

# How to Make It Through the Storm

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 119:153-160

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 15, 2013

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Well, let's go to the old part of the book, the book of Psalms, Psalm 119. Actually, I was thinking about how this world is a series of troubles and trials and difficulties and thinking about some of the brothers and sisters who will have their jobs ending unless God does something we can't foresee out of International Paper, and I thought about the Psalmist and I thought about how the Psalms record the Psalmist pouring out his trials, his fears, his anxieties before the Lord, and the Psalms are very difficult to outline in any way, particularly Psalm 119 where we're going to be, but it's rich with truth so I'm going to do something of just a running expositional commentary on this section of Psalm 119. If you'll look there with me, and we will not be long tonight. Psalm, beginning in 153 and going through 160. I chose this section because what he says when he begins in Psalm 119:153, he says, "Look upon my affliction and rescue me." Have you ever felt like that?

153 Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Your law.  
154 Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word.  
155 Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Your statutes.  
156 Great are Your mercies, O LORD; Revive me according to Your ordinances.  
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, Yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies.  
158 I behold the treacherous and loathe them, Because they do not keep Your word.  
159 Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.  
160 The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

So the Psalmist is, indeed, facing a hard time. Repeatedly he says, "O God, revive me. Lift me back up. Get me back on my feet. My spirit is downtrodden." That's where many of you are tonight. I don't know all of your heartaches, I don't know all of your pains, I don't know all of your predicament, but so many of you tonight, you're hurting and you're afflicted. Some of you bear some silent sorrows that almost no one else knows and maybe that's something that ought not be. Maybe you ought to share some of those things with some godly friends that could lift you up and give you godly counsel and godly encouragement. But that's where the Psalmist was and that's where he was so often and it's amazing, I think maybe a lot of young men, maybe young preachers in particular, you want to be a godly man like the Psalmist but it's amazing how God required the Psalmist to pen so much of his own journey, his own spiritual pilgrimage, and he was unveiled,

warts and all, in these Psalms. His sins, his weaknesses, his shortcomings. He's just so very humble and very transparent about it and all the troubles and the trials that would come into his life.

Sometimes they just come out of nowhere. We're not looking for them, we're not expecting them. We can't look at anything in our own lives. There is nothing that we did. No failure, no transgression that would have brought something but the storm just comes on and it's a difficult thing and I think that's where the Psalmist is here. Of course, from his wording, he may have various things going on. He talks about affliction. He talks about enemies and adversaries and he just wants to be revived again. But one thing we do know, this is one of the first things I want to point out is that he is loyal to the Lord and that's a key point and it's a simple thing, but you need to anchor this in your soul: where do you run when the trial comes? The Psalmist immediately goes to God. I don't know that that's always true with the children of God. I don't know that even the true elect children of God are quick to run to God when the difficulty comes. He looks to the Lord. Now, perhaps he had a sin issue. Perhaps he's aware that he's partly responsible for part of the difficult issues in his own life. But nevertheless, he runs to God. How many times as your pastor have I told you when you sin run to God? That's what grace is for. You come boldly to the throne, listen, of grace. That's why it's a throne of grace.

So here this Psalmist is as we see him over and over, King David predominately wrote the Psalms, and once again he maintains that he has been striving from his heart to be faithful to God, keeping the word of God, and honoring the word of God in his life. Now, the Psalmist is not saying he's in some sort of work approach to his religion. He's just saying, "My heart's been changed and loving God and loving God's word is the mainstay of my heart and my life." And he has great confidence that God will revive him, God will rescue him, because he knows God's word promises that.

I spoke with a lady this morning who has a loved one who's not yet converted or maybe they're newly converted, they've just not yet presented themselves for baptism, and she's so very burdened and has a good heart, is on track, and I said, "Look, God did not start that work of grace in that person's heart just to play a game with them." And that's where the Psalmist is. He knows. He has a confidence. He looks to God with confidence to revive him, rescue him, bring him through the affliction, because he knows, "God didn't start this work in me just to leave me hanging somewhere. He's going to get me through it." Did you hear that? He's going to get you through it. He's gotten to you, he's rescued you, he's going to get you through whatever he allows to come your way.

