

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE -

11.24.2024

PSALM 119:89-96 -

DEPENDING ON THE
STEADFAST WORD OF GOD

I. INTRODUCTION

Psalm 119:89-96

Lamedh

89 Forever, O Lord, your word

is firmly fixed in the heavens.

90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;

you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

91 By your appointment they stand this day,

for all things are your servants.

92 If your law had not been my delight,

I would have perished in my affliction.

93 I will never forget your precepts,

for by them you have given me life.

94 I am yours; save me,

for I have sought your precepts.

95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,

but I consider your testimonies.

96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,

but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

- Other letters of this Psalm have sorrowful or angst filled tones, where the psalmist reminds himself of the affliction he's in, followed by reminders of the word of the Lord and of the comfort it brings.
- The letter Kaph just before Lamedh in verses 81-88, gives a significant danger to the psalmist, and his writing is in this context of serious affliction.
- This is still the context the psalmist is writing in for Lamedh.
- He references this continuing danger in verse 92 saying "I would have perished in my affliction" and in verse 95 "The wicked lie in wait to destroy me".
- But even though the danger and affliction persist, there is a stark contrast to the tone the writer takes as he pens these verses.
- Lamedh carries a joyous tone! A declarative tone coming from a place, not of questioning and crying out to the Lord, but reflective of a conviction that the word of God is sure and stable and will remain sufficient for him even in his time of affliction!
- In Kaph, the psalmist asks for life in verse 88, but now in Lamedh vs 93 we see him declare that the Lord has given him life!
- This psalm gives us two amazing reminders:

1. That we can depend on the steadfast word of God, verses 89-92
2. And that when we do, we will be steadfast in our dependance on the word of God, verses 93-96.

II. DEPENDENCE ON THE STEADFAST WORD

Verse 89 - Eternal Word

Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

- This verse is giving praise to Yahweh! The thought of God's steadfastness is worthy of praise.
- His word is forever! It's eternal. Unending.
- Just like the LORD from whom the word proceeded is eternal, in all his being, so then is his word.
- Eternality is an attribute of God and his word reflects that.
- Psalm 93:2 tells us that God is from everlasting, he has no beginning.
- And Psalm 102:27 tells us that God's years have no end, he has no end.
- *Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*
- This is our God, eternal in all his being. He does not faint or grow weary as time passes. His understanding is unsearchable.
- His wisdom is eternal - Acts 15:18
- His power is eternal - Romans 1:20
- His goodness is eternal - Psalm 136
- Thomas Manton wrote a thought about our eternal God: "*This eternity of God is not seriously and sufficiently enough thought of and improved, till it lessen all other things in our opinion and estimation of them and affection to them.*"
- God's word has not nor will not be changed. His word is firmly fixed in the heavens forever!
- Psalm 119:152, the psalmist writes "Long have I known your testimonies that you have founded them forever."
- This is not saying that God's word is more fixed than the heavens.
- Nor is it saying that as the heavens are fixed in place, so is his word.

- But there is a greater and far more vast statement being made here: God's word is eternal and unchangeable in a way which transcends this world.
- His steadfastness is not like his creation's, but rather they are simply reflecting his own!
- But even earthly steadfastness cannot compare. What does God's word tell us? "Heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of the Lord will endure forever."
- God's word is fixed in the heavens in a way that provides comfort to us in that we know it is forever, and forever unchangeable!
- God's word is fixed in the heavens in a way that contrasts heavily to the changeableness of our present time and circumstances.
- God's word is fixed in the heavens in a way that our very salvation is fixed because his word is fixed.
- *1 Peter 1:24-25: "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever."*
- His word is forever church, and it's forever unchanging. And we can trust and hold fast to that.

