

Season 5, Episode 6: From Despair to Hope (81-112)

The following is an uncorrected transcript generated by a transcription service. Before quoting in print, please check the corresponding audio for accuracy.

Sarah: This podcast is sponsored by 10offthose.com. 10offthose.com hand pick the best Christian books that point to Jesus and sell them at discounted prices. I want to recommend Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy by Mark Vroegop. I've recently finished it and it is genuinely one of the best books I've read in a long while. And I say that knowing that we recommend books on here every week. The author takes us on a deep dive into the grace of lament and helps us to see how essential, valuable and foundational it is for processing and growing through life hardships. It really is an excellent book and has helped me read Psalm 119 and other psalms with greater depth in understanding, showing me the wisdom and grace of what it is to lament. Grab your copy at 10offthose.com.

Felicity: Welcome to Two sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Felicity and I live in the States and this is my sister Sarah. She's in the UK.

Felicity: In this episode, we're excited to be jumping back into Psalm 119. We're going to be covering verses 81 through to 112 and we're excited to be joining the Psalmist back on his journey as we go through this psalm.

Sarah: Sarah, I wanted to follow up on Hunter last week saying that people in the US don't really have kettles. What? How have we not talked about this before?

Felicity: It's true, actually, and I find it in most houses that I stay in that to make a cup of tea is actually quite a laborious process because you have to actually get the saucepan, boil the water. I was staying with a friend a couple of weeks ago. She kindly bought a kettle because we were coming and she knew we love a good cup of tea. It's very kind. I think because everyone drinks coffee, they just have their coffee machines, basically. That's why haven't quite worked out why.

Sarah: But yes, I feel like I use my kettle for so many more things than just a cup of tea as well.

Felicity: I know there is a certain awe and wonder as well when people do come to our house and we do have a kettle that lights up as it's boiling and they're just a bit bemused as to what is going on. Yeah. Okay.

Sarah: Before we get stuck into our puppy today, we are going to tackle another listener question. This one is from Jill and it's a really great question. How do we get into these conversations, like opening the Bible with our friends, when it's just like our room is full of little people, there's Juplo, there's noise, there's nothing changes. What does it look like when there's little opportunity for quiet to get the Bible apart with each other?

Felicity: What a great question. I mean, let us be honest, duplo is probably the loudest toy out there, so it might be wise to, like, move the duplo out of the room. But I do think a big part of this is our expectation of what it looks like for a bit of quiet. And actually, we maybe come into parenthood thinking a quiet time is literally like an hour or half an hour of solid quiet time. And very quickly into parenting, you realize that's a rare occurrence. So if you're going to be in the Word at all, then it's going to have to be for a short time. And I think in the midst of a playdate, in the midst of having kids all around you, then the expectation that we might even just read a verse or two, say what struck us, what encourages us. Someone prayed 1015 minutes. And I think behind that is just this solid conviction that God is going to work through His Word. He doesn't say, I'm going to work only if you read a chapter or if you've got all this quiet, I am going to work, even if it's just a verse. And the joy of reading that together and being in it together, I think surpasses even the noise that is accompanying it.

Sarah: Yeah, big time. And I think if, you know, taking some hundred and 19, like if you just said to each other, right, let's read if we can manage to read this stance before we meet, and then as we're chatting over a cup of tea with the kids playing around, let's.

Felicity: Just talk about it.

Sarah: And we're going to be talking anyway. So if we can talk about what we've managed to read or someone just read it out as we're doing it, great. And then just spend a couple minutes praying about it, I think, yeah, as you say, it's the expectations, but actually just getting over the kind of awkwardness of we're going to talk about the Bible now and just go for it, is a really, really helpful thing, isn't it?

Felicity: Absolutely. I don't think anyone will regret it. When you go away from that playdoh.

Sarah: Having had a you never regret it, do you? Yes. You never regret it. All right, so we get stuck in there. So we're going to be reading from verse 81 to 112. Do you want to start 50? You do the first two and I'll do the next.

Felicity: Sure thing. Okay, here we go. So, verse 81. My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in Your word. My eyes fail looking for your promise. I say, when will you comfort me? Though I'm like a wine skin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees. How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors? The arrogant dig pits to trap me? Contrary to your law, all your commands are trustworthy. Help me, for I am being persecuted without cause. They almost wiped me from the earth. But I have not forsaken your precepts in your unending love. Preserve my life that I may obey the statutes of Your mouth. Your word, Lord, is eternal. It stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations. You establish the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. Save me, for I am yours. I have sought out Your precepts. The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes. To all perfection I see a limit, but your commands are boundless.

Sarah: Oh, how I love your law. I meditate on it all day long. Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey Your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey Your word. I have not departed from Your laws, for you yourself have taught me how sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth. I gain understanding from Your precepts, therefore I hate every wrong path. Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, but I will follow Your righteous laws. I have suffered much. Preserve my life according to your word. Accept, Lord, the willing praise of my mouth and teach me Your laws. Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law. The wicked accept a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts. Your statutes are my heritage forever. They are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.