Keep your finger in Psalm 119 and go to Acts 12 real quick just as an illustration of the faithful provision of God. Acts 12, and we see again the vicious and awful persecution that Christians in the first century faced and notice how God is faithful to rescue them. Acts 12:1, "Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. When he had seized him," that's Peter, "he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the

Passover to bring him out before the people. So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two guards, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And his chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, 'Gird yourself and put on your sandals.' And he did so. And he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.' And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. When Peter came to himself, he said, 'Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.'"

Listen, that's not just a story of history, that's the reality of all children of God. He may not rescue in this very same way, but God is for you, he will be faithful to you, he will provide for you, and he will keep you through the trials you face in this life. Not the guards, not the gate, not the governor, could hold in bondage the child of God. God will rescue his own from the affliction. You need to believe that.

Look at Psalm 119. Now turn back there and look at 157. In 157 he says, "Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, Yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies." His point is, "God, it's difficult but I am resolved and settled that I'm going to look to your word to find my hope and find my solution." You know, in life it's easy going downhill. I mean, when you're going downhill, you're just going. You don't really have to do nothing. You're just going along. But it's relatively hard to begin to go uphill. As a matter of fact, you can zip along just fine pretty good on level ground. Some of you guys ride your bicycles and I've heard you talk about, "Man, I get out on the Natchez Trace and it's just pretty well level and it's just not hard at all." But you turn and you start up even a slight grade and you have to start putting forth some effort and you go up a steep grade and it gets a lot more difficult and it requires a lot more determination to accomplish that.

So many today in their so-called walk with Christ, when they face a steep grade, they just turn around and coast back down the hill and for so many of them, the reason why they did that because for them Christianity was a joyride. They signed up for all the blessings and the joys and like the Puritan father said, "You Christians are strange. You want heaven down here and heaven up there too." And sometimes it's not heaven down here. There are challenges; there are difficulties. The Psalmist faced, he says, many persecutors and many adversaries. But being a Christian is not a joyride and when persecution strikes, it can be a stiff grade you're called to travel up.

But notice what the Psalmist said in 157, he said even though there are many persecutors, even though there are many adversaries, last phrase of 157, "Yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies." Now, here when the trial comes into your life, when difficulty strikes in your life, here's the simple question you want to say to yourself and here's the simple

and loving gesture we should make to one another: what does the word say? It's just that simple. "Well, I've got this, this, this, this in my life." What does the word say? No, you didn't hear me. No, listen, what does the word say? We want to catch a hold of our heart, catch a hold of our emotions, and don't think in the emotional man. We want to say, "What does the word say?"

Now, I want to stand before you today as the testimony of one that hasn't always done that just right. I have failed at that test too many times, but I can tell you by the grace of God facing difficulties and trials and afflictions in God's grace. Let me just give you this quick story and I'll not be long here but I was facing an enormously difficult season as the pastor. Some of you would know if I mentioned the circumstances, but I don't know that you could get any lower than I was. I don't know that you could get anymore anxiety, even seasons of depression. It was so very difficult and I thought, "I'm gonna call Jay Adams." Jay Adams is probably the most respected Bible counselor. Not psychologist, Christian psychologist, but a biblical counselor. And I called Jay Adams and I said, "Jay, I'm just dying. I'm supposed to preach at this church and it's overwhelmingly difficult. I'm just beat down and worn out and I just don't think I can do anything." You know what I thought I was gonna get? I thought old Jay would give me about 30 minutes of just patting me on the back and petting me and, "Bless your heart," and, "Boy, I know it's difficult and I just want you to know I love you and you are a man of God," and da, da, da. He didn't do any of that. His whole counseling session was about 30 seconds. Here's what he said. He said, "What did God call you to do?" I said, "He called me to preach." He said, "Go out there and throw yourself into it like you've never preached before." I said, "Alright, I feel better. I feel better."

