Key:
Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread
Blue – Explanation/Exposition
Red – Application
Green – Illustration
Brown – Quotation
Yellow – Sermon Notes

Sola Scriptura (Part 2)

Psalm 119:41–88

Let's take our Bibles together and turn once again to Psalm 119. We continue our series *Sola Scriptura* today, examining verses 41–88.

And as you are turning there in your Bibles, I want to tell you about another famous reformer during the Protestant Reformation. Last week I told you about Martin Luther, and how his commitment to *Sola Scriptura* ignited the Protestant Reformation. But more than a century before Luther, there was another reformer named Jan Hus, or as we like to say in America, John Huss. Huss ministered in Prague (in what is now the Czech Republic), and he had significant influence on England and the Protestant Reformation there. Also his ideas had a significant influence on Martin Luther and the reformation in Germany. This man would have been probably as well-known as Luther, if his life hadn't been tragically cut short in AD 1415.

Huss was a man with a profound commitment to the Scriptures. He had an open hostility for the sale of indulgences, just like Luther. He preached the Bible, just like Luther. In fact, early in his monastic career, Luther discovered a volume of sermons by Huss. Luther later wrote, 'I could not understand for what cause they had burnt so great a man, who explained the Scriptures with so much gravity and skill.'"[1]

Huss was actually lured out in the open after an extensive period of hiding. He was promised safe passage to come argue his ideas at the Council of Constance in November 1414. But when he arrived for the council, he was arrested and imprisoned. Eventually, he was condemned to death.[2]

After his condemnation, he was given one last chance to recant at the stake. But instead he prayed, "Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee to have mercy on my enemies."[3] **Interestingly, it's said of Huss that "He was heard reciting the Psalms as the flames engulfed him."**[4] **Maybe Huss was reciting Psalm 119 when he was burned to death. I don't know.**

If he did, it would be appropriate. Psalm 119 is full of praise. It's also full of lament. It speaks of enemies; it speaks of friends. It speaks of God. It speaks indirectly of God's Son, who would become for us the Living WORD of God. But more than anything it speaks of God's written Word, the *Torah*, the precepts, the statutes, the testimonies of God.

Huss devoted his life to recovering the authority of Scripture in the church. And ultimately, he gave his life for that commitment to *Sola Scriptura*. We honor him today and his God by studying God's Holy Word.

Today, as we continue our series through Psalm 119, I'm going to give you six summary statements for the six stanzas that were read—the *Waw* (ו), *Zayin* (ז), *Ḥeth* (ח), *Teth* (ט), *Yodh* (י), and *Kaph* (כ) stanzas.

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[1] Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, eds., *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 369–71. See also "John Huss: Pre-Reformation Reformer," *Christianity Today*, August 8, 2008, https://www.christianitytoday.com/2008/08/john-huss/

[2] One of his final statements before he was burned to death was the following: "I appeal to Jesus Christ, the only judge who is almighty and completely just. In his hands I plead my cause, not on the basis of false witnesses and erring councils, but on truth and justice" (Ibid).

[3] Ibid, 371.

[4] Ibid.

Let's start with this, the *Waw* (ו) stanza.

ו) God's Word is **truth** for the **trusting** (119:41–48)

41 Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise;

That word for "steadfast love" is the Hebrew חֶסֶד. Although it's not a beautiful-sounding word to our ears, it was a beautiful word to the Hebrews. It describes God's covenant loyalty toward his people. And oftentimes this word is best conveyed in English with the word "grace." Is grace a beautiful word to us? Absolutely! It's undeserved, unmerited favor.

So let me just insert that word into **verse 41** and see if you can get a feel for what he's saying.

41 Let your **[grace]** *come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise;*

Linking the word "promise" to חֶסֶד in **verse 41** is not an accident. God covenanted with his people, Israel. And the psalmist desires God's grace and God's salvation to be accomplished in accordance with his promise.

Look at **verse 42.**

42 then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word.

