

I Will Never Leave You or Forsake You

Psalm 119:145-152

Introduction: 1) When Paul was imprisoned for the second time and faced imminent execution, he wrote a deeply personal letter to his young son in the ministry. That letter is 2 Timothy. At the end of the letter the aged apostle is honest in both his sorrow and his comfort. In 2 Timothy 4:16-17 he writes, “At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth.” All deserted me but not the Lord. He stood with me and strengthened me. He kept his promise which we find in Hebrews 13:5, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (*ESV*, cf. Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5).

2) Stanza Qoph in Psalm 119:145-152 resonates with this same confidence and hope. When our enemies draw near, we can rest assured that our Lord is even nearer. He knows where we are and He knows what we are going through. As Psalm 46:1 also promises, “God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble.” Three movements guide us through this song of blessed assurance.

I. Call on the Lord in prayer in full confidence He will answer you 119:145-149

This stanza begins with the psalmist sharing his prayer habits coupled with a prayer request. He is surrounded by enemies who would ruin him if they can, but the promises and presence of his Lord is all the assurance he needs to persevere and prevail. As he discusses his prayer pattern, he highlights five facets that characterize his prayer life, characteristics that should be true of our prayer life as well.

1) Call on the Lord with your whole heart 119:145

Fervent, passionate prayer should be evident in our prayer life. The psalmist declares “I call with all my heart” (ESV, “my whole heart”). I ask you my Lord to “answer me” with all that I am, with every fiber of my being. The genuineness and earnestness of his prayer is affirmed in his pledge: “I will obey your statutes.” James Boice writes, “Prayer should be deeply earnest. The psalmist’s prayers were, and it is this that drove him to God’s Word” (*Living by the Book*, 138). A passion for prayer and a passion for the Word of God should always go together. They should be inseparable twins in our life.

2) Call on the Lord to deliver you 119:146

A cry for answered prayer is now followed up by a prayer for salvation or deliverance from his enemies. “I call to you; save me, and I will keep

your decrees” (*ESV*, “observe your testimonies”). Verse 146 restates and reinforces verse 145. Willem Van Gemeren helpfully puts the two verses together, “[The psalmist] feverishly presents his lament before the Lord so that God may “answer” (v.145; cf. v. 26) him by delivering him from adversity (“save me”)...” (*Psalms*, EBC, 885). Again, his request has warrant. I will obey your statutes and I will keep your decrees.” Trust and obey, pray and obey, is a God-honoring combination for receiving answers to our prayers.

3) Call on the Lord early in the morning 119:147-148

Verse 145 speaks to the passion of prayer. Verse 147-148 speaks to the pattern of prayer. “I will rise before dawn and cry out for help” (147). “I am awake through each watch of the night” (148). I pray early in the morning and all night. When I awake throughout the night I turn to you, my Lord, in prayer. And, first thing in the morning, even before the sun rises, I cry out to you in prayer. I cry for help because of the evil men who are after me (v. 150). I cry out in “hope” and I “meditate on your promise.” Early prayers and early meditations on the word: another powerful prayer combination.

4) Call on the Lord knowing He loves you

119:149

The psalmist will pray and obey. He will pray early and meditate early on God's Word. He will also pray confident of the Lord's *hesed* his 'faithful love' (ESV, steadfast love"). Answer me in verse 145 is complemented by "hear my voice" in verse 149. His prayer is audible, out loud. The confidence of my cry is founded upon your loyal love, your faithful covenant love for those who belong to you. I can come to you my Lord anytime and anyplace confident that you hear me. Why? Because I know that you love me as a father does his child. Yours is a true, tender, genuine and affectionate love I will never doubt. You have told me your love me. You always keep your word. Nothing more need be said.

5) Call on the Lord because He is just and gives us life 119:149

The prayer of verse 149 anticipates the dire situation of verse 150. Evil persecutions are closing in. Their intentions are evil and unjust. I appeal to you, on the basis of your justice, "give me life." I need you to deliver me from my enemies for I cannot deliver myself. They are too numerous and powerful for me, but they are not too many and too strong for you. O *Yahweh* (vs. 145, 149, 151), I cry to you, to give me life or I die. Draw

near to me or I perish. I know you love me. I know you will not fail me.

You are near, just and loving. You are all I need.

