

Psalms 19-06-20a

This is Thursday, June the 20th, 2019. We continue our study in the book of Psalms, picking up after something of a hiatus in Psalm 119 verse 81 through 96. This is the Kaf and the Lamed section.

We covered Lamed last time and just we'll do a quick review of that. Let me say at the outset that we do have a handout for tonight. And for those of you that are here, you can have these.

I need one. And for those of you that are joining us from the wonderful land of Afar, if you go to the website and go like you're going to pull up a Psalm study and instead of, you have to kind of copy the URL for one of those earlier Psalms documents, but this one is called Psalm 119 with no spaces, Psalm 119 underscore 81-96.pdf. No spaces in the name, Psalm 119 underscore 81-96.pdf. And if you can insinuate that into your browser with the Psalms folder, you'll see a copy of it. You can get by without it.

I'm going to be verbose and explicative and illustrative and otherwise capable of painting this thing in air to the point that you can catch it up later. I did not have time to create a link. I apologize for that, but I was doing well to get the thing copied up there at all.

So again, we'll be picking up and we'll review the Kaaf section of 81 through 88. And then we'll look at Lamed tonight, specifically 89 through 96. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we'll get started.

Father, it is such a wonderful privilege to spend time together looking at your word and gleaning the truths and the strength and comfort that it provides to us. We thank you for the powerful ministry of your Holy Spirit that enables us to understand what we could not otherwise perceive and know. We thank you that he stores it in our souls and brings it to our minds as opportunities for application and pertinent circumstances arise.

We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ for his example as a human being who lived by every word that proceeds from your mouth in the same enablement of the Holy Spirit that he has granted to us. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word tonight, that it will be meaningful and helpful to each one of us, that the truth will transcend the presentation and do its divine work of restoration and renewal and the creating of hope and confidence that provides the motivation for us to live in the light of the calling that you have issued to us as members of the body of Christ and his representatives on this earth in the same way that you sent him. We pray that we can shine as lights in the midst of our crooked and perverse generation, and when others see that light, they will be drawn to you and to salvation through the Lord Jesus.

We pray all these things in his name. Amen. Well, hopefully you have been able to, by hook or by crook, acquire the handout.

Once again, if you navigate to the audio folder for Psalms and you can pick any of the links in there, right click it and then paste it up into the URL box of your browser, but then take whatever the mp3 name is away and replace that with Psalm 119, no space, underscore 81-96.pdf. And that should magically create a copy of this document on your screen, side-by-side Kof and Lamed with color coding and the beatific vision of the symmetry we're going to observe tonight. But let's begin by looking at our passage. It's been a couple of weeks.

I'm just going to read the Kof section. You'll quickly remember or you'll remember quickly or I will quickly review so that you remember that we had the first 10 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and we thought of those as fingers on your hands. And so Yod or Yod was the final letter and Yod and Yad are spelled the same in Hebrew and that is one word for hand, but that hand and that shape is the hand of supplication, the hand that is outstretched to be filled and to receive.

The very next letter in the alphabet is the one we looked at last time and that is Kof, but this is the hand that is extended in power and in control and in strength. And so right at that juncture in the alphabet you have the transition from the hand with all of its 10 fingers that belongs to us and then in the Kof section you have an appeal to God's power, God's hand. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand, the powerful strong hand of my righteousness.

So keep that in mind as we review the Kof section because this is what is in the psalmist's mind as he writes. And there's a contrast between God's omnipotence and his divine sovereign operation where he has the strength to do anything. He is in total and utter control and our weakness and inability and the need that we have even after we've got looking at both our hands and all 10 fingers, our hands are in need of receiving God's grace and God's provision and God's deliverance.

So beginning in Psalm 119.81, the psalmist, you'll remember, says, my soul faints for your salvation but I hope in your word. My eyes fail from searching your word. You notice from searching is in italics.