Felicity: It's a surprising start, I think, isn't it, to these stanzas, because we've just had him talking about how he has various ways of finding comfort from the Lord. It feels like we're being thrown back into an even more desperate kind of state, the way that he sort of is crying out to the Lord, when will you comfortably, like, when? Come on, how long? Lord, I need your help now. It feels more desperate in some ways than he's been before.

Sarah: I think this is a really deep pit that he's in right now, isn't it? I think it's a really dark place, and I think the fact that he's spent so long talking about comfort and where he finds it, and then to just say, where is it? And this is the imagery, isn't it? I'm in like, a wine skin in the smoke, like he's just kind of all shriveled up. There's hardly anything to have left. And I've always, always been wiped from the earth. Like, this is a really desperate situation that he's in. It's a really dark place, which is really rare, isn't it? It's raw, as you see that and as you can read those words. So he's in this really raw place and then where does he go after that?

Felicity: Well, that's part of the surprise, isn't it? Because the next thing we have in the next stanza is this kind of series of statements about the enduring, eternal beautiful brilliance of the Lord and His Word. And I wonder whether that actually, the combination of those two things is really quite helpful for our expectation of real life in that we can have all the kind of intellectual answers, we can know our Bible well, we can have all that, and yet we can still feel the deepness of the pit as he's feeling in the first one. But I guess what we're seeing here is in his journey, we're seeing actually what do we do when we're in the pit while he's speaking truth to himself. And the particular truth, I think one of the things that stands out

most here is that Word kind of enduring. And it's the Word, the eternal enduring word of the Lord which really contrast with that, as you were saying, the shriveled wine skin and the almost being wiped out. There seems to be a kind of a stark contrast here.

Sarah: Yeah, definitely. I think there's a real kind of emphasis in there that he's barely clinging on, but what he's clinging to is so established and so firm and so steadfast that that is his hope, that is his kind of his salvation, isn't it? Yeah, clinging to the Lord. And I think as we're seeing through this arm, it's so important seeing these standards in context, isn't it? Because if you just took by either of these or any of these four, just as on their own, you wouldn't really understand why they were where they are in the Psalm. But actually what we see here, there is a journey, there is a progression to where he's going. He starts in the in a really dark place and he then clings to this enduring Word. And then the next under there's actually delight as though there is some hope here because he starts to kind of ponder what it is about the Word that is so helpful to him. And I love that. I love that. Yeah, he starts to kind of just begin to meditate on it for himself again. And then that leads in the last answer to kind of almost like a resolve, isn't it? There's a Godly determination there to press on to the very end because he's seen what the Word can give Him and what happens as he clings to it in the darkness.

Felicity: I think that's so true. And if you go back to verse 94, you really get that kind of all in this kind of like this is where his hope is. So save me, for I am yours. And as he is all in with the Word, with the Lord, with these promises that bring salvation, then you see as you were saying, the active nature of the Word, like God does work through His Word. I love that in verse 98 you're always with me and make me wiser. I have more things are changing, like he is being given things and then, as you say, that resolution in the last. I think it's really challenging to have this hold the Word in this way. Like to really think that the Word and the God who gave it to us is the lasting eternal he and His Word surpasses even creation. This is it. This is where our hope lies in order to guarantee life.

Sarah: Yeah, but I think it's interesting saying that he says in verse 102, I've not departed from your laws that you yourself have taught me. So again, it's not the Word as an end in itself, is it? It's the word. Because in the midst of the Word, we find the Lord Himself, we find Christ the Word. And I think that's just really helpful. So as he's clinging to this Word, he's clinging to the Lord, isn't he? And he's clinging to every word that the Lord says about his salvation and his deliverance and his care for Him in the midst of how he's feeling.

Felicity: Yes, that's a big Psalm 119 thing, isn't it? Because I think especially the press for the psalm, the rep it has is that it makes us love the Bible but actually love the Word, because then we are loving the Lord who gives us Himself through the Word. And ultimately that being Jesus. And that's something that you and I have been talking about quite a lot, isn't it? Like, how do we see Jesus in this psalm? Not just in the sense that he is the only one who is obedience, almost kind of like big trees, which are all true, but how specifically in the verses that we're looking at, do we see Jesus? And so are we able to cling to Him in the same way that the psalmist is clinging? Because in some ways that the psalmist is clinging to the promises, isn't it? And the promises are then ultimately all fulfilled in Christ. So it's really helpful for us to see Jesus. So can you help us a bit more in how we're seeing Jesus in these verses here?

