Psalm 119 (Part 1): 1-88 • Your Word is a Lamp unto my Feet

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Psalm chapter 119, you might find interesting to learn, is arranged in an acrostic pattern. What that means is that there are, you'll notice in your Bible— and I guess, I don't know, some Bibles don't do this, but most Bibles arrange this chapter into stanzas. You can see in there that there's a stanza of 8 verses, followed by another stanza of 8 verses, and there are 22 of them totaled because there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza begins with a different successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Not only that, but every verse in the stanza begins with that letter that that stanza begins with. It's just a form of poetry, and that's the way they put it together.

This chapter focuses primarily on my favorite subject, which is the Word of God. It focuses on the Scripture, and it uses the—it speaks of the Word over and over again, but uses different words to describe the Word, if I can say it that way. You and I have those, too. We have the Word, and we have Scripture, and so on and so forth, but there are actually 8 different words that are used to describe the Word in this chapter. I want to put them up on the screen for you so you can see them.

- Law
- Word *(dabar)*
- Judgments
- Testimonies
- Commandments
- Statutes
- Precepts
- Word *(imrah)*

They are: Law— and then there's actually two references of the Word. Now, first of all, the law is used 25 times, and, of course, refers to the Torah. The first reference to *word* is the Hebrew word, dabar (דָּבָר). It's used 24 times. The idea behind this is the spoken word – God's spoken Word to man.

And then you're going to see the word, Judgments. That's going to occur 23 times. It's used because God's Word is the judge of our words, the judge of our

deeds. The Word of God is always the judge over our lives. And we never judge the Word; the Word always judges us.

Then the next word that's going to be used 23 times is the word, Testimonies. That word is related to the word for witness. Just like in a trial, you give testimony or a witness gives testimony. And of course, the witness here is God's truth and wisdom found in His Word.

Next, you're going to see the word, Commandments, which is used 22 times. The word is just what you would think: it's a commandment – something that God commands, and it implies His right to command.

Next, you'll see the word, Statutes, which we don't use a lot in our regular vocabulary. You see it used in legal sort of proceedings. But the word, statutes, occurs 21 times in Psalm 119, and it speaks of the authority of the written Word.

Then we're going to hear the word, Precepts, which is used 21 times. That speaks of very specific instructions, like God giving you a specific directive. Like, go do this, would be a precept.

And then we finally come to also the word, Word, which is a different Greek word in this case. It's the Greek word, imrah (אִמְרָה). It's used 19 times, and it is similar to the other usage that we saw earlier, but this has more of a general application, and it speaks of anything God has spoken or commanded or promised. So, it's a general word for the Word.

Before we dig in, one quick story that I want to share with you. Some of you may be familiar with a Bible commentary by Matthew Henry. It's so old now. It's a part of the public domain, and I think you can find it online for free. If you were to get on your computer and just say Matthew Henry commentary, it'll all come up. He has a concise commentary, and then he has more of a full—and man, I tell you, that man was verbose. He could really talk and it's very in-depth.

Anyway, here's what's interesting about Matthew Henry's commentary— by the way, he lived and wrote his commentary during the 18th century, and he was introduced to this chapter, Psalm 119, when he was a little boy, because his father challenged Matthew and his siblings to take one verse a day out of Psalm 119 to read it and meditate on it for the day, for the whole day. That way, he said that they would go through this chapter twice in a year. Can you imagine that? Taking one verse, meditating on it all day long. And what Matthew

Henry's father told him was: Doing this will bring you to be in love with all of the rest of the Scriptures.

You have to wonder, if that's one of the reasons Matthew Henry loved the Word so much and wrote the commentary that he did to help other people understand the Word—and by the way, Matthew Henry's commentary is still ministering to people powerfully today, just as much as when he wrote it. In fact, with the Internet, far more.

But isn't that interesting? One verse a day. Meditating on one verse a day. When's the last time you took one verse and meditated on it? That means, just to think about it all day long and let the Lord add to what you're thinking about.

Back in the 60s and early 70s, meditation got a bad rap because things like transcendental meditation came into vogue, and people were doing it because it went along nicely with the particular flavor of drugs they were taking. And so, people began to look at meditation with a very negative view of what it really is.

