

## How Affliction Increases Affection (Ps 119:153-160)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on March 22, 2009

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You've heard of the seven wonders of the ancient world – well, there are many more wonders of God's ancient Word. We have the great privilege to look again at Psalm 119 in this wonderful book inspired by a wonderful Savior. One of the wonders of Scripture is its unique nature and history, the diversity of human writers from multiple countries over more than 1500 years, yet a wonderfully and amazingly consistent Divine message:

There are words written by kings, by emperors, by princes, by poets, by sages, by philosophers, by fishermen, by statesmen, by men learned in the wisdom of Egypt, educated in the schools of Babylon, and trained at the feet of rabbis in Jerusalem. It was written by men in exile, in the desert, in shepherd's tents, in green pastures, and beside still waters. Among its authors we find a tax-gatherer, a herdsman, a gatherer of sycamore fruit. We find poor men, rich men, statesmen, preachers, captains, legislators, judges, and exiles. The Bible is a library full of history, genealogy, ethnology, law, ethics, prophecy, poetry, eloquence, medicine, sanitary science, political economy, and the perfect rules for personal and social life. And behind every word is the divine author, God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

Psalm 119 is the most wonderful tribute ever written to the wonderful Word of God. In our verse-by-verse section-by-section study through this chapter, this morning we come to the section beginning in verse 153. One of the wonderful blessings of studying through this book is seeing the wonderful blessings that took place through the original author's commitment to Scripture and prayer.

Theme: *Affliction should increase affection for God and His Word.*

Goal: *We walk away saying "what a wonderful Savior we have"*

Psalm 119:153-160 (NASB95) <sup>153</sup> Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Your law. <sup>154</sup> Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word. <sup>155</sup> Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Your statutes. <sup>156</sup> Great are Your mercies, O LORD; Revive me according to Your ordinances. <sup>157</sup> Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, *Yet* I do not turn aside from Your testimonies. <sup>158</sup> I behold the treacherous and loathe *them*, Because they do not keep Your word. <sup>159</sup> Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness. <sup>160</sup> The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

This passage begins in *affliction* (v. 153) and ends with *affection* (v. 159 "I love Your precepts") and praise for God's truth (v. 160). Our affections of love, delight, and joy and praise to God are not *inconsistent with* affliction; they can be *increased in* affliction.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4 "I am filled with comfort; **I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.**"

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup> for **in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy** and their extreme poverty have **overflowed in a wealth of generosity** on their part.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV) <sup>6</sup> And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for **you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit**

It is not only *possible* to receive, love and delight in God's Word with joy during affliction ... Psalm 119 argues that it's *essential*:

<sup>92</sup> If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.

You may have noticed when I read our passage earlier he prayed 3x "revive me / give me life according to Your Word." In v. 50 and others we see God's Word was the instrument God used to answer that prayer through affliction, which also brought great comfort.

<sup>50</sup> This is my comfort **in my affliction**, That **Your word has revived me**.

Luther noticed in Psalm 119 that the psalmist not only prayed and meditated over the Word of God in order to understand it; he also suffered in order to understand it. Psalm 119:67, 71 says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.... It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." An indispensable key to understanding the Scriptures is suffering in the path of righteousness.

Thus Luther said: "I want you to know how to study ... in the right way. I have practiced this method myself ... three rules. They are frequently proposed throughout Psalm [119] and run thus: *oratio, meditatio, tentatio* [prayer / supplication, meditation, and tribulation, or affliction, which] he called the "touchstone." "[These rules] teach you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's word is: it is wisdom supreme."

He proved the value of trials over and over again in his own experience. "For as soon as God's Word becomes known through you," he says, "the devil will afflict you ... [and for a believer, Luther said this] will teach you by his temptations to seek and to love God's Word. For I myself ... owe my [Catholic persecutors] many thanks for so beating, pressing, and frightening me through the devil's raging that they have turned me into a fairly good theologian, driving me to a goal I should never have reached."

