

PSALM 119 – ANCHORED IN THE WORD

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Scripture: Psalm 119: 81-88

Today, we're going to look at the eight-verse segment from Psalm 119, that starts with the Hebrew letter *kaph*. We are going to be in vs. 81 to 88.

"Kaph

⁸¹ My soul languishes for Your salvation;
I wait for Your word.

⁸² My eyes fail *with longing* for Your word,
While I say, "When will You comfort me?"

⁸³ Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
I do not forget Your statutes.

⁸⁴ How many are the days of Your servant?
When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?

⁸⁵ The arrogant have dug pits for me,
Men who are not in accord with Your Law.

⁸⁶ All Your commandments are faithful;
They have persecuted me with a lie; help me!

⁸⁷ They almost destroyed me on earth,
But as for me, I did not forsake Your precepts.

⁸⁸ Revive me according to Your loving kindness,
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth."

I wonder if you have ever come to a point in your life where your strength feels completely drained, where you've prayed, you've waited, you've hoped, but nothing seems to change, and where your soul feels torn, worn out, stretched too thin for too long. Many of us know this place quite well. you're not just physically tired here, but you're spiritually exhausted. You've cried until no tears remain. You've waited for God to speak, but only the deafening silence has come back to you. You've longed for healing, justice, relief, but the waiting seems so endless.

And if that's where you are today, or if that's where potentially you could be someday, then these eight verses in Psalm 119 are for your consideration this morning. These verses are raw and honest.

The psalmist doesn't pretend that everything is okay. He tells God exactly how he feels. And yet, even in deep affliction, he does something extraordinary. Three things, actually.

- He remembers,
- He reaches for God's word, and
- He refuses to let go.

This passage won't give you neat answers. But it will give us a way to stand when everything around us seems to be falling apart. It shows us how to hold on when we feel like letting go. And it reminds us that God sees, God hears, and God is faithful.

So let's look at these eight verses.

HIS CRY:

My soul languishes for your salvation; To languish is to waste away or weaken due to prolonged distress. It means to feel drained, hopeless, and even forgotten. My soul languishes. The psalmist is waiting for salvation, for God to deliver him.

My eyes, he says, **fail with longing for Your word.** He's waited so long, his eyes grow dim with watching. He cries out, **When, O Lord, will You comfort me? I've become like a wineskin in the smoke.** Such a powerful image. A shrivelled, dried, blackened wineskin. Suffering has left him cracked and fragile. And yet he says, **I do not forget Your law.** In deep distress, he clings to God's word. He says, **how many are the days of Your servant?** O Lord, tell me, How many days should I go through this? When do the curtains come down on this phase of my life? How many? A cry of desperation from him.

And then he says, **The arrogant have dug pits for me.** Evil people, scheming, lawless, are after him. **They persecute me with a lie.** He's falsely accused and slandered. **They almost destroyed me,** he says. He's at the edge of collapse. But then he says, **I did not forsake Your precepts. Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, so I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.**

So what do we do when we find ourselves here? When we feel like the psalmist – worn out, eyes failing, heart aching, surrounded by trouble, alone? What do we do when our soul languishes? It's such a poignant word – to languish. And that the reviving hasn't yet come? what does he do? It says he clings to God's *hesed* (Hebrew) – His steadfast love. Clings to His steadfast love and asks to be revived. Not just to survive, but to one day testify about the faithfulness of God. One day, when this is all over, let me keep the testimony of Your mouth.

SO WHAT DOES HE DO?

1. He speaks honestly to God.

No pretense. Absolutely no pretense. His prayer is raw. "I'm weak, I'm tired, I'm waiting. Where are You?" Sometimes that's our prayer as well. in the midst of everything that's going on, we're crying out to the Lord, have been crying for a long, long time: Lord, where are you? My eyes are failing, I can't see You. Where are You in this?

I believe God welcomes this kind of honesty. He's okay with it. The psalms are guttural like that. they're raw. Where are You, Lord?

2. He holds on to God's word.

Even when nothing changes, he waits for the word. Even when persecuted, he doesn't forget God's statutes. God's word becomes his anchor. In the midst of all this suffering, he can still say: I do not forget Your law. I do not forget Your love. I did not forget Your precepts.

How is it possible to have that kind of an attitude in the midst of this kind of tribulation, persecution, aloneness, desperation? How is it possible to turn towards God's word? It seems like that's the last thing that we think about. As I was going through this, I stopped and thought to myself: What is it that allows him to do this? And I realized that he was already in a place where he knew the word. He was already immersed in the word before the problems came.

