

Psalm 119:121-160

Part 5

Read Psalm 119:121-128:

The Normal Christian Life is Not What You Think

The psalmist has been obedient to follow God; and yet he finds himself in another *rescue* situation. We have talked about how God delivers us through life's trials, not from life's trials. God is trying to get us to *man-up* in Christ. That means that we have to trust him when there is something on the line. **It is empty confidence if it fails the test of reality.** It is unrealistic to expect that our lives will ever get to a point where there are no hassles. The better question is about *managing my expectations.*

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.
(*Psalm 34:19*)

Our setbacks make us more sympathetic and emotionally available to those who are struggling through life.

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. (Hebrews 5:1-2)

The psalmist is connecting his obedience to his expectation for deliverance. He feels that he should be spared of these difficulties. The Jews felt that their life circumstances were a direct result of their obedience or disobedience. It is true that Moses spoke about the blessings and curses that follow our choices. That was like a *parochial school rule book.* Our choices do create our environment.

“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. (Deuteronomy 28:1)

“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: (Deuteronomy 28:15)

The Law of Moses was actually written to unbelievers. It was *hard rules for hard hearts*. If you do not love God or your neighbor; then a consequence will be introduced. The psalmist, however, is a believer. How does this correlation play out in the life of a believer? It's different. God sees things that we need. The evil things in our lives serve as opportunities, and rut derailers, and course corrections. The *gains and losses* are no longer our focus. They are just *half-time scores*. We develop patience, and see that apparent curses reverse out. I embarrass myself by complaining about things that end up evaporating into nothing.

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. (John 9:1-4)

Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ” (Luke 13:4-5)

The psalmist is asking God to *be a surety* for him. He is looking God to be his *backer* because he can *vouch for his character*. The word for surety here is (H 6148); meaning to provide an exchange, or to enter into a mortgage. In other words; the psalmist is asking for his safe rite of passage in exchange for lifetime of regularly-occurring obedience.

Job's counselors also saw the world the same way. They saw Job's struggles as a result of his *apparent sins*. They were wrong. The Book of Job was largely about how that was an incorrect conclusion.

“Remember now, whoever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? (Job 4:7)

Job was actually an honorable *worry wart*, who obsessed over the prospect of losing his family and belongings. The very thing he feared came upon him to free him.

The writer of this psalm is checking and re-checking his bible. Is he missing something? Is he out of compliance? He is growing weary of waiting on God to rescue him. He is confused. *“I must have overlooked something here”*. Thinking that we are out of place creates a lot of anxiety.

The psalmist is further confused and frustrated by the fact that his Godless opponents are the ones doing this to him. Not only does he seem to be penalized for foul play; but these heartless bullies are getting away with it.

The writer is being ruled by his circumstances. That is a sign of spiritual confusion. It is easy for me to say that about him. God has a plan for us to walk through these things in relative peace. Unfortunately, these setbacks and concerns usually *own* us. Paul endured extreme hardships in his efforts to share the gospel around the world. He was faithful, and he battled the opposition the whole way. The problems had nothing to do with his conduct. He knew that. Somehow, he sang in prison, and did not bear grudges.

From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. (2 Corinthians 11:24-30)

Read Psalm 119:129-136:

The Ultimate Experience

The psalmist says that God's word is wonderful. The word used here is *pele* (H6382); which means *a miracle*. I can remember staying at my grandmother's house in Sacramento on vacations as a boy. She had bookshelves of encyclopedias and year books and a few old bibles. I had a fascination with these old Catholic treasures that seemed to have been forgotten and overlooked. She seemed to be confused as to why I would want to read her old bibles. I did not spend much time looking through them; but I was struck by the possibility that they were powerful.

The psalmist treasures God's word, and describes it to be *a monument* in his life. It is a connection that he wants desperately to preserve. It is like a mystical and transforming potion. When I drink it in, I can see things that I could not otherwise see. I can feel things that I would not otherwise feel. I can do things that I would

not otherwise do. Conversely, the same is true with sin and mind-altering chemicals. Engaging in them can lead to thoughts and desires and perspectives that are imagined.

Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1)

He sees sin as an opposing mind-altering force. The scriptures describe lust and sin alike. Wine gets you to do things that you would not do, unless you were under its spell. Adultery and pornography work exactly like a mind-altering drug.