II. Remember evil people disregard the Word of God and will come after you

119:150

The psalmist cries for help in verse 147. He asks God for preservation of life in verse 149. Verse 150 now provides the specific reason for his requests. Once again he is being tracked down by oppressors (v. 121, 122, 134) and foes (v. 139) those he now describes as “those who pursue evil plans,” those “who persecute me with evil purpose” (ESV).

1) Evil people will pursue us and try to take us down

The Message describes the evil men of verse 150 as “those out to get me.” Enemies of the songwriter have appeared throughout Psalm 119 and now they are very close, closing in on him, with nothing but evil intentions. One gets the sense that they are determined and relentless. They will not stop until they have captured and destroyed this man (or woman) of God. This is a real life scenario that has been repeated thousands of times throughout redemptive history. We should never forget this was the experience of the Lord Jesus. We should not be surprised when it is our experience as well.

2) Evil people care nothing for the law of God

The psalmist says those who pursue evil plans against him also “go farther and farther from the truth” that God reveals. In other words they hate me because they hate God and his Word. These things always go together. Jesus addressed this reality at some length in John 15:18-25. The entire section is worth our reflection and meditation (v. 148), in the context of this stanza. There Jesus says, “If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they don’t know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. The one who hates me also hates my Father. If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not have sin. Now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: **They hated me for no reason.**”

III. Never forget the Lord is always near and His Word endures forever **119:151-152**

In Revelation 21-22 we are given a glorious vision of eternity and the final home for God's children. In 21:3 a wonderful promise thunders forth from the very throne of heaven where our God declares, "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" (emp. mine). The promised eternal presence of God is indeed an eschatological hope and reality. It is also a present hope and reality as well. Romans 8:38-39 says it so well, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The final verses of stanza Qoph reaffirm this blessed truth as well.

1) The Lord is always with us

119:151

The persecutors with evil intentions have come near to the psalmist. If he is not careful their presence can blind him to a far greater presence that is even nearer. He will not allow that to happen and neither should we. In bold faith we declare no matter what our circumstances may be, "You are near, LORD." Our covenant keeping God is with us where we are and in what we are going through. Our enemies may come after us

and get very close. They may even persecute us and inflict great evil on us. Do not distress or grow faint hearted. The Lord is near and by means of His Spirit, He is in you! Recall 1 John 4:4, “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

2) The Lord’s Word is true

119:151

How do I know the Lord is with me and that He will never leave me or forsake me? I know because God always keeps His Word. The songwriter confidently declares, “all your commands are true.” All your words are true. Spurgeon puts it like this, “God neither commands a lie, nor lies in a command....If all God’s commands are truth, then the true man will be glad to keep near to them, and therein he will find the true God near him....God is near and God is true, therefore his people are safe” (*TOD*, vol 3, 403).

3) The Lord’s Word will last forever

119:152

Alan Ross says, “The testimonies of God may be ancient, founded long ago, but they are not obsolete...the assurance of God’s presence with the believer and all that implies is an eternally valid promise” (*A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 3, 579). The psalmist closes this stanza with another word of assurance and confidence in the Lord grounded in experience. “Long ago I learned...” Your faithfulness is not new news to

me. “Long ago I learned from your decrees (*ESV*, “testimonies”) that you have founded them forever.” What God said long ago is still true today and it will be true tomorrow and forever! What is that line in “How Firm a Foundation:” “The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes.”

Conclusion: The Song was written and recorded by the Christian band “Third Day” in 2005. It is a beautiful complement to the hope and promise of stanza Qoph in Psalm 119. It is simply entitled “Cry Out to Jesus.”

To all of the people with burdens and pains
Keeping you back from your life
You believe that there's nothing and there is no one
Who can make it right

There is hope for the helpless
Rest for the weary
And love for the broken heart
And there is grace and forgiveness
Mercy and healing
He'll meet you wherever you are
Cry out to Jesus
Cry out to Jesus

When you're lonely
And it feels like the whole world is falling on you
You just reach out, you just cry out to Jesus
Cry to Jesus

To the widow who suffers from being alone
Wiping the tears from her eyes
And for the children around the world without a home
Say a prayer tonight

There is hope for the helpless
Rest for the weary
And love for the broken heart
And there is grace and forgiveness
Mercy and healing
He'll meet you wherever you are
Cry out to Jesus
Oh, cry out to Jesus