It just says my eyes fail from your word and for whatever reason the eyes are no longer looking at it or able to look at it or have grown tired from looking at it, saying, when will you comfort me? And there are times when we look at the promises and the principles of the word of God and we say, well, count it all joy, brethren, when you fall into various trials. Well, I'm in various trials and I'm having a really hard time being joyful about it. When is the trial of my faith going to produce this patience and the perfect work that that patience is going to have in me? And when am I going to receive the benefits of my relationship with God and my continuance in well-doing and my faith and my obedience? It just seems sometimes like things remain dark, remain difficult and joyless and verging on hopeless.

And this is where the psalmist is. So he says, my soul is panting. My soul is growing weak for your deliverance.

But I hope in your word, I haven't given up that expectation. My eyes fail your word saying, when will you comfort me? For I have become like a wineskin in smoke. You remember we examined that in some detail.

What is a wineskin? What is it known for? What is its purpose? It's all about the contents, isn't it? And a wineskin in smoke, there's something on the inside and there's something on the outside. On the inside, there can be wonderful, restorative, preservative and joy-inducing wine. But on the outside, smoke, the old saying goes, is present where there is fire.

And so there is some sort of an ordeal and a smelly, smoky set of circumstances on the outside. And the psalmist says he is the wineskin trying to preserve that which he has within. But the smoke suggests that there is trial, potential destruction and so on.

I'm a wineskin in the smoke, yet I do not forget your statutes. I'm hoping and I do not forget. These trials are severe and worrisome and potentially hazardous from a human point of view, but they do not drive me from my faith.

They do not drive me from my confidence. How many are the days of your servant? When will you execute judgment on those who persecute me? And we saw the notion there, I'm only going to live so long if the deliverance doesn't come soon, I won't see it till glory. The proud have dug pits for me, which is not according to your law.

These proud are Israelites who ostensibly are in a covenant relationship with God and are bound by that covenant law to love their neighbor and to look out for one another. You can look in, for example, Deuteronomy chapter 22. It's a rather famous chapter.

I've been doing a little special work on it. But the first part of that chapter talks about if you build a new house, put a rail around the roof so your neighbor doesn't fall off. If some of his stuff goes missing, find it and take care of it and return it to him.

Don't be indifferent. It's an Old Testament, more detailed version of the golden rule. You would hope that someone would look out for your interests, your property, your health.

You should do that for your neighbor. Well, that has gone away. Instead, the neighbors that should be looking out for your interests and practicing the golden rule are actively trying to cause trouble, cause harm.

Instead of following the law, they're contrary to the law, digging pits for you to fall into. Not according to the law. All your commandments are faithful.

The problem is not in the word of God. The problem is in the people who are failing to keep it and failing to abide by it. They persecute me wrongfully.

Help me. And there's just an outcry in the middle of this that sounds a lot like our two-word prayers when things are about to go horribly wrong in the car on ice or in some other severe

situation. Our prayers get very short, very direct, and very immediate, very much full of force and emphasis.

Oh, Lord, save. Oh, Lord, deliver. They almost made an end of me on earth, but I did not forsake your precepts.

And we mentioned last time, it puts you in mind of Job. Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. Circumstances should not determine the level of our dedication, our commitment, or our faith.

These are determined by recognition of who God is, of the tremendous price that was paid to enter us into relationship with him, and that he is in complete and sovereign control. And whatever be tied, it's the words of another hymn, whate'er be tied, God will take care of you. Be not dismayed, whate'er be tied.

Well, whate'er be tied, though they came close to making an end of me in the land or on the earth, I did not forsake your precepts. Revive me according to your chesed, your loving kindness, so that I may keep the testimony of your mouth. I want to continue to be a testimony and a witness to the grace of God, the faithfulness of God, and vindicate dedication to his testimonies, his precepts, his statutes, all of the synonyms that we've seen for his word.

Well, that was the cough section. And you can see that in looking at that strong hand of God, it is a reminder of our weakness in the same way that viewing representations of God's righteousness often causes us to sink into the dust. Peter had this experience looking at the Lord Jesus when he created the miraculous draft of fish.

