



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 119 (Part 4)

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Introduction

- This is part 4 of Psalm 119 which includes verses 49-64
- Or, the Hebrew letters Zayin and Heth
- Zayin section, verses 49-56 deals with the comfort of the word of God
- This section, begins by seeking the main consolation, namely, the Lord's fulfilment of His promise
- And then it shows how the word of God protect and keep us under affliction and makes us so firm, well-founded to enemies' contempt
- The psalmist repeated the word remember many times in this part of the Psalm



Introduction

- Why he repeated it?
- Remembering God's Word and focusing on the things that are true and right, fills the life with hope and comfort
- Then the theme of Heth section verses 57-64 is obedience
- Nothing is more important to do than keep God's commandments, one should obey quickly
- In this section the psalmist seems to take firm hold upon God Himself; seizing Him (verse 57), crying out for Him (verse 58), returning to Him (verse 59), comforting himself in Him (verses 61-62), associating with His people (verse 63), and longing for personal experience of His goodness (verse 64)



Introduction

General Outline

- Zayin: The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56
- Heth: Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- The psalmist knows that God could never forget His word
- Speaking in the manner of men, this was a plea for God to fulfill the promises stated in His word
- God's word of promise has given him hope
- The word of promise was made to David, concerning establishing his house and kingdom forever; which he desires God would show Himself mindful of in fulfilling it
- He is asking God to renew and confirm his faith, and give him some new assurance of its fulfillment, 2 Samuel 7:16
- Not that God ever forgets His promise, or is unmindful of His word

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- But so it seems when He delays its accomplishment; and when unbelief prevails and doubts arise, and faith is weak; and he does not have clear view of the promise, and comfortable assurance of its being fulfilled
- God wants His people to plead His stated promises back to Him in prayer
- The psalmist is asking for God to *act*
- After all, it is in this very Word that the psalmist was made to hope
- As a faithful servant he tries to claim a corresponding faithfulness from his Lord

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- St. Augustine says, “Is forgetfulness incident to God, as it is to man? Why then is it said unto Him, ‘O remember’? Although in other passages of holy Scripture this very word is used, as, ‘Why have You forgotten me?’ ...These expressions are borrowed from moral discourses on human affections; although God does these things according to a fixed dispensation, with no failing memory, nor with an understanding obscured, nor with a will changed. When therefore it is said unto Him, ‘O remember,’ the desire of him who prays is displayed, because he asks for what was promised; God is not admonished, as if the promise had escaped from His mind. ‘O remember,’ he says, ‘Your word unto Your servant:’ that is, fulfil Your promise to Your servant.”

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- The psalmist's trust and *hope* in God's word is not credited to his own spiritual greatness
- It came because God worked in him to *hope* in His word
- When the psalmist recalled how faithfully and powerfully God's word had brought him *life* in the past, he then found *comfort* in his present *affliction*
- Past experience of the life-giving sustaining power of God's promise is his comfort in affliction
- In the midst of an *affliction* suited to the individual, the believer can also enjoy a *comfort* specifically suited to him; it is *my affliction*, and it is *my comfort*

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- The sinner can say, *Your word has given me life*, when he was dead in sin
- In verse 51, he gives a glimpse of this affliction he was referring to in verse 50
- The psalmist is mocked and reproached for his love and trust in God's word
- These *proud* mockers look at him and his dedication to the word of God, and they hold him *in great derision*
- No matter how great the *derision* that comes from the *proud*, he will hold faithful to God and His word
- *The proud*, is used in Scripture to describe the enemies of God

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- The goal of *the proud* was to turn him away from the word of God
- But the psalmist says, *Yet I do not turn aside from Your law*
- *I remembered Your judgments of old*, Not merely God's sentences upon wicked men, but all the course of His providential authority of the world, including His deliverances of His servants
- This remembrance serves as motivation and encouragement
- When challenged to lessen his confidence and trust in God's word by the *proud* mockers, the psalmist wisely responded by increasing his confidence in God's word
- In that he *comforted* himself

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- The psalmist remembered that the law of God was always the same; and that, therefore, he might trust in God
- The psalmist not only tolerated and accepted reproach, but did it cheerfully
- There was specific comfort in remembering *Your judgments of old, O Lord*
- In a similar way, we are comforted and strengthened in hope as we remember how God has dealt with men and circumstances in the past
- *The proud* who hold the simple believer in *great derision* enjoy the praise and honor of some in this world; but they can never know the comfort that the psalmist wrote of here

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- When the psalmist thought of the *wicked* – perhaps the proud who held him and others who trusted in God's word in great derision – it made him indignant
- The burning *indignation* that seizes him, is a response to the wicked who have long departed from the instruction of God's word
- He recognized their great sin: *who forsake Your law*
- Those who deny God's word do just this – they *forsake* the word of God; and worse yet, they often lead others to do the same
- Jesus described the punishment for those who lead others astray (Luke 17:1-2)