Suffering was woven into life for Luther. Keep in mind that from 1521 on, Luther lived under the ban of the empire. Emperor Charles V said, "I have decided to mobilize everything against Luther: my kingdoms and dominions, my friends, my body, my blood and my soul." [At any time Luther] could be legally killed, except where he was protected by his prince, Frederick of Saxony.

He endured relentless slander of the most cruel kind ... Physically he suffered from excruciating kidney stones and headaches, with buzzing in his ears and ear infections and incapacitating [conditions] ... emotionally and spiritually he would undergo the most horrible struggles ... These were the trials that he said made him a theologian... trial, the thorn in the flesh, is Satan's unwitting contribution to our becoming good [men of God].<sup>2</sup>

John Piper writes: "The stresses of life, the interruptions, the disappointments, the conflicts, the physical ailments, the losses—all of these may well be the very lens through which we see the meaning of God's Word as never before. Paradoxically, the pain of life may open us to the Word that becomes the pathway to joy ... use the Word of God to fight for joy."<sup>3</sup> What a wonderful Savior!

I certainly have not had to face the afflictions of Luther or the man who wrote Psalm 119, or even the afflictions some of you in this room have faced or are facing right now. My greatest afflictions are undoubtedly future, but the timeless truths of this text should encourage us all and equip us all. The *emotions* we see at the start of our passage are by the end of the passage overpowered by his *exultation* in God's Word. His afflictions were not only overcome by his affections, afflictions actually increased his affections for God and His Word. And they can do the same for us as well.

Let's consider Luther's 3 rules for Bible Study for our outline:

1. Supplication – What he prayed for
2. Meditation – Dwelling on God more than his afflicters
3. Tribulation/Affliction – How he was changed as he prayed

## 1. SUPPLICATION - WHAT HE PRAYED FOR

This past Tuesday we had the privilege to hear the wonderful Moody Symphonic band, and they had a beautiful and big harp. This musician who wrote this Psalm to be sung (whether David the harpist or not), however, begins this stanza on a note different than the uplifting crescendos of the orchestra, as one put it, in Ps. 119 “We find the singer once more tuning his harp to a minor key.”<sup>4</sup>

Verse 153 begins the distraught cries for help, five rapid fire imperatives in the first 2 verses, pressing the writer's sense of urgency. This stanza is the *Resh* stanza, meaning each verse in the Hebrew begins with that letter (equivalent to English “R”).

*Regard me* (v. 153a, “Look”)

*Rescue me* (v. 153b)

*Represent me* (v. 154a, “Plead my cause”)

*Redeem me* (v. 154a)

*Revive me* (v. 154b)

### ***Regard me* (v. 153a, “Look”)**

<sup>153</sup> Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Your law.

LOOK – in Hebrew could have a general or more special focus. Turn to Genesis 22, where we have a theologically significant use of this root word.

When our Psalm prays for God to “look upon,” the Hebrew phrase for “look” has been correctly described as having ‘more in mind than a request for God to glance casually upon him ... [he] was likely recalling the rich historical testimony of the LORD who had often looked intensely upon the troubles of His people *so as to intervene and care for them* ... For example, in Genesis 22 ... in verse 8 [Abraham] told Isaac literally “God will see” [same Heb. Word] i.e. He will *take care of* the matter of the sacrificial means. After the substitute for Isaac's life had been mercifully provided by the LORD, it is noted that Abraham called *YHWH yireh* [or Jehovah Jireh – same Heb. Root for “see”], “the LORD provides,” i.e. He quite characteristically *looks upon to care for* His people in their plight.<sup>5</sup> What a wonderful Savior is Jesus our Lord!