Ezekiel had this experience when he had a vision of the realms of God's throne in heaven. John had this reaction when he saw the glorified Lord Jesus. And in the same way that God's pure righteousness makes us conscious of our sinfulness and our corruption, our defilement, our inherent inability to generate that quality and meet that standard, looking at God's strength, it's a reminder of how limited our strength is and how dependent we are upon God.

Well, that brings us to the Lamed section now. Lamed is the preposition in Hebrew that means two or four, two or four. And this would make it pretty easy to create stanzas that begin with that letter.

But we're going to see beginning here in verse 89. In English, it doesn't look like it starts with two or four, but it actually does because the word forever is l'olam, which is the future ages, the timeless future, the indefinite, whatever is ahead with no visible termination. So l'olam, unto the ages.

And olam is a common singular here. So into the future, future, it would be a good translation here as a singular noun. And of course, the phrase is rightly translated endlessly or forever.

To the future, into the future, O Lord, your word, this is dabar, d-a-b-a-r, your word is settled. Forever, O Lord, your word is settled. And this is the verb natzav, which means to set up, to

appoint, to establish.

It's used of commissioning officers or appointing officers. This is an appointment. It seems to be putting a certain thing in a certain place for a specific purpose.

I will appoint an officer to be over this aleph or this battalion or this group. I will appoint a time in which a certain task is to be fulfilled. It's more than settle.

It means God's word has content. God has said things. God has ordained things verbally that create situations.

And I'm not real sure how else to describe it. But natzav, N-A-T-S-A-V, it's a soft B, kind of like a V. You can soften, transliterate it with a V. But natzav has the idea of standing something. You stand a thing up.

You appoint an officer. You put something in place for a purpose. So God wasn't just speaking platitudes.

He wasn't just speaking principles. The kind of word that is spoken here is not just an abstraction. These are God's words as they pertain to time and circumstance for man, where you were born, why you are who you are, the particular heredity that you were dealt, the particular circumstances you have experienced, particularly those that were beyond your control.

You don't get to pick locations and family members and situations and circumstances. You don't get to pick your level of health as time goes on. I am more and more impressed with the notion that when I see people down at the feed store or around the area here and they're limping or gimping or up on one side and asymmetrical, they didn't choose that.

There was a time when they were in their high school yearbook and they probably played sports and were hale and hearty. And over the course of the years, things that were largely out of their control have happened. And things don't work like they used to.

The pixies come and swap out your body parts when you're asleep. And over the course of years, pretty soon you wake up and things give and tear and break and don't heal. You don't choose that.

You don't stick up your hand and say, oh, torn rotator cuff for me. Or, oh, can I have the bad knee, please? Or give me a back that surprises me with intense pain and renders me hopeless for days on end. These things are outside our control.

But the word of God, and this is not the Bible, this is not principles of abstract righteousness. When he says your word, oh, Lord, is eternally stood up, it's appointed. And these appointments were made in heaven.

This is the content of what human history is going to be like in general and what history is

going to be like for you and me in particular. God settled it. God established it.

God mapped it out and he appointed circumstances for you and circumstances for me. And that's why they are what they are. God allowed, God said, I will allow the incursion of ill health.

I will allow this insult. I will allow this provision. I will allow this blessing.

I will, whatever the mix is, that's what this word is. Forever, oh, Lord, the circumstances you ordained have been appointed, stood up, and established in heaven. That's what it means.

Davar is not just abstractions. This is what God said would be. The next line says your faithfulness endures to all generations.

Now think about this. Look at the movement. He starts out with God's sovereign management of all the circumstances of history.

And that management was done, settled, fixed, established, where? In heaven. It's not touchable by things on earth. No enemy, no adversary, no amount of human endeavor.

You can't build a tower of Babel and step high enough to get up there and monkey with what God has ordained. God did it and it's out of reach to anybody but God. So if you want to make an appeal about those circumstances, if you would like to make a change in those circumstances, if you would like them to be different or be resolved or whatever, what is the only recourse you have knowing that they have been established, fixed, and ordained, appointed in heaven? You've got to go to the appointer, right? This is the beautiful, wonderful, fantastic privilege that the Lord Jesus Christ has given to us.

