

Psalm 119: 49-56; "This is my Comfort", A Communion Sermon delivered before the Lord's Supper, by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 1st, 2007, in the Morning Worship Service.

Lately I have been reading the biography of Missionary Adoniram Judson which was compiled from the letters which were written by he and his wife, Ann Hasseltine Judson; and commented upon by Francis Wayland. The book is having a great impact upon my life. The reason that it is having such a great impact upon my life is because of the way that this man endured the sufferings and afflictions that came to him. He and his wife left for Burma in 1813, and almost from the moment that they left, they encountered many difficulties, trials and afflictions. But they learned by God's grace to bear up under them by faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Learning to bear up under affliction is something that is expected of every disciple of Jesus Christ, and not just missionaries. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all," it says in Psalm 34: 19. The Lord expects us to learn to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. He expects us to "confess Him before men" and "not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," or of others who are prisoners because of their faith in Christ. We are here this morning to take these truths and apply them to our hearts and minds in relation to the Lord's Supper. We are here to remember the greatness of our Savior's grace and the comforts of being a true disciple. This will be a means of renewing and strengthening our faith. The Christian who is suffering afflictions should learn by the example of the psalmist in this psalm, to build himself up in his most holy faith. He does this by thinking of the comfort that is brought to him by the things that the Lord has spoken to Him by His Word, and by the things that the Lord has worked into his life, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. How does the Lord comfort his afflicted people by His Word and the grace of Jesus Christ? We will learn from these verses that the Lord comforts this afflicted servant, the psalmist, in accordance with his prayers and the reflections of his heart in the following 4 ways. We will find comfort in our afflictions if we will follow the psalmist's example.

1st of all - The Lord comforts his afflicted servant by remembering His Word to him. (Verses 49 and 50)

This is a very unusual phrase which we find here; "Remember the word to Your servant." It is not that that he prays that he would remember God's Word to him. It is that God would remember His word to his

servant." Now God has no lack of a good memory. He is not the "Old man upstairs" who has gone daft and cannot remember what He has promised to do for those who trust in Him. But the prayer here is that even as God had "caused this man to hope" that all that He had promised was true and that it would come to pass, even so, he is praying that God would cause His Word of what He had promised, to come true to him now in this time of his trouble and affliction. He is asking for God to be faithful to His promises to help him now, in the time of his weakness and difficulty. Let me ask you first of all this morning if you believe God's Word to be true; and if so, have you taken any care to memorize some of His precious and magnificent promises? If you intend to live the Christian life, you are going to need them all at one time or another. How about Psalm 50: 15? "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." You will find that there will be times where you do not understand why God does not come to your aid or to your rescue right away. "Why," you ask yourself, "would God permit such a thing?" Well he has a number of holy reasons. But you must call upon Him and ask Him to remember these promises that He has given you, to faithfully apply them to your life. He would give you true comfort and not have you confuse it with being safe from physical harm. We all desire to be safe from physical harm, by nature, and desire the safety of those around us if we . But gospel grace and the grace to minister to others takes us one step father. I want to use the example of the Apostle Paul to illustrate the truth of parts of our text this morning.

You must be convinced that God is a God who is faithful to His promises or you will find little comfort in your afflictions. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. In this first chapter of this second letter to the Corinthians, Paul is concerned for the believers there, that they be brought theologically and practically, to the place where they understood that the Christian life does not consist in their trying to be more spiritual than other Christians. He had reproved them for this sinful misconception in his first letter to them in Chapter 4, verse 7 and following. He had reproved them for their boasting in men, and comparing one great teacher to another. He knew that this was immaturity on their part. He hoped, that now they had received this truth so well from him in the first letter, that they would come to the place where, practically, they would know how to endure sufferings for Christ's sake. So in verse 3 he teaches them about this great subject. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort which we ourselves are comforted by God." In learning to walk in the

Christian life, we need to be taught how true spiritual consolation comes to those who are persecuted and afflicted. Paul says in verse 5, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ." "Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation, and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer." "Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are the partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