Exodus 3 also shows how this word is used in another theological, rich passage. Our text in Psalm 119 prays “Look upon my affliction” and the words for “look” and “affliction” also appear in Exodus 3:

Exodus 3:2-17 (NASB95) <sup>2</sup>The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and **he looked [same Heb. Word]**, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> So Moses said, “I must turn aside now **and see [same Heb. word]** this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” <sup>4</sup> When the LORD **saw [same Heb. word]** that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup> Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” <sup>6</sup> He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid **to look at [different Heb. word meaning “gaze” or “behold”]** God. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said, “I have **surely seen [same Heb. word] the affliction [same exact words as in Psalm 119:153 “look on my affliction”]** of My people who are in Egypt, **and have given heed to their cry** because of their taskmasters, for **I am aware of their sufferings.** <sup>8</sup> “So **I have come down to deliver them** from the power of the Egyptians ...

<sup>9</sup> “Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, **I have seen [same word again]** the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them ...

<sup>16</sup> “Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “**I am indeed concerned about you** and what has been done to you in Egypt. <sup>17</sup> “So I said, **I will bring you up out of the affliction** of Egypt ...

What an encouragement it should be for us who know this God, that we can pray to this same God who has the same concern for His people today. We read back in Psalm 119:153 “Look upon me in my affliction, and deliver me” – this man who loved the Law of God and meditated on it day and night was probably meditating on this very chapter from the Law (Ex. 3) when he wrote this verse:

- He prays essentially, Lord, I know you looked on your people in the past in their affliction and delivered them, please look on me in my affliction and deliver me as well.
- He says at the end of the verse, “for I do not forget your law.” I won’t forget what your law says about your nature of looking on to provide and care for, so I’m asking you not to forget this servant of yours who is keeping your law.
- I know you saw your people when they were oppressed by oppressors in Egypt, so I know you see my oppression, too
- Your Word in Exodus 3 says you were aware of their sufferings, so I know you are aware of mine.
- That passage says you gave heed to their cry, so I am asking you to give heed to mine, as well.
- Your Word says you were concerned about them and what had been done to them, and I know you are the unchanging God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the same yesterday, today, and forever, and you are still concerned about us.
- If you delivered Israel from the entire Egyptian army, I know, O LORD, you can deliver me from my far smaller problems and persecutions, so please look and lift me up.

Psalm 9:13 (NASB95) <sup>13</sup> Be gracious to me, O LORD; **See my affliction** from those who hate me, **You who lift me up** from the gates of death,

Psalm 25:18 (NASB95)

<sup>18</sup> **Look upon my affliction** and my trouble, And forgive all my sins.

Psalm 31:7 (NASB95) <sup>7</sup> **I will rejoice and be glad** in Your lovingkindness, Because **You have seen my affliction [there's joy and gladness in affliction again. Why? Because]**; You have **known the troubles of my soul,**

Psalm 106:44-47 (NASB95) <sup>44</sup> Nevertheless **He looked upon their distress [NKJV "affliction"]** When He heard their cry; <sup>45</sup> And **He remembered** His covenant for their sake, And **relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness.** <sup>46</sup> He also made them *objects* of **compassion** In the presence of all their captors. <sup>47</sup> **Save us, O LORD our God, And gather us from among the nations, To give thanks to Your holy name And glory in Your praise.**

*So he prays not only, Regard Me, but ...*

***Rescue Me (v. 153b)***

In Ps 119:153, "Look upon my affliction and rescue me," the word means 'to rescue as with a gentle hand ... [not necessarily a] hasty, dramatic rescue, but for a full consideration of his sorrow that would lead God to deliver him from in His own way and time.'<sup>6</sup>

What is so unique and wonderful about our great Savior is that He is not a distant, detached dispassionate disinterested Deity, a God "watching us from a distance," as Bette Midler sang. We sing of a:

*Wonderful, merciful Savior, Precious Redeemer and Friend  
Who would have thought that a Lamb  
Could rescue the souls of men? Oh you rescue the souls of men  
Counselor, Comforter, Keeper, Spirit we long to embrace  
You offer hope when our hearts have Hopelessly lost the way  
Almighty, infinite Father Faithfully loving Your own  
Here in our weakness You find us Falling before Your throne*

