

GOD'S MERCIES AND HIS WORD

Psalm 119:41-48

Intro: We continue to see in this sixth stanza that the Psalmist is still praying, and that his prayer to God has to do exclusively with the Word, just as in the stanzas which lead up to this one.

It is always instructive for us to place our prayers along side of the prayers of Scripture, to see how they compare. The prayers of Scripture are recorded in the Word for many reasons, but that is certainly one of them, that we might see if we are praying about the same things that the Lord's people in the Old and New Testaments prayed about. Psalm 119 is certainly the longest prayer in Scripture, and it all has to do with the Word of God. The psalmist, whoever he was, lived on the Word. He loved the Word. His life was obviously devoted to obedience to the Word, but at the same time he expressed in many ways his dependence upon the Word. And in this stanza we see his desire to pass the Word on to others, even as we see in verse 46, to kings. And yet it was a battle. The Word of God was not any more popular with people of the world then than it is now. But he wanted others to know about the Word, knowing that it would bring reproach upon himself.

A true child of God will recognize how much he needs the Word, but the more he loves it, the greater will be his burden to pass it on to others. In those days you couldn't buy a Bible to give it to a friend, it primarily had to be passed on by word of mouth. They didn't have all that we have, but it would seem that many of them, those who really loved the Lord, made better use of it than we do today. But let us note in this stanza how the psalmist expressed his need and his desire to the Lord as he considered how to get the Word of God to others. It is almost like he was responding to what Paul wrote to Timothy about the Word. Cf. 2 Tim. 4:1 ff. The task facing Israel in the OT was the same as the task we have today. We are going to be learning more about that as we come to some later chapters in Isaiah. See, for example, Isa. 43:10-12:

10 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses,

saith the LORD, that I am God.

See also Isa. 44:8:

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Place along side of these verses a NT verse which is familiar to most of us: Acts 1:8:

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Now we ought to know from Scripture that our primary, basic witness is our life. If we are not living what we preach, then we have no witness at all. But the witness of our lives must be followed up with the witness of our mouths. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15.

The stanza before us tonight emphasizes both, and even indicates that the more reality that there is in our fellowship with the Lord through His Word, the greater will be our desire to bear verbal witness concerning God and His Word.

Now let us see how the psalmist approached this subject. He prayed first of all concerning:

I. THE MERCIES OF THE LORD (Psa. 119:41-42).

What are “the mercies” of the Lord? And why does the psalmist link those mercies with the salvation that he had received from the Lord?

“Mercies” are special blessings from the Lord. Salvation is a bundle of blessings that the Father has given to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are told what they are, as the Psalmist recognizes, “according to the Word. They are revealed in the Word. They are promises which are recorded in the Word. What the Psalmist meant here was that he knew that he was not sufficient in himself for the task that he felt compelled to do in his heart. And so he was confessing his dependence upon the Lord to supply out of salvation all that he would need to fulfill His calling to pass the Word along to others.

This is confirmed by verse 2. It is only by trusting in God’s work in us

that we will have the strength and the courage to fulfill our calling.

It is interesting that the psalmist used the word “reproacheth” here. He knew that people were not looking for the Lord. He knew that people did not want the message that he had to give. In fact, he knew that people would scorn him, that he would lose friends. You will remember that the Lord Jesus told His disciples that they could expect the same kind of a reception from the world that He had gotten. We all sense this, and this is what makes us hesitant about talking to others about salvation. But the psalmist expressed the fact that with the mercies of the Lord, trusting in the promises of the Lord, he would have the spiritual resources to face whatever he had to face in witnessing to those, even those Israelites, who did not know the Lord.

Notice how he expressed his faith: “For I trust in Thy Word.” The psalmist believed in the reality of the promises of God, and that God was sufficient to enable him to be faithful. He knew that it was his responsibility before God to witness; it was up to the Lord to determine when and where the Word would produce fruit unto eternal life. Cf. Isa. 55:10-11, “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth that thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth ... “

II. THE SECOND REQUEST (Psa. 119:43).

What the Psalmist was asking for was boldness of speech – not brashness, but fearlessness. Cf. Acts 4:23-31.

