

# Psalm 119:81-96

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Date: 31 July 2022

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. My name is Andrew, as Kyle said. I'm one of the elders here at Shoreline. and I'm one of the team of guys who have been filling Dave's shoes in the pulpit this summer while he's on sabbatical.

It's been such a blessing to hear from so many different voices. It's not how we normally do things. And I wanted to thank you guys, the congregation, for being patient with those of us who don't often preach.

And today is going to be especially a day that calls for patience because I am preaching on the longest chapter in the Bible. And it is a family worship Sunday. So if I start seeing families moving to the exits, then I'll know it's time to cut things short.

Well, our sermon that text this morning is Psalm 119 verses 81 through 96. And so this sermon, as Kyle alluded to, might feel a little bit like a rerun because I did preach on Psalm 119 back in January.

But there is a lot of material there, so I won't be repeating myself too much. But second, it could feel like a rerun because I'm going to be focusing on the theme of suffering in Psalm 119.

[1:11] And so I'm going to be highlighting a lot of the same themes, a lot of the same points that we've heard in about the last three or four sermons.

And that's not really intentional. That's not by design. We didn't really confer with one another. We didn't set up these sermons in any sort of order. So it seems like this is a theme that the Holy Spirit is highlighting for our church.

And I don't really know, you know, why that might be the case. But I did want to say, if you're suffering this morning and there's nobody walking through that with you, come talk to me after the service.

Or you can talk to Mike. He's not here this morning, but you can reach out to him. Or another brother or sister who's here. Let us know what's going on in your life. We want to walk through that with you. We want to be a comfort to you.

We want to help you in any way that we can. And that's a big reason why the church exists. So now I'm going to ask, can I please have all of the children who can walk come up to the front of the room for a children's sermon.

[2:20] You can come right up here and sit down here on the ground. Good job.

This is great. So you guys weren't here. Most of you weren't. The last time I preached on Psalm 119, you guys were across the way.

But I'm going to need you guys to help your mommies and daddies remember what it is that they heard, what we talked about. Are you guys able to help me? Raise your hand if you can help me. If you're willing to help.

Yes. See some hands. This is good. You can't help Ezekiel. Well, just try and answer these questions. And if you do, it'll be helpful. You can help. Okay, this is good.

So what is this? Who knows what this is? It's a book. A book. Do you have this book? Yeah. So you have this book? Yeah.

[3:16] So what do you do with this book? Read it. Do you guys read it? Maybe your mommies and daddies read it to you? Yeah. You do it by yourself?

Your mom? Yep. Your mommies. So when they read you this book or a book like this, do they just read it one time all the way through? How many times?

One. Ten times? A hundred? A hundred? So they read it again and again and again. Why not just, why do they keep reading it? Because it's fun?

Because you like it? Yeah. Yeah. So who knows what these are? Bibles. Bibles. Yeah. So one of these?

Yep. Yeah. Probably a lot of you do. So this has, yes James, what were you going to say? Nothing. You have one too? Yeah. So this has stories from the Bible and this actually is a Bible.

[ 4 : 15 ] So what do we do with these? Read them. Read them. And do you just read through them one time, front to back? A lot. A lot of times. Again and again.

One hundred thousand. Yep. Like maybe you'll keep reading it for the rest of your life. So this book, will you keep reading this as you grow up, when you're older?

You? I'm old. I'm old. You can't, you're old? You're already grown up. Okay. Some of you might. Probably not though. You probably won't read this when you're grown up.

But will you read this when you're grown up? Yeah. Yes. So why do we keep reading this book?

Because it's the Bible. Because it's the Bible? Lennox. It's about God's word. It's about God's word?

Yeah. Yeah. Well maybe, maybe there's a verse that can help us understand. Can somebody read this verse? Lennox. I can. I can. Lennox is going to read it for us.

[ 5 : 10 ] So what does that mean? Against. Say that again? Against.

Against. That is one of the words. Does anyone know what that means? It's kind of tricky. Hmm.

Well so when we, again and again. Yeah. So as we read it again and again and again, that stores it in our hearts.

That stores the truth of God's word inside of us and that helps us not to sin against God. That helps us to obey. So that's one of the reasons why we read God's word again and again.

Here's another verse. Owen, can you read that verse? This one right here? Maybe? Okay. Nope.