There are two main ideas here that Paul is teaching. The first one is that God Himself comforts His people who are suffering for Christ's sake. The sufferings of Christ abounded in Paul and his companions as they preached the gospel. They received opposition, reproach, and ridicule. They at times received blows, and beatings, and imprisonment. But as they went through these things there was real comfort ministered to them by the Holy Spirit that was theirs. Can we describe in any other way? They were satisfied by the presence of Christ assuring their hearts and their minds that they were perfectly in the center of God's will. "Our consolation," Paul says, "abounds through Christ." The Lord was even giving them joy and rejoicing in it, because they were experiencing the "fellowship of Christ's sufferings. The second idea here is that God had orchestrated their sufferings in such a way that it was intended to bring comfort to all of God's people who heard about it. "If we are afflicted, it is for your consolation." This doesn't exactly sound right to our ears, does it? How could the sufferings of the Apostle and those with him, bring consolation to the hearts of his Corinthian readers? The answer is; that the Corinthians, hearing and understanding what Paul and his companions had gone through, would be encouraged to realize that Christ would also be ministering to them in their deepest sufferings. The gospel was going forward, reaching out to unbelievers, and its saving confirming power was at work in the those who preached and those who were suffering because they preached. It was a confirmation of the strength and power of the reality of the grace of Christ in the worst of situations. This is God "remembering His Word to His servants." This is God's Word giving them life, the Word of God upon which they had be given hope and they were receiving hope.

This needed to be learned in Corinth, in the big things like persecution; and it needed to be learned in other important things such as Paul's coming to them. Paul's coming to them was related to whether he was being faithful to do what he said. Paul had not been able to come to them when he wanted to. This is evident in Chapter 1, verse 15 of 2 Corinthians. Paul says,

"And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit--to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea." "Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?" "But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No." "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us--by me, Silvanus, and Timothy--was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes." Now look at what he brings up here. "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him, Amen, to the glory of God through us." Do you see what Paul is saying here? He is trying to turn the gaze and attention of the Corinthian church to the power of God's grace to comfort in all things that hurt us and disappoint us whether they are great or small.

Sometimes we can become disappointed at what others do not do for us because they have promised something and then it does not work out that they can do what they promised. This does not always mean that unfaithfulness is the cause. It was not in Paul's case with the Corinthians. But when we realize that God is faithful, His promises are all Yes and Amen, and that He is the One who makes men able to be faithful, then we know how to be comforted in all of our afflictions. The promises of God will all be fulfilled in time, and at the right time, and the faithfulness of other Christians will also improved in time; all because of the grace of Christ. This will come about and be established by the faithfulness of God and by the means of the prayers of God's people.

Now 2ndly- The Lord comforts the psalmist by having him to remember God's judgments of old. (Verses 51 and 52)

He says, "The proud have me in great derision. Yet I do not turn aside from Your law." "I remembered your judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted myself." There are many proud people in the world who think about God and our religion in a contemptuous way. They hold those who are serious about their Christian faith, in derision. To deride is to laugh in contempt; to mock, or scoff or make sport of a person who is serious about doing God's will. "To do evil is like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom," it says in Proverbs 10: 23. The righteous person has the wisdom and the understanding to see through this scoffing and to remember that God will judge the wicked. "Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment." "But a man of understanding walks uprightly." (Proverbs 15: 21) The man of understanding just keeps on going in the right direction no matter what the wicked do. But he does need comfort in this; and he does need the strength of Christ. How do you find comfort from

Christ when people are making fun of you when you do? It is by remembering God's judgments of old. The people of the world before the Flood in Noah's day made fun of him for building the ark. It took him the better part of 120 years. It was a tremendous work. It says in 1 Peter 3; 19 that Christ went and preached to them through Noah in the building of this ark. They probably ridiculed the idea of such a judgment taking place. Where would all the water come from to float such a barge? But God's word to Noah was that He had seen the wickedness of this people and He was going to destroy all flesh. Christ spoke to these people through Noah's preaching and through Noah's building. And when the patience of God was over, and Noah and his family and all the animals were brought into the ark, then the Lord opened up the heavens, and broke up the fountains of the great deep. The people of that day did not laugh then. This did not make fun of his great boat when they had to climb up to the highest mountains and trees because the water was rising. No, they would have been very thankful, very comforted then, if they only would have believed God's word. Noah was comforted even before the judgment came. Noah was comforted because he was doing the will of God in preparing for the judgment. This is the comfort of the Christian now. The Christian knows that judgment is coming and he comforts himself in his present continuing obedience with the thought that God's Word has been true in the fulfillment of both His promises of salvation and his warnings of judgment. A warning is simply a negative promise. God is telling us what He will not accept, and what He most certainly will punish. We remember the flood of Noah's day and we are comforted by His patience and faithfulness to the people of that generation. We remember the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and how if even 10 people could have been found in those cities that were righteous, then God would not have destroyed it. The proud may hold us in derision now, but that is no reason to turn aside from God's law. We remember God's judgments of old and we comfort ourselves.