Sarah: Yeah, I think as you're saying, it is hard and it is hard not to just you know, it would be easy to say, well, Jesus has obeyed all of this. He's fulfilled this in the way that he's wholeheartedly live it. So we go. Wow. Again at Jesus. And I think that, as you say, it was all good and true. But I think we can drill down more specifically. Take for example, the first stanza. It is really, really dark what's going on for this Armist here. And I think if we just kind of cast our minds to the cross and what Jesus would have been feeling in those moments. I think that kind of helps us just kind of experience some of the darkness and some of what was going on there for him. Likewise, if we go to the next answer, I think just the word, the eternal word, Jesus being that eternal word, what does it look like to kind of put his name into everywhere? It says he's eternal, he's enduring, he's steadfast. I think it's just really, really helpful to cast our minds to what it looks like for Jesus to be that word. Or the third one just talks about wisdom, understanding, insight and actually in colossians, Paul tells us that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ. So again, like, wow, as he kind of starts to climb out of the pit and see the value and the delight in this word, he's

delighting in Christ, who is this wisdom for him? And then the light in the last stanza, I think is really powerful. Christ actually he says he's the light in the darkness, doesn't he? Says the darkness will not overcome him. And this is such a journey from darkness to light in this kind of group of stanzas that I think just kind of more specifically seeing Christ in that way, well, it's definitely helped me anyway. I don't know what you think.

Felicity: No, I think that's so, so helpful and I think that's absolutely right to really drill down and see actually then what does that mean now? How does that change the way that I am able to sing along with the psalmist, isn't it? Because that's what we've been kind of doing all along, is trying to like how can we run in the commands of the Lord as the psalmist is seeking to do? And I think when you see Jesus really clearly in these things, then you're all the more persuaded that this is absolutely what I should be doing. I've been really struck by that kind of all inness that he has going on here. The Word is a lamp for my feet. That is where the light comes from. And I think the more I see Jesus to be that light, the more I see Him to be the wisdom, the more I see that God works through His Son to enable me to know Him better, then the more persuaded I am that I want to really be all in with the land. Because Jesus the cross, the resurrection I'm standing on that firm ground, aren't I?

Sarah: Yeah, it's really helpful. Yeah. I think for me, what's really struck me, I keep coming back to the first answer here, the really dark one, but I think as I see Christ having gone through that and as I see this and I read these words of the psalmist in that pitch, it's giving voice to the darkness, isn't it? It's giving permission to feel this way. Christ has been through it, others believers have been in it. And actually I just think this is so helpful that this is here because it just gives permission to feel this low and to be able to speak into that. And I guess I'm just really encouraged that it's here. But I'm also really challenged do I think God's Word is the thing that my friends or like whoever, do I think this is what they need when they're in this place? Or I'm just challenged on that. Do I think God's Word is powerful enough to shift their gaze in the midst of it?

Felicity: I think that's a really helpful way of thinking about is it because we can be quite in the midst of the pit myself, would I turn to the Word in the crunch, would I turn to the Word? But sometimes when we think about it in relation to other people, that's more of a teller, isn't it? So would I point other people to the Word like I've got my friends suffering, would I point them to where because I really do believe that God is lifting them out of the pit. That's part of the thing isn't the pit might still remain, but the heart within it is lifted to the Lord. And that then means that you get to the point. I just love this last verse, 111 your statutes are my heritage forever. They are the joy of my heart. You put that next to that first stance. That's the journey, isn't it? It's a heart extraordinary, isn't it, to that point? I love that you're such a my heritage. But everything for eternity is anchored in these everlasting statutes because they are of the everlasting God.

Sarah: Yes. And they're nothing to do with Him. It's not Him clinging, it's not his work clinging on. This is the Word at work in Him. This is the promise given to Him. And as you say, the circumstance has not changed, has it? There's been no sign of it changing. There's just the very fact that he's now some amazing miracle. He's got joy because his gaze has been shifted onto the Lord and His Word and not onto where he's sitting. And I just think, wow, good.

Felicity: I know. So good, so good. It makes me just want to just soak in these verses all the more. Sarah, what do you pray for us as we as we finish them?

Sarah: Yeah, I'd love to see heavenly Father, we just thank you so much that these verses are here for us to meditate, for us to ponder on, to consider Your ways. We thank you so much that this takes us on a journey, that we see that journey from despair to hope. And we pray to you that Your Word is the thing most powerful to change our hearts. And we just pray, father, please, Lord, we just pray. Would you be at work in our hearts by Your Word? Would you help us to see how powerful it is? Would you help us to see what a firm and steadfast rock Your Word is in the midst of suffering, raising our hearts, suffering from situations out of our control. Lord, we just pray. Father, please, would you help us to see delight in Your Word in the midst of all that's going on and all the different pressures. And we pray that for Your glory that our hearts would be able to rejoice like this psalmist here. Amen.

Felicity: Amen. And I guess echoing a bit of what we've been saying at the end there, like, why not grab a friend and read Psalm 119 together? If we really, really do think that God is going to work through His Word, why not get stuck into this together? Even over duplo. Who knows? You might actually be encouraged amidst the noise. Absolutely.

Sarah: Well, time is gone. We need to go. We'll see you next time for the next one.

Felicity: See you next time. Looking forward to it. Bye.

Sarah: Bye bye. Thanks for listening to this episode. It's sponsored by ten of those.com. Check them out for great discounted resources that point to Jesus.