Hebrews 2:17-18 (NASB95) <sup>17</sup> Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest ... For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Hebrews 4:15-16 (NASB95) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Men who suffer and have sorrows can pray to Jesus, "man of sorrows and familiar with suffering," experiencing rejection of men, despised, esteemed not, as Isaiah 53 says of Christ, who was oppressed, afflicted, chastened, scourged, bruised, pierced, crushed – and not just physically but spiritually. This Suffering Servant Messiah came to bear our griefs, carry our pains, endure the stripes from the whip that we deserved, the wrath of God that we should suffer, so that by His suffering in our place the LORD caused the iniquity of us all (all His servants in Christ) to fall on Him, so we can be healed and forgiven of our sins of going astray our own way. Isaiah 53 speaks of Christ's affliction, and Isaiah 63:9 says:

In all [His people's] affliction **He was afflicted**, And ... **saved** them; In His love and in His mercy He **redeemed** them, And He **lifted** them and **carried** them ...

When we walk away from this great study in this great psalm today I don't want us to think "what a great sermon" – but *what a great Savior we have!* I'm a great sinner, so are you, He's a Great Savior

*It's to this Savior we can pray Regard Me, Rescue Me, and thirdly  
Represent Me*

In v. 154 he prays “plead my cause,” or “my case,” which is language borrowed from the legal arena, from courts of law. And right before this third request, he says at the end of v. 153, “I have not forgotten *your law*,” in other words he has not disregarded or ignored the law of God as his life pattern, but he needs someone to represent him in this court of law against the lawless and godless.

The request “plead my cause” can be paraphrased “represent me by your righteousness, stand in my stead, bear my burden, fight my fight, pay my price, take on my trial, argue as my attorney.

Be my advocate – rather than defend myself before human accusers, my conscience is clean before the divine court, and I plead with you to plead my cause. No one else is standing with me; Lord stand for me. Take up my cause as your own. Be my defense attorney as I am arraigned before the tribunal of wicked one, either literally or figuratively. No one else will even take my case. Be my Representative, who comes into the court room with all-powerful means and unassailable arguments to rescue me from my accuser, either human or the great accuser Satan himself on the last day.

1 John 2:1 says when a blood-bought repentant believer sins, “we have an Advocate before the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” What a wonderful Savior we have!

This was David's plea:

1 Samuel 24:15 (NKJV) <sup>15</sup> Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.”

Psalm 35:1 (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> A Psalm of David. Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with those who strive with me; Fight against those who fight against me.

This is the very nature, heart of God for the powerless and penniless

Proverbs 22:22-23 (NASB95) Do not rob the poor ... Or crush the afflicted ... For **the LORD will plead their case** And take the life of those

God is the advocate for widows and orphans and others in distress, desperation, vulnerability. Even Satan himself, the great adversary and accuser of God's children, falls before Christ the defense attorney who has judicially credited His perfect righteousness to His defendants and has already satisfied the Judge by paying their penalty in full so they are justified. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What a wonderful Savior we have!

*He Regards Me, Rescues Me, Represents Me, and now he prays*

***Redeem Me***

<sup>154</sup> Plead my cause **and redeem me**;

The images in the Old Testament of these two prayers are closely related. The One who represents His own not only regards them, but rescues them because He is also their Redeemer as well. There is no rescue or representation in their case without a Redeemer for such oppressed, fatherless, hopeless, helpless, powerless children.

