

## GOD'S ETERNAL AND SAVING WORD

Text: Psalm 119:89-94

Readings: Matthew 5:1-20; 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Theme: God saves us through his eternal Word

Purpose: To show that God's word is eternal and that he saves us through this word.

We live in a world of change. People move house every few years, they change jobs regularly, they move to another city in New Zealand or they move overseas and then return again. Sadly many people regularly change their marriage partner, which means that children often have to adjust to new parents.

In a world of constant flux and ongoing change many people are looking for more stability, for an anchor point. They want roots, they want a firm place to stand.

As Christians we know that we can find an anchor in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that the Word of God gives us a place to stand; the Scriptures are solid ground and the Old Testament gives us roots that go way back to Abraham and beyond him to Noah and Adam.

The man who wrote this long psalm felt uncertain and unsettled. He was being persecuted by enemies and he was very despondent. The mood and tone of this psalm keeps going down until it reaches its lowest point in verses 81-88. But then, in this stanza, the mood changes and he begins to climb up out of his pit. He expresses his confidence in God's word and his salvation. He declares that God's word is eternal and that God's word is our salvation.

### 1. GOD'S WORD IS ETERNAL

The psalmist develops this truth of God's eternal Word in verses 89-91. This general truth introduces the second half of this psalm and, of course, it fits in with the overall theme of this psalm, which is the Word of God.

Verse 89 says: "Your word, O Lord, is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens." Spurgeon wrote; "After tossing about on a sea of trouble the psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock." In the uncertainty of his situation this man is glad to put his trust in God's Word.

#### a. He draws attention to **God's word of creation.**

In verse 90b he wrote, "You established the earth, and it endures." By his word God created the world and he sustains it so that it endures.

After the world wide flood God promised Noah that there would be regularity to the seasons; "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease." (Gen 8:22).

There is regularity in the 24 hour rotation of the earth, in the changing of the seasons, in the phases of the moon and the movement of the tides.

All of this is sustained and regulated by God's eternal word.

#### b. We notice also **God's word of promise.** Verse 90; "Your faithfulness continues through all generations."

Throughout this psalm everything that is said about the *word* of God is based on *God himself*. God's *Word* is eternal because *God* is eternal. God's *Word* is faithful because God is faithful.

He is faithful "through all generations", from one generation to the next. He has been our God and he will be the God of our children after us. He always keeps his promises. You can depend on him. He will not let you down.

Verse 90 reminds us of Psalm 90; “Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” God is eternal and reliable and faithful; he is always true to his word.

c. The psalmist also draws our attention to **God’s word of command**.

V 91; “Your laws endure to this day.” God laws and commands are eternal.

We can make a distinction in God’s laws between those that are civil, ceremonial and moral. *The civil laws* applied particularly to Israel in her own land and Old Testament setting. They don’t apply directly to us today, although there are general principles in those laws that are valid for us. *The ceremonial laws* had to do with sacrifices and washings and the temple services and were all fulfilled in Christ and no longer apply today.

But *the moral laws* of God are eternal and we are obliged to keep them. Sadly, these commands of God are widely ignored in our society, both by the government and by the citizens of this nation. But despite what the government says and how people live, the word of God is eternal. All of God’s moral laws, summarized in the Ten Commandments, and recorded in many other parts of the Old and New Testaments, apply to us today. God’s law is eternal.

d. We also need to consider **God’s word in Christ** because each of these three features of God’s law relates to the Lord Jesus.

i. When John introduced his gospel he deliberately recalled the beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapter 1; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God....Through him all things were made and without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1f). Paul informs us that “All things were made by him and for him, and in him all things hold together (Col 1:17; cf. Heb 1:1ff)..

ii. God’s word of promise is also fulfilled in Jesus because all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament point forward to him.

iii. And God’s word of command also points forward to Jesus because he came to fulfil the law. He lived in perfect active obedience to all of God’s commands. He kept the law on our behalf. He explained that he had not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it. (Matt 5:17) And in the Sermon on the Mount he amplified God’s law and showed how it dealt, not only with outward actions, but also with inner motives and thoughts.

e. God’s word is **eternal**, which means it lasts forever, it will always be there.

i. We could contrast this with the ideas and thoughts of mankind which are always changing. Every decade someone comes up with a new programme for education or another theory in psychology. Every few years a systems engineer works his way through a company to overhaul the management and do a major re-organisation! Every year someone comes up with a new solution to the problems of our society.

ii. By contrast God’s word stands firm; it does not need an overhaul every few years, it does not need to be rewritten or revised or rearranged. It is the same and remains reliable, it is certain and sure, it is faithful and true.