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- Their conduct alarms him; and their condition overwhelms him
- He sees them rebelling against God and exposed to His wrath
- He sees the awful scenes of judgment near and sees them about to be cast off and his soul is filled with horror
- The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David; frightened him, it put him into an amazement
- He trembled to think of the dishonor thus done to God, the satisfaction thereby given to Satan, and the harm and malice thereby done to the souls of men

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- He does not say, "*Horror has taken hold on me* because of their cruel plan against me, but because of the contempt they put on God and His law
- No man can look on the world of despair without horror; no one can truly realize that his fellow-men are exposed to the horrors of that place without having his soul filled with anguish
- St. John Chrysostom says, "Let us then shed tears for their sake, not one day, but all the days of our life."
- Sin is an evil horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jeremiah 2:12,5:30,23:14; Hosea 6:10

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- God's word, *Your statutes* makes him sing with joy and confidence
- God's word has been to him a source of joy and happiness, his consolation and his delight
- He has found pleasure in meditating on them and has had peace and joy in them in the day of loneliness and trouble
- The rules and regulations of God are his cheerful songs
- Those who know the power of singing God's word have great comfort *in the house of their pilgrimage*
- As St. Paul and Silas did while they were in prison

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- They *“were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”* (Acts 16:25)
- *In the house of my pilgrimage*, the earthly house of his tabernacle, in which he was but a pilgrim and stranger
- He is referencing his current status as a stranger in this world who is awaiting the coming kingdom (v. 19)
- Which Jacob calls, *“The days of the years of my pilgrimage.”* (Genesis 47:9)
- *In my pilgrimage* through the desert of this world; amidst rocks, and sands, and desolation; the psalmist found joy in these scenes by thinking on the holy truth of God

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- St. Augustine says, “This is the low estate, in the house of mortality, of the man who sojourns away from Paradise and the Jerusalem above, whence one going down to Jericho fell among robbers; but, in consequence of the deed of mercy which was done him by that Samaritan the statutes of God became his song in the house of his pilgrimage; although he was weary for the ungodly that forsook the law of God.”
- Once again, the psalmist *remembers*
- But the object of his recollection is not simply a portion of God's Word, but the very name of God

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- The name of God encompasses the sum of who God is – His nature, character, deeds, and promises
- The Word of God *reveals* who God is
- *in the night*, This is true both literally and figuratively
- In the dark of night when fears and anxieties often rush in upon him, the psalmist finds comfort in the *name of the Lord*, revealed to him by God's word
- Yet this comfort is also real in the figurative *night* of distress and affliction that believers may face
- He remembers God's name and it is this remembrance that motivates praise and obedience

The Power of God's Word to Comfort 119:49-56



- *This has become mine*, The psalmist is saying that it is his portion, duty, privilege, and possession to obey God; God has given these blessings to him, it is his
- All this comfort and steadfastness and joy in the midst of the trials and sorrows of life *has become mine, Because I kept Your precepts*
- This consoling remembrance of the mercies of God, of His covenant grace, was to him, or came to him, in consequence of his consistent obedience
- It is not that the psalmist claims perfect obedience, but a life generally lived in faithfulness to the word of God

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- This begins a new part of the Psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter, Heth
- To him, God was all and in all; he asked nothing else
- Others place their happiness in the wealth and honors of this world
- Their portion is in this life; they look no further; they desire no more; these are *their good things*, Luke 16:25
- *You are my portion*, These are the words of a satisfied soul
- The psalmist is satisfied with the *portion* received, and that portion is the *Lord* Himself

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- The word *portion* has its roots in the Levitical priesthood
- The household of Levi was to be set apart from the rest of the nation of Israel
- Levites were given no land, no portion of land that flowed with milk and honey
- Instead, God Himself was to be their lot and portion
- The land represented blessing and prosperity and God's favor; and yet, as priests of God, their treasure was to be God Himself, set apart wholly to Him
- The psalmist wants his portion of divine blessing to be God Himself like the Levites

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- Nothing is better and nothing will ever fully satisfy his heart but God Himself
- *I would keep Your words*, he determined this within himself to do, under a sense of the love of God to him, in being his portion and inheritance
- *I have said*, not only purposed it in his own heart, but have professed and owned it before others
- This promise would be an empty vow without the empowering of God in our lives
- When we have a close connection with God and receive and enjoy Him as our *portion*, we also receive strength to *keep His words*