Thank you for trying. Can anyone else read that verse? Lennox again. Again. Yeah. So not only does reading God's word help us to obey God's word, but it also leads us to delight, which means to have joy in God's word.

[ 6 : 18 ] So when you guys go home today, you can ask your parents to help you understand what it means to delight in God's word. Okay. You guys can return to your parents. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So when I preached on the first two stanzas of Psalm 119 back in January, verses 1 through 16, we talked about a life conformed to the word of God.

That's what the first stanza of this psalm portrays. Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. And then the second stanza portrays a heart that's in love with the word of God.

And we ask the question, how? Because that's the very question that the text invites us to ask. The first verse of the second stanza is, how can a young man keep his way pure?

And we talked about how desire for God leads to discipline, which becomes delight. As the Lord works on our hearts. These two stanzas introduce these themes, and then they're woven like threads through the entire psalm.

[ 7 : 41 ] They just keep popping up in stanza after stanza. If you've read the psalm, you know what I'm talking about. But there is a sense in which what I've just recapped and what I shared with our kids kind of sounds a little bit like a children's sermon.

It sounds like something that's sanitized, something that's simple, uncomplicated, that we feed to kids knowing that all the bad stuff's been taken out. Do we just love God more and more and everything works out?

Is that what you believe? Owen says yes. Is that what you believe? Probably not if you've lived much of life. But maybe is that what you think you're supposed to believe?

Is that what you think the Bible teaches? And I want to break here for a quick minute. I kind of just cast some shade on my children's sermon here. It's totally okay to feed bite-sized chunks of truth to kids and to adults, right?

We're limited creatures by nature. God and his word are limitless. And so we have to deal with that disparity somehow, and we do it by taking one bite at a time. And so my children's sermon didn't contain all of Psalm 119.

[ 8 : 50 ] My sermon in January didn't either. This one won't. But praise the Lord for that. But we are going to take another bite today. So back to our question. Does Psalm 119 paint an unrealistic picture of life?

Is this the whole story that the psalm tells? Desire, delight, desire, discipline, delight with God doing the work. Well, without looking closely, that's kind of how this psalm starts out.

And if we just skim the whole psalm, and we pull a few of the most striking verses out of context that might be our mistaken conclusion. Here are some of the most famous verses which maybe you've memorized as a child.

All of them wonderful. And all of them true. But with these famous verses in mind, maybe you've internally characterized this psalm as a psalm about a man with a never-fading love for God's word who God consequently rewards with a life above the fray.

But here's the thing. That's not a real person, number one. And that's not the message of this psalm at all. We talked about this a little bit back in January. If we read carefully, we find first that the psalmist was a sinner.

[10:02] And second, that he experienced great affliction and sorrow, sometimes as a result of his sin and often not. And if you trace that theme of suffering through this psalm, you'll see that it actually builds to a crescendo at the very structural center of this psalm.

What I mean by structural center, the psalm's broken into 22 stanzas, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And we're going to be focused on stanzas 11 and 12 right now.

So those are the stanzas at the very middle. So we've already talked about the first two stanzas in which there's really no mention of his affliction other than indirectly. He talks about how he's a sinner.

But then three stanzas in, he mentions adversaries who are plotting against him. So this is real affliction, but it's kind of removed from him. Then there are brief mentions of his affliction in stanza six, which then intensifies in seven.

Then it recedes a little bit into the background in eight, nine, and ten. And then we get to our text, stanzas 11 and 12. So structurally, we're at the very center of this 22 stanza psalm.

[11:06] And what do we find at the center of this psalm focused on the beauty and the perfection of God's word? We see the suffering of the psalmist burst from the background into the foreground.

There's this outburst of emotion. He tells the Lord exactly how he's feeling, and he desperately pleads for the Lord to act on his behalf. So let's read the text together and see what the psalmist has to say about engaging with God and his word in the midst of affliction.

My soul longs for your salvation. I hope in your word. My eyes long for your promise. I asked, when will you comfort me? For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me? The insolent have dug pitfalls for me. They do not live according to your law. All of your commandments are sure.

They persecute me with falsehood. Help me. They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. And your steadfast love give me life that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

[12:19] So the first of the two stanzas at the heart of this psalm is a desperate plea for deliverance. And as we unpack this plea, we're going to look at the character of the psalmist's plea, the direction of his plea, and the foundation of his plea.