But the Bible talks about meditation. God had a corner on meditation before eastern religion got a hold of it and made it weird, okay? Meditating on the Word is a good thing to do. In fact, if you read the story of when Isaac first saw his wife-to-be, Rebecca, when Abraham's servant went to go get her, went to go get Rebecca, and he brought her back with this huge entourage, and from a distance they saw Isaac, you know what it says he was doing? He was sitting out in the field meditating. Isn't that interesting? Way back in the Book of Genesis, you got people meditating on the Lord and so forth.

Anyway, let's get into this. The first stanza begins by saying:

"Blessed (or happy or joyful) *are those whose ways are blameless,* (and blameless means not subject to accusation; it doesn't mean perfect; it doesn't mean they live a perfect life; it means that they're not subject to accusation—and he says) *who walk according to the law of the LORD." (ESV)*

By the way, throughout the course of Psalm 119, you're going to hear a lot about the law of the Lord. And I want you not to be afraid of those references to the law because some New Testament Christians are—they read about the law and they go, well, but that's Old Testament, and so forth. The reason they do that is because there's this tendency among some people to look at the law as a means of being saved. I mean, legalism still has an easy foothold in many people's hearts. Many people have a gravitational pull toward legalism, and so

some Christians get nervous when we talk about the law because they're like, well, now, wait a minute, we're not saved by keeping the law, right?

Okay, well, we're past that. We're not looking to the law to justify us before God. All right? So as long as we understand that we're not looking to the law to justify us. What—we'll look at this and we'll say, well, okay, what is the law? What is the Old Testament law? Well, it's a reflection of God's character. It's a reflection of His holiness. It's a reflection of His purity. It's like looking in a mirror and seeing God. Okay?

And so, we're going to look at it that way. When the psalmist talks about there's a blessed condition that is upon those who walk in the law of the Lord, we're talking about people who recognize the law for what it is: not a means by which to be saved, but a means to reflect the glory of God. And the law, when it's doing what it ought to be doing, leads us to Christ because the law makes us, when you look into the face of God— and by the way, you can't look into the face of God, but we're getting the best we can get through the law. What we see when we look at the law is, woooh!, I can't do this; this is too pure; this is too holy, right? I recognize, on the one hand, that it's good, but I also recognize, on the other hand, it's too good and I'm not good enough to attain to the law.

You with me? The point here is, the law leads us to Christ when we're thinking about it properly.

Verse 2:

"Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,
3 who also do no wrong,
but walk in his ways!"

The psalmist says that those who seek God with their whole heart are also a blessed and happy person.

Verse 4:

"You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.
5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
6 Then I shall not be put to shame,

having my eyes fixed on all your commandments."

Notice he begins here in Verse 5 by saying: *"Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!"* In other words, he's crying out prayerfully and saying: Oh, that I might be faithful to keep Your Word. Oh, that I might be true to Your Word. It's an acknowledgement that he struggles.

Verse 7, he says:

"I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous rules.
8 I will keep your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me!

And there's the first stanza. The cry of the psalmist is to be kept in His Word, and conscious he is of his own inabilities to stay there.

The next stanza begins with a question. Check out this question:

"9 How can a young man keep his way pure?"

Did you notice who the psalmist is asking about? He didn't ask about a young woman. He didn't ask about a young boy. He didn't ask about an old man. He didn't ask about an older woman. He says: *"How can a young man keep his way pure?"*

How can a young man keep his way pure? And why does he focus on a young man? Well, because the challenges of the young man are frankly greater than all the others. I say that categorically— but I say it, and you may disagree with me, but there is something about a young man. There is something about the challenges and temptations that come into the life of a young man that exceed those of others, and there are just so many things that are stacked up against a young man. I don't mean to make you frightened if you're raising a young man, but you do need to be aware of the fact that the Scripture says: *"How can a young man keep his way pure?"*

I mean, the things that are against him is, first of all, his youthful energy. When a young man— and I'm talking, we're talking about those years from like about 15 to maybe 21, 22, something like that. A young man is just full of energy.

I remember those years. I'm hoping my heavenly body will be somewhere between 15 and 22, that sort of boundless sort of deal. I remember being 22 thinking, this is great, I could drive all night places, I could stay up, and I could

eat anything I wanted. I was slim and trim, and I ran everywhere I went, and it was great.

But you know what? It tends to make a young man think he's bullet-proof because he has this boundless energy and makes him prone to, because of that, do foolish things.

