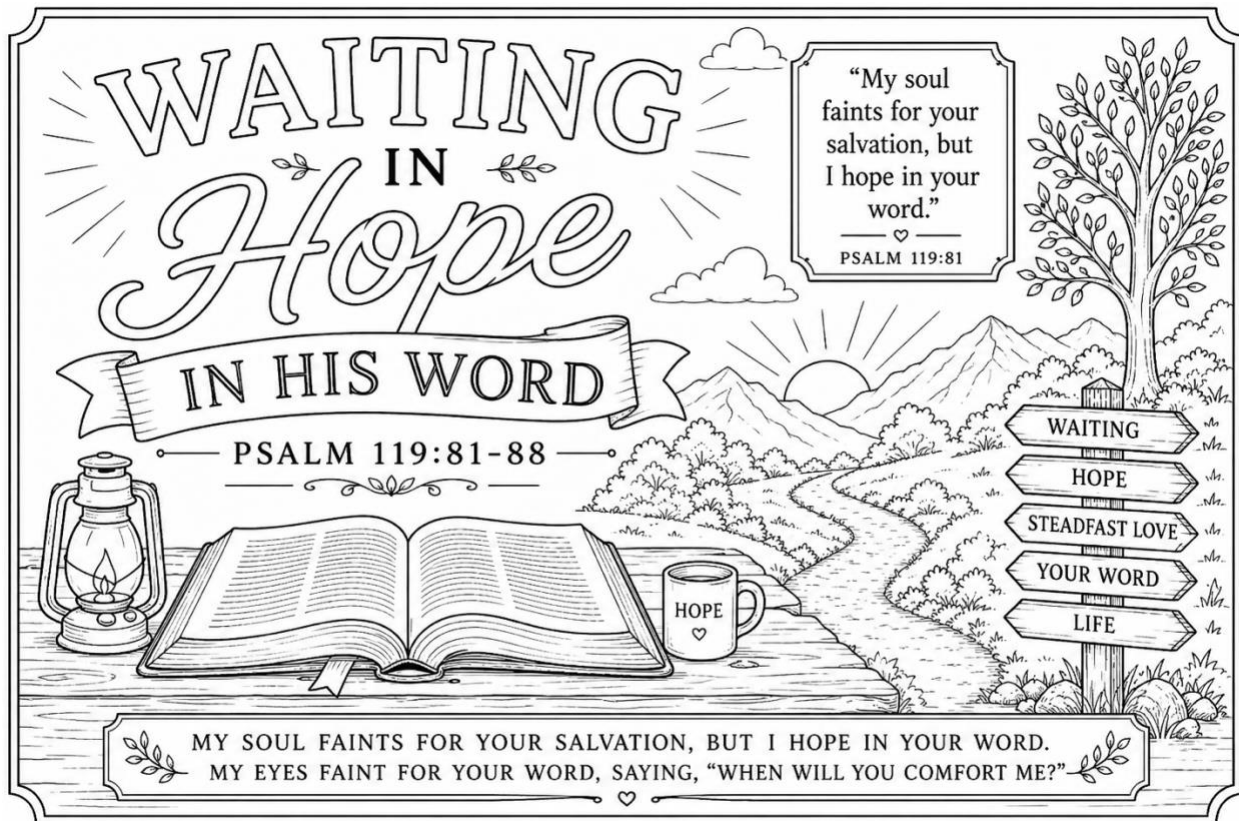




Waiting in Hope Psalm 119:81–88

Big Idea: God uses seasons of waiting to deepen our dependence upon His steadfast love and to form us into faithful disciples.

Introduction: Few people enjoy waiting.

- We wait for water to boil.
- We wait for the weather to change.
- We wait for the service person to arrive to fix what's broken.
- We wait for the electricity to come back on after a storm.
- We wait for the grade on a test.
- We wait for news about a job
- We wait for medical tests.
- We wait for prodigal children.
- We wait for healing.
- We wait for a relationship to be restored.
- We wait for that money to come in.
- We wait for doors to open and close.
- We wait for God to answer prayers we've prayed for years.

And if we're honest, waiting often feels like

- we are doing nothing and/or
- nothing is happening.

Yet throughout Scripture, waiting is never passive. Waiting is one of God's greatest tools for spiritual formation.

**When God delays His answers, He is not delaying His work.
He is often doing His deepest work.**

- Joseph waited in prison.
- Abraham and Sarah waited for Isaac.
- Moses waited for God to free Israel.
- David waited for the throne.
- The prophets waited for justice.
- Israel waited in the wilderness and then in captivity (Isaiah 40:31).
- Mary and Martha waited for Jesus.

