

The Comforted Heart

Psalm 119:49-56

Introduction

Introductory Comments and Prayer

Contextualization

- Connection
 - **א** (1-8) *The Heart Condition*: There is a life of blessing for those whose hearts are shaped by obedience to the word of God.
 - **ב** (9-16) *The Guarded Heart*: Treasuring the word of God in your heart will keep you from sin.
 - **ג** (17-24) *The Consumed Heart*: Believers should be characterized by a prayerful, consuming desire to know God's word.
 - **ד** (25-32) *The Enlarged Heart*: The word of God, personified in Jesus Christ, brings vitality to believers, enabling them to keep God's commandments.
 - **ה** (33-40) *The Dependent Heart*: Believers are ultimately dependent on God to teach them and change their hearts so they can live righteous lives for God's glory.
 - **ו** (41-48) *The Confident Heart*: Loving God's word should lead us to confident public witness, both in word and deed.

Connection to Our Passage

- **ז** (49-56) *The Comforted Heart*: **When obeying God's word leads to affliction in a wicked world, believers should take comfort in the hope found in God's word.**

When we feel all alone in a hostile world, we remember the promises of God. We can cry out to Him for salvation, and we can rest in the promised hope found in God's word. If nothing else, obeying the word of God is—or ought to be—enough for us.

Connection to Succeeding Passage

- **ח** (57-64) Believers must seek God's grace to be satisfied with God and keeping His word, strengthened by knowing that they are not alone in doing so; they are surrounded by companions and the steadfast love of God.

- Orientation

- [Mat 5:10-12 ESV] Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
- [2Co 4:16-18 ESV] So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 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. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
- [Rom 12:12 ESV] Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Body

I. The Comfort that God's Word Brings to His Servants

A. The Premise (56)

- Perhaps not a good translation; no other translation agrees with it. The Hebrew contains merely a relative reference without a noun: "This has become to me..."
- Probably refers to the content of the stanza: the derision and affliction he experiences, and the hopeful comfort he feels, is because he knows and keeps God's precepts.
- NASB: This has become mine, that I observe your precepts.
- KJV: This I had, because I kept thy precepts.
- => Let them go right on sinning and speaking against me; my lot in life is to obey, come what may.

B. God's servants experience affliction for their obedience to God's word (50-53).

1. External Persecution (51)

2. Internal Provocation (53)

(A) **Illustration:** Paul in the city of Athens was provoked at a city full of idols

3. **Illustration:** Paul in 2 Cor. 11 (recounts external persecution and internal daily pressure due to anxiety for the churches)

4. **Application:** When was the last time you were derided for publicly standing on God's truth?

Does wickedness provoke you deep to the core? Not because they have divergent political views or because they don't think you are right, but because it's contrary to God's righteousness?

C. God's servants experience comfort through God's word (49-50, 52, 54).

1. By Petitioning God for His Promises (49-50)

(A) Remember

- (1) A fairly common word in the OT, but beautiful in its usage; it is often used in connection with God's remembrance of his promises to specific people or his covenant with his people; it is also used of men by way of command to remember covenant laws.
- (2) God remembered Noah and caused waters to subside (Gen. 8:1)
- (3) Remembered the covenant with Noah by the rainbow (Gen. 9:15-16)
- (4) God remembered Abraham by removing Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:29)
- (5) God remembered Rachel, to open her womb (Gen. 30:22)
- (6) God heard the cries and remembered his people in Egypt (Ex. 2:24; 6:5)
- (7) Israel was to remember the deliverance from Egypt by the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 13:3)
- (8) Israel was to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8)
- (9) God remembered Hannah in her barrenness (1 Sam. 1:19)
- (10) What is man, that you are mindful of him? (Ps. 8:4)
- (11) "I will not remember your sins" (Isa 43:25)

(B) Hope: to wait, hope, expect

Tit 2:11-13 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

- (C) “Gives me life”: to live, whether literally or figuratively: to sustain life, live prosperously, live for ever; restoration from sickness, from discouragement, from faintness, from death
- 2. By Remembering God’s Ways (52)
Getting comfort by remembering God’s rules seems strange, but it also brings to mind the covenant relationship behind those rules. His ways are truly the best way to live!
- 3. By Praising God through His Word (54)

II. The Contrast between the Wicked and God’s Servants

A. The Wicked...

- 1. Forsake God’s Law (53)
- 2. Deride God’s Servants for Keeping God’s Law (51)
Luk 6:26 Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