Literally, **"Then I shall answer my taunter a *word*, for I trust in your *word*."**

Some scholars have speculated that this psalm was written while Israel was in exile. I think there's merit to that view. Perhaps Daniel or one of his contemporaries in Babylon authored this psalm. And so when this author speaks of "him who taunts me," I can only imagine what that looked like in Babylon or some other place of captivity.

"You trust in Yahweh for your salvation? Seriously? We just annihilated your people. We looted Yahweh's temple. Your God is weak, Israelite! Trust in the gods of Babylon. Trust in King Nebuchadnezzar; he is a god among men!"

And Daniel, or whoever it is that wrote this psalm, says, **"No! The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men." "Yahweh, I will trust you! I will trust in your Word! I will trust in your promises, even if it invites the reproach of those who despise you."**

Look at **verse 43.**

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,

There's that word "word" again, as a reference to Scripture. And the psalmist says, "**Don't take it out of my mouth." Maybe those of you who are memorizing this week have said something similar. "Help me, Lord, to memorize this. Keep it in my brain. Keep it in my mouth!"**

take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my ***hope*** *is in your rules.*

David wrote in **Psalm 20:7,** "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." Some hope in money. Some hope in government. Some hope in family or success or their own intelligence. Some hope in themselves and in their "can-do attitude."

But David said in **Psalm 20**, **"Not me, Lord. I put my hope in your name!"** The psalmist says in **Psalm 119**, "My hope is in your rules." Literally, the word for "rules" here is "judgments" (Hebrew: מִשְׁפָּט [*miš·pāṭ*]). **Who judges and rules the world? Not me! I don't hope in myself. Who are you hoping in, Christian?**

Look at **verse 44**.

44 I will keep your law continually, forever and ever,

45 and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts.

Now don't be confused with **verse 44.** This psalmist knows that he's not perfect. He knows that he has violated God's law. This is not a rich young ruler kind of thing (**Matt 19:16–30**). No, he's confessing his commitment to God and his Word forever. **This is like Rich Mullins singing, "I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways." Yeah, maybe we'll stumble along the way. But we are locked in on that target.**

And the result is walking in a "wide place." That's a good thing! There's nothing to trip over in a wide place. There are no dangers lurking.

Look at **verse 46**.

[46] *I will also speak of your testimonies*[5] *before kings and shall not be put to shame,*

Maybe this is Daniel! Maybe the kings are Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius the Mede (see **Dan 1–6**). Daniel testified before them and he was never put to shame.

Look at **verse 47**.

[47] *for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.*

[48] *I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.*[6]

Notice the two times at the end of this stanza how the psalmist says, **"I love your commandments!" Does that describe you, believer? Do you love God's commandments?**

The statement about "lifting up hands" toward God's commandments is interesting and cryptic. Literally he says, "I will lift up [my palms] to your commandments." What does that mean?

Perhaps this is a Hebrew idiom for longing. Imagine a little child reaching up toward Mom or Dad, wanting to be held. This is similar to that. This psalmist loves God's Word so much that he is lifting up his hands to it in order to be held up by it. Again, does that describe you, Christian? Do you long for God's Word like this?

This last week, I've been appalled by the number of grown men who are gushing about the coming out of some stupid video game. I watched videos of men who said that they are taking time off work to play this game that celebrates violence and sinful wish-fulfillment. It's obvious to me that they *love* that game. They love their sin. They will make their families and their employers bow to their misplaced love.

I was honestly a little inspired by their devotion. I want to love God's Word like that! I want to love this better thing that God has given us as much as they love their thing.

Write this down as a second point. God's Word is truth for the trusting. Also...

ז) God's Word is **help** for the **harassed** (119:49–56)

Look at **verse 49** with me.

[49] *Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.*

There's that language of "hope" again. **We hope in God's Word. We hope in God's promises. And this hope will become really important as we work through this section of the psalm, because we're going to see that the psalmist is under duress.**

For instance, look at **verse 50**.

