

Koph | Thou Art Near, O Lord

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 January 2023

[0 : 00] Psalm 119 will continue, 22 different letters in the Hebrew alphabet. If I was to ask you how much the Bible meant to you and how much at the last part of this section it talks about having an old relationship with the Word.

You've carried it a long time with you. If I was to ask you about your relationship with the Word, I doubt any of us in here could go from A to Z and make all of our sentences start with the same letter A for eight sentences and then the letter B for six sentences and so on.

And that's what we've had in Psalm 119 is that it's been alphabetically from A to Z in the Hebrew Bible talking about the importance of the Word of God in our lives.

And then specifically I'd like to focus our attention on the components of a prayer that we see. These are being prayed to the Lord. In Luke 11, 1, after Jesus finishes praying, a disciple comes to him and says, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught the disciples.

Those few words teach us a good bit. When it says, Lord, teach us to pray, it tells us that prayer is something that can and should be learned, that you could grow in that understanding. It also shows us that you can go to God and request to learn how to pray because here's the disciples going to God, going to the Son, and asking him how to pray.

[1 : 24] It also shows that Jesus taught them to pray by praying. They say, teach us to pray, and then Jesus prayed. It teaches we can learn from other people because it says, as the disciples learned from John.

And Psalms is a great place for us to learn how to pray. Some of you in here would have a testimony of having the chance to have listened to maybe a grandparent or a parent or somebody in your life praying for you, maybe in another room or around a dinner table.

Others in here didn't have that same opportunity. But when we listen to David pray, we should pay attention to what is going on. We should learn how to pray from looking at these prayers.

A few things we'll see. We see that he cries out with all of his heart. The answer to the prayer of God says he's near in verse 150. He asks him to save him, to keep his testimonies.

He says that he will do it early in the morning. He also says that he'll do it through the night watch. The grounds of his request is because of your loving kindness towards me and according to your judgment. And at the end of it, he says that he loves his testimonies and that God never changes.

[2 : 33] So those are the things I want to show you briefly with the time we have together. Psalm 119, 145 says, I cried with my whole heart, hear me, O Lord, I will keep thy statutes.

And here I have the words, my whole heart made bold. But in the scriptures we have, we don't have emojis. And I'm glad because I never know what an emoji is when Stephanie sends it to me.

We don't have emojis. We don't have highlighting. We're not having bold. We're not having underlining. But what we have is repetition. So it says, I cried with my whole heart in 145. And then it says in 146, I cried unto thee.

In Psalm 119, 147, it says, and I cried. And then in 150, it says, they draw nigh that follow after mischief. So the repetition of a person crying out shouldn't be missed.

I feel fine, but my voice is a little hoarse tonight. But even if it wasn't, I still don't think that I would be willing to come out of my shell enough to really communicate to you what this probably looked and sounded like as it was being said.

[3 : 40] There's all kinds of reasons to cry out for God. Cry out to God for forgiveness. That would be a very reasonable thing that we would do is to cry out for him. Cry out for God for deliverance. Cry out for God for help.

But this cry is connected to obedience. Yes, he has enemies, but his cry out to the Lord here has to do in the areas of obedience. He says, hear me, Lord.

I'm crying with my whole heart. I will keep thy statutes. It is a prayer to say, God, I want to follow after you. And it's helpful here.

This crying out is spoken with his voice. You could hear it. It's helpful to pray out loud. It's not the only way that we can pray.

The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing. And so that would indicate that there should be an internal prayer that can be going on throughout our day. I've shared before how I'm not very coordinated. So I could go through a drive-thru and decide I need to pray.

[4 : 33] Close my eyes for a second. I'm like, can't do that. All right. That's not a good idea. You don't need to close. You don't have to close your eyes when you're praying. We can commune with him. But there's a value to praying out loud.

Because sometimes, well, often, it's difficult to maintain an intensity of devotion unless we hear ourselves speak.

Unless we hear our voice say something, sometimes we get lost in thought. I'm going to show a picture here to you. If that's your help me in the back. It looks like the picture of a waterfall.

Kerry Schmidt, who came through here not long ago, he's in Israel right now with a group of people. And he shared this picture. It's the lowest place in the world, in Getty, near the Dead Sea.

And he said, imagine you're running, fearing, hiding for your life. Your enemy is relentless and powerful. But then God leads you to his oasis for you in this moment.

[5 : 30] It's a cave. And inside a beautiful, fresh waterfall, flowing with rainwater that came an estimated seven years before, in that place with God, you pen Psalm 57.