That's what the word said. The word said God calls preachers to preach. I wasn't supposed to worry about what this was going over here, what this was saying over here, what these people were doing over there, what these people are doing here. God's word said, "You're a preacher." Now, what has God's word said to you? Get busy with what the word says. Don't focus on the storm, don't focus on the trial, don't focus on the adversaries or the persecutors, what does the word of God say? It is amazing speaking the word to a person. I mean, when they're at their lowest low. Everything in human psychology and in the human mental understanding says, "No, you've got to da, da, da, da, da." Well, now listen, I do believe and I teach that you have to comfort people and give them hope, okay? I don't know if Jay Adams believes that or not but I do believe that. But thank God. Look, he got me through that thing. He spoke the truth to me.

Have you noticed something? Now, again, I'm like the Psalmist, I'm reflecting out of my own weaknesses and some things I'm learning, hopefully I've learned some. Listen, this right here is profound, change your life. Are you listening? You can't be depressed when you forget yourself. Now, if you'll think that through in every form of depression you're thinking about self. "No, I'm worried about da, da, da, da." No, you're thinking about what you yourself might do for them, what they mean to you. It's always a self-connection. I have never had a season of anxiety and depression when God didn't yank me by the nape of the neck and say, "The bottom line here is you are concerned about

yourself." And you don't know that you are. It's not a willful thing but at the end of the day when you look at it you think, "Now, who am I really worried about here?"

Well, you're not the priest, this isn't confession time for Pastor Jeff, but I'm just telling you that's where a lot of us are and I'm telling you it is so important. What does the Psalmist say here? He says in 157, "I do not turn aside from your testimonies. When it's hard and when it's difficult and when the trial is on." And listen folks, sometimes you just can't think straight and you need brothers and sisters in Christ to sit down with you and, yes, hold you and, yes, cry with you and, yes, give you hope but speak the word of God. Men, if you come to me and I'm hurting and my life is broken and I'm in despair, be comforting. Bring a homemade apple pie but please speak the word of God to me in that time. Amen? It does something nothing else can do.

I know I'm on very holy ground and I want to tread here with deepest humility and respect. Brother Scott Thompson is sitting over here to my left and we know the trial that the Lord has allowed to come their way and we've all felt something of that. Not what they felt but something of that. But Brother Scott told me after Julie went home, he said, "All the love and all the care, it's been overwhelming but, Brother Jeff, nothing has helped me like the word of God. Nothing has helped me like the word of God." Isn't that true of all the children of God?

The Psalmist said all the affliction, all the adversaries, but I'm going to see what does the word say? Now, I've got to hurry on because I said we wouldn't be long. Now, Jesus is a good example for us. Here Jesus is on the cross, persecuted while he's hanging there on the cross. The Jewish leaders mocked his lordship. The Roman soldiers mocked his kingship. The criminals mocked his messiahship. And then he promises us in Matthew 10, if they did it to the teacher, they'll do it to you. Trials are expected in the Christian's life.

He even in the midst of his troubling time has a thought of introspection in verse 159, he says, "Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me according to Your lovingkindness." So he says, "Lord, consider, analyze and look at me and test me, in a sense, to see if I'm not one of those who does love your precepts. I love your word." Now look, have you understood the dichotomy, as such, that's in every true child of God's heart? What is it one of the great Puritan writers wrote? He said, "Those things which my flesh loves, I hate." Did you hear that? The things which my flesh loves, I hate. Do you have that warfare? So the Psalmist is not saying here, "I know I'm batting 1,000." He's saying, "I may struggle and I may strive but in my heart of hearts you know at the end of the day I want you and I want your word."

Now, you quit figuring out how it's supposed to be. You quit figuring out what somebody is doing wrong to you and worse than that, if somebody has done wrong to someone in your family; somebody's done wrong to your child or whatever it is. Don't you take up that offense. You see what the word says and you get your heart right with the word of God. You'll do so much damage when you start trying to fix and patch up things that

aren't any really of your business at the end of the day. What does the word of God say? That's where the Psalmist's heart was in all of this.

