

Sunday Night Message

July 31, 2016



























Psalm 119:81 - 88 – *Patiently Enduring – Hanging On By A Thread*

Series – The Psalms

Text – Psalm 119:81 - 88

Introduction

We are continuing our examination of the longest Psalm as well as the longest chapter of the Bible. As we discussed last week, this psalm is a Hebrew acrostic where every eight verses are separated into sections where the first letter of each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The first eight verses each begin with “Aleph”, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Verses 9 – 16 all begin with “Beth”; verses 17 – 24 all begin with Gimel; and, so on.

									
Yod (Y)	Tet (T)	Chet (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V)	He (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Bet (B/V)	Alef (silent)
									
Ayin (silent)	Samech (S)	Nun (N)	Nun (N)	Mem (M)	Mem (M)	Lamed (L)	Khaf (Kh)	Kaf (K/Kh)	
									
Tav (T)	Shin (Sh/S)	Resh (R)	Qof (Q)	Tsadeh (Ts)	Tsadeh (Ts)	Feh (F)	Peh (P/F)		

We do not know the writer of this psalm, though we think it must have been a “high profile” person, perhaps a king or a priest. Nor do we know the historical context. There is no doubt, however, as to the theme of the psalm. 170 out of the 175 verses in this psalm speak directly regarding the Word of God. The writer to this psalm is expressing his love and devotion to the Word of God, and is encouraging us to do the same.

Phillips has said regarding the anonymity of the writer:

Throughout this psalm we are made aware that the singer is in trouble. We would like to know who he was—David, perhaps, or Daniel, or Hezekiah. But since he has remained

anonymous (making this psalm one of the “orphan psalms” of the Hebrew hymn book) the Holy Spirit intends his sufferings to be of universal significance. Any beleaguered saint of God can put his or her name at the head of this psalm and sing it themselves.¹

"CAPH"

“Caph” is the eleventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Every verse of this section (vs. 81 – 88) of Psalm 119 begin with the letter Caph.

Introduction to this section:

This section of Psalm 119 has the theme of patient endurance. The psalmist is obviously suffering persecution because of his relationship to God and his love for the Word of God. Yet, he is patiently enduring. He is hanging on by a thread, but he is hanging on.

I He Was Down and Almost Out (v. 81)

“My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.” (Psalm 119:81)

"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." (Psalm 84:2)

The word “salvation” here is not speaking of salvation for sins, but rather salvation from a life harming situation. The psalmist was at a place where he desperately needed help from the Lord. He was sinking, and he needed the Lord to pull him up.

The application could be here to someone who is spiritually in need of revival. Sometimes when a person gets away from God, he gets to the place where he needs the life of God to be breathed back into him.

The Bible does not tell us what the particular circumstances surrounding the psalmist, and maybe it is well that it doesn't because now we can make a general application. We all go through times when it seems as if the world is coming to an end. The solution to all of our problems is the same as for this psalmist – the Word of God. The Word of God will keep us going even when it seems that all hope is lost.

II He Spiritual Eyes Were Dim (v. 82)

¹ Phillips, J. (2012). Exploring Psalms 89–150: An Expository Commentary (Vol. 2, Ps 119:81–88). Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp.

"Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?" (Psalm 119:82)

III He Was Diminished in His Service (vs. 83 & 84)

"For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes." (Psalm 119:83)

The general consensus among theologians is that "a bottle in the smoke" refers to a wine skin that has become dried up and blackened due to prolonged exposure to the smoke of a fireplace. In Bible days, these wineskins would often be hung near the cooking fire, and there was often a lot of smoke and heat due to poor ventilation. The interior walls and furniture within these areas would also become blackened from the smoke. The wine skins would shrivel and blacken, and would eventually become useless as the smoke would permeate the skin and pollute the beverage.

Trials and testing have a way to cause a believer to shrivel outwardly and can even darken his spirit to the point that the fruit coming out of him becomes bitter. The Word of God can help cleanse away the blackness of the smoky trials.

"How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?" (Psalm 119:84)

Two possibilities come to mind from verse four. The first is that the psalmist was up in years and had grown weary in the battles. This seems to fit well with verse three, which indicated that the psalmist had felt that he was no longer of any profitable use.

The second idea is that this verse is reflecting on the duration of the trial, or perhaps the amount of time until God delivered him from the trial.

It is natural for us to wonder and even to ask, "how long?"

"Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake." (Psalm 6:2-4)

*"But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end."
(Jeremiah 12:3-4)*

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:9-11)

But God wants us to hang on:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:2-4)

IV His Was Being Defeated by His Enemies (vs. 85 – 87a)

A They tricked him:

"The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law." (Psalm 119:85)

B They treated him unjustly:

"All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me." (Psalm 119:86)

C They almost triumphed (v. 87a)

"They had almost consumed me upon earth;"

V He Was Determined (v. 87b - 88)

"but I forsook not thy precepts." (Psalm 119:87)

But for the grace of God. The psalmist struggled but he didn't cease trusting in God.

"Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth." (Psalm 119:88)

Don't quit:

Don't quit coming to church.

Don't quit reading your Bible.

Don't quit serving in your ministry.

Don't quit tithing.

Don't quit trusting in God.

Illustration

Young William Wilberforce was discouraged one night in the early 1790s after another defeat in his 10-year battle against the slave trade in England. Tired and frustrated, he opened his Bible and began to leaf through it. A small piece of paper fell out and fluttered to the floor. It was a letter written by John Wesley shortly before his death. Wilberforce read it again: "Unless the divine power has raised you up... I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that (abominable practice of slavery), which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might." (Daily Bread, June 16, 1989.)

John Wesley also knew something about hanging on by a thread:

From the diary of John Wesley. . .

Sunday, A.M., May 5 Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore.

Sunday, P.M., May 5 Preached in St. John's. Deacons said "Get out and stay out."

Sunday, A.M., May 12 Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there, either.

Sunday, A.M., May 19 Preached in St. Somebody Else's. Deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.

Sunday, P.M., May 19 Preached on street. Kicked off street.

Sunday, A.M., May 26 Preached in meadow. Chased out of meadow as bull was turned loose during service.

Sunday, A.M., June 2 Preached out at the edge of town. Kicked off the highway.

Sunday, P.M., June 2 Afternoon, preached in a pasture. Ten thousand people came out to hear me.

You may be going through the trial of your life right now – keep hanging on. God will get you through.

Illustrate – Satan blew up the motor on the bus yesterday – Yeay! Hang on - God's going to give us a better motor – or maybe even a better bus!