Coupled with that is his lack of experience. A young man—I'm sorry, I think I did that myself, guys. There is a prideful tendency within young men— and I know this because I was there—to think that they've got life dialed in but they don't. I didn't. And when I was in that age bracket, that area, I thought I had things—I thought I knew what I was doing. I look back on that time period and I realized I didn't know anything, but my lack of experience was a detriment that I was unaware of.

There's also in a young man a very strong desire to be a man, to branch out and be independent. That also can cause a young man to do foolish things.

There's also the gravitational pull of his sexual appetite, which I believe is stronger than a young woman's. And most of the time, I might even be free enough to say all of the time his sexual appetite outruns his emotional and spiritual maturity. Usually outruns those things.

Then there's— he begins to grow up and he recognizes the thrill of making money, having some money in his pocket and the things that go along with that, the temptations that go along with having money.

And then, of course, there's peer pressure and the expectations of friends, which encourage moral compromise. I mean, I could go on. Again, I'm not trying to make anybody feel like, good grief, how do we raise a young man? Just duct tape him to the bed and wait till their 23rd birthday and then set him free or something? No, the Scripture actually answers the question for us here.

How can a young man keep his ways pure? Look what it says at the end of that verse. It says: *"By guarding it* (and it refers to his life or his way) *according to your word."*

And what we learned by that simple verse is that a life pleasing to God, particularly in a young man, doesn't just happen—it doesn't happen automatically. It's important to understand that it happens by a determined effort to guard what is important and to live according to the Word of God. That's what the Scripture is saying.

If a young man will live his life according to the Word, he can avoid the regular pitfalls that a young man during that age area would normally waltz right into. But the problem is he's got to be willing to live his life according to the Word of God. The Word of God is such a wonderful warning of the potential dangers that life presents. And if a young man will heed that warning, he can avoid those pitfalls. They rarely do, because again, they think, okay, I'm bulletproof; nothing's going to happen to me; don't worry.

I mean, when I was that age, oh, good grief, if I told you the stories, you probably wouldn't come back to church. But it's simply saying that if a young man is living his life according to the wisdom of God's Word and steering clear of the things that would otherwise stumble him spiritually, emotionally, physically and so forth, then, he could remain pure.

Verse 10:

"With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
11 I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.

That's what we're doing, by the way, in AWANA, over in the other building. We're encouraging kids to store up the Word in their hearts. Why? It says here that it is a deterrent against sin.

"12 Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes! (Those are the specific directives of the Word.)
13 With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.
14 In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches. (Wow)
15 I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word."

I love particularly verse 11. Let's go on the third stanza:

"17 Deal bountifully with your servant,
that I may live and keep your word.
18 Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.

19 I am a sojourner on the earth (another way of saying I'm only passing through this earth);
hide not your commandments from me!
20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your rules at all times.
21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments.
22 Take away from me scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your testimonies.
23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
24 Your testimonies are my delight;
they are my counselors."

And I want to spend just a moment getting you to focus on what he says right there in that last verse: *"Your testimonies are my delight*; and he says, *they are my counselors."*

When I read that line, it really grabbed me because in the last couple of decades, we've become very centric in the area of counseling. People think that counseling is—I don't know if they really think it's the cure-all, but they treat it like it's a cure-all, frankly. We need counseling. If I had dollar for everybody who came to me and said, we need counseling—and I appreciate what they're asking for, if they want true biblical counsel. Often that's not what they want because in many people's minds, the expectation of counseling is, I want to just sit and talk.

Counsel is something that we listen to. It's something we hear and it's something we respond to with obedience. And I want you to notice here that the psalmist says in verse 24 that the Word or the testimonies of God are my counselors. Isn't that interesting? And I shouldn't surprise it— I mean, the one who gave us the Word is called in the Scripture, Wonderful Counselor. He is a Counselor. In fact, He gives the best counsel. He is the best counselor.

And so, why is it that the Word can't be our counsel when we're faced with challenges, difficulties, questions? That's where we ought to be going. Instead of going and talking to some secular counselor who's going to fill your mind or your heart full of worldly ideas, go to the Word and get counseled by the Word. Let the Word tell you. Let the Word speak to you. Let the Lord counsel you through His Word.

I love that. Your Word, God. Your words, Your laws, Your truths. They are my counselors. They are my counselors. Can you imagine what a church we would be in the world if each and every believer meditated on the Word and found all the instruction they needed right from the Bible, right from the Scripture?