He so depended on the Lord and we see some wonderful truths of redemptive grace and the truths of Christ jumping out here. Look in verse 154, he says, "Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word." He's actually looking to the Lord as his advocate or his lawyer. Isn't that exactly what the Bible says Jesus is? Jesus Christ is our adequate advocate. He's the righteous one who advocates on our behalf and one might ask the question: how can you, a sinner who fails more than you even can comprehend that you fail, the depth of your offensiveness before a holy God is incomprehensible, how can you boldly go to God and say, "Help me!" Here's how: because God himself has decided he will be your advocate. God advocates for you before God. It's as if you go before a righteous judge, the judge of the universe, and he's sitting on the judgment throne and you stand there before him and there's just no response, there's no excuse, you are guilty to the bone marrow before him and all of a sudden he stands up and he takes his robe of jurisprudence off and he lays it aside and he walks down there beside you and he stands beside you and you look at him and say, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm not only your judge, I'm your lawyer." And he said, "By being the judge, I know your case and I know the law. I can get you acquitted." And that's what Jesus does. He's our advocate before God.

That's what the Psalmist is saying here, "Plead my cause. Redeem me." As a matter of fact, you know we have two advocates in heaven. It's an amazing thing. We know the Lord sits at the right hand of the Father, the Scripture says, where he ever intercedes for us. But the Bible also says in Romans 8:26-27, "The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." It's an amazing thing. In your deepest trial, Jesus Christ is interceding for you and the Holy Spirit of God is uttering intercessions for you with groanings too deep for our tiny finite minds to grasp and comprehend.

Well, he talks about the Lord being his advocate or his lawyer, and then he gets on the lovingkindness of God. Notice what he says, "Great are your mercies, O LORD." That's in verse 156, "Great are your mercies." You can translate that multifaceted. God doesn't just have one big lump of mercy, he has, if you will, multifaceted, multidimensional designer mercies designed for all the kinds of trials and difficulties you might face. What a God of mercy and lovingkindness he is.

Think about his mercy. Just quickly, here he is preserving the human race. We talked about the fact that when the church is raptured and God removes the restraining work of the Holy Spirit and this wickedness is allowed to run unchecked on the earth and that's going to be a great aspect of God's judgment on planet earth, listen, God's coming back to avenge the murder of his Son. God's coming back to avenge those who dishonor and disobey his word which are all mankind apart from Jesus Christ. And when he does, part of the way he'll judge the earth is pulling back the restraints, taking them off, and sin will be allowed to go unchecked and unrestrained on the earth. But God hasn't done that and day by day, moment by moment, second by, just think about it, over all the earth there are

untold millions of radically offensive things that are done before a holy God. Untold millions. I mean, just untold numbers of thoughts, attitudes, dispositions, feelings, actions, behaviors, words, that violate the holy truth of who God is in his holy revealed law and in mercy he doesn't consume us; in mercy he didn't come down and just evaporate in wrath the wickedness of this earth. That's the mercy of God.

Friend, the very fact that the untold hundreds of millions of people will wake up in the morning having drunk in the flood of continual blessings of God: he gives them air to breathe, rain for their crops, clothes for their backs, on and on and on we could go. And listen, hundreds of millions of people will rise in the morning and never give one thought to be grateful to God. They are so completely blind and full of their self-centered, stinking, selfish heart, but God is merciful, and that's not even talking about redeeming grace and I mean the great common graces of God and mercies of God for all of mankind can't even come close to redeeming grace. And, you know, I'm not really that good with words. Some of you think I am, I'm just not, and I wish I had the vocabulary. Of course, if I had 100 million years in heaven with a perfect mind and a perfect tongue I could never articulate the glories and the wonders and the depths of the fact that God looked down on beings that were radically and wholly depraved, absolutely and completely vile and offensive to him, God looked on us and there was nothing appealing to him about us. Nothing. Nothing attracted God's mercy. Nothing attracted. God didn't look at you and say, "Oh, he's pitiful. I want..." God didn't do that. The Scripture makes us, the Scripture requires us to acknowledge that everything about us evoked God's judging wrath but God is such a God that he can bestow the infinite love of his Son and his Son's death for those that he in his true nature would desire to punish and judge to the fullest. He took the most unlovely and unattractive and poured out the greatest love on them.