That is exactly what we discover in the Kaph stanza.

Here, the psalmist is waiting...excruciatingly waiting.

- Waiting for salvation - 81
- Waiting for comfort - 84
- Waiting for justice - 86
- Waiting for relief - 88

But while he is waiting for God to work around him, God is working within him. By the end of the stanza, his circumstances have not changed, but he has. That is the journey of Kaph.

And it has to be addressed because there are always times when we have to wait. It's a part of life and, as such, should become constructive for us as Christians because we should long for God more than the answers we seek or the problem to be solved.

In these verses, the Psalmist tells us,

First: Waiting Awakens Holy Longing (vv. 81–82)

Waiting begins by exposing the deepest desires of our hearts. We naturally assume that changed circumstances are what we need most. The psalmist discovers something deeper. His greatest need is God Himself. Notice the progression.

- *"My soul longs..." - 81*
- *"My eyes long..." - 82*

- His whole person is engaged.

Waiting strips away superficial desires until we discover what we truly treasure.

Then notice where his hope rests.

- Not in circumstances.
- Not in people.
- Not in outcomes.
- *"I hope in your word" – 81b*

He keeps his eyes fixed on God's promises.

APP: Waiting has a way of exposing idols. It also can produce a deeper longing for God.

Second: Waiting Produces Steadfast Faith (vv. 83–87)

This is the longest movement of the stanza. Notice what happens.

- *"I have become like a wineskin in the smoke."*

Ill: In the ancient Middle East, people crafted wineskins from animal hide. People often hung them in the rafters of a tent or house when they were not in use. Because there were no chimneys, smoke from the cooking fire would rise and collect near the ceiling. Over time, the smoke would blacken the wineskin, dry out the leather, make it brittle, shriveled, and cracked. A wineskin left in the smoke was still hanging there, but it had lost its suppleness and was slowly deteriorating.

The psalmist says that is how he feels. Prolonged suffering has left him worn, weathered, and exhausted. He is not describing a brief trial but the cumulative effect of enduring hardship over an extended period of time. He feels as though life has dried him out and robbed him of his strength. And so he cries,

- *"How long?" - 84*
- *"They dug pits." - 85*
- *"They persecute me." – 86b*
- *"They almost made an end of me." - 87*

This is not one bad day. This is enduring pain. Everything weakens him.

- His circumstances.
- His enemies.
- His emotions.
- His body.
- His future.

Yet, and this is really important – perhaps the crux of the stanza – after every description of suffering comes another declaration of faithfulness.

- *"I have not forgotten..." – 83b*
- *"I have not forsaken..." – 87b*

That repetition is intentional. The suffering grows. But so does the perseverance.

Notice the contrast: Though his outward condition has deteriorated, his inward devotion has not wavered.

- His body may feel withered,
- his circumstances bleak, and
- his hope tested,
- but God's Word still occupies his mind and governs his heart.

Affliction has weakened him physically, mentally, and emotionally, but it has not separated him from the Lord or from His truth. The psalmist may be a dried-out wineskin, but he is still anchored in God's Word.

IMP: Here is **one of the great lessons** of the Christian life. God rarely forms mature disciples through comfort. He usually forms mature disciples through dependence. Waiting becomes God's classroom.

- Every delay teaches trust.
- Every unanswered prayer teaches perseverance.
- Every trial teaches dependence.

APP: What has your waiting produced?

- Anger
- Resentment?
- Revenge
- Self-pity?
- Self-reliance?
- Or deeper trust?

Third: Waiting Leads to Dependent Living (v. 88)

Is this an experience of what Jesus said in John 15?

John 15:4-5 - Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Is this what God is teaching the psalmist? Us?

Because it is here that the stanza reaches its climax. Everything has been moving to this conclusion.

- *"My soul longs..." - 81*
- *"My eyes long..." - 82*
- *"I have become like a wineskin..." - 83*
- *"How long?" - 84*
- *"They dug pits..." 85*
- *"Help me." - 86b*
- *"They have almost made an end of me..." = 87*

Now...

- *"In your steadfast love give me life." - 86a*

This is where waiting has been leading all along. Notice what the psalmist does not ask. He does not first ask,

- "Remove my enemies."
- "Change my circumstances."
- "End my suffering."