When you look at Psalm 119, it's filled with expressions of a heart and life immersed in God's word. And the psalmist has treasured, meditated on, and delighted in God's statutes for a long time. And that investment has become his anchor in the midst of affliction. In times of suffering, we don't reach for what we don't know or don't have. We cannot. We have to fall back on what we already have hidden in our hearts. That's a good time to pause and say:

That's what we need to do. Because at the time of calamity, when things are beginning to fall apart, if you don't know the word, the word cannot come to you, cannot be revived within you.

So, we place the word of God already in our hearts so that when times like this come, the word can get resurrected within us and come up and give us hope and be an anchor for our soul. As he suffers, the psalmist is not clinging to vague hope or wishful thinking. He's clinging to something that he already knows.

What does he know? That God is faithful, that His commandments are trustworthy, that His law brings life and revives the soul. This is why he can say in v. 83, "I do not forget Your statutes." I don't. I cannot forget Your law, Your word. Even when he feels like a shriveled wineskin in smoke, the affliction may be pressing in on him, the word is holding him together.

Is it holding you, beloved? Is the word holding you together? It's like a tree in drought, where the strength lies not in the visible leaves that we see. Its strength lies in the invisible roots that have gone down deep near streams of living water. The psalmist has planted himself in the word. And now when everything else is falling, it sustains him.

How does he hold on to God's word in the midst of these trying circumstances? He does so because he knew. Before the suffering came, he had the word in him. And now in the darkness, that word remembers him.

Psalm 107: 19-20 says, "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble. He sent out His word and healed them."

3. He remembers who God is.

God is loving. God is faithful. God is just. And God is near. Even in the pain, he speaks of God's lovingkindness. Even in the waiting, he still speaks of God's faithfulness. And even when persecuted, he trusts in God's justice. This remembering doesn't in any way erase the pain, but it brings fresh perspective. It offers strength. And it fuels hope within us.

It's not escape; it's endurance. It's not denial; it's a declaration. It's saying: I may be in the fire, but my faith is not consumed. I may be surrounded by lies, but I will still speak the truth of who God is. It's a declaration.

At this point, you probably agree with everything I've said till now. You're saying, "This is good. this is God's word. I agree 100%. I've seen the psalmist's example, and that's great." But the question always is this. What you agree in your head, in your mind, are you willing to apply in your life, in your situation? Are you willing to apply exactly what the psalmist applied in your situation, beloved, this morning? That's always where the rubber meets the road. That's the crux of the issue, of the sermon, even.

Maybe you're still asking questions. I still don't know how to do this. Maybe that's what you're saying. I don't know how to do this. Or maybe – I don't know why it would matter. It worked for him; I don't know how it will work for me. Or maybe you're saying: I don't understand what getting God's word into my heart would actually do in real life. The how, the why, the what. How do they work in my life? And that's fair. I think it's fair to ask those questions.

So let's look at it a little deeper. Let's see what happens when we're in the midst of distress and we're asked to remember God. Let me tell you how it helps, what it does, and why it matters. How does remembering God and His word in the midst of pain help?

1. It reorients your focus.

It realigns or maybe readjusts your focus. Why? Because when you're in pain, pain always narrows your vision. But remembering God widens it. Always. And then it brings order to the emotional chaos that could be in your mind. When you're in pain, emotional or spiritual, your world becomes very small. You only see the problem or the betrayal or the diagnosis, the silence or the stress. It's like walking in a dense fog. You can't see beyond your own next step.

But here's the thing. When you remember God, who He is, what He's done, and what He's promised, your perspective begins to shift. You are no longer locked into a tiny frame of present pain. You begin to see the bigger picture. How? Because you begin to remember. Remember what?

"He's faithful in every season." (Psalm 36)

"He's near to the broken-hearted." (Psalm 34)

"He works all things together for good." Paul tells the church at Rome.

"This suffering is not the end of the story." Paul tells the church in Corinth.

And suddenly, your pain is no longer your whole world. God lifts your eyes. Your vision widens. And you're able to see the eternal even in the midst of what is temporary.

Also, it deals with the emotional chaos. Suffering always feels like mental and emotional disarray. Thoughts race. Emotions swing from anger to despair. You don't know what to think about or even how to pray in those moments. But when you bring in the word of God, when you remember His truth, it acts like a plumb line in the middle of the storm. It steadies you.

God's word gives you language. Read the psalms, and you get bolder when you go to God and tell Him about your troubles after you've read the psalms. If the psalmist can say this, I can say that too.

It brings truth into confusion. And it anchors you in something that is unchanging. Think of it like this. When everything in your life is swirling, remembering God is like finding the North Star. Finding direction. It may not change the storm, but it will help you stay oriented emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

2. It restores connection with God and with people.

Why? Because pain isolates you. Especially deep, prolonged suffering often causes us to withdraw from people, from community, from God Himself. And we will feel no one understands what we are going through. I'm alone in this. No one really understands what I'm going through. It's too hard to explain. Even God seems far away. So, we pull back. we go silent. We sit alone with our questions and grief.

