

**COMFORT IN AFFLICTION**

Psalm 119:49-56

**Intro:** The Word of God has many uses, many purposes. As I have said many times, the Bible is not only a revelation from God, but it is a revelation of God. God has seen fit to reveal Himself most fully in the Scriptures, and especially in what the Scriptures tell us about Christ. Anyone who wants to know God and the truth about Him, must come to the Bible. There is no other book like it. It is in the Bible that we learn that there are Three Persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is the only book that gives us the true history of man. We learn there that man was created by God along with everything else, and that he was created in the image and likeness of God. The Bible gives us the only reliable description of man that there is. We look at the world and see what happened to bring God's perfect creation to the condition that it is in today. The cause is sin, man's disobedience of God, and what that disobedience did to man. Man's sin alienated him from God. The Bible tells us that man did not, and does not, seek God, but rather that God is the One Who seeks us. The Bible tells us that God sent His Son into the world to provide salvation for sinners. He did this by dying on the Cross to atone for the sins of all who would ever be saved. The Bible tells us about salvation, and the change that is made in the hearts of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us that we are "born again ... by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). It is by the Bible that we grow as Christians (see 1 Pet. 2:2-3). The Bible described in great detail how Christians are to live, that we are saved by faith and that we live by faith. It tells us what Christians believe. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17. Christians get their guidance from the Word. Christians are sanctified by the Word (John 17:17). The Bible is to the Christian life what food and drink and exercise are to our physical life. The Bible gives us our hope for the future, not only that we will be with the Lord, but that we will be like the Lord. The Bible is our source of true wisdom. I always look forward each month to reading the book of Proverbs because that book was written to make us wise.

But one of the chief purposes of the Bible is to give us comfort, and this is the theme of this seventh stanza of Psalm 119. The word *comfort* is used

twice in this stanza. In verse 50 it is a noun; in verse 52 it is a verb. It means that which brings us consolation, encouragement, peace, in the midst of our afflictions. Afflictions speaks of that which troubles us, or depresses us. We all would like to have trouble-free lives, but there is no such thing in this world, especially when men turn away from God and His Word. But the Psalmist was saying that when afflictions come his way, when he is suffering or persecuted or just plain discouraged with a feeling of hopelessness, and perhaps despair, when the problems of life become greater than he can handle, he has found comfort, encouragement, and strength in the Word of God. He said this in verse 50, and again in verse 52.

When some people get overwhelmed with life, they turn to drink, or to drugs. Some just become morbid and look upon life as a problem which they cannot handle. The man who recently went over Niagra Falls has admitted that he was actually trying to commit suicide. The Lord knows what life is like in a sinful world, and that is one reason that He is called “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulations ... “ (2 Cor. 1:3-4). But the only way we can learn that great truth is in the Bible, the Word of God.

When Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he had this to say about comfort and the Bible:

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

God never intended for us to live without Him, without depending upon Him, and so He has given us His Word where we are to find our comfort in our afflictions.

And so as the Psalmist began this stanza he called upon the Lord, as His servant, to “remember the Word ... upon which” God “had caused” him “to hope.” Now we need to remember that when the Psalmist called the Scriptures “the Word,” this is the most general term of all that we find in Psalm 119 and that it includes God’s Word in any form, whether promises or commandments or simply the great doctrines of Scripture.

Now we know, don’t we, that God is not going to forget anything that He has given us in His Word. But sometimes it seems to us like He has forgotten at least some of it, or He at least has forgotten us and what we are going through. But God doesn’t forget us either. He knows where we are

at every moment of every day. He knows the inward trials that we may be going through that we have not mentioned to anybody. There is not a situation that we are in but what He is sufficient to help us in it and even through it. But it seems that the psalmist was calling upon the Lord to “remember” because in saying this the psalmist was saying in so many words *that he was acquainted with the Word, acquainted with what God had revealed about Himself, and especially that he knew the promises that God had not only given, but had placed in His Word as a permanent record of Who He is, and what He had promised to do for His people in their afflictions.* And though the Word was written directly to him, yet the Psalmist knew that as a servant of the Lord, it was all for him! And when he said that it was the Word “upon which Thou hast me to hope,” he was saying that the Lord had placed a conviction in his heart that those promises, those great truths about God in Scripture, were absolutely true!

