

The Impacts of God's Words

PSALM 119: 73-88

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Psalm 119:73-88 There are some very interesting facts about Psalm 119: It is the longest Psalm in the Psalter; the longest chapter in the Bible. This one Psalm is longer than many books of the Bible. Psalm 119 is broken into 22 stanzas of 8 verses each. In the original Hebrew each stanza begins with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet, beginning with *aleph* and closing with *taw*. For our purposes today we will look at two of the middle stanzas, *yodh* and *kaph*. Hear the Word of the Lord:

Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands. ⁷⁴ May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word. ⁷⁵ I know, LORD, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. ⁷⁶ May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant. ⁷⁷ Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight. ⁷⁸ May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts. ⁷⁹ May those who fear you turn to me, those who understand your statutes. ⁸⁰ May I wholeheartedly follow your decrees, that I may not be put to shame.

⁸¹ My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word. ⁸² My eyes fail, looking for your promise; I say, "When will you comfort me?" ⁸³ Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees. ⁸⁴ How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors? ⁸⁵ The arrogant dig pits to trap me, contrary to your law. ⁸⁶ All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for I am being persecuted without cause. ⁸⁷ They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. ⁸⁸ In your unfailing love preserve my life, that I may obey the statutes of your mouth.

On Apr. 18, 1521, Martin Luther was on trial because in his books he defended the supremacy of Scripture over all matters pertaining to life and godliness. No mere mortal, he argued, was above God's Words. Protestant Reformers like you and I hold this same view today, *especially* regarding salvation. We believe – without hesitation, without reserve – that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, by the Word of God alone, to the glory of God *alone*. The question you and I must wrestle with from Psalm 119, and truly from all of Scripture is this: Am I living out God's Word obediently each and every day? From verses 73-80 we will look

at the "Impact of God's Words in affliction" and from verses 81-88 we will consider the "Hope of God's Words."

The exact time of the writing of this Psalm is not known. It is believed to have been written during the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century B.C., or not long afterwards. And it is likely – I stress likely because we do not know for sure – but it is likely that Jesus had the Hebrew letter *yodh* in mind when He said in Matthew 5:18. **Until heaven & earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.** I suggest this because if you saw the letter *yodh* it resembles a comma.

Throughout Psalm 119 God's words are front and center; they are the focus of this Psalm. The Psalmist uses many terms to refer to what God has revealed in His Word that is the Holy Scriptures. In our 16 verses alone God's Words are referred to as **commandments, words, rules, the law, precepts, testimonies** and **statutes**. Defining those and applying them would take far too long, not to mention none of you came here for an English lesson; so let's jump into the passage.

We must not miss what the Psalmist gleans from what God has taught and continues to reach us: from verse 73 we learn that Almighty God fashioned us, that is purposefully and intentionally created us. And because we bear God's own image we are to ask God to help us remember, treasure and apply *His* teachings to our *daily* lives. Your faith and my faith, in this same God, is *not* just to be practiced between the hours of 10 and 11 on Sundays. NO! It is a faith that must impact not just this hour, but *every* hour of *every* day. It must impact how you drive, how you interact with those who serve you at both the drive-thru and sit-down restaurant and it must impact how you even refer to people in private conversations just to name a few.

In verse 74 we read that the Psalmist wants to be so transformed by God's Words that he wants others to rejoice and give glory to God whenever the Psalmist is present. He does not want to simply be a lucky charm where "good things" happen to those around him. This same idea is echoed again in verse 79 which says: **Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies.** The Psalmist does not want to be the focus, he does not want to receive any praise, he wants the Holy One to receive all the praise and glory. The Psalmist knows he is but a sign post pointing forward and beyond himself to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

And we see that the responses of the Psalmist are delight and joy in verse 77. Not only that, but in verse 80 we read that the Psalmist believed that through faith, study of God's Words, that he would be declared blameless – that is righteous - by Almighty God Himself! The Psalmist did not believe he had "arrived" when he wrote these words. He knew that there was much more work to do on his part *for the rest of his life*. His faith was not to stagnate, it was never to settle to know only what it knew and no more. He knew sanctification was a process, a long journey in the same direction,

toward holiness as God's Words called him to. But – he also knew this to be true, necessary, an obedient for *everyone* who claims the same God to be his or her God!