Now, see, some of you that's like water off a duck's back because that's totally outside the human realm. You and I love because someone does something for us. We love our kids, we love our grandkids because they're connected to us. They bless us. They look like us. They sound like us. They're part of us. But when God sent his Son to die for man, there was nothing that evoked God's heart to do that other than God has the capacity to love the most deeply unlovely. Mercies. Look, and when you grasp that, you'll get where David is. Here David is, knowing that he doesn't merit in any way God's mercies but knowing that since God chose in sovereign grace to show such love and grace to me, I know he's going to rescue me in this trial also. That's good biblical logical thinking. That's good logical deduction.

Well, let's hurry on. He talks about the Lord reviving. As a matter of fact, nine times in Psalm 119 he talks about the Lord reviving again. He says, "Revive me again," in Psalm 119:159, "Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness." You know, it's impossible to be attached to God, it's impossible to be connected to the word of God and never receive its reviving power. If you'll get into the word of God, if you'll sit under the preaching of the word of God, if you'll meditate on the word of God in your heart, you cannot avoid the reviving power of God. I cannot tell you the number of Sundays when I face just the fallenness of my own flesh, the wrestling with unbelief. You know, as a preacher you go through things like, "Well, nobody's

gonna come this Sunday," and the Lord says, "Why wouldn't nobody come?" I just say, "Because nobody's gonna come." You know, just the glass is half empty all the time. You know, that kind of thing and then you come into church and somebody quotes the word of God, somebody reads the word of God, the songs sing the word of God, and it revives you and you're strengthened and you're encouraged. It's going to do that. It's going to revive you.

Well, he's anchored in the Lord's word. Look at 160 of Psalm 119. He says, "The sum of Your word is truth." The sum of your word is truth. God's word is nothing but the truth. I mean, from the very first word of the Bible, "In the beginning God." That's true. God was there when the beginning began. God is the uncaused cause of all things. There is just so much truth in that one statement. In the beginning God created. He made everything out of nothing. That's truth. You can bank on that, the veracity of God's word. He created the heavens. That's true. Every star, every sun, every moon, every planet, every galaxy has the finger of God on it. He brought it forth. The size, the complexity of the universe, all point to an eternal, omnipotent, omniscient Creator. It's truth. He created the heavens and the earth. He made it. It's true. Every atom, every molecule, every chemical, every element, every stick and stone, every rock and reel, every shoreline, every sea, every fish, every fowl, every plant, every tree, every animal, every human, they're created by God and when you see the complexity of the universe and how he put it all together, you have to agree that the very first words of the Bible scream of truth. I mean, it makes about as much sense to say that an atom evolved than to say that an automobile evolved. You couldn't put that together. That couldn't just by chance come together. An infinitely intelligent one put that together.

What's my point? Every word in the Bible is true all the way to the end and man may espouse his theories. You know, it's interesting how there's no difference in principle. We talked about the Gnostic heresies this morning and how the Apostle John wrote 1, 2 and 3 John to encourage the church because so many were trying to pull the church away from the truth. They were bringing in Gnostic heresies and putting Christian camouflage clothing on it because Gnostic heresies let you live in sin and enjoy the world and still call yourself a faithful follower of the Christian life or Christian truth, and how men do that today. All these things you hear and see, all these grand, learned theorists and philosophers, if you would, because evolution is more a philosophy than it is science because nobody's ever seen it. You can't put evolution under a microscope, I'm sorry, and the carbon dating. The only way you can really know if carbon dating works is to know that all through the eons and the ages carbon has always deteriorated at the same rate and there could have been cataclysmic events that changed that ratio and, by the way, there have been some cataclysmic events like a great flood and other things.