Next stanza, beginning in verse 25:

"My soul clings to the dust;
give me life according to your word!
26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes!
27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
28 My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word!
29 Put false ways far from me
and graciously teach me your law!
30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your rules before me.
31 I cling to your testimonies, O LORD;
let me not be put to shame!
32 I will run in the way of your commandments
when you enlarge my heart!"

And of that stanza, I love verse 27. If you look with me there again, verse 27 says: *"Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works."* The reason I like that is because this is the cry of the humble heart that basically confesses to God: You know what, God? Sometimes I don't get it.

Have you ever said that to the Lord? Have you ever looked at the Word and said: I don't get this; I don't understand this? The humble heart comes to God in the lack of understanding, and says: Lord, teach me to understand Your Word; teach me to understand Your ways.

It is the prideful heart—and I hear this a lot; I hear people being critical of the Scripture and critical of the Word. And you know why they're critical? Because they don't—the same reason the humble person isn't critical, but the same reason they cry out to God, they are critical because they don't understand the Word. But instead of being humble and saying, Lord, teach me Your Word, they basically take the position that if I don't understand it, there's nothing to understand. That's pride. That's human arrogance. If I can't read this and make

sense of it, well, then it's stupid. There's nothing to know. There's nothing to understand here.

The humble heart says: Lord, teach me. I see things in Your Word, and I don't really understand them. I see things about how you want me to live, and I'm not sure how I'm going to get there. Show me, teach me, give me understanding. Right? I just love the humility of that attitude: help me to grow in understanding.

Next stanza, verse 33:

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;
and I will keep it to the end.
34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart."

Very similar to the cry of the last stanza, wouldn't you say? Give me understanding.

Verse 35:

"Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, (look at this)
and not to selfish gain!"

And I love this verse because it's a great prayer; because the psalmist is admitting here that the flow of my heart, the gravitational pull of my heart is towards selfishness, self-gratification. That's the way my heart goes. You too? My heart is directed to me. It's directed inward and I recognize that. The psalmist recognizes that here in this song; he recognizes the whole flow of his life is inward, to self. And so, knowing that, he prays here in this verse, asking that his heart might get a spiritual adjustment outward, or I should even say upward to the direction of God's Word, away from his natural tendency towards self and toward the Lord.

And I love that: *"Incline* (he says) *my heart to your testimonies."* In other words, to Your Word, and not just to me, not to selfish pursuits and gains.

He says in verse 37:

"Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; (What a great prayer!)
and give me life in your ways.
38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
that you may be feared.
39 Turn away the reproach that I dread,
for your rules are good.
40 Behold, I long for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life!"

Next stanza is in verse 41:

"Let your steadfast love (your bible may say your mercies) *come to me,*
O LORD,
your salvation according to your promise;
42 then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me,
for I trust in your word.
43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your rules.
44 I will keep your law continually,
forever and ever,
45 and I shall walk in a wide place, (that means a place of liberty; in fact, your Bible may say, if you have a different translation, I will walk in liberty. What it means is I will walk in freedom because of Your Word)
for I have sought your precepts."

Verse 46:

"I will also speak of your testimonies before kings
and shall not be put to shame,
47 for I find my delight in your commandments,
which I love.
48 I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes."

Next stanza, verse 49:

"Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.
50 This is my comfort in my affliction,
that your promise gives me life.
51 The insolent utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.
52 When I think of your rules from of old,

I take comfort, O LORD.
53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
who forsake your law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
in the house of my sojourning.
55 I remember your name in the night, O LORD,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
that I have kept your precepts."

Can I call your attention again to verse 50? Look again with me in verse 50 of that stanza. The psalmist says: *"This is my comfort in my affliction that your promise gives me life."*

Do you ever get comforted in the midst of your affliction? It's funny. I was just talking about this to the students in our Bible class. I do a Bible class for the kids in our school. We just started – in fact, going through 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Paul makes mention in the first few verses of that chapter about the hope of the Thessalonians that was present even in the midst of great affliction. And he says— he's basically commending them; he says, you guys are hopeful even in the midst of affliction. And so, we talked for a while about affliction, what it means to be afflicted, and then we talked about having hope in the midst of affliction, being hopeful in the midst of affliction.