He asks, *"Give me life." - 88*

Throughout Psalm 119, this is one of the psalmist's favorite prayers. He isn't merely asking God to keep him alive physically. He is asking God to continually revive, strengthen, sustain, and renew him so that he can continue walking faithfully before the Lord.

Notice why. *"...that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth." - 88b*

That is remarkable.

- His greatest desire is no longer simply deliverance.
- His greatest desire is obedience.

That is the life waiting has produced. Then notice the basis of his request. *"In your steadfast love..." - 88a*

- Not because I deserve it.
- Not because I have endured well.
- Not because I have remained faithful.

- Because of Your covenant love.
- Because of Your *hesed*.

God's unwavering covenant commitment to His people.

IMP: The destination of Christian maturity is not greater independence. It is greater dependence.

Fourth: And This Is Where the Gospel Meets Us

No one ever waited like Jesus. Think with me.

- He waited thirty years before beginning His public ministry.
- He waited on His Father's timing at every step, choosing disciples, healing people, etc.
- He waited in Gethsemane.
- He waited while false witnesses accused Him.
- He waited in silence before Pilate.
- He waited on the cross.
- Unlike us, He never became impatient.
- He never doubted.
- He never abandoned His Father's will.

Then came the greatest waiting of all.

- He entered death itself and waited three days for the Father to justify everything He had said about Himself.

In a way, we are saved because Jesus perfectly waited.

Now, everyone who trusts Him receives the life He earned by waiting. And today the Holy Spirit continually gives that life to people and then teaches them to wait like Jesus.

Conclusion: The Kaph stanza teaches us something we desperately need to hear.

Waiting is never wasted.

- God is not absent.
- God is not late.
- God is not uncaring.
- God is forming you.

Read something with me – *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10).*

The Greek word translated "workmanship" is ποίημα (poiēma). It is the word from which we derive the English word "poem." However, in Greek the meaning is broader than our modern word "poem."

Poiēma simply means "something made," "a creation," "a work," or "a masterpiece." It could refer to a work of art, a crafted object, or any created thing. In the New Testament it appears only twice:

- Romans 1:20: God's created world is his *poiēma* ("the things that have been made").
- Ephesians 2:10: Believers are God's *poiēma*, recreated in Christ.

Can we say we are God's poem? Yes. Although the word doesn't literally mean 'poem' in this context. It means God's workmanship, handiwork, or masterpiece. And the English connection provides a fitting illustration: God is crafting our lives into something beautiful that reflects his glory.

Notice the flow of Ephesians 2:

- We were dead in sin (2:1–3).
- God made us alive with Christ (2:4–9).
- Now we are his workmanship (2:10).

Paul is saying that salvation is not merely forgiveness. God is creating something entirely new. Every Christian is a new creation, intentionally fashioned by the divine Artist.

God is writing the poem of your life. You are His masterpiece. Some stanzas/colors express joy, while others express lament. Some lines are complete while others seem unfinished. But the Master Poet never abandons his work. He has not yet written the last verse, painted the final brushstroke, but He will complete the poem when Christ returns.

Perhaps that is why the Kaph stanza doesn't end with changed circumstances but with a changed man.

How changed was Jesus? Perhaps the twin visions of Jesus in Revelation 5 illustrate it best.

*Revelation 5:1-6 - Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, **the Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw **a Lamb** standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