So the character of the psalmist's plea. So the first thing that struck me when I read this psalm was the raw, honest emotion the psalmist's words convey. The first two words of this stanza are my soul.

And that's where he starts with this prayer. He starts with an honest description of the state of his soul. And his description includes two statements of longing for the Lord to act on his behalf.

So at his core, that's what he craves. And so that's what he tells the Lord. And then he describes the state of his soul with this striking metaphor. I have become like a wineskin in the smoke.

So that's a picture of a container for wine made out of animal skin. And it's been placed in the rafters above a cooking fire. And the smoke and the heat from the fire have come and blackened that container and dried it out and shriveled it up.

[13:27] So he feels useless, ugly, dried up, nearly lifeless. So this plea that he brings to the Lord is honest. It's also bold.

He doesn't just describe the state of his soul. He moves on to actually question when God will act. How does that sit with you? Is that spiritual?

To question God? Let's read his questions. I ask, When will you comfort me? How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me?

So notice the theme of time. When, how long, when. These are words that reinforce both that the psalmist has been suffering for a long time and that he wants the Lord to act now.

Notice also the forcefulness of these questions. He doesn't ask for comfort and relief from affliction. He asks when the Lord will provide comfort. When the Lord will provide relief.

[ 14 : 34 ] That's kind of presumptuous, right? That's bold. Can we talk that way to God? Do you talk that way to God? His final two prayers are then directives to the Lord.

Verse 86, They persecute me with falsehood. Help me. And verse 87, In your steadfast love, give me life that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

So he moves from describing the state of his soul to questioning the timing of God acting on his behalf and finally to demanding that the Lord would act.

So again, the question, is this how you pray? I think I often default to thinking that questioning God or demanding something from him indicates immaturity.

Like a young child embarrassingly begging their parent with a shower of repeated requests. Or even worse than immaturity, a lack of faith.

[ 15 : 32 ] But we see here in the Psalms, this Psalm and others, the urgency and presumption of a child modeled for us. So this is an example for us to follow. Jesus also talks about this in Matthew 7, verse 7 through 11 and Luke 18.

So we don't have time to go there today, but those would be great texts to read to your kids and to talk about this further. The direction of the psalmist's plea.

So we just walked through this stanza focusing on the character of the psalmist's plea, the emotive language that he uses. So now let's go back through looking at the direction of his plea. When we pray, it's important that we're praying honest prayers from the heart and we see here an encouragement to pray as well as elsewhere in the Psalms, bold prayers.

But there's more to prayer than honesty and boldness. The direction of our prayers or the orientation of our hearts as we pray is critical. So there are a few words in this stanza that clue us in as to the direction of the psalmist's prayer.

We see the object of his requests are salvation, comfort, promise, life. And then the source that he looks to to provide these is unquestionably the Lord.

[ 16 : 47 ] Notice the, I think, tenfold repetition of you, your. So it's evident that in the midst of affliction, the psalmist's gaze is 100% focused on the Lord.

And maybe you're thinking, well, duh, of course, you know, one of God's people, you know, he's doing the right thing. He's focused on the Lord. But is that where we normally look when we're afflicted? Think about the Israelites.

They were frequently afflicted by other nations as well as by natural disasters. And where did they go for help? Sometimes they went to the Lord. Other times they went to other gods or to surrounding more powerful nations.

Often they hedged their bets. They would pay lip service to the Lord. They were up to date on all their sacrifices and all of that. But then on the side they were making a treaty with Babylon or Assyria or Egypt.

And the Israelites often provide a mirror for us to look into and see our own hearts. So are we double-minded like the Israelites? Do we hedge our bets when we ask for deliverance?

[ 17 : 49 ] Are we pleading with the Lord in prayer and maybe praising him with our lips while our hearts are chasing security elsewhere? The foundation of the psalmist's plea.

So as the psalmist approaches the Lord honestly, boldly, with undivided attention, what's the basis for his confidence, the foundation of his plea? Well, he makes it abundantly clear that his hope rests in the word of God.

I hope in your word. I have not forgotten your statutes. All of your commandments are sure. I have not forsaken your precepts. Notice the intensification in his statements of resolve to cling to the word of God.

He moves from hoping in God's word to not forgetting God's word to not forsaking God's word. So the stakes are raised with each one of these statements and the intensification of his resolve mirrors the intensification of his situation.