The world gives us a lot of reasons to be hopeful. The problem is every single reason the world dishes out as a possibility for generating hope is subject to being dashed because, I mean, it could easily go as soon as it comes. I was talking with the kids: What do you guys hope in? What is your hope in? And we're talking about what are you looking forward to? I look forward to the weekend, looking forward to vacation. I'm looking forward to turning 16, when I get my driver's license. I'm looking forward to this, I'm looking forward to that. And we put our hope in those things that we look forward to. It's a very natural sort of a thing. Well, then affliction enters our lives, and it seems that our hopes just become dashed. They just evaporate into the air.

But notice what the psalmist says in verse 50: *"This is my comfort in my affliction that your promise gives me life"*—and see, that's where his hope was. My hope is in the promise of God and the life that comes from that promise. That's my hope, and that one's never going to get dashed because of the one who made the promise. He's faithful and He will never go back on His Word.

Hope is a powerful, powerful thing. And when a person loses hope, most people usually decide life is no longer worth living. It's hopeless people who are basically tired of living. There's no hope to go on.

What keeps you going to bed and knowing you're going to get up the next day? You got to hope in something. And boy, when life gets hard, when life gets hard —and our world is great at throwing things at people who are otherwise hopeless. I look at all the pot shops that have sprung up here in Ontario, and they're basically catering to a hopeless generation. It's all they're doing. It's what they're doing. They are literally serving a hopeless generation. These people have nothing to put their hope in and so they're just going to get high. What else is there? Life is hard. Life is full of afflictions. Life is difficult. You might as well just disconnect, try to make it easier. That's what's going on. Make no mistake about it. They're making money on hopeless people.

You and I ought to be the most hopeful human beings on planet Earth because our hope is not founded in anything that this world has to offer. It is founded in the God who has promised us life. Right? And when this entire thing that we're living right now starts to fade away, the promise of God is no less sure. And that ought to produce hope in our lives.

Let's go to the next stanza. Verse 57:

"The LORD is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 *I entreat your favor* (that means to seek the favor of the Lord) *with all my heart;*
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 *When I think on my ways,*
I turn my feet to your testimonies;
60 *I hasten and do not delay*
to keep your commandments.
61 *Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,*
I do not forget your law.
62 *At midnight I rise to praise you,*
because of your righteous rules.
63 *I am a companion of all who fear you,*
of those who keep your precepts.
64 *The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love;*
teach me your statutes!"

Look at that stanza right there, and I have to tell you, I love verse 63. Can I read it with you again? He says: *"I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts"* – and that's a fancy way of saying, my friends are those who love You and love Your Word.

I got to tell you something. One of the most important things that you can do as a believer to remain strong in your walk with the Lord is to surround yourselves with friends who also love the Lord and walk with the Lord. That is one of the single most important things you can do.

Conversely, one of the most damaging things you can do to your Christian walk is to surround yourself with unbelievers who are full of worldly influence and constantly dragging you down and away from the Lord.

Let me remind you of something the Apostle Paul said when he wrote to the church in Corinth. I'll put this up on the screen:

1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV)

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

This was obviously a saying back in Paul's day, and it is true that when you surround yourself with people who are very worldly in their advice and their thoughts, it's going to have an effect on you.

But you know what? Friends who are encouraging you, praying with you, helping you, sharpening you—and you know how it talks about how one man sharpens another, do you know how that sharpening takes place? It's not by just playing patty cake or being, oh, you're my friend. It means, hey dude, what are you doing? It's the accountability that we offer one to another, where we have the freedom to speak into one another's lives and to even call a brother or sister out—not publicly, but privately, and say: Hey, I love you. What are you doing? Why haven't you been in church? Why aren't you, why are you, why do I see you doing things that you know you did in your old life before you met Jesus? Why are you going back that way? Hey, that's sharpening. Those things can hurt, but they're ultimately for our good, and we need them to stay strong.

Paul, the writer of Hebrews says: *"Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, which is the habit of some, but encourage one another daily, as you see the Day approaching."* Meaning the day of the Lord.

We need, I need encouragement daily. I really do, because sometimes, life can get a little overwhelming. And I think probably it's the same for you. So be careful. Learn from this Psalm. My friends are those who fear the Lord. Those are the ones I've gathered around.