Here's the thing. Isolation begins to be a coping mechanism which might work temporarily, but is not good in the long run. It's dangerous, because when we isolate, the enemy often uses that time to whisper as loudly as he can. "You're alone. no one

really cares for you. Not even God is listening.” Then we begin to believe it. But remembering God reconnects us to His presence. When we intentionally call to mind the truth of who God is.

Who is God? God is Emmanuel. God with us. He’s the shepherd who will never not tend for His sheep. He will always feed His lambs. He’s the father who runs to meet His children. That’s who God is. That’s what you call into remembrance. We remind our souls that we are not abandoned.

“The Lord is near to all who call on Him in truth.” (Psalm 145)

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for He is with me, His rod and His staff, they will comfort me.” (Psalm 23)

So when we remember God’s presence, past and promised, our hearts begin to beat again with life. The lie of isolation is broken by the truth of Emmanuel.

Then, it activates a deep sense of being seen and loved. From a psychological perspective, the human soul is wired for connection. We all carry a deep longing to be seen, to be known, and to be loved. That’s innate in us. It comes true especially in our suffering. We need that. And when we remember God, we are reminded that His word tells us that He sees every tear. How many of you have cried in a lonely place where nobody can see, but the tears have flowed?

You know what the Bible says about that? “You have kept count of my tossings, put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?” (Psalm 56). God keeps note of those tears that you’ve shed. His Spirit reassures us that we are not forgotten. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.

Then His faithfulness in the past proves His love is not circumstantial. “This I recall to mind. Therefore, I have hope.” The Lord’s lovingkindness indeed never, never, never ceases. His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness. In the midst of a lament, there’s this ray of hope, the silver lining in all the dark clouds of devastation.

3. Remembering reminds us and provides us stability.

In shifting circumstances, God’s word is a firm foundation. Even in the unknown, you’re grounded in what is unchanging. Life can change in an instant. We all know that. A diagnosis, a job loss, a betrayal, or a phone call at midnight. Everything changes. Suddenly, everything that we thought was stable is gone. And in that chaos, fear rushes in.

But in those moments, the one thing that remains unchanged is God’s word. It hasn’t changed. It’s not shaken. It does not expire. It does not bend with circumstances or emotion. In fact, Jesus said, “Everyone then, who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. What happened? The rain fell. The floods came. The winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall. Why? Because it had been founded on the rock.

Isaiah reminds us, “The grass may wither, the flowers may fade, but the word of our God stands forever.” So when you build your trust on God’s word, you’re not at the

mercy of all those headlines that keep coming to your mind. You're not tossed by emotional waves. You're not defined by temporary outcomes. Because God is stable.

What about the pain?

The pain is still there because the pain is based on the situation and the circumstances. But hear this. Now you walk through it with someone beside you.

It's not denial. This is defiant faith. It says, "I'm in the fire, but I'm not consumed." God's love will continue to reach to where I am.

Corrie Ten Boom had this wonderful saying: "There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still." Wherever you are this morning, and if you're feeling like you're unloved, God's love is underneath you. Underneath are those everlasting arms.

So, as we look at these eight verses, there are two bookends. He starts with, "My soul languishes," – the opening bookend. And then the end – he says, "Revive me according to your lovingkindness." In the middle, he waits, he aches, he suffers, and he clings. He's attacked, but not abandoned. He's weary, but not without hope. He says, "I long for Your word. I trust in Your justice. I wait for Your comfort." And in the end, his cry becomes, "Revive me, not because I deserve it, but because You, God, are a loving God. That is Your character. That's who You are."

And that, beloved, is the faith that endures in the midst of trial, not a faith that never breaks, but one that refuses to let go. Not a faith that avoids pain, but one that stands firm in it.

And the psalmist's final desire is this: "Lord, when You do this to me, then I will keep Your testimony on my mouth. I'll be able to speak about what You have done when this is through. I'll reflect Your goodness to people around me. Even this pain, even this languishing will become a testimony of God's faithfulness.

And beloved, so may yours, wherever you are today. And maybe this message has been burning a hole in you, reminding you that you're not alone, that you're not going down the creek without a paddle, that God has got you. In the midst of what's happening, God has got you.

So speak honestly with Him. Hold fast to His word. Let His lovingkindness revive you. And may your life, like the psalmist's, one day declare: God was faithful to me in the waiting, in the pain, until the very end.

Three things:

- Remember God.
- Reach out for His hand.
- Refuse to let it go.

Amen.