So to be true science, you have to be able to observe it and watch it and reproduce it, but why do they come up with all of these theories? Folks, at the end of the day it's just like the Gnostic heresies. It's a way for them to throw off the authority of God over their life. It's a way for them to sound intellectual and sophisticated and remove any accountability so they can indulge in the sinful wickedness they want to indulge in in their hearts. Is it no wonder as we progress, become more learned, more advanced, more technologically



savvy, what has our culture done? We now glory in women murdering their unborn babies. We now have to applaud and celebrate the perverse wickedness of sodomy. And on and on and on we can go. And, folks, the dominoes are just starting to fall and do you know why they're falling so easily? Because the church is so weak. There is no salt and light because the church has become worldly also because we want to be effective.

Now, I'm getting offtrack a little bit but I want you to hear this: what's the bottom line issue that causes the church to be so immensely weak? It's this right here: people begin to teach that the primary purpose of the church was to win lost souls. That is not true because if that's your modus operandi, then all of a sudden you begin to justify all kinds of stuff outside of the word of God because it helps you "win lost souls." But the primary function of the church is not to win lost souls, if the primary function of God was to win lost souls, he'd win them all. He lacks no power to save them all. The primary function of the church is not to win lost souls, the primary function of the church is to glorify God. So we win lost souls his way, amen? By his truth and his methods which proves he's wise and he's powerful, not us, and that causes us to cling closely to God's truth and God's word and not get on all of these other extrabiblical things that begin to pollute and weaken the church and we lose the salt and the light that we're called to be.

Well, one last thought and I'm done. He throws something of a contrast in here. He's talked about his own heart. The Psalmist is not braggadocios; he's not saying, "I'm keeping God's word perfectly." He's just saying, "My heart's been changed by you. You've placed in me a love for you and for your word. Now, Lord, in this trial, I trust that you will also revive me and get me through it." That's where he's coming from.

But look at verse 155, "Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Your statutes." You didn't begin a work in them that was manifested by them having a new heart that loves you and loves your word. You didn't start a new work in them and they can't expect you to carry them all the way through. So he throws out a contrast here. They're a long, long, long way off. But as a side note can I say something to you, sir? Can I say something to you, ma'am? You don't have to stay a long way off. You don't have to stay. The prodigal son was a long way off but when he came to himself, the Bible said, and he realized that the servants back at the father's house were doing better than him, that's where some of you are. You're not doing very well because you've been captain of your own ship; you've been master of your own destiny; you've been running your own show and you've messed up your life. But you don't have to stay that way. If you will turn, humble yourself like a little child and say, "O God, I'm a mess. I can't fix me. I can't cure me. I certainly can't cleanse me and forgive me for all the rottenness that I am and that I do." If you'll turn and turn toward God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you know what you'll find? You'll find just what the prodigal son found. When he got up and started walking that way, the father was looking down the road. The father was just looking down the road and as soon as he saw him, he ran to him.

Is that not good news? You don't have to stay a long way off because God will run to you if you'll turn to him in repentance and faith. You don't have to, listen, did you hear me? You don't have to stay a long way off. You don't have to stay. Do you know what? All of

us, we like to say, "Well, this person was a deep sinner and, boy, they got saved." Look, you're all deep sinners. I mean, you're so deep in sin if we were to compare from a human way of explaining it, if we were to compare the best sinner and the worst sinner, it's like being a million miles away from God and one is one inch closer than the other but you're both a million miles away. It's just we're all bad sinners, but you don't have to stay away from God.

Well, the Psalmist here is throwing out a contrast. I got offtrack but the Psalmist is throwing out a contrast. He said the wicked who haven't had the heart change, who do not love you in your law, they don't have any hope of you being faithful to them and getting them through their trials. He says, "For they do not seek Thy statutes." Someone said there are none so blind as those who will not see. There is none so lost as those who will not seek. None whose condition is worse than being lost and not knowing it. Well, that's the heartbreak of the pastor preaching and teaching and watching and discipling and seeing some young men grow up and he gets to be 17, 18, 21, if you've been here as long as I have, they get to be 25 and 30 and 35 and 40 and 45 and you still see some of them who haven't yet turned to God. They've learned a lot of stuff and they're nice enough people perhaps, but they haven't turned to God, but they don't have to stay that way.