You hear the falls. You feel the lush life surrounded by barren desert. You know the presence of God in your lowest place in life. So consider that when you read Psalm 57. And let the merciful God rain strength from heaven upon your parched soul.

Psalm 57, 6 says, They have prepared a net for my steps. My soul is bowed down. They have digged the pit before me in the midst whereof they are falling themselves. Say love, take on these things. And my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.

I will sing and give praise. In the Psalms, we don't always know the condition of David's heart or where he's at, as we might with Psalm 57. But here, we have David crying out to the Lord in a situation where he says, Even though I believe the enemy is getting closer to me, I believe that God is closer.

That's what he says. And we also have the example not only of David, but we have the example of Jesus. It says in Hebrews, Hebrews chapter number 5 and verse number 7, an example of Jesus praying with strong crying and tears, who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him, that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.

[6 : 56] Another example we would have of a person with a strong emotion is in Genesis chapter number 32, verse 26. And he says, And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. That is Jacob wrestling with an angel of the Lord. I have so many questions about that, and I'm going to ask Travis at this time to come up and answer all of them for me.

And I'll give him a heads up. I have questions about it, about prayer, about wrestling with it. Because you have confidence. You ask God. We know that it's not our, we don't wear him down.

He's not a person who's reluctant to answer our prayers. But we find that people and examples of the Bible, people going to God continually. And he said, I'm not going to let go until I receive the blessing that I know that you have for me.

William Plummer, on his commentary on this passage, says, Your soul would not be so empty of comfort if your mouth were not so empty of prayer. Convicting.

[7 : 59] Let me read that for you again. Your soul would not be so empty of comfort if your mouth were not so empty of prayer. So this psalm starts off with David, who has been in a lonely place before, as we saw in 57, who knew what it was like to feel barren.

This is a cry out to God and say, God, I'm going to keep your statutes, but you're going to have to do it. God, I want to do this, but I'm crying out to you. If I'm going to be obedient, I'm going to need you to supply the strength in my life.

And I am going to, it says multiple times, crying out to the Lord. And so he prayed. He said in verse 146, God, I want to be obedient.

I need you to bring deliverance to me. And then what a sweet and wonderful way that God brings an answer to his prayer. In verse 150, They draw nigh that follow after mischief.

They are far from the law, from thy law. Thou art near, O Lord, and all the commandments are truth. And so they draw, there's people that are drawing nigh to me in mischief, but those people are far from the Lord.

[9 : 07] But it says, thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth. We should, have you felt that? Have you experienced what it's like to know when God is near?

So we saw last week in the section of Psalm we were looking at, is that we, we, God is real to us. We can love him because he is real and he's personal. You can't have strong love or hate for something that isn't real or personal, but our God is.

And so here's the hope that he's saying. In a time of trouble, when it's close, God is closer. God is near to those who love the law. So in 150, there's a group of people that says, they're coming closer to me, but as they're coming closer to me, I know they're getting farther away from the Lord.

And so he knows that these people, if they don't love the saints, then they don't love the law. Lord, these people hate me, and they're drawing close to me because they hate your law. But then in verse 151, it says, thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth.

The psalmist was not far from the Lord because he was not far from the word. And you and I should not believe that in the presence of trouble, it means there's the absence of the shepherd.

[10 : 14] Now just because problems are getting closer, it doesn't mean that God is running. He is not a fair weather friend, right? He is not farther away. Psalm 23, 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

Why? And say it with me, for thou art with me. In the shadow of death, in the presence of trouble, he is there with us. That's what the psalmist here is crying out and saying, that you draw close to me, Lord, but I know that you are more closer.

And in the times of prayer, in the dawn of the morning, he cries out and he hoped in God's word. His expectation was to be found in God's word. Now when you see duty as a prayer, or prayer as a duty, you may sign up and do it when it's assigned to you.

You may check that box off. You may come to it. But only when you see it as a privilege is it the thing that you want to do at early morning, or it be something that you'd be willing to give up sleep for.

And that's what's being said here. Early in the morning, but not just early in the morning, there's times that he would stay up through the night. I won't ask in here which one's harder for you to do, but there are times where it's right there on you.

[11 : 26] You wake up in the morning and you think, oh man, this is going to be just a normal day. And then you have that realization, oh, this isn't a normal day. I forgot about this.

And it comes over you. And it's that privilege that you can go to the Lord immediately, that you don't have to live any portion of your day without having an opportunity to speak with him.

And then there's times that we should pray even through the night. And then it talks about meditating on the word. You should, being in the word should help us want to pray, but also our prayer life will help us give understanding of the word.