He's at the very end of his rope in the last two verses. Verse 87, they've almost made an end of me on earth. And then verse 88, give me life. His statements of resolve are phrased positively.

[ 19 : 05 ] I hope, I have not forgotten, I have not forsaken. But they lay out the path that we follow when we stray from the word in the midst of affliction. If we begin to stop hoping in the word, it begins to recede from our minds.

We'll forget the word. And after a long enough period of time forgetting the word, there may eventually come the time that we forsake the word. Are you in a place where you're no longer hoping in the word?

If that's you, don't be ashamed. We all find ourselves there. But ask the Lord to give your heart hope in his word. Are you in a place where a lack of hope has progressed to simply forgetting the word of God?

You go through life as if God's word simply has no significance at all. It has no impact on your heart. It's no longer doing its work of convicting, encouraging, teaching.

Maybe you only encounter the word on Sunday at church. If that's you, return to the word. Soak your mind in its truth.

[ 20 : 12 ] Meditate on it until it pours out of you. Turn off whatever streams of content may be choking out the word in your life until it becomes the dominant stream again. So don't forsake the word.

Don't forget the word. Don't lose hope in the word. Psalmist plea is based on hope in God's word. It's also based on faith that God will act.

There's an implied faith that God will act that undergirds all of his questions. He wouldn't ask when will you comfort me without believing that God will comfort him. There's no question in his mind that God will act.

God will act in his life. And then finally, his plea is based on the steadfast love of the Lord. And your steadfast love give me life that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

So how much more than the psalmist can we be confident in the steadfast love of the Lord when we're facing affliction? On the other side of the cross, we know even more the quality of his steadfast love.

[ 21 : 16 ] The God who became a man and died for us, he's not going to leave us in our affliction. In the first of the two stanzas at the heart of this psalm, the psalmist has poured out his soul to the Lord and has forcefully made his case for deliverance, demanding that the Lord will act on his behalf.

And now he pivots in the second of the two stanzas. And it's a striking pivot. There's no transition. It's kind of abrupt. And so we're going to answer two questions or we're going to try to answer two questions about this pivot.

What causes or motivates his pivot, number one, and then what does he pivot to? So first, let's read the text together. Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

Your faithfulness endures to all generations. You have established the earth and it stands fast. By your appointment they stand this day for all things are your servants.

If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts for by them you have given me life. I am yours.

[ 22 : 29 ] Save me for I have sought your precepts. The wicked lie and wait to destroy me but I consider your testimonies. I have seen a limit to all perfection but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

So the psalmist has moved from declaring they've almost made an end of me on earth and pleading in your steadfast love give me life to forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

In Psalm 119, the first verse of each stanza generally sets the tone for that stanza. And so this second stanza is focused on the permanence of God's word.

So if you're like me you're searching this stanza for any clues that the Lord has answered his requests for relief. But every indication we have from this stanza as well as from the rest of the psalm suggests that the Lord never lifts his affliction.

Verse 95 of this stanza says the wicked lie and wait to destroy me but I consider your testimonies. And then here are a few verses from later in the psalm. Verse 107 I am severely afflicted.

[ 23 : 38 ] Give me life O Lord. Verse 145 With my whole heart I cry answer me O Lord. And verse 147 I rise before dawn and cry for help.

I hope in your words. And then finally verse 153 Look on my affliction and deliver me for I do not forget your law. So there's been no change in his circumstances yet we still see a change in focus and tone in this stanza.

So what has brought that about? What has caused him to pivot? Well what clues do we have in the text? It seems as though verse 92 and 93 give us the answer.

If your law had not been my delight I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts for by them you have given me life. So the Lord did not remove the psalmist's affliction right?

Verse 95 but he's given the psalmist life in some way. So what does that mean? Well when we look at the context of the entire chapter we see this is a phrase that's repeated 11 times 9 times as a request and twice as a statement.

[ 24 : 51 ] So it's either give me life or you have given me life. And the source that the psalmist looks to to provide this life is usually the word of God but also occasionally the character of God.

His righteousness justice love. So how does God's word give us life? You know that doesn't maybe it doesn't seem like that computes the words of this book giving us life.

But maybe we're forgetting that it's the word of God that is the very breath of God. 2 Timothy 3.16 And it's his breath that gave us life in the beginning Genesis 2.7 So why should we be surprised if he continues to sustain and refresh us with life through his word?