Verse 90 - Faithful Word

Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

- God is immutable. That means he is unchanging. He is consistent. He is consistently good, for example. All that he does is good.
- *Job 23:13: But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does.*
- God does what God will do. And what God does, and for this we are utterly thankful, what he does is good.
- Because he is immutable, consistently working good generation after generation, we count that as his faithfulness.
- The steadfast eternal word of the Lord from vs 89 isn't just for the heavens, for the great expanses of our universe, but it also reaches down to mankind.
- To people living their short lives here on the earth, being born, living, and dying, generation after generation, and yet in every single one of those generations, his faithfulness endures.
- *Psalm 90:1 "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations."*
- The Lord is faithful to all who follow and obey him, generation after generation.
- He was faithful to the generations in the past and he will continue to show his faithfulness to the generations to come.
- *Exodus 3:15 "God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."*
- We see his faithful enduring, not just to some generations, but to all them.
- Spurgeon put it this way: *"The promises are ancient; yet they are not worn out by centuries of use, for divine faithfulness endures forever."*
- The laws of nature, of this universe, the law of gravity, the principle of thermodynamics, the rising and setting of the sun, the tide, photogenesis - these were created by the Lord and they continue as he made them.
- And so the faithfulness of God is evidenced by the creation he has established and sustains.
- Both the word of God and the works of God are similar being both fixed and unchangeable.

- The same word that was spoken of God was the same word that produced the works of God, his creation.
- When we see creation acting consistently with the way the word of God made it, it's evidence of the faithfulness of the God who spoke it into existence. This is encouraging for us!
- *1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast and unmovable."*
- Be encouraged that God and his word are faithful to our generation! As he was to the generations before us, and will be to the generations coming after us.
- Sometimes we look at the generation we're in, and we're prone to lose hope. To think "How can this ever turn out for good? How will the Lord build his kingdom in this crooked and perverse generation?"
- Take heart, and be encouraged, church. God's faithfulness is still enduring.

Verse 91 - Sovereign Word

By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants.

- The 'They' who stand are his works of creation. He decreed them, appointed them, and then created them. And they continue even now.
- They stand this day, meaning they continue daily, they are in place every day.
- The word created them, and they continue according to that word in their being and well being.
- This is a reminder, and an encouragement to us, that God's decree is the reason for the continuing existence of all things.
- This verse speaks to the eternal decrees of God as it declares that the works of his creation stand by his appointment.
- *1689 (3:1) 1. From all eternity God decreed everything that occurs, without reference to anything outside himself. 1 He did this by the perfectly wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably.*
- All creation was created by God's word, according to his decree, therefore they obey that word, and therefore they fulfill the purpose for which they were created.
- "All things" is all encompassing. Big things like galaxies. Small things like cells and neurons.
- They are all his servants, subject to his rules, his governance, and they stand and serve him according to his decrees. He is sovereign over all.
- It's popular in society to think we are completely free, to do whatever we want, that we are sovereign over our own lives, but that would make us an exception to the created order and laws of this universe where all things created by him are subject to him.
- The psalm writer here is overwhelmingly encouraged by the fact that all things stand fast due to the appointment of a great and sovereign God, and that all things are subject to his decrees.
- There are insolent, evil men about him, digging pitfalls and trying to trap and snare him. They have almost made an end of me, he says!
- But they are not above or beyond the decrees of God! They are not outside the realm of all things!
- Any danger to him is by men who exist and act within the appointment of the Lord, and his decrees which are good and right are still standing fast.
- *Isaiah 46:8-10: 8 "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'*

- *Romans 11:36 "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."*

Verse 92 - Sufficient Word

If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

- The psalmists' conclusion is that his life would have been over, he would have perished, drowned, and would have been lost in the affliction or the danger he was facing, had it not been for the word of God!
- The writer is still in a hard place, still in a tough situation, but now he's reminded of God's words, his precepts.
- And he has found them to be a delight, and then he recognizes that without them, he would have perished!
- The writer finds God's word to be sufficient in the midst of his affliction. He is now the blessed man from Psalm 1:2 whose delight is in the law of the Lord.
- He has found God's word to be a delight, and to be sufficient for his time of trouble, and that brings him immense comfort!
- In difficult times the word of God speaks a sweet word of comfort to our hearts.
- *2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 "16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."*
- 'If' and 'would' in this passage describe though a sad possibility: the possibility that the psalm writer would perish in his affliction.
- But there is also a joyful triumph here that the Psalm writer did not perish in his affliction but rather delighted in the truth. He will never forget God's law! And it has kept him from perishing.
- Because he has chosen to never forget God's precepts, he is now living in harmony with the rest of creation who also follow God's commands. Now the psalm writer is delighting in the law of God, which he was created to follow.
- Delight in his word church! Discover the sweetness of it! Meditate on it day and night and allow it to infuse the truth into your hearts!
- God's law is a delight and you'll find it is sufficient for every situation, for every single need.