[50] *This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.*

In other words, **"The Word of God is a comfort in our times of affliction." "My life might be falling apart. My family might be a mess. My health is failing. My job is precarious. My prospects are suspect. My coworkers are ridiculing me because of my faith. But you know what, God? Your promise gives me life! I cling to that in my affliction."**

You know, it's easy to trust God when life is going great, and you have no trials. But what about when life is hard? What about when affliction is real? For the record, I don't do health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. Because the gospel is true even when health, wealth, and prosperity escape me.

Look at **verse 51.**

[51] *The insolent utterly deride me,*

Wow! This guy is having a rough go of it!

[51] *The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.*

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[5] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 859: The word *ʿēdût* is derived from *ʿwd* ('witness,' 'testify') and is used idiomatically in 'the two tablets of the Testimony' (Ex 31:18) and 'the ark of the Testimony' (Ex 25:22). The tablets and the ark were symbols of the covenantal relationship; hence 'testimony' is often synonymous with 'covenant' (cf. 25:10; 132:12). The observance of the 'statutes' of the Lord signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant made between the Lord and Israel (cf. 99:7; Dt 4:45; 6:17, 20)."

[6] VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, 859–60: "'Decrees' (*ḥuqqîm*, GK 2976) occurs twenty-one times. The noun is derived from the root *ḥqq* ('engrave,' 'inscribe'). God, being the Author of his decrees, reveals his royal sovereignty by establishing his divine will in nature (148:6) and in the covenantal community (50:16; 105:10; cf. Dt 4:1)."

Listen, let's step out of the ancient world for a minute. **We live in a world right now where you will be derided if you follow Jesus Christ. You will be mocked. That was the case for me thirty years ago, when I was in high school. And things haven't improved since then. Things have gotten worse. And I think the situation is going to get much worse!**

And there will come a time when your faith has to stand up to scrutiny and to mockery. Do you really believe? Or do you just believe because your parents believe? Do you just believe, because someone told you to believe?

We need to be able to say, like this psalmist… we all need to be able to say this...

[51] *The insolent utterly deride me* **[they mock me; they insult me; they ridicule me publicly],** *but I do not turn away from your law.*
[52] *When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O* LORD.
[53] *Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law.*

I understand that! This is righteous indignation here in **verse 53**.

[54] *Your statutes have been my songs*

That word for "songs" is the plural of the Hebrew זְמִיר. And that word indicates "happy songs" or "joyful songs accompanied by instrumentation."[7] It's not a dirge or a lament. **It's "I just got ridiculed for my faith! Hallelujah! Strike up the band! Let's sing a song of praise to the Lord."** Like Paul and Silas worshipping the Lord in chains in prison (**Acts 16:25**). Like Peter and John rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus (**Acts 5:41**).

[54] *Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning.*

Again, maybe this is Daniel "sojourning" in Babylon (**Dan 1:1–21**). Or maybe this is Ezekiel in Babylon (**Ezek 1:1–3**). Or maybe Jeremiah when he was forcibly taken to Egypt (**Jer 43:5–7**). Or maybe this is David when he was fleeing from King Saul among the Philistines (**1 Sam 27:1–7**). We don't know. But whoever this person is, this person finds joy in God's Word while living as a sojourner.

Look at **verse 55**.

[55] *I remember your name in the night, O* LORD, *and keep your law.*
[56] *This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts.*

Write this down as a third point for today from the next stanza.

ח) God's Word is **wisdom** for the **worshiper** (119:57–64)

The Hebrew letter for this strophe is the letter ח (***Ḥeth***), which means that every verse in this section begins with a ***Ḥeth***. **And that's great. Because *Ḥeth* is my favorite Hebrew letter!**

And for the record, beginning eight consecutive verses with the letter ***Ḥeth*** is incredibly difficult. But this poet is a pro. And the essence of what he communicates in these eight verses is that "God's Word is wisdom for the worshiper."

Look at **verse 57** with me.