Think of Spurgeon, it says, which is more important, reading the Bible or prayer? And his answer was, which is more important, breathing in or breathing out? Should we try that in here? One side do one. Another, we'll see which one stays conscious the longest in here.

Which is more important? And so you're really limited. A person will not have the prayer life that they should if they're not a person of the word. And a person will not understand this word if they should, if they're not a person of prayer.

[12 : 28] And so if I prevent the night watches, I might meditate on the word. And we see here in verse 148, my eyes prevent and meditate, which means internalizing the Bible teaching to such an extent that the truth discovered in the Bible become part of how we think, so that we think differently and then also function differently as a result.

It is internalized inside of us. It isn't just knowing it and quoting it and knowing the placement, but it's living it out. It's changing the way in which we think. I want to read to you a quote by William Brooks.

It says, and hear them, and he wants to know, not are we able to use words that are flattering, not are we able to pray the longest prayer, but are we people that are sincerely wanting obedience to his word? That was what he was crying out for. God, I want to live according to your will, which we know to live according to his will is to live according to his word.

So that relationship and prayer to the word of God, it's in the word of God that we learn the nature and the heart of God to whom we're praying. It's in the word of God, it's from here that we receive from God what we should thank him for. God is good, he does all things well. That fact that we rejoiced in was taught to us from this word. And so we learn from the word and it ought to motivate us to want to express our thankfulness to him. His greatness informing and expanding our praise, his will directing us to pray that we can do, his promises to his people, which we claim by faith, and the substance of our prayers. There's times that you just don't have words, you should turn to the Psalms and let his words become your words. And in closing here, I just want to point out to you the grounds on which his request is coming. 149, hear my voice, and why should the God of the universe give any of us an opportunity to be heard, right? He says, hear my voice according unto your loving kindness, O Lord, quicken me according to your judgment. So he's saying here in regards to loving kindness, Lord, I know that I don't deserve to be heard by you, yet I believe that you are rich in grace and mercy. Please, according to your generous and kind love, hear my prayer.

And in justice, he says, Lord, I know that my sins are righteously forgiven because of what Jesus did on the cross. I know what you have forgiven me according to your justice, and one is forgiven, I pray. I also know that according to your justice, you see the righteousness of my cause with those who are against me. Because of these, please bring me new life.

[15 : 31] Those are the grounds on which we could go to him, his loving kindness and his justice, what he has already forgiven us of our sins. And then it closes in 142, he says, concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever. He had confidence in God's word. It's an old relationship with the word of God. I have known of old. He has spent his life in it. You read, I read other people, I read their thoughts about the Bible, I read the psalmist, and I just think, man, I don't have that. I don't have that type of prayer. I don't have any of those things. And here he's saying that it becomes seasoned through the years of life, that you can, through faithfulness, and through being a person of prayer, being a person of the word, you can have not just a new relationship with the word, but you can have an old relationship and great confidence.

The psalmist's great love and appreciation for the scriptures had deep roots to them. It wasn't something that was new, but it was something that had been part of his life for many, many years.

What's the saying? When's the best time to plant a tree? What, today or 20 years ago, right? And so you read this and you say, well, I don't feel like my Bible study or I don't feel like my prayer life has the depth that I read. Well, when's the best time to start on that? Today or 20 years ago. And so that can be developed. And the psalmist found hope. Thou art near, O Lord. That's he finds hope in God's nearness. He finds hope in God's truthfulness. All thy commandments are truth. He finds hope in the fact that God is unchanging concerning your testimonies. I have known of old, thou hast founded them, and he said it out loud. And you would do well to do that as well. But say, God, you are near, God, you are true, and God, you are unchanging. So before I pray this passage for you tonight, I just want you to be reminded of a few things that we saw as David prayed to the same God that you can pray to. His circumstances of the trouble that he was in, the enemies that were drawing near to him, that'd be different than your circumstances. But you can draw near to the same God. When you're in trouble, and the trouble is near, the Lord could be nearer. Through prayer, we can find hope. We have grounds that come to God because of Jesus, his loving kindness, and because of justice. And we should meditate upon God's word. As we pray to him, we should be considering the truths about him, and we should cry out to him. And so tonight, we've seen the testimony of the importance of prayer and the life of the psalmist. And then we can take a moment and we can reflect on ourselves about what our testimony of prayer is. How integral is it to our lives? How involved, how connected is it to our Bible study? How connected is it to us overcoming the challenges in our lives? And it ought to be not just a once-in-a-while call. It ought to be a continual communication with God, our Father.