III. STEADFAST IN DEPENDENCE ON THE WORD

Verse 93 - Sustaining Word

I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.

- A precept is another word for his commands, his mandates, given to us so that we live in a way that is blameless, righteous, a way that walks in truth in accordance with God's commands.
- These precepts are steadfast. They are life giving. They bring order to the one that follows them in the midst of a chaotic life.
- But hearing the precept isn't the same as learning the precept. Hearing it allows it to be forgotten. But once you learn the precept, you will not forget it.
- The Psalm writer here writes from personal experience of how knowing the precepts of God have given him life. He has experienced how they

have blessed him, kept him, spoken truth to him in all occasions of life. Especially these troubled ones.

- There is a resounding theme in Psalm 119 if you haven't noticed it yet, of frequent prayers by the writer for the Word of God to give him life!
- Psalm 119:25 "give me life according to your word!"
- Psalm 119:37 "give me life in your ways."
- Psalm 119:40 "in your righteousness give me life!"
- Psalm 119:50 "your promise gives me life."
- Psalm 119:88 "In your steadfast love give me life"
- Psalm 119:107 "give me life, O LORD, according to your word!"
- Psalm 119:149 "according to your justice give me life."
- Psalm 119:154 "give me life according to your promise!"
- Psalm 119:156 "give me life according to your rules."
- Psalm 119:159 "Give me life according to your steadfast love."
- Do you see the importance of God's word in our lives here? There is a constant, repeating prayer here from the writer, crying out to the Lord for life, according to his word.
- May this too be our prayer! Prayer coming from a place where we have come to know God's word as steadfast and sure in our chaotic lives and so we cry out for life according to his word!
- What kind of life would we have without his word? What kind of life would we have were it not according to his word, were it not given by his steadfast love?
- 'Therefore, I will never forget your precepts!' Never forget them church!
- Forgetfulness is dangerous when it relates to the commands and laws and word of the Lord.
- *Deuteronomy 8:11 "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today,"*
- Be like the Psalm writer who has determined that he will never forget the word of God which sustains him.

Verse 94 - Preserving Word

I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts.

- This is a prayer for God to save the writer which is based on an argument that the writer is the Lord's. Save me for that reason he says.
- We are the Lord's because he has called us, redeemed us, purchased us, and created us.
- He has made us his children, that can come to him crying Abba, father.
- When a child asks their father to save them, we know of course that he will! And so will our good father in heaven save his children! What a relationship that is! Have you marveled at that lately?
- Because the implication there is that as his children, this saving is not based on the worthiness of the child, but because of the relationship to the father.
- Don't read this as save me because I have sought your precepts. God doesn't do that because of our good works. Or because of our abilities to obey his law.
- Instead, he has sought the precepts of Lord BECAUSE he belongs to him! His seeking is evidence of the fact that he belongs to God!
- The "save me" is right because the seeking of his precepts is evidence of the holy spirit at work in his heart.
- But this seeking out and desiring his precepts is evidence of the work of grace in our lives.
- When we belong to God, when the holy spirit is at work in our hearts, teaching us his law, teaching us to obey his commands, then we can seek his precepts.

- Jeremiah 29:12-13 “Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”
- The seeking is linked to the saving. ‘Save me, for I have sought you’, he writes.
- If we have sought the Lord, it's already by the grace of God at work.
- And if we're seeking him because of his grace, he'll save us, because it means he's already sought us. And if he's determined to seek us, he's gonna accomplish that!
- *Psalm 119:44-45 44 I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, 45 and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts.*
- Consider your own lives. Consider the evidence. If you are seeking the Lord, then it's evidence that he has sought you and take this moment to give him all the glory!
- And if the evidence isn't there, call upon him, and pray to him. Seek him, and you will find him, when you seek him with all your heart.

