's Word, a Christian hold's back their feet from evil (v. 101). It's like a spiritual GPS that will guide our lives. I hope and pray that my children choose God's way and wisdom over mine. I don't always know what's best, but God does.

The Psalmist loves the Lord's law because he loves the Lord of the law. When we give our lives to Jesus we will begin to love and desire his Word. It won't taste like castor oil, but as the Message version says, "your words are so choice, so tasty; I prefer them to the best home cooking." Wisdom doesn't come by just learning facts from the Bible, but as we humbly receive it in love, obedience, and joy.

Father, teach me how to savour and relish your words, that they would strengthen my heart, affect how I see the world and guide my choices. We thank you for how you sent your Son Jesus to live the life and die the death we should have led and died. Our trust is in the only one who fully lived out this Psalm, who walked this path all the way to the cross and out of the tomb! Thank you, Lord, for your word. Amen.

Martin

Wednesday 23rd September - Psalm 119:113-128

Samekh

113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Depart from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.
116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I
may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope!
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually!
118 You spurn all who go astray from your
statutes,
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you discard
like dross,
therefore I love your testimonies.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.

Ayin

121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
122 Give your servant a pledge of good;
let not the insolent oppress me.
123 My eyes long for your salvation
and for the fulfillment of your righteous
promise.
124 Deal with your servant according to your
steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
that I may know your testimonies!
126 It is time for the Lord to act,
for your law has been broken.
127 Therefore I love your commandments
above gold, above fine gold.
128 Therefore I consider all your precepts to be
right;
I hate every false way.

Coming back from my grandparents at Dee Why, there was always a division in the car. Those who wanted dad to drive up the hill on our street flat chat and mum on the other saying no don't do it. Mum always stood alone as dad put his foot down and went screaming up the hill. Four cylinders of the Hillman minx screaming. Then a fast turn into the driveway. Mum feeling carsick and the rest of us kids laughing it up.

In this section of the psalm, our writer stands alone with only God on his side. The others in this psalm are screaming in their rebellion, laughing going their own way. Their 4 cylinders of glory running away from God and onto their own road, to their ultimate judgement. Can you see the contrast in the psalm?

The psalmist is even more carsick than my mother. He clearly loves God and His word with all of his heart. Even when God's word hurts, it is welcomed and treasured above all things (v. 127) gives him the help and security he needs. See how he has set his heart and life's way into the path of God's way through the hearing God's word. Setting himself apart from the exhilaration of the world.

How we need to live, being sick of the world's cheering for its way instead of loving and treasuring Jesus.

Phil

Thursday 24th September - Psalm 119:129-144

Pe

129 Your testimonies are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
131 I open my mouth and pant,
because I long for your commandments.
132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your way with those who love your name.
133 Keep steady my steps according to your
promise,
and let no iniquity get dominion over me.
134 Redeem me from man's oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.
136 My eyes shed streams of tears,
because people do not keep your law.

Tsadhe

137 Righteous are you, O Lord,
and right are your rules.
138 You have appointed your testimonies
in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
139 My zeal consumes me,
because my foes forget your words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is righteous forever,
and your law is true.
143 Trouble and anguish have found me out,
but your commandments are my delight.
144 Your testimonies are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

What things delight you and bring you joy?

So wonderful is the God's instruction that the psalmist has a hunger to know even more. He says, "I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands." v.131.

He knows that it is only through God's word that people can develop a true understanding of the nature of God, and learn to live lives pleasing to Him.

He understands that in following God's word he has victory over sin and temptation and he grieves over the fact that others fail to delight in His word (as he does), but instead harden their hearts to the pure knowledge of God.

As for the psalmist, his deepest consolation and joy come from the hope that springs from meditating and resting in God's revelation of Himself in Scripture.

Father God, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You. Help me to begin to imagine what my life would be like if I became as serious about your word as the writer of this psalm.

John

Friday 25th September - Psalm 119:145-160

Qoph

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O Lord!
I will keep your statutes.

146 I call to you; save me,
that I may observe your testimonies.

147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I hope in your words.

148 My eyes are awake before the watches of the
night,
that I may meditate on your promise.

149 Hear my voice according to your steadfast
love;

O Lord, according to your justice give me life.

150 They draw near who persecute me with evil
purpose;

they are far from your law.

151 But you are near, O Lord,
and all your commandments are true.

152 Long have I known from your testimonies
that you have founded them forever.

Resh

153 Look on my affliction and deliver me,
for I do not forget your law.

154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise!

155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.

156 Great is your mercy, O Lord;
give me life according to your rules.

157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
but I do not swerve from your testimonies.

158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

159 Consider how I love your precepts!
Give me life according to your steadfast love.

160 The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your righteous rules endures
forever.

Have you ever cried out to God with all your heart because you are in a desperate situation? How do you know if God will answer you and will deliver you? The Psalmist here is calling out to God for deliverance (v. 145-146). All that he has is the word of God to rely on and to put his hope that God will answer and save him (v.147). Some of us might be in a situation wherein we call unto the Lord for deliverance for only God's hand can turn around our situation.

One of my favourite deliverance stories in the Bible is the deliverance of the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptian army as they are trapped at the shore of the Red Sea (Exodus 14). They are trapped because God put them there exactly in that perilous situation (Exodus 14:1-4). God wants them to know who He is to them and only He can deliver them out from the slaughtering hands of the Egyptian army. The Lord God gave his word to Moses, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord."(Exodus 14: 4).

As the marching Egyptians approached, the Israelites were terrified and cried out to the Lord. But they said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"(Exodus 14:10-12). Do you cry out like the trapped Israelites here or do you cry out to God like the Psalmist who has hope because He puts his trust in the God of word?

Psalm 119 is a celebration of God's word. God didn't give us His word just to increase our knowledge but to affect our lives. The writer of this psalm understood that. He found the blessing that comes from meditating, obeying and loving it (v.159).

If we do not love the Bible, we certainly do not love the God who gave it to us. – C.H. Spurgeon

Edwin