[57] *The* LORD *is my portion;*

I could preach a whole sermon just on this half of a verse: "The Lord is my portion!"[8]

And what's remarkable here is that the word "portion" (חֵלֶק, [*ḥēleq*]) was used to refer to the land inheritance that the Israelites received in the Promised Land (**Josh 18:5–7; 19:9; Num 18:20**). The tribes received their allotments, but the Levites received no tribal territory. The Lord was their portion (**Deut 10:9**)![9]

Well, this psalmist, like the priests of Israel, says, "**Yahweh is my inheritance! Yahweh is my portion.**" That's a pretty radical statement coming from an Israelite, especially if he was in exile.

[57] *The* LORD *is my portion; I promise to keep your words.*

He very well may be in Babylon. No matter! He's going to keep God's Words.

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[7] See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 274, s.v. זְמִיר; James A. Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. זְמִיר.

[8] See Numbers 18:20; Psalm 16:5; Psalm 73:26; Psalm 119:57; Psalm 142:5; Lamentations 3:24.

[9] The same expression is used in Lamentations 3:24, "The LORD is my portion." The context of this was Jerusalem's destruction.

[58] *I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.*
[59] *When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies;*

"Everyone else may be going the wrong way. Everyone else may be going in the direction of worldliness and wickedness and licentiousness. Not me, God. I'm turning my feet toward you. I'm forcibly taking these members of my body in the direction of your testimonies."

[60] *I hasten* **[I hurry, I hustle... this is the Hebrew word** חוּשׁ (*ḥûš*)**]** *and do not delay to keep your commandments.*

In other words, **"I don't lollygag when it comes to obeying your words, Lord. When I hear your commandments, I will hustle to keep them. I'm not just a hearer of God's Word. I'm a doer. In fact, I'm a fast doer!"**

Listen, church, this is a good place to do a little applicational assessment of your life. When you read something in God's Word, do you *rush* to obey it? When you get convicted by an issue of sin, do you forcibly turn your feet and run in the opposite direction? If God reveals something to you in his Word that will help you grow in holiness and in spiritual maturity, expedite that. Expedite it!

And by the way, don't just read the Bible for information. Read it for transformation! Don't just mine the Bible for data and facts and knowledge. Don't just read it so that you can clobber your brother-in-law in Bible Trivia. That's not a meaningful goal. Read God's word for wisdom. Read it for *applied* knowledge. Read it so that the fear of the Lord takes root in your heart and bears fruit in your life.

Listen, no one should ever say about us as a church, "Boy, they know a lot about the Bible! But honestly, they're a bunch of jerks! They sure have a lot of knowledge about God's Word, but they aren't very godly." God forbid that that would be said of us!

Look at **verse 61.**

[61] *Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.*

God's Word is wisdom for the worshiper. It's also help for the harassed.

[62] *At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules.*

Why is this guy getting up at midnight? I don't know. Maybe he can't sleep. Maybe he's Daniel in the lions' den. Maybe he's David hiding from Saul. No matter. He rises to praise God!

[63] *I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.*
[64] *The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love;*

There's that word again—חֶסֶד. The earth is full of your "steadfast love," your "loving-kindness," your "grace." **"The earth is full of your grace, Lord! Your grace is evident everywhere."**

teach me your statutes!

Speaking of grace, write this down as a fourth point.

ט) God's Word is **goodness** from a **good** God (119:65–72)

The key word here in the *Teth* (ט) strophe is the word טוֹב which means "good." That word begins five out of the eight verses in this stanza. And at first that word "good" might feel a little too generic and a little too bland to describe God and his Word.

But in this world of badness... in this world full of non-goodness... it's important to remember where the source of all goodness resides.

The psalmist writes in **verse 65**.

[65] *You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word.*

Literally, **"Good, you have done, with your servant, O Lord, according to your word."**

[66] *Teach me good judgment and knowledge,*

Literally, **"Good taste and knowledge, teach me!"**

for I believe in your commandments.
[67] *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.*

Several years ago, I had a young believer come to my office and ask me about this verse. He asked me, "What exactly does this verse (Psalm 119:67) mean?" And I wasn't ready for that question. So I did a little "drive-by" exegesis. And I told him, I think the first two statements are in apposition, meaning "I

was afflicted" and "I went astray" are describing the same thing. That's what I told him. Like this was a self-affliction kind of thing.