Verse 95 - Testifying Word

The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies.

- There is a marked difference in his mindset regarding the danger before him. Now the Psalm writer has his mind set not on his enemies, but on the testimonies of the Lord.
- The wicked are still around him, they lie in wait to destroy him, but instead of considering them, he's considering the testimonies of God in his word.
- The wicked are still there, lying in wait to destroy us, to shipwreck our faith!
- But they lie in wait in vain if we focus not on the enemy but we instead consider the testimonies of our God and we cling to them, believe them and trust in them! Then we will not be shaken!
- We will not be moved because the Word of God testifies of his sovereign goodness and grace towards us, and if that's who he is then let the enemy lie in wait!
- We consider his testimonies and we will then not be moved when trial and sickness and temptation and hardship show up all around us.
- Consider his testimonies. When you wake in the morning, where does your mind go? To all the stresses coming that day? To all the tasks? To the problems of your life, the troubles of your situation?
- Or do you consider his testimonies and be encouraged when you read that he is the everlasting and eternal good and faithful God!
- Are you encouraged when you read his word and it testifies to your heart that he is the same God today and forever?
- Remember that he is full of mercy and grace and love and power and strength you can trust in him no matter who or what is lying in wait around you.
- The word 'consider' here means to ponder. To think about something very carefully and thoughtfully. And specifically, before you come to a conclusion about something.

Verse 96 - All-Encompassing Word

I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

- The psalm writer has considered the word of the Lord, determining it to be eternal, faithful, sovereign, and sufficient!

- And because of that it has given him a steadfast dependance on that word as it sustains him, preserves him, and testifies to him.
- And as he ponders these things, considering them all, he concludes that he has seen the limits of all perfection in this world, but God's word goes exceedingly far and beyond anything he has seen!
- Think of all the writer could have seen in his time on this earth: he's seen beauty and art, music, goodness, the righteous, and had probably experienced precious wonderful moments in time.
- None is righteous no not one! So even when we look around us and see those who seemingly are perfect and good, they are not! They will at some point, in some way, fail to live up to that expectation of perfection!
- That's what the writer here has experienced in his own life! And as he considers this, he contrasts this earthly perfection which only goes so far and gives the profound statement "But your commandment is exceedingly broad."!
- The commands of God are exceedingly broad! They cover our thoughts, our actions, our desires, our words, our motives, our emotions!
- They establish a standard of perfection, of holiness and righteousness in a way that is so exceedingly broad, it is all encompassing for this universe!
- But rightfully so because these aren't just arbitrary commands, they are HIS commands! They come from God himself!
- The one who is holy and pure and full of goodness in all his being, that's who he is, church, and his commands reflect his attributes!
- So they are right commands, worthy commands, and just as our God is exceedingly broad in his being, so are his commands!
- And we look at them, and we have instant conviction because none of us have what it takes to perfectly follow that divinely perfect law.
- Sometimes we do good. And by the grace of God and the sanctifying work he's doing in the lives of his people, we do more good. We align more closely to his law in our hearts and thoughts and words.
- But as the Psalm writer noted, he has seen a limit to all perfection. None of us meet the standard of perfection which his commands encompass.
- But even though his commands are exceedingly broad, there was one, one man who fully and perfectly lived a life of perfection, a life in complete and utter adherence to every single command of God.
- That is our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is the infinitely perfect son of God. When we look at Christ, there is no end to his perfection.
- And we remember that the exceedingly broad word of God, the perfect word of God, is broad and perfect because it is a reflection of those very same attributes of God from whom they proceeded!
- His word is broad enough to cover every situation in our life. Every affliction, every danger, every discouragement, every fear. The perfection of his word comes from his own perfection, and speaks to our hearts precisely what we need to hear.
- His word is eternal, his word is faithful, his word is sovereign and sufficient, and we can depend on it!
- And as we remember it, delight in it, and seek after it, we will find that it will make us steadfast through every trial of life as it sustains us, preserves us, testifies to us of who our perfect and exceedingly broad God and king is!

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?