

Psalm 119:41-48

Introduction – We will end this section of Psalms (31-40) with the sixth section of Psalm 119 as is our custom. It could be titled, “The Protecting and Providing Mercies of God’s Word.” The mercies which are proclaimed from God’s Word and are received through God’s Word-proclaimed are mercies which *protect* us from reproaches and shame. These mercies also *provide* for us true liberty and confident boldness in every situation of life. The Psalm-singer teaches us to meditate over them, sing of them, request them and seek them with hearts on fire for the Lord. Spurgeon says these verses are “...one continued pleading for the abiding of grace in his soul, and it is supported by such holy arguments as would only suggest themselves to a spirit burning with love to God.”

The Many Lovingkindnesses of Salvation (vv41) – The Scriptures teach the Christian that he has been saved, is being saved, and will be saved. This is the sum and crown of all the mercies of God, our salvation. But consider what mercies (the word means “loyal-lovingkindnesses”) God gave you leading up to your conversion. What did He protect you from? Who did He provide in your life for your life? How did He love and care for you even while you hated Him? If you were converted early, what mercies can you point to for that? What mercy is it that you do not have an R-rated testimony? What family did He place you in with what promises? What extended family, what kind of access to the Word, to preaching, to the ministry of a faithful church, what access to His means of Word and sacrament? What normal, everyday mercies of provision, what super-normal answers to prayer, what promises has He given to keep you, to complete what He has begun and to preserve you? What persevering mercies, what mercies of discipline, what fashioning-through-trials mercies, what eye-opening mercies in His Word or throughout His world? These are the lovingkindnesses of our salvation and these are what the Psalm-singer longs for more of with specific applications/needs in mind. But they are “according to Your Word,” that is, there is no other name by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12) and so we must turn to Him for them and nowhere else. To experience these mercies is to experience the ongoing work of your salvation in an ongoing, daily way.

Protecting Mercies (vv42-43) – The Psalm-singer prays for mercies to stop the words of those who would shame him, criticize him, and accuse him (v42). This could be any kind of enemy, but ultimately it is the work of the great accuser, Satan himself. Whenever we have to deal with his taunts (“you are unworthy,” “your God doesn’t care,” “you are too sinful,” “you believe in Jesus? Welcome to the 21st century,” and so on), it is the merciful work of God’s Word applied by the Spirit by which we withstand reproaches and temptations of all kinds. And so, he pleads that God never take “the word of truth utterly out of” his mouth (v43, see Col 3:16). He may be referring to the hard heart that does not receive the Word deeply and it is snatched away or quickly withers (Matt 13:3-9). A life that is not based on hope in the promises of the Word is a life that will be hope-less. The mercies of God protect us from such loss and they are ministered to us by His Word.

The Law of Liberty (vv44-45) – Hope in God’s Word is manifest by continual obedience to it with faith (vv43b-44). But this kind of obedience (from faith) is not enslaving; rather it is freeing. “*The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King’s highway for freemen...*” Spurgeon. The Word of promise, the commands of salvation, are words of liberty (a wide space), setting those oppressed by their sins free (Luke 4:18). Jesus says this is what happens to those who “abide in My Word” (John 8:30-36); they are “free indeed.” Romans 6:18-23 describes our liberty as being “slaves to righteousness,” and Gal 5:13-15 teaches us that this liberty is not freedom to sin, but freedom from sin – freedom to serve one another and not to indulge the flesh any longer. This is why James calls it “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25).

Providing Mercies (vv46-47) – This is part of our liberty, “*I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings*” (v46). These mercies provide us with a confident boldness in the Lord’s provision for us in all situations to speak the truth in love, whether to one another (Eph 4:12) or boldly before all men, even those with great authority over us (Acts 5:17-21, 29-32, 40-42). Jesus warned us not to fear those who could only destroy your body (Matt 10:28). We are emboldened to proclaim the truth, not out of arrogance, but rather out of hope, for it is the message of salvation to the world (Rom 1:16-17). These mercies constrain us with the love of Christ to proclaim the only answer there is for corruptions of every kind (2 Cor 5:14-21). When these mercies get ahold of the Psalm-singer, nothing will stop him, for next to the mercies of liberty and courage comes the mercies of delight and love (v47).

Aiming for Salvation (v48) – The lifting up of hands, whether to the holy sanctuary (Psalm 28:2), or to the Lord’s commandments (v48) is a sign of reaching out to receive salvation, the mercies of God. And of course the point of it all is to reach out for the One to Whom the sanctuary and commandments reflect - to Christ, the Word made flesh. He is reaching for the crown of all mercies, the One who was lifted up to draw all men to Himself, the One who cast out the ruler of this world (John 12:30-33). Therefore, to “meditate on Your statutes” is to meditate upon Christ. He has saved you. He is saving you. He will save you. These are His many lovingkindnesses for you.