Jeremiah 50:33-34 (NASB95) Thus says the LORD of hosts, “The sons of Israel are oppressed ... [But] **Their Redeemer is strong, the LORD of hosts is His name; He will vigorously plead their case So that He may bring rest ...**

Proverbs 23:10-11 (NASB95) Do not ... go into the fields of the fatherless, For **their Redeemer is strong; He will plead their case against you.**

What a great Savior, who ‘takes the place of the kinsman and also of avenger to the poor and helpless.’<sup>7</sup>

When Pastor Jerry picked those “Redeemer” songs for our service, he didn’t know this would be what I was preaching on today. What a great Savior we have who works even in such details to glorify His redemption. This word “redeem / redeemer” ‘is used of a man’s nearest relative at a particular time. In Lev. 25:48f., it refers to a man’s brother, uncle, cousin, or some other kinsman who is responsible for standing up for him and maintaining his rights.

The most extensive illustration of this responsibility/privilege is found in the Book of Ruth

Ruth 2:19-20 (NIV) <sup>19</sup> Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!” Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said. <sup>20</sup> “The LORD bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close **relative** [same Heb. word we saw last week in Ps 119:151 “the Lord is *near*”]; he is one of our kinsman-**redeemers**” [same Heb. word as Ps 119:154]

Ruth 3:9 (NIV) <sup>9</sup> “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a **kinsman-redeemer.**” ...

<sup>12</sup> Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. <sup>13</sup> Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; **let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it.** Lie here until morning.”

Ruth 4:6-17 (NIV) <sup>6</sup> At this, the [other] kinsman-redeemer said [*he’s speaking to Boaz*], “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. **You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.**” ...

<sup>9</sup> Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. <sup>10</sup> **I have also acquired [purchased, paid for] Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife ...**

<sup>13</sup> So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. <sup>14</sup> The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to **the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer.** May he become famous throughout Israel! <sup>15</sup> He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.” <sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. <sup>17</sup> The women living there said, “Naomi has a son.” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, **the father of David.**

The first page of the New Testament picks up on this: “The record of the genealogy of Jesus, the son of David ... Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth ... Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.” (Matt. 1:1, 5, 16).

That genealogy that includes such pictures of grace as Rahab and Ruth and Boaz and David and Bathsheba, a line including sinners and women outside the covenant people of Israel, were all part of the line of the Son of David Jesus Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer who also purchased and paid a price to redeem a bride for Himself.

We were just as needy as Naomi and Ruth, utterly dependent on the kindness of others to sustain and provide for us. Without Christ we were all like Ruth, our only recourse to humbly come as a lowly servant and plead with our Redeemer to cover us with His garment and not our own sinful garments of filthy rags. Like the women said to Naomi in verse 14, “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you ...” What a wonderful Savior and Redeemer we have!

Job 19:25-27 (NIV) <sup>25</sup> I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. <sup>26</sup> And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; <sup>27</sup> I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

The O.T. saints understood this more than some give them credit. The N.T. completes the picture of the Redemptive work of our Lord on the cross: the church is God-sought, Spirit-taught, blood-bought slaves, redeemed by being chosen from the slave market from an undesirable mess of humanity, no better than the rest but graciously bought back by their original owner, ransom price paid in full, brought into God’s family as sons (as some slave-owners would), chains of sin broken and replaced by the Lord’s yoke which is light, redeemed to sing what a wonderful Savior we have:

*“Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it, redeemed by the blood of the lamb, redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child forever”*

Through all redemptive history till to the end of time, redemption will be the eternal anthem in heaven to the Lamb who was slain!

Revelation 5:9-12 (NASB95) <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, “**Worthy are You** to take the book and to break its seals; **for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation [His bride].** <sup>10</sup> “You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” <sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, “**Worthy is the Lamb that was slain** to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

Thou art worthy, O Lord, and the height of the supernatural symphonic orchestra in heaven focuses its praise on redemption, the slain Redeemer who purchased us. Heaven is cross-centered and it is quite loud about it. What a wonderful Savior we have!

But not everyone will sing this song... sadly many don’t want to

<sup>155</sup> Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Your statutes.