Psalms 19.7 says the law of the Lord is perfect reviving the soul. So as we look deeply into God's perfect law as we fill our heart's lungs with the very breath of the word of God something changes inside of us.

We're refreshed. We're made new. And this is purely an act of God. It's not something we can do. We can read the word and we can pray but the Lord does the work.

[ 26 : 00 ] But I don't want to make this concept of being refreshed by scripture overly mystical. Think of it as if the psalmist has two pairs of glasses through which he can view his life.

So the first pair of glasses is this human experience pair and the second is scripture. So it's as if he was first staring in that first stanza at the scenes of his life through his human experience pair of glasses and then he takes off that pair of glasses and he puts on his scripture glasses and now suddenly he sees something totally different.

He's looking at the same scene but his vision has been entirely refreshed. We too have these two pairs of glasses available to us. What we view through our human experience pair of glasses is real life but it's also very limited.

Unlike God we can't see all that there is to see and then we also have scripture too which is not comprehensive either. It doesn't tell us everything that there is to know but it is sufficient.

It contains everything that we need for faith and godliness. Often what we see through these two pairs of glasses doesn't line up. We can look at the same situation and it can seem as if we're looking at two completely different things.

[ 27 : 16 ] Almost as if through one pair we're watching a beautiful stirring drama and through the other a horror movie. We often have to take it on faith that the two stories are both reality.

That the things God has done in the past the things he says he's doing now and the things that he's promised for the future are just as real as the pain and suffering that we're experiencing or that we see others experiencing.

And sometimes we can get weary or even frustrated because we can't figure out how to align the two different stories that we see unfolding. And sometimes that leads us to put on our scripture glasses less and less.

The story that we view through them feels less real and more distant. But that's dangerous. It's when scripture feels the least real and the most distant that we need to be ingesting it the most. Brother Jim shared a quote from Magician's Nephew when he preached two weeks ago. So I want to follow that up with a quote here from Silver Chair which is another one of C.S. Lewis' Narnia series.

[ 28 : 24 ] Awesome books. So this quote is from the beginning of the book. Aslan, who's the Christ figure, has just commissioned one of the main characters, Jill, for a task that she and the other protagonists are going to attempt to complete for the remainder of the book.

And he's given her his words in the form of several signs to guide them while they're on their quest. And after giving her the signs, this is what he says. But first, remember, remember, remember the

signs.

Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs.

And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly. I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain the air is clear and your mind is clear.

As you drop down into Narnia the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look when you meet them there.

[ 29 : 33 ] That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters.

So maybe you're on the mountain right now and everything looks perfectly clear. Or maybe you're down in Narnia where the air is thick and things are unclear. The important thing is to know the signs.

Nothing else matters. Cling to the word. Put on those scripture glasses whether you can make sense in the moment of what you're viewing through them or not and pray the psalmist's prayer that the Lord would give you life according to his word.

So the psalmist's vision is refreshed as he looks through the lens of scripture and what does he see? What does he pivot to? First he sees that God's word is unchanging.

Forever oh Lord your word is fixed in the heavens. And we talked about the theme of time in the last stanza. He returns to that theme here. His suffering seemed permanent.

[ 30 : 39 ] It seemed unending. But after meditating on God's word he's been reminded that God's word actually is permanent. His suffering will pass away but God's word will not. And what does it mean that God's words are fixed in the heavens?

Well his word is everything that he's ever spoken. Everything that he's decreed. Everything that he's promised. Each one of these words from the Lord is fixed.

It will come to pass. So maybe right now you're overwhelmed with impossible needs. As implausible as it may seem my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in Christ Jesus.

That's a word from the heavens from the Lord. It's fixed in the heavens. It will come to pass. Maybe you're struggling with loneliness right now. Jesus said I will be with you always even to the end of the age.

And by that he is referring to the Holy Spirit who's residing inside of you if you're in Christ. You might feel alone but you're never alone. He has promised to be with you always.

[ 31 : 49 ] That's a word from the Lord. It's fixed in the heavens. Maybe you're struggling with sin you can't seem to turn away from. Maybe that's how you're suffering right now. God has promised to transform you from one degree of glory to the next.

That's a word from the Lord. It's fixed in the heavens. So he pivots to God's unchanging word. He's also been reminded that the permanence of God's word, its fixity, is paralleled by God's faithfulness to his people.