But I was wrong. I had to tell him later that I misspoke. Because after I studied that verse, I came to a different conclusion. That's what I get for doing "drive-by" exegesis.

Here's what I think the author is saying with this statement. He is saying, **"I was going astray! I was living a life of rebellion and sinfulness. And then, the Lord afflicted me. And those afflictions woke me up. And now I keep your word."**

In other words, sometimes God afflicts us in order that we might obey his Word. I want you to keep that thought in the back of your mind, because we'll come back to it at verse 71.

Look at **verse 68**.

[68] You are good and do good;

There's that word "good" again. **"God is good! All the time! All the time! God is Good!"**

[68] You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.
[69] The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;
[70] their heart is unfeeling like fat,

What a picture, right there! Their heart isn't healthy and strong like muscle or like meat. It's like lard. It's like the suet of a piece of meat that burns off in the fire. The hearts of these insolent people are dull and insensitive, like a layer of fat.

[70] their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law.

By the way, "fat" is usually positive in the OT. But you don't want a fat heart!

Look at **verse 71**.

[71] It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

Last week, I challenged all of you to memorize an 8-week section of this psalm. For some of you, if you find that too difficult, just memorize this verse. Just memorize verse 71. This is the verse that actually changed my mind about **verse 67**. Because I think these verses are communicating something similar.

What does it mean that affliction helps us learn God's statutes? Is that true? Can pain and hardship really teach us God's ways?

Some people might say, "No, Pastor Tony! Affliction is a curse! If life is hard, then God must hate me. If life isn't going my way, then that means that I'm doing something wrong. I read the Bible every day, so bad things don't happen to me. I read the Scriptures so that life will be hunky-dory."

Listen, church... that is pure superstition! That's treating the Bible like it's some kind of talisman! Like it's some kind of lucky charm. **"If I read my Bible, nothing bad will happen to me!"** That's not true.

And that's not what the psalmist says here. In fact, he says something so counterintuitive it is meant to grab your attention. He's already told us that God's word is a delight to him. And now he builds on that by saying, **"You know what, God, it was good that I was afflicted. It was good that I went through pain, because it drove me to my knees. It forced me to learn your statutes. I saw Scripture in a whole new light because of affliction."**

"Because of affliction, I've learned, Lord, that..." verse 72.

[72] The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

God's Word is good! In fact, it's *gooder* than gold! It's better than money. It's a gift from God. It's the best gift from the Giver of all good gifts.

Theodore Roosevelt said once, "No educated man can afford to be ignorant of the Bible."[10] Robert E. Lee said the following, "In all my perplexities, the Bible has never failed to give me light and

[10] Theodore Roosevelt, *Realizable Ideals: The Earl Lectures* (San Francisco: Whitaker & Ray-Wiggin Co., 1912), 69.

strength."[11] **The famous Helen Keller said similarly, "The Bible gives me a deep, comforting sense that 'things seen are temporal, and things unseen are eternal.'"**[12]

If you remember Helen Keller was deaf and blind, so her statement about "unseen eternal things" is especially meaningful. When Keller was introduced to the God of the Bible she said, "I always knew He was there, but [until now] I didn't know His name!"[13]

Can you imagine, church... just think about this with me for a second... what if God had created us and chosen never to speak with us? What if he just created us, and then poof, disappeared without any communication of his love for us? No communication of our purpose in this life! No communication of what he expects of us! Just imagine how impoverished we'd be in a world like that.

But God didn't do that! He spoke. He wrote a book. And he revealed to us in this book everything we need for life and godliness.

Don't take that for granted, church. Don't miss out on this life-giving treasure from the Giver of all good things. Don't let the infinite distractions in this world crowd out these life-giving words.

Write this down as a fifth point.

