

A PRAYER FOR THE LORD'S QUICKENING

Psalm 119:153-160

Intro: The word “quicken” is prominent in this stanza. In the whole Psalm it is used a total of sixteen times. It is translated “live” in verses 17, 77, 116, 144, but in all of the other verses our translators have used the word “quicken.” Sometimes it is translated *recover*, or *restore*, or *revive*, or *repair*. Those are easy words to remember. But, however it is translated, this word indicates that the psalmist has some spiritual needs, that at the moment he is not as well of spiritually as he used to be.

There is no indication in this Psalm that the psalmist was in rebellion against God, or that he was living in some sin which he was not willing to give up. If that were the case, we could understand his threefold cry in this Psalm for the quickening power of God in his life. No, he is not living in sin, but he has been worn down by the way his enemies have afflicted him. He feels exhausted by the conflict, and probably not a little discouraged! That is the way trials often affect us. We get tired of the battle.

But what is probably the greatest danger in our trials is that we stop reading the Word.

If this were a present day situation, he would be looking for a psychologist, or a psychiatrist, or some counselor to get him out of his depression. There is nothing wrong with seeking the advice of some mature child of God. However, he would not seek help from anyone who does not know the Lord. The psalmist shows here that the people of God don't handle their problems that way. Instead he goes to the Lord and to the Word of the Lord.

We have been learning from the Lord's teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, that the Lord knows that things that we have need of even before we ask Him. The Lord knows all things, and that was just as true in OT times as in NT times. But that does not mean that we cannot go to the Lord, and approach Him as though He was totally ignorant of the circumstances that we are facing. In fact, sometimes it seems like the Lord does not know, or does not care, or is too busy with more important matters than to pay attention to what is going on in our lives. We know that such things cannot be true with God, but I am talking about the way it appears to us on many occasions. So when the psalmist said, “Consider,”

He was asking the Lord to pay particular attention to his affliction at that time. The language expresses the urgency which the psalmist feels. He not only wants the Lord to see what is going on, but he wants deliverance. "Deliver me." And the reason that he felt that he could address the Lord in such a commanding way was because he was not forgetting the "law" of the Lord. That is, instead of living in disobedience, he was seeking to be obedient to the commands of Scripture.

In verse 154 when he asks the Lord to "plead" his cause, he was asking the Lord to stand between him and his enemy. He is calling upon the Lord to take his side, and deliver him. This word "deliver" is different from the word he used in the preceding verse. This verse carries with it the idea of a kinsman redeemer.

But one thing about this stanza, which we have seen before (and this is so very important), he asked the Lord not only to do something *for him*, but he asked Him to do something *in him*: "quicken me." And this was to be "according to Thy Word." Undoubtedly the psalmist was thinking of some of the promises of God, or of ways in which God had helped others in the past. He needed a revival in his soul. He needed to be restored in his fellowship with the Lord.

It is important also to see how simple and clear the psalmist was in his words to the Lord. He did not have a lot to say, but he made himself very clear so that anyone could really understand what he wanted the Lord to do. And it was the Word which gave him hope that the Lord would hear and answer him.

In verse 155 the psalmist took courage when he looked at "the wicked," which was his way of describing his enemy. The word "salvation" here may be used here of a deliverance in this particular situation. The wicked do not care about God, nor about His Word. They believe that it is folly to expect any help from the Lord. They do not call upon the Lord. Nor do they feel that it helps anyone else to call upon Him. They pay no attention either to God or His Word. In verse 156 when the psalmist acknowledged that the Lord's tender mercies were great, he not only meant that they were great in number, but even more that they are sufficient. They were adequate for all of his needs. He did not need the Lord *plus* others, but the Lord alone was sufficient for his need. And so again he asks for the Lord to quicken him, to revive him, to repair what was broken, by the judgments of His Word.

In referring to the judgments of the Lord he meant that he was not telling the Lord *what to do*, or *when to do it*, but he was leaving all of that up to the Lord.

All of that was in anticipation of what he said in verse 157. He was greatly outnumbered by his enemies. Humanly speaking he did not stand a chance against them. He was like the children of Israel were when they reached the Red Sea. They were in desperate straits because of the mighty Egyptian army that was coming after them. But we know that time and time again God has demonstrated that regardless of greatly His people are outnumbered, the Lord alone was all they needed. He is the all-sufficient One.

While we know that all that we have seen thus far, is true. Yet verse 158 would take us completely by surprise if we had not seen the same attitude expressed before. See verse 136. Here in verse 158 he was thinking about how his enemies had violated the Word of God time and time again, and it grieved him. It actually made him sick, sick at heart, sad. He felt extremely sorry for them because he knew what was ahead of all those who go through life refusing to listen to the Word of God. We can see evidence in this statement that the Lord had already begun a quickening in the heart of the psalmist. It is not natural when people are out to harm us, and perhaps kill us, to have feelings of compassion toward them. What they do, they do in ignorance. Nevertheless, this does not lessen their guilt.

Repeating the word that he had used in verse 153, the psalmist here asks the Lord to “consider” something else. Here it is how much he loves the precepts of the Lord. This means that he had paid attention to the details of what the Lord had asked all of His people to do, not just outward obedience, but obedience from the heart, without overlooking any part of God’s Word.

Again in “lovingkindness” we come to the Hebrew word *chesed*. And this is an interesting point. With all that the psalmist had said about his love for the Word and his desire to please the Lord, we might think that the psalmist was saying that God was obligated to help him. But this word *chesed*, “lovingkindness, mercy, means that he felt totally unworthy to come before the Lord, and that his claim upon God was not to be found in anything in himself, but in what was for him in God, the Lord. Even we come to the throne of grace, not to parade all of the merits we think

we have with God, but we come to obtain “mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” We please God by our obedience, especially when it comes from our hearts, but we do not make God our debtor. We need to humble ourselves before Him, and let Him deal with us according to His holy will.

In verse 160 we see how the psalmist honors the Lord by honoring His Word. In this one verse he went back to the beginning of the Word, and reached into the timeless eternity to come, and declared that the Word is not only true, dependable, but also righteous. And this applies to the trials that we go through as well as any other part of our lives. This verse needs to be added to all of the other verses in Scripture which praise the Word of God. When the Psalmist spoke of the beginning, and then the ending, it was just another way of saying, and Derek Kidner suggested, that every part in between is true and it is righteous. It might be true, but not necessarily righteous, but without hesitation we can say that the Word from beginning to end, and all in between, is both true and righteous. And the person who does not abide by it is the greatest of fools.