Salvation is far from all the wicked who do not seek the Lord and Him alone as their Redeemer and wonderful Savior. Our Lord came to seek and save the lost, those who know they’re lost and that salvation is far from them and impossible by their own efforts.

Isaiah 55:6-7 (NASB95) <sup>6</sup> **Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.** <sup>7</sup> **Let the wicked forsake his way** And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, **And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.**

If you reject the only Redeemer and His work on the cross as your only hope, salvation will be far from you. But if you turn from trusting your own corrupt works and trust the cross work of Christ

Ephesians 2:13, 17 (NASB95) <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus **you who formerly were far off have been brought near** by the blood of Christ ... <sup>17</sup> AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY ...

What a wonderful Savior we have in Jesus our Lord! If Jesus is not yet your Lord, seek Him while He may be found, call on Him now.

*Regard me, rescue me, represent me, redeem me, and now lastly **Revive Me***

Regard me – as you regarded the slaves in Egypt  
 Rescue me – as you delivered them through the Red Sea  
 Represent me – as my Advocate in court  
 Redeem me – as my near Kinsman  
 Revive me – as my wonderful Savior

v. 154b “... **Revive me** according to Your word.”

v. 156 “Great are Your mercies, O LORD; **Revive me** according to Your ordinances.

v. 159 “Consider how I love Your precepts; **Revive me**, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.

It’s noteworthy that these repeated prayers for God to revive him or give him life are sandwiched and surrounded by verses that speak of the wicked sinners (see vv. 155, 157-158). It seems that especially as he thought of his persecutors, that he sensed all the more his need for continual reviving spiritual life from God. His affliction increased his affection for God and His Word.

God’s own affections in v. 156, what the NKJV calls God’s “great ... tender mercies,” is what drives his prayer for God to revive his own spiritual life as well, including his affections. In affliction, do we pray for God to give us greater spiritual life and affections?

Charles Bridges writes that this repeated prayer “revive me” should prompt self-examination as to where we need such grace: ‘Are my views of sin, and especially of the sin of my own heart, slight and superficial? Do they fail in producing humility, abasement, tenderness of conscience, circumspection of conduct? If it be so—[Revive] me, O my God! Does my apprehension of a Saviour's love serve to embitter sin to me? to crucify sin in me, to warm and enliven my heart with love to him, and zeal in his service? If I am convicted of coldness to such a Saviour, and sluggishness in such a service, I need to pray—O Lord, [revive] me! And how do I find it with regard to prayer itself? Are not my prayers general—unfrequent—wandering? Is not my service too often constrained, a forced duty, rather than a privilege and delight? O Lord, [revive] me!’<sup>8</sup>

If we are in sin, God’s great, God’s abundant mercy in v. 156 is the only way a sinner can plead in repentance:

Psalm 51:1 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN NATHAN THE PROPHET WENT TO HIM, AFTER HE HAD GONE IN TO BATHSHEBA. **Have mercy on me**, O God, according to your steadfast love; **according to your abundant mercy** blot out my transgressions.

When Moses prayed for God to show him His glory, the fullness of His character is revealed in terms similar to this verse, God's mercies are great, His goodness is abounding.

Exodus 34:6-7 (NKJV) <sup>6</sup> And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, **merciful** and gracious, longsuffering, and **abounding in goodness** and truth, <sup>7</sup> **keeping mercy for thousands ...**

What a wonderful Savior we have! Because of his mercy, abounding goodness, we are enabled to love His Word in affliction

<sup>157</sup> Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, *Yet* I do not turn aside from Your testimonies.

No matter how he suffered, he would not swerve from God's Word. He does not and will not deviate from God's great and manifold Word, no matter how great or many his enemies may be.

<sup>158</sup> I beheld the treacherous and loathe *them*, Because they do not keep Your word.

His strongly negative emotions were not ultimately or primarily because of how these ungodly treated him as a person, it was how they treated God and His Word (as the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the verse says).