ו) God's Word is a **fortress** for those who **fear** him (119:73–80)

Look at **verse 73**.

[73] Your hands have made and fashioned me;

Notice the way that **verse 73** harks back to **Genesis 1**. The word "made" (Hebrew עָשָׂה [*ʿā·śāh*]) is used repeatedly in the creation account. God made the expanse (**1:7**). God made the sun and moon (**1:16**). God made the animals (**1:25**). And most importantly, God made both male and female in his own image (**1:26–27**).

And this same God who made us in his image is being asked by the psalmist in **verse 73**...

give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.

Look at **verse 74**.

[74] Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word.

Why do those who fear God rejoice when they see this psalmist? Because the psalmist fears God too! Because he hopes in God's Word too. Like-minded people rejoice when they meet each other, especially if they share a fear for God and a love for his Word.

And notice the language of "hope" again at the end of **verse 74**. **Where's your hope found, church? Where's your fortress found? I *hope* that your *hope* is not a *house* built on sand.**

Look at **verse 75**.

[75] I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

There's that affliction language again. It's almost like God is sovereignly controlling our affliction. It's almost like God has a larger purpose behind the hardships that we experience in this life. This psalmist doesn't begrudge the affliction of the Lord. He welcomes it. Because it was an expression of God's faithfulness.

Sometimes surgeons have to break a bone that has healed incorrectly so that it can heal properly. That breaking is painful, but it's an act of healing, not cruelty. Sometimes God has to break what is crooked in us so that he can make us right.

And notice how God's affliction is countered in **verse 76** with his comfort.

[76] Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant.

The Lord, like a surgeon, has to break us. He has to afflict us for our own good. But he's got good bedside manner. He comforts us, even as he sovereignly ordains affliction.

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[11] Robert E. Lee, letter to A. W. Beresford Hope, April 16, 1866, in Robert E. Lee Jr., *Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1904), chap. 11: https://www.historyofwar.org/sources/acw/lee_letters/chapter11h.html.

[12] Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1903), 113.

[13] This is a paraphrase of what's recorded in Mary Lowe Dickinson and Myrta Lockett Avary, *Heaven, Home and Happiness* (New York: Christian Herald, 1901), 216. When Helen Keller was introduced to the God of the Bible, she reportedly said to Phillips Brooks, "Mr. Brooks, I knew all that before, but I didn't know His name."

Look at **verse 77**.

[77] Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.

*[78] Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will **meditate** on your precepts.*

The word "meditate" is used repeatedly in **Psalm 119 (15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148).**[14] To meditate biblically means to muse upon or to reflect upon God and his Word. **We don't contemplate our navel or meditate on something stupid like the sound of one hand clapping.** We meditate on God's Word. We mull it over in our minds. We think on it as it becomes absorbed into our psyche.

And by the way, meditation often appears in this psalm alongside affliction. **The more we are afflicted, the more we need to meditate on God's Word.**

Look at **verse 79**.

[79] Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies.

Again, this guy is a friend to those who fear God. He enjoys fellowship with others around God's Word. **That's what we are doing right now at church. We are fellow God-fearers and we have fellowship together around God's Word.**

And here's our prayer in **verse 80**.

[80] May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!

Finally… Here's one more statement about God's Word from the *Kaph* (כ) stanza.

כ) God's Word is a **promise** to the **persecuted** (119:81–88)

Look at **verse 81**.

[81] My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.

Now let me just give you a heads up before we come to the middle point of this psalm. This particular stanza is probably the most depressing in this psalm. This stanza is more lament than rejoicing.

And it's interesting to me how the author of **Psalm 119** combines both of those genres in this one psalm. Sometimes we soar to emotional peaks celebrating Scripture, and we want to shout, "Hallelujah, God is good!" At other times in this psalm, there are deep valleys where you whisper against your emotions, **"Hallelujah, God is good!"** You speak those words from a place of faith and not from sight. That's the case with this stanza, the *Kaph* (כ) stanza.

Let me show you. Look at **verse 82**.