He made a way, Hebrews, through the veil, which is his flesh, so that we can come boldly to the throne of grace and find help in time of need. If God has settled, fixed, ordained, and established circumstances that are difficult, and we find ourselves singing along with the psalmist in the kaff strophe here, I've only got so many days, Lord, where is the deliverance? Notice who he's talking to. He is talking to heaven where those ordained circumstances can be changed, and it's only there.

No political party, no political candidate, no human effort, no organization, no crusade is ever going to change situations and circumstances on this earth. I actually saw, I made perhaps a mistake in tuning in the PBS news hour, and it's a segment called, I don't know, Point of View, or What I Think, or I forget what it is, but they had a lady get on there. And this lady is a novelist, well-spoken, well-organized thoughts, and somewhere between Uranus and Neptune in terms of contact with this earth, in my opinion, because here's what she said, the time has come for us to pay reparations for slavery.

There's a confluence, the mood has changed, people are ready, we're conscious of these wrongs and abuses, which in fact were wrongs and abuses in the days of slavery, but we're not going to be, she made this argument that the past is now, and now is the past, and you can't

just shove it all into history and forget about it, because somebody spray-painted on a wall above her apartment in Berlin, how long is now, and that just stuck with her. How long is now? Well, the past is now, which is a completely illogical way to argue, but illogic seems to be the mode of the day now, especially in political fanfare, getting ready for the election. But the reason I bring this lady up is there is a belief, and there is evidence to support this belief, that the results of slavery long after emancipation continued as a plight, continued as a plague on African American people in this country.

That's true. It's absolutely true. Christians practiced slavery and justified it out of their Bibles, and that was wrong.

There were plenty of wrongs perpetrated in the past. However, that premise doesn't necessarily lead to a conclusion that monetary reparations should now be paid. Why is this? Well, how many wrongs are we going to go back and pay people to salve our collective postmodern conscience? I've got a few issues I could certainly bring up, a little thing called the Trail of Tears and the loss of ancestral lands at the cost of murder and mayhem on the part of the government and so on.

So, shall we track down all of the living Cherokees and give them \$17.13 to recompense for the land that was stolen from their ancestors? Here's the point, and I'm using this as an example for a psalm. If your mind works logically, if there is a crime and there is a victim, even in the law of Moses, restitution is paid to whom? The victim. Nobody has come to these 40 acres and driven me off of it and sent me halfway across the country to make my way to some wilderness already inhabited by other people and try to make my way.

That happened to a few of the people that I am descended from. Is there lasting problems in this country with discrimination and bigotry and racism and things of that nature? Yes, but those are modern-day crimes and those crimes have modern-day victims and the solution, to the extent that one can be found, is to address current crime and current victims with whatever justice we can arrive at as mortal human beings. There's a latter days said in former times, the fathers bit the sour grapes and the children's teeth were set on edge, meaning things happened in the past and the children are still suffering, but it goes on to say we're not going to do that anymore.

Now everyone is accountable for what happens in the present and it is perpetrators and victims in the present and we've got our hands full addressing that without digging back into the past and saying, well, so which of our African American population are actually descended from slaves? President Obama is a black man, his mother was white, his father was black, but he's not descended from slaves. So should President Obama and others like him be excluded from any sort of reparative effort? Do you have to now go trace your lineage back and be like the Israelites? How far back does my genealogy go? This is just really a classic example of people trying their best and I give them full marks for empathy, sympathy, a desire to right wrongs. It's all very noble and it's conscience driven and I applaud the fact that people have a conscience

and they're not callous and indifferent, but this is not the answer.

We have all suffered indignities and losses at the hands of other people. I'm still processing an insurance claim because somebody stole my spare off of my F-250 truck and that spare by itself, the wheel and the tire, it's a 20 inch tire, it's over a thousand dollars just for that. Plus the cable that they sawed with a hacksaw, that whole hoist system that holds the spare tire to the truck has to be replaced and some rascal with a hacksaw went in there and stole that spare.

