

Comfort in Affliction

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Psalm 119 verses 49 to 56. Yeah. Yeah. Let me read it out loud for us.

Remember your word to your servant in which you have made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction that your promise gives me life. The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.

When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O Lord. Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked who forsake your law.

Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourn. I remember your name in the night, O Lord, and keep your law. The blessing has fallen to me that I have kept your precepts.

Ships make use of anchors, as you know, when ashore. In order to prevent it from drifting away due to the wind or the current. Most anchors have a, there are two types of anchors, but most of them have a hooking mechanism where it actually hooks into the seabed and grips it so that it doesn't move.

[1 : 19] And it's the actual connection to the ground, the solid ground that keeps us from moving. And similarly, when we are in turbulent times in the midst of a sea of changes, we need to exercise our faith like anchors to hook into God's word.

And God's word is the immovable seabed that keeps us from drifting into the seas. And that's kind of what this, that's kind of the reality that this section of Psalm 119 speaks of.

Its main point is that God's word provides comfort in the midst of affliction and produces righteousness in the midst of wickedness. So let's first look at the comfort in the midst of affliction. It begins with a prayer asking God, Remember your word to your servant in which you have made me hope. This word is what the psalmist hopes in.

It's, in fact, God who made him hope in this word. And, of course, God doesn't, you know, get senile like humans do and forgets things.

[2 : 23] So it's not that he forgets. That's why he must be reminded to remember. But rather asking God to remember his word is asking him to really act in accordance with his word.

God, this is what you said to me. This is what you promised. Remember your word and do what you said you would do. I place my hope in your word. I've staked my life on it. So please remember what you promised.

So that's kind of the idea behind this prayer. And it's not a presumptuous demand. You know, that stems from a sense of entitlement. It comes from an acknowledgement of humble dependence.

That's why the psalmist refers to himself as your servant. I am your servant. I don't belong to anyone else. No one else do I hope in. So please help me, take care of me, deliver me.

I look to you. I am your servant. That's the idea. Remember your word to your servant in which you have made me hope. And then the psalmist continues in verse 50 of Psalm 119.

[3 : 26] He says, This is my comfort to my affliction, that your promise, comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. So he's experiencing some kind of suffering or affliction.

And we know from the next verse that he's being ridiculed and derided by his enemies. But nevertheless, he's holding on to faith and hope that God's promise gives him life.

And it's this word that's life-giving in the midst of life-threatening circumstances. And because this psalmist has hooked on to the seabed of God's word with the anchor of faith, it says in verse 51, So he's able to remain steadfast in his devotion to God and to God's will, even in the midst of insolent derision of his enemies.

And so instead of being tossed to and fro by the wind of human opinion or criticisms, instead of feeling insecure and embattled by the sea of affliction, it says in verse 52, God's word provides comfort in the midst of affliction.

And I love how it's phrased here, When I think of your rules from of old. His rules are not novel. They're not creations of men. They're not invented. It's from of old because God is the ancient of days.

[4 : 52] He's from eternity past. And in that unchanging law of God and rules, we take comfort. So we can find comfort in the midst of affliction. That's the first point. And then secondly, it says that God's word produces righteousness in the midst of wickedness.

And in verse 53, it says, Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked who forsake your law. It's a really descriptive phrase, hot indignation. It's really referenced to rage, heat of anger.

Psalmist is enraged because of the wicked who forsake God's law. And we might think in kind of the sanitized Christianity that we might think of that this is an undignified or even unchristian response. But this is actually a biblical and godly response to wickedness. Psalm 11, 5 says, The Lord hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

Mark 3, verse 5 says that Jesus looked around at the Pharisees with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart. Romans 12, 9 teaches us to abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good.

[6 : 03] So to be like God, to be godly is to hate what God hates and to be angered by what angers God. And so the question to ask is, Does hot indignation seize you when you see God dishonored and besmirched by the wicked?

Does hot indignation seize you when you see the vulnerable oppressed and unjustly exploited? This doesn't mean that we should lash out in sin, of course.

There's plenty of biblical warnings about sinning in our anger. Ephesians 4, 26 warns about that. But we should get angry in the face of wickedness. And John Stott puts it this way, And I think the way in which we have become so tolerant of evil and so desensitized to it shows how insensitive we actually are to holiness.

That we are indifferent to sin because we are indifferent to holiness. And the flip side of this anger in the face of wickedness is delight in God's law.

And we see that in verse 54. Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourn. The psalmist so delights in God's statutes that he sings about them.

[7 : 33] And so we see the beauty and glory of God's laws to make us sing about them. If we love God's laws, we will hate wickedness.

And if our love for God's law is lukewarm, then our hatred of wickedness will also be lukewarm. And the converse is also true. Our delight will be commensurate with the level of our appreciation of God's law, God's word.

And the psalmist experienced such passionate indignation at sin because he was zealous to keep God's law and to see kept by others. And we continue to see that in verses 55 to 56.

I remember your name in the night, O Lord, and keep your law. This blessing has fallen to me that I have kept your precepts. So even at night when no one else is looking, even at night when his mind maybe is wandering, he's tired, exhausted from a long day.

The psalmist is remembering God's name and keeping God's law. So verse 56, I think, is likely an over-translation because the Hebrew is literally just, this has been to me because I have kept your precepts.

[8 : 51] And obviously that doesn't make that much sense, right? This has been to me because I have kept your precepts. So people kind of supply meaning. So some people think, well, this blessing it must be has been to me because I have kept your precepts.

But I think the NIV actually gets closer. It translates as this has been my practice. I obey your precepts. He's saying it's been to me. This is how I have been. I remember your precepts at night. I remember. I keep your word. And so that's why I observe your precepts. So remembrance leads to obedience, meditation of God's word and study of God's word, remembering of God's word.

And we make that our habit and that becomes our practice. And this section of the psalm is fulfilled in Christ like all the parts of scripture.

And because Christ is the perfect example of someone who suffered and in the face of affliction found hope in God's word and lived a life of perfect righteousness in the midst of wickedness.

[9 : 55] And he died on the cross as a result of his death on the cross was his affliction, his mockery by men, wicked men.

And yet through that, he produces the great righteousness that saves us all. And so we can look to him and follow in his footsteps. Then we can follow and obey Psalm 119 and its prescriptions.