Secondly, notice in verse 2 that the psalmist was speaking about past experiences. He had found comfort in the Scriptures that he could not find in any other place. He had gone in times of trouble to the Lord through the Word, and he had been quickened. This means that the Word had revived him. It had strengthened him. There were times when he was down, and almost out, but the Word was to his soul like a blood transfusion would be to his body. Haven't you experienced that?

I went into our bedroom the other night. Lucille was already in bed, but she was propped up by her pillow, and she had her Bible in her hand, and I knew she had been reading it. I asked her what she was reading, and she said that she had been reading selected passages, going from Scripture to Scripture, those of her own choosing. Why? Because she was looking for the quickening power of the Word.

There have been many times I have done that too. And I am sure most of you are not strangers to such a practice. We do that with verses we have memorized, don't we? We can be driving down the street, weighed down with problems, reviewing in our minds verses we have committed to memory to find some of that quickening power of the Word. Cf. Heb. 4:12, “For the Word is quick, and powerful, and sharper ... “

In verse 51 we see a situation in which, if not the cause of our affliction, it surely is an aggravation of some affliction through which we are passing through. I have heard it said that prayer and faith are only for weaklings, that it is weak people are the ones who need God. I am willing to agree

with that. The psalmist calls his oppressors “the proud.” What is the chief characteristic of a proud person? It is that he is self-sufficient. He can handle his problems. He doesn’t need to pray. He doesn’t need God. And he laughs at you because you read the Bible and believe that it is true. But the psalmist is so sure that God can and will help him that he refuses to do anything but trust the Lord and to do what the Word tells him to do with his afflictions. For example, 1 Peter 5:7.

In verse 52 the psalmist has been reflecting upon what he has learned from the Word, and how the Lord’s people in the past have committed themselves and their troubles to the Lord, and have found the Lord faithful. Read the story of Noah and Abraham and Jacob and Joseph, and Moses and on right through the Bible, both the OT and the NT, and let your heart dwell on the faithfulness of God, and the rightness of the ways of the Lord. And he drew comfort from all of this truth for himself. What a blessing this can be to us! Would Abraham discourage us from trusting the Lord? Or would Joseph? Or would Isaiah? Or would Jeremiah with all that he suffered? They all would tell us that trusting God is the only way to live.

Another thing contributed to the psalmist’s comfort in a strange way. You see this in verse 53. It was in seeing in Scripture and in daily life, what happens to those who have forsaken the law of God. He called it “horror”! The word expresses something like the blast of a terribly hot wind so that a person can hardly breathe. It frightened him. It shocked him. And it ought to shock us because we see people like this all around us, even in those who are facing death. Oh, the unspeakable tragedy that awaits those who have never had any time for the Lord or His Word. We often say that we don’t know what people do who are not trusting the Lord as they go through the trials of life. And then they die the same way.

How different it is for the psalmist as he brings this stanza to a close.

In verse 54 we see him singing, singing the Word, or here, singing the statutes of the Lord – declaring the permanent nature of the Word of God. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God’s word will not pass away. The promises are secure, and we can trust completely in the faithfulness of God, faithful to His Word.

In verse 55 the psalmist talks about the night. Everything seems to be worse at night. Cf. Psa. 130:6. The psalmist found out how to conquer

the night, and that was by remembering the Name of the Lord. Cf. Isa. 26:3-4. Throughout his affliction there was one thing the Psalmist continued to do: he continued to keep the law of the Lord, and that is why he found comfort.

Afflictions test our obedience. They test our faith. But let us remember 1 Cor. 10:13, and rest on the faithfulness of God.

**Concl:** In going through a stanza like this, especially when we are going through what the psalmist was experiencing, it is good for us to do what he did. Get your Bible out and read. Read verses you know that will bring comfort to your needy heart. Such as Rom. 8:28; Eph. 3:20-21; Heb. 13:5-6.

To prepare for times of affliction which come to all of us, we need to be walking with the Lord every day, learning to trust Him, being careful that we are obeying Him, and filling our minds and hearts with His precious, unchanging Word. Learn the great stories of Abraham and Joseph and Daniel and Ruth and many, many others. There is not a one who would in any way discourage you and me from trusting the Lord with all our hearts. So then, let us trust Him because He will not fail us.