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- Then in verse 58, the psalmist understood both the urgency to seek and please God, and the inability to completely do so
- Having said, *You are my portion*, he *entreated His favor*, as one that knew he was unworthy of it, and yet lost and destroyed without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it
- The words translated *Your favor* are literally, *Your face*
- The psalmist here declares that he has sought the face of God
- He sought the face of God with a sense of inability, shown in the request *be merciful to me*
- The request for mercy is not based on it being a right, or that he deserves it

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- The psalmist speaks as one who expects mercy *according to* the promise of God's word
- *I thought about my ways*, Time spent in God's word has given the psalmist thoughtful reflection about his *ways*
- This gave the insight necessary to turn in the right direction
- While he was studying the word, he was led to study his own life
- *turned my feet*, He does not say that he waited for God to turn him; or that he found he could not turn of himself, but that he *turned*; he paused; he reflected; he changed his course of life

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- He turned not only his eye to them, but his feet, his affections to the love of God's word and his conversation to the practice of it
- There is an actual turning from sin; an actual turning to God
- The sinner turns; he leaves an old path and walks a new one
- Understanding the promise of God in His word leads us to live lives of repentance
- *I made haste*, Once on the right path, with the *feet* having been *turned*, the Psalmist can now speed his way in the course of obedience
- Men are quick to put off their repentance - to delay it to a more "*convenient time*" (Acts 24:25)

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- The psalmist was so prudent - he *made haste* and did not delay to keep God's commandments
- He acted at once under his conviction of what was right
- He did not ask permission to defer it to a future time, as Felix did, (Acts 24:25), and he did not attempt to avoid the duty and claim inability
- The main difficulty in repentance lies in the fact that the sinner is not willing to obey God at once and he will not break away from his sins; but pleads for delay

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- The psalmist was attacked and afflicted by adversaries; but they could not make him forget or forsake the law of God
- *The cords*, A metaphor from the snare or trap of the hunter
- *The wicked*, great numbers of them, surrounded him and put him into fear
- According to St. Augustine, the wicked are, “the hindrances of our enemies, whether spiritual, as the devil and his angels, or carnal, the children of disobedience, in whom the devil works.”
- The word of God dwells in him richly so that he is able to not be tempted by wicked snares from within or without

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- When the Lord is one's portion, he can stand against trials and temptations
- The heart and the mind of the psalmist are so filled with *thanks* and appreciation toward God that he finds his sleep interrupted by these high thoughts
- *At midnight I will rise*, As if the daylight hours did not give him enough time to thank God
- His devotion to God was sincere, shown by its secrecy, alone when no one is watching
- His desire to praise God in his Word was more important to him than even the desire for sleep

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- He does not thank God on account of that He saves him from the temptations, but because of His *righteous judgments*; turning the temptations into holy blessings
- St. Jerome used words of the psalmist to express how important to commit to prayer specially at night; saying that the Lord Christ, commands us to “*watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation*” (Matthew 26:41)
- And He, Himself, “*continued all night in prayer to God*” (Luke 6:12)
- The psalmist enjoyed the special fellowship present among those who honor and hold God’s word, *of those who keep Your precepts*

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- David had often expressed the great love he had to God; here he expresses the great love he had to the people of God
- His companions are not of the rich and powerful ones; but of such who had the true fear of God upon their hearts
- He loved them because they *keep Your precepts*
- Having experienced this broad companionship, the Psalmist felt the goodness of God filling the *earth*
- *The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy*, This is the expression of a heart full of love to God and to His word
- In such a state of mind as the psalmist was in, the goodness of God is seen everywhere

Hurrying to God with All His Heart 119:57-64



- The earth is full of demonstrations of God's grace and kindness (Psalm 136:1-9, 104:10-30)
- This experience of God's *mercy* increased his desire for knowledge and obedience, *teach me Your statutes*
- The pursuit of God in and through His word leads to satisfaction and blessing
- That satisfaction and blessing leads to a deeper pursuit, leading to even more satisfaction and blessing
- Because everything of God is grace and goodness, the Psalmist wants to know everything that God has to say about everything
- *Teach me Your statutes*, God readily teaches those who seek Him



Discussion

- What is the psalmist asking the Lord to remember?
- Why do you think he is asking Him to remember it?
- What does the psalmist do when the proud deride him?
- How are the arrogant people going to treat God's people?
- What is the house of our pilgrimage?



Discussion

- What connection does remembering His Word have to keeping His law?
- What is the psalmist's comfort in affliction?
- How does the psalmist react to the wickedness he sees around him?
- In what areas might proud men deride Christians in our day?



Discussion

- What does it mean “The Lord is my portion”?
- What is the portion of worldly men?
- How does God show His graciousness towards us?
- What does the psalmist do when he is persecuted by wicked men?
- Who are the psalmist companions?