<sup>159</sup> Consider how I love Your precepts [in contrast to the treacherous and lawless sinners]; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.

He began this stanza saying "consider my affliction" – now he prays "consider my affection." As he prays, he is changed by God's love so that he loves God's Word. As one writer described it, 'he becomes preoccupied with the unfathomable grace of God (v. 159b) and the inestimable gift of God, His all-sufficient Word (i.e. v. 160). It would seem that tranquility progressively dispels the shadows of trepidation as one's focus shifts from the more temporal the more transcendent.'<sup>9</sup> He began with prayers, and ends with praise, lost in the wonder of the wonderful Savior we have. He praised what we prized, and he saw far superior pleasure here.

Hebrews 11:24-26 (NKJV) <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> **choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,** <sup>26</sup> esteeming the reproach of Christ **greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.**

It is not in spite of his affliction, but because of his affliction, that he had increased affectionate love for God's Word as he prayed to the God he loved, looking to the reward of His truly greater riches.

<sup>160</sup> The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

The totality of God's Word is truth, without error in all parts and in the whole. God's Word never needs to be revised, rescinded, rewritten, retracted, it is righteous forever. 'God's Book has proven itself to be both dependable and imperishable. For needy pilgrims it exudes its never-failing reliability which enables them through a transcendent perspective to endure and persevere amidst the tempestuous tribulations of life in a hostile world.'<sup>10</sup>

What a wonderful Savior we have! How should we respond?

Thomas Watson applies this passage in his book *Profiting from the Scriptures*, which I hope will profit us as well:

‘Get an ardent love to the word. Prizing relates to the judgment, love to the affections. Ps 119:159: "Consider how I love thy precepts." He is likely to grow rich who delights in his trade; a lover of learning will be a scholar. [Augustine] tells us before his conversion he took no pleasure in the Scriptures, but afterwards they were his delights. David thought the word sweeter than the honey which drops from the comb. Thomas a Kempis used to say he found no content but in a corner, with the book of God in his hand ... What infinite pleasure should we take in reading the book of life! There is enough in the word to breed holy ... delight; it is a specimen and demonstration of God's holy love to us. The Spirit is God's love token; the word his love letter; how does one rejoice to read over his friend's letter! The word written is a divine treasury, or storehouse; in it is scattered truth as pearls, to adorn the inner man of the heart. The word written is the true manna, which hath all sorts of sweet taste in it; it is a sovereign elixir ... Holy David drank of this cordial; Ps 119:50: "This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden; every line in it is a fragrant flower, which we should wear not [on our jacket] but in our heart. Delight in the word causes profit ...'<sup>11</sup>

Affection can be increased in our affliction, by our Lord who is:

- Caretaker (v. 153a “look upon”)
- Savior (v. 153b “rescue me”)
- Law Giver (v. 153b)
- Advocate (v. 154a)
- Kinsman-Redeemer (v. 154a)
- Life Giver (vv. 154b, 156b, 159b)
- Judge (v. 156b, “ordinances”)
- Mercy Giver (v. 156a)
- Covenant Keeper (“LORD,” vv. 156, 159)
- Teacher (v. 159, “Your precepts”)
- Loyal Lord (v. 159, “Your lovingkindness”)
- Truth Speaker (v. 160)

*What a wonderful Savior we have in Jesus our Lord! Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> Source unknown; cited by John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup> John Piper. *The legacy of sovereign joy : God's triumphant grace in the lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin*. Originally published: Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2000. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Piper, *When I don't desire God : How to fight for joy*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Phillips, *Psalms*, p. 403.

<sup>5</sup> Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God*, p. 337-338.

<sup>6</sup> Lockyer, *Psalms*, 603.

<sup>7</sup> Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the O.T.*, p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Bridges, *An Exposition of Psalm 119*, p. 410.

<sup>9</sup> Zemek, 347.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Watson. *Profiting from the Scriptures*, p. 30-32.