

Psalm 119 – Session 5

week 1, v. 81

With Psalm 119:81, we begin the eleventh section of eight verses. Each starts with the eleventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet Caph. It literally means the palm of the hand. God reaches out to us with His open hand to bless us and sustain us; we need to reach out to God with an open hand to receive His help and comfort and strength. The weight of life and ministry has become heavy upon David. His answer is to look to God.

The true meaning is to be sought in the full interpretation of the word; for the hand is hollowed either in order to retain something which actually lies in it, or to receive something about to be placed in it by another. Thus the hand may be God's, as the giver of bounty, or man's, as the receiver of it; and the whole scope of the section, as a prayer for speedy help, is that man holds out his hand as a beggar, supplicating the mercy of God. --Jerome, Ambrose, and others, in Neale and Littledale, taken from the Treasury of David.

Ps 119:81 My soul languishes for Thy salvation; I wait for Thy word.

First we look at the word soul. In Hebrew it is <nepesh> meaning a breathing creature. In Psalm 84:2 the word soul is explained further to mean my heart and my flesh. So we can conclude this means his entire being. To have your entire being involved in something is a strong response. It is both mental and physical, every fiber that makes you who you are. If we look up the word soul in WordWeb we get a definition that says " the actuating cause of an individual life; a human being; deep feeling or emotion; the human embodiment of something.

The NAS version uses the word languishes as a verb, the KJV uses the word fainteth.

<kahah> this is the idea of being consumed, of longing for something. Again, strong descriptions of the Psalmists exhaustion and need for God's encouragement. In *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on this verse he puts it this way, " my very spirits are exhausted" .

' Fainteth' – With long desire and earnest expectation. John Wesley's Notes on the Old and New Testaments

The psalmist sought deliverance from his sins, his foes, and his fears. Hope deferred made him faint; his eyes failed by looking out for this expected salvation. But when the eyes fail, yet faith must not. His affliction was great. He was become like a leathern bottle, which, if hung up in the smoke, is dried and shrivelled up. We must ever be mindful of God's statutes. The days of the

believer's mourning shall be ended; they are but for a moment, compared with eternal happiness. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

The word languish in WordWeb means to 1. lose vigor, health, or flesh, as through grief; 2. have a desire for something or someone who is not present; 3. become feeble.

Another commentary uses the words 'vehement desire' to describe the way David is feeling.

Ps 119:20 My soul is crushed with longing after Thine ordinances at all times.

Ps 42:1 (For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.) As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God.

Ps 84:2 My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

When your physical strength is gone and your spiritual strength is weary what do you do, where do you go to be refreshed? What is our example in this passage?

Looking to God for help is the answer. Salvation <t@shuw`ah> means rescue; deliverance, help, safety, victory.

This same word is used in describing the victory God gave to David in slaying Goliath.

Ps 37:39 But the salvation <t@shuw`ah> of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in time of trouble.

Ps 38:22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation <t@shuw`ah> !

Ps 60:11 O give us help against the adversary, for deliverance <t@shuw`ah> by man is in vain.

Ps 146:3 Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation <t@shuw`ah> .

La 3:26 It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation <t@shuw`ah> of the LORD.

As longing for God's deliverance engulfs the Psalmist, he turns his focus to the hope he has in God's word.

wait <yachal> hope; to be patient, stay, trust

The first time we see this word is all the way back in Genesis when Noah waited patiently for the waters to recede. (Ge 8:12)

The last time it appears is in Micah 7:7 when the prophet directs his hope towards God as the wickedness around him prevails.

My soul is overcome, and languisheth with a longing desire of thy salvation; yet still I am sustained by an assured hope of thy merciful performances. Hall's Explanation of Hard Texts

Ver. 81. -- I hope in thy word: i.e. I hope beyond anything I understand, and beyond anything I can possibly do, and beyond anything I deserve, and beyond all carnal and spiritual consolations, for I desire and look for Thee only ... --Le Blanc., TOD

What is our example here? What do you do when things seem incredibly difficult? Do we get frustrated as we continue to try and 'fix' things or do we lean on the promises of God's deliverance as we go through trials?

Ps 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. (KJV)

In fact, read Psalm 46 in its entirety.

'Be still' means we are to slacken or let alone those things which are out of our capabilities and control. We are to let go of our hold on things and trust God to do His work.

Our example is to yearn for God's direction and deliverance being patient as His plan and purpose unfolds.

Application Questions

What does an open hand symbolize in this section of scripture?

How would you describe the intensity of the words 'my soul languishes' in this verse?

Think of a time when you have felt completely spent; how did you respond, where did you go for comfort?

Read Psalms 42:1. We are given a word picture of a deer panting for water. How can you relate to this scenario? Water is the only thing that will satisfy in this verse; what is the only thing that can satisfy your longing according to the Word?

We might think of the word 'salvation' as a one-time occurrence. What do we learn about this word in the following scriptures?

Psalms 37:39

Psalms 38:22

Psalms 60:11

What does it mean to hope in something? What kinds of things do people place their hope in? What is the difference between hope placed in God and hope placed in stuff or others?

Read Psalms 46. Are you responding to circumstances in your life right now according to the examples we have in God's truth? Do you need to adjust your thinking? How would God have you apply His truths to your life?