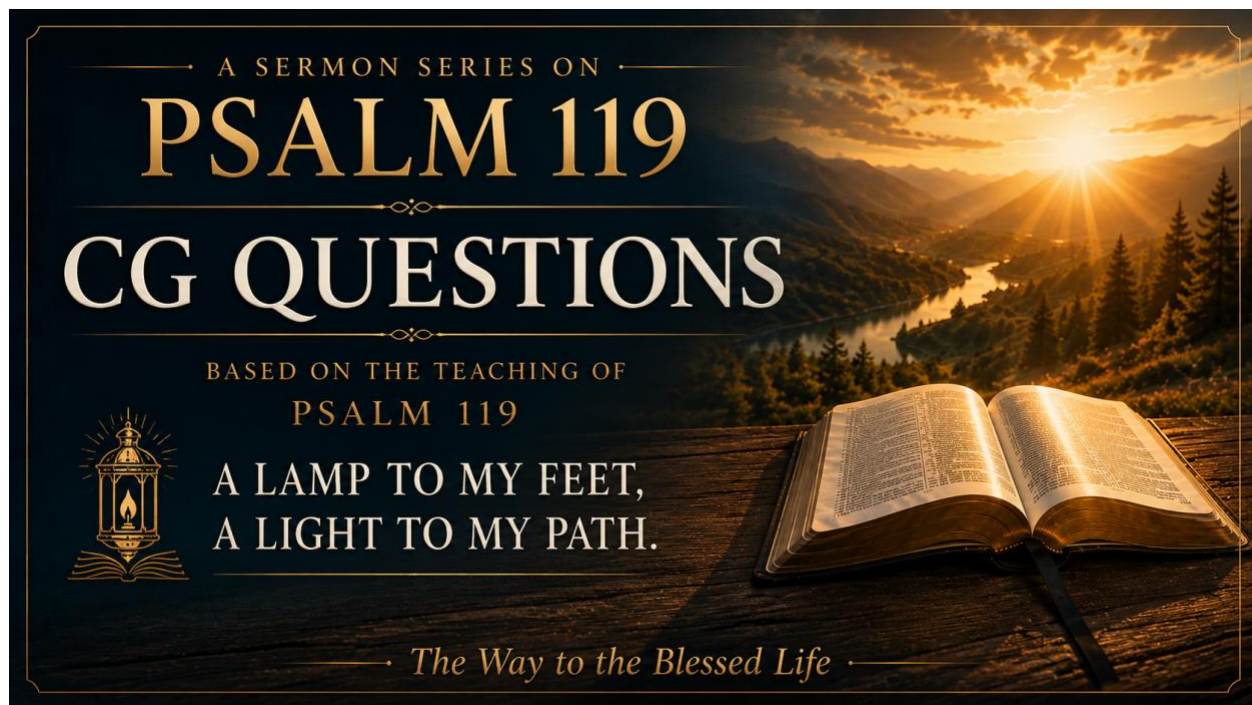
John hears of a Lion. He turns...and sees a Lamb.

The suffering has become the Sovereign.
The crucified has become the King.

And one day, we will become like Him the moment we see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

Until then, the man who has learned the blessing of waiting is now teaching us to say while we wait, *"In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth."*

That, friends, is how the waiting life becomes the blessed life.



Observation
(What does the text say?)

1. As you read verses 81–88, what words or ideas does the stanza repeat? What do those repetitions reveal about the psalmist's experience?
2. What different forms of waiting do you see in verses 81–82? What does the psalmist long for, and where does he place his hope?
3. In verses 83–87, what hardships and pressures does the psalmist describe? How would you summarize his circumstances?
4. What statements of faith does the psalmist repeat despite his suffering (vv. 83–87)? Why are those repeated declarations significant?
5. According to verse 88, what does the psalmist ultimately ask God to do, and why does he ask for it?

Interpretation
(What does the text mean?)

6. Why do you think God sometimes uses waiting as part of His work in the lives of His people instead of answering immediately?
7. The sermon notes suggest that waiting exposes what our hearts truly love. How does this passage support that idea?
8. Why is the psalmist's final request, "Give me life," more significant than simply asking God to remove his suffering?
9. The sermon notes argue that Christian maturity is marked by greater dependence rather than greater independence. How do verses 81–88 illustrate that truth?

10. The stanza ends with the psalmist still waiting yet spiritually changed. What does that teach us about God's purposes in seasons of delay?

Correlation

(Where else in the Bible do I see this text?)

11. How do the lives of Joseph, Abraham, David, or Moses illustrate God's work through seasons of waiting?

12. Read Isaiah 40:31. How does Isaiah's description of waiting on the Lord complement the message of Psalm 119:81–88?

13. Read Romans 5:3–5 and James 1:2–4. What do these passages teach about God's purpose in trials and perseverance?

14. How does Jesus perfectly model faithful waiting throughout His earthly ministry, especially in Gethsemane, before Pilate, at the cross, and in the tomb?

15. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John 3:2. How do these passages deepen our understanding of becoming like Christ through beholding Him?

Application

(How can God use this text to form me?)

16. What area of your life currently requires the greatest waiting? How is God inviting you to trust Him in that situation?

17. During seasons of waiting, what are you most tempted to rely upon besides God? How does this passage challenge those competing loves?

18. How can you practically cultivate hope in God's Word while waiting instead of allowing your circumstances to define your outlook?

19. What circumstances in your life are currently drawing you closer to God? Which ones could draw you farther away from God if you're not careful?

20. What is one specific step of faith or obedience you can take this week that demonstrates your confidence that God's promises are worth waiting for?

*God alone is infinitely beautiful.
He made us to love Him and become like Him.
Every created thing is a path to Him or a distraction from Him.
Yet only God can satisfy the longing of the human heart.*