As mentioned before, though, the Psalmist is in midst of some affliction, some difficulty, struggle, pain or uncertainty. Throughout the Psalms "afflictions" often go unnamed purposefully so you, the reader/listener, could insert whatever it is you are dealing with at any time. And what are you and I, our families dealing with? We live in a culture of outrage don't we? Now, you may disagree with that approach or response, but so often we respond to outrage -- with outrage – but that is an un-Christian response! But we quickly forget that we think and act like those who influence us. If the radio and TV shows you watch and listen to push fear and are filled with complaints and outrage, guess what, you'll likely respond with complaints and outrage! What is the Christ-honoring way?

2 Corinthians 4 helps us with the answer. We read: **We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.** But thankfully, 2 Corinthians 4 goes on by saying: **[We] know that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus... into his presence... So we do not lose heart. For this *light* momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison... as we look *not* to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.** In short, we proceed forward in life by faith not only by what we see. Should we take what we see into consideration? Yes, absolutely! But we must also never forget that what we see is fully under God's control and that He will redeem it all upon Christ's return.

The point of afflictions for God's children is to prepare you for the day of glorification to come. God has a purpose for what has, is and will afflict you. Are you trying to discover those purposes, are you indifferent; are you throwing a tantrum??? Indifference and tantrum throwing are signs of hardened heart towards God at best and an unbelieving heart at worst! God promised to make Abraham and those who share his faith, a blessing to the nations; God still promises this!!! Are you trying to bless others with your skills and talents; has your faith become action?

God's Word reveals that one of the blessings to the faithful includes full glorification in fully restored bodies in God's holy presence. That's why the Psalmist saw his afflictions as God's faithfulness to him (verse 75). He saw God preparing him for the fullness of God's promises. These truths allowed the Psalmist to praise God for His steadfast love despite his circumstances. His circumstances did not change God's character or His promises. Therefore, the Psalmist lived – through trials and afflictions – with hope and

confidence in the unchangeable God, the God who cannot lie, who promised to also complete the good work He too began in your life!

If you are still able to endure afflictions while holding tightly to Jesus by faith, that is a fruit that only the Spirit can provide. That is the point of verses 81-88.

The Psalmist in these verses sees what's happening around him and to him and it sounds bleak. But Who and what the Psalmist knew by faith were immensely significant. What and Who you know will affect how you interpret circumstances. The fuller your knowledge and understanding of God's Word is, the more steadfast you will be through life's storms and trials.

The Psalmist knew that, he hoped in that, he banked on that, he fully depended on these truths. Do you actually depend on these truths like Psalmist? How can you tell; can others tell that in you?

What does obedience look like? Obedience is taking what afflicts you to God in prayer. Obedience is voicing your afflictions to others for their prayers. It is acknowledging your sinfulness to Almighty God; confessing your doubts and bent towards unbelief to God. Obedience is confessing your sins to God and those you have sinned against. And no, this list is *not* exhaustive. These say more about your faith and the God you *claim* to believe in!

Do you have reason to rejoice now? Absolutely, *if and only if* Jesus truly is your High Priest; if and only if Jesus truly is your sin-bearer; if and only if Jesus truly is your Shepherd; if and only if Jesus truly is your King. You can rejoice, you should rejoice because Jesus has given you eternal life through your repentance and faith. His promises never end -- and there is nothing the entire kingdom of darkness can do to you now or in eternity, to change these truths!!!

Are you known as one who rejoices in Jesus Christ? Do you live as a testimony to God's mercies? Are the fruits of the Spirit evident in your life? How much you rejoice, or exult as some older translations say, how much you exult in the blessings and mercies of God says much about you, about your faith, about the God you serve. Be biblical *always*, be thoughtful, be thankful and rejoice in God, His promises, and His Words. He will deliver on all His promises, and *when He does*, I repeat when He does deliver on His promises as they were fully intended, your responsibility will be praise in His presence forevermore.