Your faithfulness endures to all generations. God's word is one long unbroken! broken tale of his steadfast love and faithfulness towards his people.

And so as we meditate on his word, we can't help but be amazed, be comforted, be assured by story after story of his work on behalf of his people. And then after soaking our minds in those stories, our thoughts return to our troubles and we're newly encouraged that our God, who is faithful to the patriarchs, to the Israelites, to the early church, will be no less faithful to us.

His faithfulness endures to all generations. And finally, he's comforted by God's unshakable providence.

[ 33 : 05 ] You have established the earth and it stands fast. By your appointment, they stand this day for all things are your servants. All things are his servants, all things, even your affliction, whatever it is that's afflicting you, cancer, a difficult coworker, a disobedient child, a difficult class at the Coast Guard Academy, is God's servant.

Whatever it is that's afflicting you is under the sovereign hand of God. What a comfort that is. From our limited vantage point, when we have our human experience glasses on, our suffering often doesn't make sense, especially in light of a sovereign God.

Putting on our scripture classes won't answer the why question. Scripture is sufficient, but it's not comprehensive. It wasn't intended to be. But with our scripture glasses on, we're reminded that suffering doesn't get the last word.

It may seem unending, but it's not. All suffering will eventually pass away. Revelation 21 says, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

[ 34 : 31 ] That's the word of the Lord. It's the final word on suffering for those who are in Christ. As we close this morning, I struggled a little bit with whether or not I should preach this text.

As I had been studying Psalm 119 for my sermon back in January, this theme of suffering in Psalm 119 really stuck out to me. And then when the elders decided that we were going to be doing a sermon series in the Psalms, it seemed like the natural thing for me to preach on.

But I really felt unsure about it because I know my suffering is a drop in the bucket compared with what I know many of you have suffered.

And there are probably people in this room, I'm sure there are, who are going through things that I don't even know about. And so I kind of felt like, am I really the man to preach this sermon? And as I prayed about that, it felt like the Lord was saying, you know, this is the word that I have for you to share.

And so we're here today. And I might not be the man who can speak, you know, perfectly into your situation. I probably can't empathize with the depths of your suffering.

[ 35 : 52 ] But there is one who can. This is Isaiah 53. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. So like the Psalm 119 man, Christ endured great suffering and it was entirely undeserved.

But his experience diverges, right, from the experience of the Psalm 119 man and from our experience. Sometimes when we suffer and we cry out to God, it might feel like he has hidden his face from us.

Like the psalmist says, when will you comfort me? We might feel like he's rejected us. And we're free to pray that feeling to the Lord, but we know it's never true. We cry out feeling forsaken, but we can be confident that we're always heard and that the Lord is always near.

But Christ, in the midst of his suffering, cried out words that ring very similar to the words of this psalm, although they're from a different psalm. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[ 37 : 10 ] So he cried out those words in the deepest anguish that anyone has ever felt, and there was no response, because unlike you and unlike me, he actually was forsaken.

And so if you're suffering right now, there might not be anyone in this church who's gone through what you're going through. There might not be anyone who's walked a road as hard as the one you're on, but there is one who's actually gone lower in suffering.

than either of us will ever have to go. And he did it for you and he did it for me. And that shouldn't feel at all like it minimizes our suffering.

God cares like we just read about, about every tear that falls from your eye. He's promised to wipe every tear away. Looking at Jesus' suffering doesn't minimize our suffering, it bounds our suffering. His suffering is the guarantee that our suffering will be limited. He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.

[ 38 : 16 ] Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and by his wounds we are healed. So here's the thing, Christ left the side of the father, he took on the weakness of human flesh, he lived a life of sorrow and pain, which was cut short when he was tortured to death on the cross, and he did all of that for your sake and for my sake.

Do you think he'd go through all of that trouble for you and then abandon you and your affliction?

The answer is no. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.

That's what his word says, it's fixed in the heavens. Let's pray. Jesus, we look to you like Peter said, where else can we go?

You have the words of eternal life. So often we don't understand the pain of this life. We don't understand why you let us go through so much pain and suffering, but you've blessed us with your word.

We cling to your word, and you've also blessed us with the word made flesh. You've blessed us with yourself. love. So we don't understand, but we trust in your love and your faithfulness and in your word.

[ 39 : 36 ] Please give us new life according to your word. Refresh our souls. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.