Well, should society at large pay me reparations or should I reap back some of the untold thousands of dollars in insurance premiums that I have paid to make that good? There are better ways. Well, in the spiritual realm, and I am coming back to our Psalm here, what is the appeal when we are hard pressed, when circumstances cause us to cry out, save me, help me. I don't know how much longer I'm going to be alive.

If your deliverance is coming, it needs to come soon, oh Lord. And we pray this respectfully, but somewhat urgently. I'm hanging on to the last frayed pieces of rope here.

Well, that's what is going to be the substance of the appeal, but it is based on this foundation. This section doesn't just start out, save me Lord, help me Lord, deliver me Lord. How does the prayer begin? And this is a prayer notice to whom it is addressed, oh Lord.

So this is a prayer. This is an appeal to heaven where God has ordained all these things, but it's a great model for prayer because it doesn't just start out with, oh Lord, I need this. And oh Lord, can't you fix that? And how soon can you do it? What does he do? He lays the foundation.

Lord, I recognize that no circumstance takes place without it having been approved and established and appointed in heaven. It is either proactively designated or it is allowed. God will step back like he did with Job.

He didn't tell Satan specifically what to do in testing Job, did he? He just said, you can do whatever you are planning to do, but here's what you cannot do. This is the line that you cannot cross. If you heard the review of the parable of the man with the legion, the Gerasene, Gadarene, Demoniac, remember that was a principle in that story.

If I said parable, I didn't mean it's miracle. But remember the man is inhabited with a legion of demons, many, many demons, but he runs directly to the Lord Jesus and falls at his feet. Why? God has forbidden Satan and his angels from inhibiting anyone who wants to come to Christ.

And they can make him do all kinds of other things, shred his clothes, mangle his manacles, attack people on the road. They can do all kinds of things, but they cannot prevent him from making a beeline to the Lord and falling at his feet. It is not permitted.

So there is allowance and permission in God's ordinances as well. So the psalmist begins by acknowledging that Lord, your word with regard to what happens on this earth is fixed and unassailable in heaven. It stands established.

Now look at verse 90, your faithfulness to all generations. And this to all generations is the beginning of the next verse. So you have a to the future or to forever starts with Lamed and it's to the Olam.

And here it is to all generations. And this is dor wa dor, which is generation and generation. This is just the cyclical nature of reproduction on this earth.

So to dor wa dor, your faithfulness endures. And faithfulness here is imuna. And of the various attributes of God, imuna is the, it's translated faithfulness, which is good, but it's faithfulness in the sense of stability, predictability.

You can have a faithful dog, but he can see a rabbit run off and do unpredictable things. This is God's faithfulness in the sense of you can count on it. It never fails.

Anytime you turn to it, look at it, appeal to it, it is there. It's never missing. It's never distracted.

It is nothing but constant. It is stable. It is the most predictable thing among predictable things.

So your faithfulness endures. And notice it endures is in italics because this is to all generations, to generation after generation, your faithfulness. Now it says you established the earth.

And remember we talked about the word established up above in the sense of natsav, which is appoint, ordain, fix, stand up. This is a different word. This here in verse 90, you establish the earth and it abides.

This is nakon, N-A-K-O-N, nakon. And this means to prepare, to provide, to set in order, to fashion a thing. So God's word ordaining all things is fixed and unchanging in heaven.

He's the only one that can access it. Here on earth, his predictable faithfulness is at work. It is fashioning.

It is doing things. And so even though this is translated as established, it's more, the word, it's like a written contract or document in heaven. Once that contract is hammered out, that's the law.

That's what's going to take place. It's crafted once and it stands. It's fixed.

On earth, God has fashioned it. This is his active working. It's in harmony with his word, but this is the active part.

You have the plan and then you have the execution. So the plan is stood up and firm in heaven. The action on earth is what God does in terms of preparing, ordering, directing, fashioning.

So it focuses on the action of God. And this is helpful to think about. Why? We have a hard time imagining non-time.

We have a hard time imagining heaven and what would go on there. We tend to look at heaven

in human and earthly terms. People have imagined an elderly gentleman with a long white beard and a bunch of servant angels around and so on.