[82] My eyes long for your promise; I ask, "When will you comfort me?"

This is a guy who has been reading God's Word and reading his promise. More literally "his eyes are *spent* looking at God's promises."

[83] For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

That "wineskin in smoke" metaphor is really strange. We're not even completely sure what that means. But **Charles Spurgeon** (who knew a thing or two about depression) is probably right about this: "**The skins used for containing wine, when emptied, were hung up in the tent, and when the place reeked with smoke the skins grew black and sooty, and in the heat they became wrinkled and worn. The Psalmist's face through sorrow had become dark and dismal, furrowed and lined; indeed, his whole body had so sympathized with his sorrowing mind as to have lost its natural moisture, and to have become like a skin dried and tanned.**"[15] Do you get the picture, church? That's a vivid metaphor. **Maybe some of you are feeling like a wineskin in smoke right now.**

Look at **verse 84**.

[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.

This psalmist is experiencing injustice. He is asking the Lord to act! **"Let your justice shine forth! Show some mercy, O Lord."**

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[14] The noun שִׂיחָה is used in verses 97 and 99. The verb **שִׂיחַ** is used in 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148.

[15] Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Containing an Original Exposition of the Book of Psalms*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1886), exposition of Ps 119:83, https://www.treasuryofdavid.com/en/psalm119/081-088.

[86] *All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me!*

Can you feel the emotional turmoil here? "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.*

"I love the Bible, Pastor Tony!" Do you? Are you sure? What about when life is hard? What about when godless people dig pitfalls for you? What about when people persecute you with falsehood and slander? What about when instead of crying out "Hallelujah, God is good!" all you can muster up is "Help me, God!" "Help me!"

I would say those are the moments when you find out just how deep your commitment to God really is. Those are the moments when you find out whether you are the soil that bears thirty, sixty, a hundred-fold, or the soil that has its seed choked out by the cares of this world (Matt 13:22–23).

Can you say this, church? Can you say like this psalmist, "They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts" (**119:87**)? **Can you say, like Job,** "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (**Job 13:15, KJV**). **I'm not sure if I'm there yet. But I want to be. I'm getting there.**

And here's something that helps. **Romans 5:7–9** says as follows, "For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."

By the way, the psalmist was willing to follow God, because he trusted in God's promises. And he didn't have a savior yet. He was waiting for a messiah. All he knew, at best, was that a shadowy messiah-figure would come someday and redeem him and the other OT saints. **If *he* could follow God with the hope of a *future* Redeemer, how much more should *we* be able to trust God since we have a *revealed* Redeemer? How much more should we be willing to follow Jesus even through the deepest of trials?**

I'll close with this. We've spent the last few weeks examining some Hebrew poetry from Scripture. Beautiful poetry! But let me close this morning with some English poetry.

Years ago, there was a faithful Christian missionary to India named Amy Carmichael, who was a great and faithful woman of God. Amy was a strong, beautiful woman, who loved God with her whole being. She never married. She gave herself fully to the work that God had called her to. And she died in 1951 after fifty years of faithful service in India.

Much of her Christian work centered on young girls and women in India who were subject to forced prostitution. Hindu temple children were primarily young girls dedicated to the gods. They were forced into prostitution to earn money for the priests. Amy rescued girls from that trade. She set up an orphanage for them. She told them about the love of Jesus, the person who willingly suffered and was abused for them.

Amy Carmichael was in many ways larger than life. She was a wonderful example of what it means to live a life wholly devoted to God. And here is a poem that she wrote entitled, "Flame of God."

From prayer that asks that I may be
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,
From fearing when I should aspire,
From faltering when I should climb higher
From silken self, O Captain, free
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakenings,
(Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the Crucified)
From all that dims Thy Calvary
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire;
Let me not sink to be a clod;
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.[16]

[16] Amy Carmichael, "Flame of God," in *Toward Jerusalem* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), https://www.crossroad.to/Victory/poems/amy_carmichael/flame.htm. See also Elisabeth Elliot, *A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1987).

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