Porn addiction is, in theory, when you can't stop looking at porn, even if you want to. And the obsession gets to the point that it interferes with work, relationships, and other parts of daily life. It's easy to understand how this could be a problem with the widespread availability of internet porn today. In 2019, for example, the popular site recorded 42 billion visits -- that's 115 million a day. Scientists are debating if heavy use of pornography is an addiction in the medical sense of the word. The World Health Organization added compulsive sexual behavior as a mental health disorder in 2018. And while it doesn't single out a pornography (or any other) addiction, it does refer to repetitive sexual activities *becoming a central focus of a person's life to the point that they neglect their "health and personal care or other interests, activities, and responsibilities."* And a study of men who sought treatment for problematic pornography use (PPU) showed that their brains did respond to sexual images. That gives credence to experts who say that *the same brain activity shown in drug or alcohol addiction -- when circuits in your brain associated with reward, motivation, and memory get turned on -- is in those who use pornography a lot.*

Mercy and Grace

The psalmist sees clearly that those who enter into God's gates and sit at his feet are blessed with mercy. Mercy is not getting the punishment or consequences that we deserve. Grace is getting good things that we did not really qualify for or earn. One thing that keeps some men from getting too far into their faith is that they want to *earn their salvation* through good works. God is not like us. Our best efforts are not even close to being acceptable. Either God sees Jesus in us or he just sees us. We do not want him to see us.

But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousness are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

He sees his bible as a safe inn to come in a rest and be protected. It is medicine for our mental illness that causes self-destructive behavior. It is a healing potion and elixir from heaven.

God is Righteous

Read Psalm 119:137-144: The word used for righteous is H 6662 (tsaddiyq). It is for *one who does things fairly and right*. That is part of one of God's names.

The Name of Jehovah-Tsidkenu, means **THE LORD IS OUR JUSTICE**. The context in which this name is given is *wonderful*: Jeremiah 23: 1-8. It is a promise to the remnant of the Hebrew people who return from captivity in Babylon, that this rest, *that handful of those chosen by GOD* would be taken and returned to their land by the very hands of GOD and that they would again grow and multiply. That is to say, that it refers to the Messiah who is the equivalent word in Hebrew for Christ.

The Psalmist wants to find something outside of this corrupt and decaying world to cling to. The enemies of the gospel and the daily hardships just add to his convictions that he has to find something better (something that is right and good and worth keeping). Our pastor Ray Bently used to say that there is nothing sadder than to see a sinner who has chased his lusts to his own hurt; and now he cannot find satisfaction in them.

God takes care of us, but he does not let us stay in love with this world. God had to wean Adam away from his farming quest to get his attention. The worst things that happen to us are generally the best things for us spiritually. If I had succeeded in my endeavors, I would probably not have a zeal for God or have room in my heart for others.

Some Christians just disconnect from everything in the world. We are called to sort through it all and to fulfill our purposes here. They are looking for something that is right when they should be looking for something to restore.

Therefore, thus says the LORD: “If you return, Then I will bring you back; You shall stand before Me; If you take out the precious from the vile, You shall be as My mouth. (Jeremiah 15:19)

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Read Psalm 119:145-152:

Separation of the Old Man and the Emergence of the New Man

The harder that life gets; the more we are drawn to God for help. The problem is that we have to turn our back on this world’s attractions before we are willing to *let go and let God*. We need to *get sick of our old ways*, before we are going to be willing to let God drive.

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (1 Peter 4:1-6)

Some of us cannot make an honest assessment of our lives without being severely humbled. God’s goodness is a constant. Our willingness to receive and embrace God’s path varies inversely with our self-confidence. We are all like *Thanksgiving turkeys* who need to be at a certain temperature and pressure to become ready. Too much leash and too much success is not going to result in fervency or pursuit of God. Many church planting organizations have discovered that giving missionaries too much money almost always ruins their attitude towards the LORD’s work

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:3-6)

Being *born again* is where our journey begins. After that, the first item on our checklist is to *get baptized* (by our own faith...not as an infant). Baptism represents the death of our old self persona. That can take a lifetime before it takes place. We all want to build on our old lives; but God has some demolition that needs to take place before the *new thing* in me can be built up. We really have to get *a good wiff* of our own miserable essence to wake up. Unbelievers are essentially *nose blind*; and oblivious to their effect on others. One day, when we are ready, the Holy Spirit lets us see ourselves for what we are. I am in serious need of an upgrade in my decision-making ability, and my lack of love for others and my apathy is not going to cut it. Our biggest idol is our self-will. Maybe Frank Sinatra did it *his way*; but we cannot do it our way. That is not why we are here. Do I have to be the one who comes out smelling like a rose; or can I be happy if God's team gets a first down when I fall?

Read Psalm 119:153-160:

[*Are we in Rocky 5; or are we Shadow Boxing?*](#)

The psalmist is really taking it on the chin. He needs a boost. He is really becoming distracted by those who have it in for him. We can *feel like we are losing when we are really winning*. We need to visualize success differently. We think that we see the final score, but we do not. Blessed are the flexible.

If we are confident in God; our opponents can even confirm our decision. The fastest sailing is into the wind. Likewise with spiritual warfare. Any dead fish can float downstream. The psalmist is obsessed with what his enemies are doing, and what they are trying to do. *We can let our enemies define us and handicap us if we are not careful.* It is all virtual. Satan wants us to carry a heart of opposition. Once we take our disagreement into the *arena of the flesh* it becomes a loss, regardless of how bad they are. If you are focused on the guy who is bugging you too much you are *off line* with God.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)