Now, one last thought in verse 158. He said, "I behold the treacherous and loathe them, Because they do not keep Your word." Now, here's something the liberal pastor and the liberal theologian or the careless pastor would never say. They would say, "You're not supposed to loathe anybody." Yes, there is a righteous loathing just like there is a righteous anger. The treacherous here means the one who is unfaithful. He's one who may claim he wants to serve and honor God but his life is one consistent or I might better say, one pattern of watching him be unfaithful. He just never learns and that's been something as I've been blessed to be here for 33 years and watched a lot of young men and, boy, have we not seen some wonderful, godly, young men grow up in this church, but there's always one or two around that you keep wanting them to turn the corner; you keep wanting them to gain some character and get rid of some things that are clearly displeasing to the Lord, but some people never do it and they become more treacherous in their spirit. They're deceptive. The word "treacherous" means "unfaithful and deceptive." And sometimes, and we've had a few of these come along through the years, what they are is they're parasites. They're parasites. You know what a parasite looks for? A parasite looks for life, particularly strong life, and they want to attach to it and they attack for a while and they receive help and encouragement and often significant sums of money and then they bail out and go somewhere else. And there'll be some who to the end of their days that's about what they're going to be. They're a parasite in the kingdom of God.

The Psalmist said, "When I see this kind of person," the Psalmist says, "they're the opposite of where I want my heart to be. They're loathsome. I loathe them." He means, "They make me sick." When you see one who pretends, when you see one who plays games in God's church and in God's work, when you see one who really lives for the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life like we preached about this morning, and it's obvious, you've been around them enough, you see that's really where their heart is but they put on this Christian thing, there ought to be

something in you that loathes that. The Psalmist said, "I loathe that." That's normal and that's good. Now, at the same time, you're humbled because you know that's me except for the grace of God. Let's always be balanced in our understanding. There's nothing special about us but God's grace saving us. These are the people that use the things of God and they use the name of God and they use the people of God for their own selfish gain or self-advancement.

One last thought. I lost my verse on my last thought. I'm sorry, 159, "Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness." So let me come back to the first premise we talked about: you're in a trial, affliction has come your way, your heart is broken. My heart has been broken. I know a little of that feeling. You feel alone. Here's the word: you do what the word says. You do what the word says. You look to the word. What does the word say? No, no, no, you didn't hear me. I mean, some of you, "Yeah, I know that but..." No, no, you do what the word says. There is some clear teaching in the word that apply to you and I'm with you about being so troubled that it's hard to get anything out of the word. Well, that's when you need a brother or sister in love to come alongside and say, "Let me show you what the word says. And furthermore, I'm not just going to show you what the word says, but because I love God and I love you, we're going to meet again and I want to hold you accountable to do what the word says because that's your hope. That's your salvation. That's your way out of this valley. That's your way home."

Just two or three quick thoughts here. We know that God causes all things to work together for the good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes. He's working all the components of your trial together if you love God. Now, if you're not really serious about putting the word to work in your situation, then you'll not see this coming together for the good yet. You need to put to practice what the word says. Now, not perfectly but with a genuine heart put it in practice and watch God work it all together for the good.

No temptation, the Bible says, no temptation, you could say trial, no difficulty, no event that causes me or tempts me stumble, no temptation has ceased you except what is common to man. The thing that's killing you and crushing you and breaking your heart, the Scripture says is common to untold numbers of people. You're not unique. No temptation has ceased you except what is common to man and God is faithful who along with the temptation will provide you a way out that you might be able to stand up under it, the Bible says. So what does the word say? Well, the word says, first of all, quit thinking your situation is unique. That's sin. That's not...anytime you're thinking unbiblical, it's sin. Call it sin. "Okay, Lord, I thought my situation was so very unique and special and I found out many, many others have faced this same kind of trial. So, God, I repent of thinking I alone have faced these heartaches." Now, that doesn't mean you don't say, "Lord, it's killing me," because, Lord, it is. Be honest, but don't be untruthful and think that it's not common to others because it is. So that's one example of do what the word says in your situation.

