

“A WINESKIN IN SMOKE”

Ps. 119:81-88

September 28, 2014

INTRODUCTION: This Psalm has been referred to as the *“orphan psalm”* of the Hebrew hymn book. Throughout the Psalm we are made aware that the singer is in trouble. Since he remains anonymous, the Holy Spirit intends his suffering to be of universal significance. Any struggling saint of God can put his or her name at the head of this psalm and sing to themselves.

The focus is on the request of the believer to receive comfort for his affliction and the responses of the believer while he waited for the Lord to judge his enemies and deliver him from persecution and danger. The psalm brings a constant reminder that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground, and we must expect trouble.

John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

The Psalmist is in greater need of having his faith stabilized than he is in need of seeing judgment upon his persecutors. The word in which he delights and upon which he meditates (**vv. 77-78**) will produce that faith in him.

Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Faith will permit him to see that which is not visible. Then he will find rest for his soul.

Psalms 37:7, “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.”

In this text we find that his prayers will be answered to his complete satisfaction, although not according to his thinking.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to our knees when we have a pressing need. However, the supply from the loving Father may not be that for which we petitioned Him. There may be a more urgent need that we did not comprehend. He will supply according to that need.

Philippians 4:19, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

I. A TROUBLING SOUL, BUT NOT WITHOUT HOPE. 81-83, 85, 87

A. HIS SOUL. 81

“My soul faints for your salvation” – has been consumed; this verse opens with the theme of suffering and the longing for divine intervention. The hour is urgent; the crisis is clear, the need is great! However, he is not without hope.

“I hope in your word” – when God seems absent and the darkness stalks us, we still have the light of His promises to us.

“Never question in the dark what God has given in the light.” Spurgeon

“When you can’t trace His hand, trust His heart.”

“for your salvation” – from sin, sorrow, and situations

B. HIS EYES. 82

“My eyes fail from searching Your word” – his eyes even now fail or grow dim from his study. He has strained them to the point of fatigue looking for help that he has requested. He is searching the promises and seeking His presence.

John the Baptist had a similar experience. He had spent his ministry preaching deliverance through repentance and decreasing of self to the increasing of Christ. Then he ended up in jail and undoubtedly anticipating Christ setting him free. Hours turned into days, days into weeks, weeks into months, and you know the rest of the story.

He sent out messengers to Jesus to ask, **“Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”**

Paul had a difficult time, and at times was desperate but not without hope!

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed”

C. LIFE IS USELESS. 83

“For I have become like a wineskin in smoke” – in the first century people made containers for wine and water out of skins of animals. In their homes these containers, due to the smoke/fire, oftentimes dried-up and shriveled; became useless (cracked/dry). Lost all influence.

D. ENEMY ATTACKING. 85

“The proud have dug pits for me” – his enemy is like a hunter who has dug their pits for him; to catch him like prey.

E. TIME IS RUNNING OUT. 87

“They almost made an end of me on earth”

Situation is critical. The sand in the hour glass reads, *“almost exhausted.”* It is a matter of life and death. He was near the brink of disaster!

II. QUESTIONING SPIRIT BUT NOT WITHOUT ANSWERS. 82, 84

The Psalmist questions are questions of the *Suffering Saints*

A. QUESTIONS #1 .82

“When will You comfort me?” – this is the natural response of people who are suffering. It is difficult for most people to wait for the things they can see; a traffic jam to end, a checkout line to speed up, a temporary illness to pass, but it is more difficult to wait for our unseen Lord to work out His will.

B. QUESTION #2 .84

“How many are the days of your servant?” – How much longer can I take this? My days are slipping away and my prayers remain unanswered.

Oftentimes we all go through *“strange delays”* in God’s handling of situations.

*“God is too wise to be mistaken
God is too good to be unkind”*
Spurgeon

C. QUESTION #3 .84

“When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?”

Note that the psalmist does not take matters into his own hands. He presents his case to God and expects His intervention.

III. TRUSTING SERVANT BUT NOT WITHOUT TRUTH.

A. HOPE. 81

“But I hope in Your word” – the object of his anticipated future was the word of God.

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

B. SEARCHING. .82

“from searching Your word”

John 5:39, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”

Acts 17:11, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

C. DON'T FORGET. .83

“yet I do not forget Your statutes”

Psalms 119:16, “I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.”

James 1:22-25, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

D. FAITHFUL. .86

He commends the faithfulness of God by commending the faithfulness of His word.

**Romans 3:3-4, “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words,
And may overcome when You are judged.’”**

E. HELP ME! .86

“They persecute me wrongfully” v.85
says **“which is not according to Your law”** – God’s law does not employ evil means to attain its end.

Prayer is *simple* and *specific*

F. DID NOT FORSAKE. .87

“I did not forsake Your precepts”

Note: “almost” and “but” in v.87

As with Job, and now the Psalmist, God had drawn a line in the sand and beyond which they could not go.

G. REVIVE ME. .88

Even though I really do want to be obedient to You, I don’t have the strength. I need You to revive me (quicken me); to breathe into me the life-giving, life-transforming power I need.

Why? **“So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth”**

CONCLUSION: The Psalmist is on his way up. Though his reactions to oppression are pulling him down, his course of action will lift him up. His hope is founded on the word. He is calling to memory that which he had read in God's word. He is proclaiming God's faithfulness and His loving-kindness, while continuing to observe His precepts and testimonies.