I'm not saying—I mean, you go to work, you can't change who you work with, and I know that can even have a negative impact, but just don't get your fellowship there. Get your fellowship with believers. Well, I don't know any believers. Get to know them. It's important. It's important.

Verse 65:

"You have dealt well with your servant,
O LORD, according to your word.
66 *Teach me good judgment and knowledge,*
for I believe in your commandments.
67 *Before I was afflicted I went astray,*
but now I keep your word. (Take note of that verse. We'll come back to it.)
68 *You are good and do good;*
teach me your statutes.
69 *The insolent smear me with lies,*
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;
70 *their heart is unfeeling like fat,* (that's interesting)
but I delight in your law.
71 *It is good for me that I was afflicted,*
that I might learn your statutes.
72 *The law of your mouth is better to me*
than thousands of gold and silver pieces."

Did you notice that verse 67 and 71 of that stanza are very similar? First of all, in verse 67, he said: *"Before I was afflicted, I went astray."* In other words, I was doing my own thing, going my own way, living life the way I wanted to. And then I was afflicted, and now I keep Your Word.

And then look at verse 71. He says: You know what, when I think back on it, it was actually good. It was good for me that I was afflicted so that I might learn your statutes, which, again, are the directives of the Lord and His Word. So, he's talking here in these two verses about the role of the Lord, that afflictions can play— doesn't necessarily always play, but can play in our lives.

And we probably overlook the role of afflictions because we hate them so much. I do, anyway. I don't like afflictions. I would rather live the rest of my

life without afflictions, thank you very much. But when I look back on my life, I think they have played a very important tutorial role in my life of guiding me out of stupidity and foolish behavior. And I can relate to what the psalmist is saying here.

Peter wrote about difficulties and afflictions. Let me put this on the screen, from 1 Peter chapter 4. Look at this. He says:

1 Peter 4:1-3 (ESV)

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

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What Peter is doing in this passage is he's elevating the purpose that God has in our lives for suffering and affliction, for bringing us out of a place of just those willful sins that we so easily let ourselves fall into because, oh, well, it's fun. And he says, yet the individual who has suffered in the flesh has let those things go and has now begun to live more for God.

Next stanza, verse 73:

"Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
74 Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
75 I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous,
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me."

Notice that even the afflictions we endure are a work of God's faithfulness.

Verse 76:

"Let your steadfast love comfort me
according to your promise to your servant.
77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.
78 Let the insolent be put to shame,
because they have wronged me with falsehood;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
that they may know your testimonies."

I like that. Let them turn to me so that I can pass along to them what You've taught me.

"80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
that I may not be put to shame!"

And then the last stanza that we're going to look at here tonight in the first half — and this will be the end. The first half of this chapter, he writes:

"81 My soul longs for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
82 My eyes long for your promise;
I ask, "When will you comfort me?"
83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,..."

It's interesting. I don't think I've ever seen a wineskin, let alone one that's been sitting next to smoke. But I can imagine, I mean, a wineskin was made out of leather, made out of skin – sometimes the inner parts of an animal even. And I can imagine what that would probably happen to that leather or that skin when it's just out in the air and being exposed to smoke. I imagine it gets all dark and brittle and ugly.

And that's the way the psalmist is saying that he has become—he's you and I would say, my spirit feels dry. I feel dry and dusty, Lord. But look at his response to the dryness that he feels at the end of verse 83. He says:

"yet I have not forgotten your statutes. (I've not forgotten what Your Word has to say.)
84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?
85 The insolent have dug pitfalls for me;
they do not live according to your law.

86 All your commandments are sure;
they persecute me with falsehood; help me!
87 They have almost made an end of me on earth,
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
88 In your steadfast love give me life,
that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth."

So, in this last stanza, the psalmist is crying out for deliverance, asking the Lord to give him life so that he may continue to serve the Lord, and keep the Word of God in his life. So, crying out for deliverance from the Lord.

And that's where we're going to stop tonight; and we're going to, next week, take the last half of this chapter. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You so much for Your Word in its many forms. Thank you, Lord, for Your law, which expresses to us the beauty, majesty and perfection of who You are. Lord, help us to have a right attitude concerning Your Word. Help us, Lord, to see Your Word for what it is: our life.

We've placed our hope in it, Lord, because it's Your Word. It comes from You. Those promises were made by You. And because You are faithful, Your Word is true, and we can place our hope in it, amen.

Thank You, Father.