Whenever you are tempted to turn aside from keeping God's law, remember; those people who seem to be so free in their sin now, those people who seem to be having so much fun in doing sin now, and who take such pleasure in making fun of your serious godliness; they will, none of them, find comfort from what they once took pleasure in when they meet God at the Day of judgment. And God can meet them in judgment at any time He chooses, before that, as well. He does not need to wait until the great Day of judgment to begin with them. He judged all the people of Noah's day, both young and old. He has no promises as to the number of days or years that he gives to unrepentant people. He does give the promise

to obedient young people and children that they will live long upon the earth. But to the wicked, He says that they are storing up punishments for themselves if they will not repent. They will grow old, and their laughter at the seriousness of God's people will cease, because they will not receive the comforts that only God can bring. You do not see atheists and mockers triumphing when it comes their time to die. But when you believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ there is real comfort that is brought to the soul; not something momentary or passing, like the false comforts that sin and worldliness bring, but something solid and substantial. We are comforted in the works that we pursue. We pray for the comfort of God to come to ourselves when others think wrongly of us because we know that God is able to bring it to us. 2 Thessalonians 2: 16 and 17 say, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts in every good word and work." It is because we are comforted by God Himself that we are able to be humble and to have the right view of ourselves and other people. In Philippians 2, after Paul speaks of suffering for Christ as something that is granted to us on behalf of Christ, he says, "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. How does this come about? It comes about by the consolation that we find in Christ, the comfort we find in remembering and knowing His love, and our fellowship with Him in the Spirit. This is what we come to celebrate this morning and to remember when we think of why He died for us.

Then 3rdly- The Lord comforts our psalmist by means of his singing Scripture songs, even when indignation at wicked men takes hold of him.

(Verses 53 and 54)

"Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked who forsake Your law." Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Notice how these two are put right next to each other; indignation because of the wicked who forsake the law of God, and singing spiritual songs in the house of our pilgrimage. We ought to indeed be indignant at the fact that so many people in our generation have forsaken the law of God. We forsake the law when we leave off the consideration of His Word and His commandments. We forsake the law when we forsake the worship of God. To forsake something is to leave it behind, and to no

longer regard it as important. The worship of God is spoken of here in terms of one its major components; singing praise to God. Coming to church to praise and worship God seems to be becoming a thing of the past. People do not think that they need it, so they do not come to church. But we do not come to church simply to have our spiritual needs met. That is an important part of why we come; God giving us help and wisdom and grace through the preaching of His Word. But the equally important reason that we come to church, long-term, is that we are coming to give God the glory due His name and to build one another up in our most holy faith. We cannot do either if we do not regularly attend church, and if we do not join with a local church. Ephesians 5: 15 says, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." God takes notice of what we do with our lives; what we really give to Him each day. Do you give Him praise daily? Do you sing to Him during the week the songs that you sing to Him on Sunday? Do you give Him praise on His Day, the Christian Sabbath. Do you continue your devotions to Him after the services of the day on the Lord's Day, or does the rest of this day belong to you? We ought to be indignant with the wicked who forsake the praise of God and will not give to God His due; but are we giving Him the praise which He deserves each day? If we are not, we should be indignant with ourselves. Remember the example of the Apostle Paul and Silas when they were beaten for preaching the gospel and were thrown in prison. What did they do that night? They were singing praises to God and the prisoners were listening. Praise is always one of the best forms of witnessing of the reality of God's truth and grace. This is what we have found through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we now want to show forth in song. We are now going to come down front and sing a song in this, the house of our pilgrimage and remember our Lord Jesus Christ.

My last point this morning from our text is this: The Lord comforts our psalmist by showing him how his prayers have led to a sincere obedience and to God's word being looked upon as his precious possession.

(Verses 55 and 56)

"I remember your name in the night, O Lord, and I keep Your law."
"This has become mine, because I kept Your precepts." Let us ask ourselves as we approach this table today, "Is my obedience to my God and my Christ, to think of and to do God's commandments, extending to all the times of the day and night? Do you remember God's name in the night? Do you remember to pray to Him, thinking about your relationship to Him and whether He is pleased with the way that you are living your life. Sometimes the Lord will wake us up in the middle of the night to do this very thing. It is good to think about our prayer life and our relationship to God. Psalm 92 says, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night." Every night? Yes, every night. What reason we have to praise our Lord Jesus Christ today and every day. Let us come to the table now, thinking yes, of our sins and repenting of them. But let us also come declaring God's faithfulness in our lives and His love to give us His Son to die for us. Let us be in our hearts and minds as the psalmist in verse 4 of Psalm 92. "For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of your hands." In Christ we triumph; at this table we remember.