John Calvin expressed the meaning of this verse in his own words like this:

Lord, support not only my heart by faith, lest I be overwhelmed with temptation, but grant me also freedom of speech, that I may fearlessly sound forth thy praises among me (Vol. VI, p. 432).

Even the prophets of the OT and the apostles of the NT felt that fear that we feel when it comes to speaking to others about the Savior. But they all knew that the Lord by His mercies could overcome that fear, and grant them the boldness that they needed. Solomon said in Prov. 28:1 that “the righteous are as bold as a lion.” Boldness enables us to put our fears aside, and do what God has commanded us to do because we are trusting Him. That is what makes the psalmist’s words in verse 42 so important:

“I trust in Thy Word.”

Then we see:

III. THE PSALMIST’S PROMISE (Psa. 119:44).

Please note that the Psalmist did not make this promise at the first of this stanza. It was only after he had offered the two requests that we have already considered. It was like he was saying, “By Your grace and with Your blessing, “so shall I keep Thy law continually for ever and ever.”

It was this that made Joseph faithful to the Lord even in a foreign land. It was this that made Daniel and his friends stand faithfully for the Lord also in a foreign land. This is what Peter had to learn, and which he did learn, as we follow his ministry after his terrible failure when he denied that he even knew the Lord. This is what made Job say, “Thou He slay me, yet will I trust Him”(Job 13:15).

Then notice:

IV. FIVE ANTICIPATED RESULTS (Psa. 119:45-48).

A. “I will walk at liberty” (v. 45).

Apart from the Lord, we are all in bondage to our fears. But trusting Him and His mercies, we are set free. “At liberty” lit. means *in a wide place*. He will be “at ease” (Calvin, VI, 434).

B. “I will speak of Thy testimonies before kings . . .” (v. 46).

David did this before Saul. Nehemiah did this. Joseph and Daniel did this. Moses did this. Paul did this. Preeminently our Lord did this. It is amazing to see how the Lord has opened doors to the kings of the earth.

Derek Kidner said the Word of God as His testimonies means that he would not hesitate to speak before the greatest of human authorities about the greatest authority of all – the outspokenness of Scripture. Note the boldness of the Apostle Paul as he preached the Gospel to the men in Athens. Cf. Acts 17:22-34.

C. “I will delight myself in Thy commandments” (v. 47).

This word “delight” carries with it the idea of loving to look upon the commandments of the Lord. Obedience to one commandment, with its accompanying blessing, cause us to look upon all of God’s commandments with great joy, and great love, instead of fear. Remember that “the commandments” present to us the authority of the Word. The more we obey the Lord, the more we delight in submitting to God’s authority over us.

**D. “My hand also will I lift up unto Thy commandments”
(v. 48a).**

The lifting up of the hands is an expression of prayer, holding out the hands to receive from the Lord, in this case, His commandments. But it can also be taken as a pledge on the psalmist’s part that he will obey God’s commandments which he had learned to love.

E. “I will meditate in Thy statutes” (v. 48b).

To meditate has been described as reading the Scriptures very carefully, word for word, almost letter for letter, so as not to miss a thing. The Lord’s statutes speak of the permanent, unchanging character of the Word of God. To meditate is to ponder. The verb gives the idea about even talking to yourself about the Word, even aloud.

Concl: What a great lesson we have here about our personal fellowship with the Lord, and our need to depend solely upon him. But it also has to be one of the greatest passages in the OT having to do with our witness to the world about the Gospel. We have the Word, and we love the Word. We love to read it. Hopefully we love to obey it. But if the Word means all of this to us, we will also find ourselves burdened to tell others about the Lord and His saving grace. May our study of these verses tonight be used by the Lord to stir our hearts toward people who are without Christ.