Along with the temptation, will provide a way of escape also that you might be able to stand up under it. "God, what's the word say? God, show me the way of escape. Show me the path. Show me the way that I can get through this." It's not even one day at a time, sometimes it's one hour at a time, sometimes it's one minute at a time, or even one second at a time, but God's got a way for you. Show me that way out of it.

Worry about nothing but in everything but prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your request known unto God and the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Worry about nothing but by everything in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. What's the word say? I have required people in counseling to take some paper and begin to write down everything in their life that they're to be thankful for and sometimes, again, you're just in a trial and you just don't know where to start. I'll tell you where you're to start: you're not in hell. Let's start there. You're not in hell. I mean that literally. I'm not in hell and I ought to be. I mean, it's simple. I have t-shirts that I can wear. Do you know there are people in the world that don't have t-shirts because they don't have any. I have shoes. I mean, everything you can think of to be thankful for and you know what you'll find if you'll write them all down and you will genuinely pray through them and thank over them? You cannot be discouraged. You cannot at the same time actively worry and actively be thankful to God. It's impossible.

What's the word say? You do what the word says. Purpose and...I told you this before but I've got a little one page article I got out of a magazine on depression, it's called "Out of the blue," and the writer was referring to this very principle of worry about nothing but everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, Philippians 4. He said here's what you do: in your despair and in your difficult season, you pray for three or four minutes and it doesn't work so you quit. Why would you take antidepressants for 20 years and only pray five minutes? Lock yourself in a room, get the word of God and an open notepad of paper. Lock yourself in a room, fall on your face and say, "God, I'm praying and praising and thanksgiving until we break through if it's five minutes, five hours or five days." Is that not better to take a couple of days off work and get with God and find revival for your soul because you got into the word and you disciplined yourself to have an attitude of thanksgiving than spending the rest of your life half doped up? And I'm not saying there's no place for some of those medicines for a season to get you through. I understand that and I have sympathy there, but here's what I am saying: don't let those things get in the way of the real core solution that the word of God can give you.

Then the final exhortation, Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." You know, it's almost impossible to stay dejected and downcast when you are busy serving others? I have a lady that's not a church member here and she has real, real trials, just real trials and my heart goes out to her. She's actually kin to me and thankfully she'll listen to good biblical counsel and I will often exhort her, "Get up in the morning and do something for somebody else now. Get busy doing something for somebody." And that's one way you're seeking first the kingdom of God, you're seeking others, serving others for the Lord's sake and then all these things shall be added unto you.

Now, perhaps some of you are here who have heard that your job is ending out at International Paper. I do not know what God's will is for you, but I do know that according to the word of God it's probably wise to pray something like this, "Lord, I'd like to raise my children, maybe even my grandchildren in a church like Grace Life Church of the Shoals, and I would desire to put your kingdom first and be a part of a church like that. So, Lord, I'm not just going to quickly take carte blanche or whatever the first thing, I want to try to seek you first in having a solid church home and, Lord, you show me what's next." Now look, if in the morning you're in that situation, you're offered a job in California and you feel it's God's will to go, I'm going to say, "Bless your heart. We love you and send you out with our blessing and encouragement." Amen? But I just want to challenge you to say, "Lord, in this decision I want to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." You can't raise your family the way you ought to raise your family without a strong church family to help you. Now, if God tells you to do something else, you've got to do it, amen? But ask the Lord and see what he might do. Pray that truth. Pray the word of God and see what God might do. He might have a job for you with benefits better than what you had before. You never know. Boy, my life is full of dead ends and detours and dry holes, but God had something better. He just specializes in doing that.

Let's stand together in prayer.