

Study and Trial

How can study help in difficulty?

- This evening I want to talk about going to the scriptures in times of trial and difficulty
- If we know Christ as Savior, we understand that He wants us to lean on Him in trouble
- To trust Him fully
- To follow His instructions
- To live by His example
- And the scriptures are where we find testimony of Him

- He reminded us in John 5:39 to "Search the scriptures;" and He said "for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."
- As I thought about this, I wondered if there were any extended passage that could give us some direction on study in trial
- And I found a verse to sum up some of my own personal experiences
- When I did, I read on, and found the next several verses provided a training course of sorts
- That summary verse is Psalm 119:143 "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights."

- I want to define some of the terms in this summary before we get started
- What is trouble and anguish?
- The word for trouble literally means narrow or tight
- It means distress
- That due to an adversary or foe, we find ourselves in a tight space

- The word for anguish is very similar
- It can also mean distress or stress
- It's very similar to our English word anguish
- They are both often used in relationship to combat with enemies
- In fact, the first word is often just translated "enemies" or "adversaries"
- It's translated that way just four verses earlier in Psalms 119:139...

"My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words."

- Distress of various kinds can take a hold on us
- But what does that mean?
- Well, the word for "taken hold" is most commonly translated find or found
- Over 359 times, in fact
- Like in Genesis 6:8 "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."
- And this trouble and anguish finds us
- It has found all of us at some point

- But, God's commands are our delights
- What does that mean?
- His words are the object of our delight and enjoyment
- No matter who (or what) distresses us

- This is a profound thought
- One which is surrounded by companions as Psalm 119 goes on
- The next verse may hold one of the key reasons...

Psalm 119:144

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

- Whatever trouble we face is temporary
- Even if it's quite a profound trouble
- But the rightness and justice of his testimonies last forever
- When we seek His word, we are not attempting to meet a temporal trial with temporal words and temporal solutions
- This is where eternal meets temporal
- It's the everlasting meeting that which will shortly be passed
- And if we could understand this, we could do as the passage says, sustain and prosper in life
- We may do something else at this time..

Psalm 119:145

145 I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

- We often find a connection between calling out to God and our commitment to obey His word
- If we call out, He will always call back in perfect accord with scripture
- And if there are instructions in His response, they will be Biblical instructions
- If we have no commitment to comply, then our calling out is wasted
- When we know the Savior, we are His
- He hears and faithfully answers, expecting obedience from servants
- The next verse is very similar...

Psalm 119:146

146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

- We will often be in need of rescue
- This is a request to be liberated or delivered or to be given victory
- It can be salvation from moral troubles
- Again, instructions may come back
- They will be scriptural instructions
- And we will need to be ready to obey
- Our daily habits may be changed in trouble...

Psalm 119:147

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

- This means to rise up before dawn and cry for help
- We do this because we have hope in His word
- This is where we find the concept that He is there, and He cares, and He can help, and He can answer, and He loves us, and He is faithful
- Other habits may change in difficulty...

Psalm 119:148

148 Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

- We may be awake through the watches of the night
- When trials do this to us, we should use the time to meditate on His promises
- Throughout various stages of life there will be times of sleeplessness
- With concern for a big decision
- Or concern for a family member
- Our own health
- The health of our children
- Whatever it is, these interruptions of sleep should be invitations to study
- The Psalm goes on...

Psalm 119:149

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

- This is a call for God to act according to His character
- It's a confidence in His character
- In that He will respond based on what He has already said
- And revive or quicken us
- The word quicken could even mean to restore us to health
- All that we know of Him and His ability to do this is found in His word
- The wicked, on the other hand...

Psalm 119:150

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

- The verse is phrased this way in the ESV...

"They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from your law."

- When in trouble with enemies or persecutors, we know that they behave this way

because they are far from Him

- Far from all of His instruction
- While our life is continually shaped by it, theirs suffers without its influence
- Another key insight comes in verse 151...

Psalm 119:151

151 Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

- Whatever we are facing, we know for certain that He is near
- And that all He says and commands is true
- The world offers nothing comparable
- It is a lonely place
- And rarely delivers reliable information
- In fact, it usually delivers the opposite
- But there is nothing better for a person facing hard things than truth
- No matter how hard can be to hear
- There is something else about the nature of scripture...

Psalm 119:152

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

- If you are here tonight, it is likely that you have known for a while that His words are our foundation
- It is a foundation that has stood for thousands of years before us and that will stand for eternity
- What He says has been tested
- It has been called upon by countless saints in the midst of desperate trial
- And it is a solid place to stand
- A true and eternal and instructive and comforting and reassuring testimony
- That comes directly from the One True God
- A God who considers us...

Psalm 119:153

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

- This is another direct reference to affliction and a need for deliverance
- And it is again connected to a pre-existing commitment to scripture
- To remember scripture
- One of the things that is obviously remembered is His faithfulness
- That is why we call and ask Him to consider deliverance
- It is His word that tells us who He is
- And therefore how He may respond to us
- There is more...

Psalm 119:154

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

- The Bible makes promises about who God is
- And how He acts on behalf of His people
- We must read it to remind us this is the case
- This is not something the lost can do...

Psalm 119:155

155 Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

- The word of God is a mystery to the wicked
- They neither know it, nor care to know it (in most cases)
- And they face trials on their own
- With whatever resources they can muster on their own
- That is why deliverance is so far from them
- Because they have neither the information nor the enlightenment of God's word
- They should be told...

Psalm 119:156

156 Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

- Men can experience the mercy of the Lord in any trial
- We can be revived by Him through the text He has given us in scripture
- Even when...

Psalm 119:157

157 Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

- In the face of desperate trial
- Enemies on every hand
- His testimonies must be ever before us
- They must be a place in which we abide

As the ESV translation of this verse says...

"Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies."

- Times of hardship are never the times to take a wrong turn
- His guidebook must be our constant companion
- We dare not swerve, either in our study of it or our obedience to it

- There are a few prime takeaways I want to remind us about...

1. His word is eternal, our trials are temporary
2. Calling out to Him should be accompanied by His word (His response)
3. The Bible is a proven foundation on which we can stand
4. Scripture is truth when we are unsure or find only misinformation in the world
5. His book reveals His character, and He is the person we need in times of trial