But from our perspective, the timelessness of God is just, heaven is a fixture. We are transient. Things change and move and go along.

It's like when you look at the timeline of history, when you get your evolutionary scientists and they spread out all of the ages and you get the Paleozoic and the Mesozoic and the Cenozoic and the Anthropozoic or whatever it is we're in now. This is the age of man because we've goobered up the planet so badly. There's no species that's not been affected by us.

And there's never been a time in the history of animate creation where one species ruined the world for everybody else. But we managed it because we're so smart. And it just goes from bad to worse.

But all of these ages, and they say modern man and history is just like a dime width compared to the circumference of the earth or something like that. There's so much more that preceded us that was very slow changing. And now we've just got this rapid hockey stick amount of changing and men run to and fro and knowledge increases but not wisdom.

So look at the contrast between the order and the fixity and the stability of what is in heaven and God's action on this earth. He fashioned, directed, ordered, brought about this earth. And with all of that action, it abides.

And this just means it stands, it continues. It's the word that just means to stand, to stay. You give something, you tell your troops, halt and they do.

You tell your dog stay and he stays. So God did all of this work. And because it is from the God who made that eternal plan in the heavens, what he does is steady.

It stays the way it is. And then in verse 91, he says, they continue. Now, what is the they? They continue this day, according to your ordinances for all are your servants.

You say, well, is because they is a plural and everything up above has been singular. Well, what are the two major things that have been conditioned by God's word? It is heaven and earth. The word that God stood up in heaven and the action that God has in this earth, they continue this day.

The plan and the execution are the two parts of they. The plan continues. The execution continues because they are both acts of God.

They continue and abide. Why do they continue? They continue according to your ordinances. So these first three verses are all an appeal to God's sovereign authority and control.

If you want a legitimate application of God's sovereignty, this is it. When we are going to go to God and make appeal about the dire nature of our circumstance or the pressure or just the

wearying, never ending nature of a test or a trial or a situation, the psalmist gives us a wonderful foundation, a wonderful altar on which to lay that sacrificial request. And that is, Lord, it's your altar.

It's your heaven. It's your earth. It is fixed.

It is immovable. And I recognize that there is nothing in heaven or in earth that can change your unchangeable word and your unchangeable work. In heaven, it is the word.

On earth, it is the work. They are both from God. What does this do? Why is that important to recognize? What do we tend to suspect when we have difficulties? Why do we have courts? You've wronged me.

I will sue. It's your fault. You fell short.

Your company didn't wash the lettuce, and now we've all got E. coli. You're at fault. You're liable.

You caused this. You did this. These people over here, by talking and by excluding and by backbiting and by clicking together and by machinations and digging pits for me, not according to God's law, they are why I'm in this fix.

And the part of objectivity is to say, nobody can make enough of a puff of wind to blow one hair of ours out of place if God does not permit it. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved. So if there are forces that are trying to move us, if there are people or circumstances that are conspiring to create great difficulty for us, the first thing to remember is this is a God thing.

God saw it. God knows about it. God either created it or allowed it.

It is a part of his word in heaven. It is part of his work on earth. So how am I going to pray to get it changed? Well, that's the question we're going to answer when we come back from the break.

That's the question the next part of this psalm is going to address and answer for us. But if you want to be persuasive in prayer, you have to approach God on his terms with what he has revealed about himself to us. We have to show ourselves to be grown up and qualified to not only prevail on him for his gracious help, but to show that we have learned what we needed to learn, which was the purpose of that test in the first place.

There is nothing that happens to us that does not have purpose that is a part of God's word in heaven and a part of God's work on earth. It has a purpose. And to the extent that we come in contact with it, there is a purpose for us.

Once we recognize that purpose and acknowledge that design on God's part, that is the precursor to deliverance. But we can't just say midterm. I don't want a midterm and expect God to take it away.

We have to demonstrate that we have the knowledge to pass the midterm. And now that we've been taking the midterm for endless days, let's bring this thing to a finish and get tested on something new. So that's the principle of the prayer, and we'll see the remainder of this when we come back from the break.