

# The Midnight of Psalm 119

## Psalm 119:81-88

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Introduction: We come tonight to the 11<sup>th</sup> section of this Psalm, with each verse beginning with the Hebrew letter “*Caph*.” The psalmist almost appears ready to “give up” – but he still responds to the Lord with faith & patience. As a Jew, this section illustrates Satan’s continued desire to exterminate the Jews (cf. in Egypt, by the Babylonians, then Assyrians, & in modern day by Hitler & Israel’s enemies today seeking their annihilation). This will even extend to the end times, according to Revelation 12. For the believer today, we are reminded “life is a battleground, & not a playground & we must expect tribulation (John 16:33)” (Wiersbe). In light of & in spite of tribulations & persecution, it has been said: “It is always too soon to quit” (Raymond Edman). Note with me tonight 4 things in these 8 verses: The condition, description, persecution, & petition of the psalmist.

### I. The condition of the psalmist (:81-82)

#### A. He is despairing, yet hopeful (:81) >

1. He is weary in waiting (“*fainteth*”), yet he continues to hope (both verbs are in the preterite tense – “it is so & has been so”).
2. “*Fainteth*” – he needs the “smelling-salts” of God’s Word [Illustrate].

#### B. He is discouraged, yet prayerful (:82) >

1. With weary eyes he heart cries out for comfort.
2. His hope is in the Lord, the only true source of comfort.

Summary: “The soul grows faint, the eye dim, with the prolonged strain of watching for the fulfilment of God’s promise to deliver His servant” (Kirkpatrick).

### II. The description of the psalmist (:83-84a)

#### A. “*A bottle in the smoke*” (:83) >

1. The “*bottle*” refers to a wineskin; here it is hung up in a house or tent, where the smoke causes it to shrivel & become darkened.
2. The wineskin loses its former appearance & usefulness.

Summary: “The psalmist is growing emaciated & disfigured by suffering & sorrow till he can scarcely be recognized” (Kirkpatrick).

#### B. “*Thy servant*” (:84a) >

1. His “*days*” suggest the brevity of life (cf. Psalm 39:4; 90:12; & James 4:14).
2. The psalmist desires to see the vindication of God’s justice on his persecutors.

Summary: He is basically asking “How long...” Compare Revelation 6:10.

### III. The persecution of the psalmist (:84b-87)

#### A. The tactics of the persecutors (:84b-87) >

1. “*Pits*” dug by the proud – illustrated by hunters digging pits for their prey (cf. “tricks” of the Devil & see II Corinthians 2:11).
2. The persecutors were wrong, but the psalmist is enduring the wrong (suffering).

B. The trust of the psalmist (:86-87).

1. He declares the commandments “*faithful*” – literally “faithfulness” – God’s way might be rough but is right & always best.
2. “*Forsook not*” – nothing could drive him from keeping God’s precepts. “If we stick to the *precepts* we shall be rescued by the *promises*” (Spurgeon).
3. “*Help me*” – God ‘*help me*’ is an excellent, comprehensive prayer; it is pity that it should ever be used lightly & as a by-word” (Henry). And compare Spurgeon: “This is a golden prayer as precious, as it is short. The words are few, but the meaning is full. God’s help is our hope.”

Summary: “”Those who find pleasure in maligning & torturing God’s people may think it fine sport now, but they will not think so when they answer for the tears & blood which they have caused to be shed, for the sighs & groans which they have wrung from the anguished hearts of God’s loving children” (Plumer).

III. The final petition of the psalmist (:88)

A. “*Quicken me...*”

1. The word means to “make alive (again)” or to “revive.”
2. “It is a good evidence of a saving change of heart when we desire more holiness, more liveliness in God’s service” (Plumer).

B. “*Lovingkindness*” – the plural “*mercies*” in 119:41 & “*merciful kindness*” in 119:76.

C. “*So shall I keep...*”

1. If we are spiritually revived, we shall exhibit a holy character.
2. “No one keeps the word of the Lord’s mouth unless the word of the Lord’s mouth quickens them” (Spurgeon).

Conclusion: The believer’s faith & patience ends with an inherited blessing (Romans 15: & Hebrews 6:12). James says that the trying of one’s faith results in patience. “The enemy may be digging pits, but the Lord will see to it that they fall into them first (Psalm 9:15; Proverbs 26:27)” (Wiersbe). Robert Ketcham wrote: “Your Father in heaven loves you too much to harm you, & He is too wise to make a mistake.” Though trials increase, God’s promises do not decrease. Even in the “night” of trials & tribulations, God can give us a song. The experiencing of such trials, of waiting & watching in them, teaches us lessons we would never learn otherwise.

What is God teaching you tonight?