B. God’s Servants...

- 1. Hope in God’s Word (49)
- 2. Find Comfort in God’s Word (50, 52)
- 3. Obey God’s Word (51, 55)
- 4. Are Provoked by Evil and Evildoers (53)
- 5. Praise God (54)
- 6. Have an Ongoing Relationship with God (55)
- 7. Receive Life from God (50)

C. The Contrast

- 1. The wicked have no help.
They cannot help themselves. That’s all they know how to do. Do you know people like that? Do you pity people like that?
- 2. The wicked have no hope.
Where is their hope? Where is their comfort? What riles and impassions them, what stirs them to action? What motivates them to strive for all that is good and beautiful and true? What do they worship? Whence their songs? Most tragically, where do they stand in relationship to God? Will they experience and inherit life?

III. The Constancy of Devotion of God’s Servants

A. In Spite of Opposition (51)

Constancy: No matter what they say or do

B. Fueled by Praise (54)

Constancy: in the house of my sojourning

C. Inspired by God’s Character (55)

- 1. Your name – the name stands for the person and conjures mental and emotional responses
- 2. Constancy: In the night – used both literally and figuratively

Conclusion

Synopsis

This righteous Psalmist is afflicted—persecuted, mocked, scorned, derided—by the wicked for living and speaking God’s truth. He cries out, remembering the promise of God’s

salvation, his hope. He is angry with the wicked. He loves God and God's word so much that he is stirred to anger by the insolent. This keeps him awake at night. And, at the same time, he finds his comfort in the word of God and in the God of the word, even in the night, whether that's literal or metaphorical. He understands that it is his lot to keep God's word, even though it means he must endure derision and emotional anguish. Yet he continues steadfast.

This servant of God is totally invested – emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. His relationship to God is not some cursory acquaintance or nominal relationship. He is not sustained by cursory, casual, careless handling of God's word. This is not once-a-week-for-an-hour worship. While he uses music as a powerful means of worship, he is not exclusively moved or sustained by songs, as if music is sufficient to direct his walk with God. His whole life is tied up in the truthfulness of this word. His hope is vested here. His perspective is shaped by it. He views the world from an eternal perspective. He believes that worldly opposition is worth it in the end because of God's promise; whatever he must endure now is of no consequence, because God's word—knowing it, and knowing God through it—brings true life, both temporally and eternally. This is why he can continue on, living and speaking in accordance with God's word, enduring reproach (and, we might add, the natural suffering and consequences of fallen creation). His whole way of life is tied to his relationship with God as governed by God's word. He clings to the promise of salvation, this hope of life.

He is a believer – in God and in the word of God. By extension, it is safe to understand the word of God as personified in the person of Jesus Christ. He is a Christian. This is Christianity summarized in a poetic prayer. Christianity is knowing, loving, obeying, serving, praising, and proclaiming God—the one, true, living God as revealed in the written and incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, as affirmed by the Holy Spirit to us and through us—in all aspects of our lives, no matter what the wicked world may say or do as a result.

Closing Appeals

1. The Importance of Remembrance
2. The Importance of Self-Examination
 - To those here who claim the name of Christ, is that portrait more like looking in a mirror or looking at a portrait of a person in an encyclopedia of *Who's Who in the Christian Hall of Fame*?
 - These are characteristics of one in relationship to God. Does this describe you? If not, are you truly a servant of God?
 - We all know that these are things we *should* be about....
 - I'm not here to heap guilt or condemnation on anyone. My job is not to give you more *should's* or *to-do's*. I don't want to pile more on you because I know that...
 - If you're anything like me, all of this points me toward the path of despair. When I'm really honest, I do not live up to this. Take any aspect or application I've given today, and you would be looking at a failing hypocrite. I don't...
 - If you don't either, I've got good news for you, news that will bring rest, relief, comfort, encouragement, joy, and hope.

Gospel Presentation – Point everyone to Jesus!

Clenching Element

Tim Keller: In Jesus Christ, God experienced the greatest depths of pain. Therefore, though Christianity does not provide the reason for each experience of pain, it provides deep resources for actually facing suffering with hope and courage rather than bitterness and despair.

Charles Spurgeon: “Hope sees a crown in reserve, mansions in readiness, and Jesus himself preparing a place for us, and by the rapturous sight she sustains the soul under the sorrows of the hour.”

Closing Prayer and Benedictions

[Rom 15:13 ESV] May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

[2Th 2:16-17 ESV] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.