That means you can depend on it, you can trust God’s word, you can build on it day by day, year after year. God’s word is eternal.

## 2. GOD’S WORD IS OUR SALVATION

Let’s remember the context; the psalmist has been persecuted by his enemies; he has been afflicted, he is low, depressed and discouraged. He felt “like a wineskin in the smoke.” (v 83)

**a. But God's word had saved him!** (v 92-93)

i. It saved him in *his physical affliction*. Verse 92: "If your law had not been my delight I would have perished in my affliction.

Many of you have faced, or are facing, affliction. You have been stretched physically and emotionally. But you too can say; "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." (v 92).

As you have read God's word in times of trouble you have found words of comfort and consolation, of hope and life, words to encourage you and give you strength.

What's more, when we read the Bible we find words we can pass on to others so that "we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Cor 1:4). God's word will give you life in affliction.

ii. God's word also saved him in his *spiritual danger*.

V 93; "I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life."

The Hebrew word means to make alive. The ESV reads; "for by them you have given me life."

This is a repeated theme in the Scriptures, that God uses his word to give us life.

James 1:18, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth."

1 Peter 1:23, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." The Holy Spirit regenerates God's elect people through the word. God uses his word, the Bible, to give us spiritual life.

This was the experience of the psalmist. Is this also your experience? Have you been born again by the living and enduring word of God? If not, you need to pray for the Holy Spirit to work in you to bring that about. And, you need to read the Bible because the Spirit of God always works through the word.

Can you say with this writer, "I will never forget your precepts?" (v 93) Is this your resolve, that you will remember God and his word?

Can you say, "I have sought out your precepts?" (v 94b) Are you reading God's word, studying it for yourself and with others, attending a Bible study, examining the Scriptures? All this is necessary because God uses his word to save us, to rescue us.

Can you say, "I will ponder your statutes?" Do you think about God's word? Do you ponder it and turn it over in your mind?

b. Having acknowledged that God's word had saved him, he went on to pray that God **would save him**.

He asked this because he knew that the crisis was not over, he was not out of the woods yet. So he prayed; "Save me, for I am yours." (v 94)

He was facing a physical enemy because the wicked were waiting to destroy him.(v 95) There are many Christians today in other countries who know that the wicked are waiting to destroy them. Our battle in New Zealand is more ideological; it is a battle of philosophies, ideas and laws. We know that behind the evil forces in our own country there is a powerful spiritual enemy, Satan himself, with all his evil angels. We are fighting against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And we are also aware of the daily battle we fight against our own sinful nature, the evil desires that rise up from within, our pride, selfishness and greed.

So we too pray, "Save me, for I am yours."

We pray, "Save me", knowing that we belong to God through faith in Christ.

You belong to God by *creation*; he made you.

And if you trust in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins then you belong to him by *election*; he chose you to belong to him.

You belong to him by *covenant*; God has drawn you into a relationship with himself.

You belong to him by *redemption*; he bought you, not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus.

And you belong to him by *adoption*; he adopted you into his family as his sons and daughters.

The Heidelberg Catechism brings this out in its opening question and answer.

"What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ." That is why you can cry out to God; "Save me, for I am yours", because "I belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ"!

We live in a world of change. There are many uncertainties in our lives. We don't know what the future holds. But in this uncertain world we can rely on God's eternal word, which "stands firm in the heavens" and "endures to this day."

This section of the psalm concludes with this theme (v 96): "To all perfection I see a limit, but your commands are boundless." God's word is eternal in time and it is broad in its scope; it has no limits, it applies to all people in all places and in all situations.

It applied to this man writing in ancient Israel, and it applies to you and me living today in the 21st century, because it is the eternal word of God, written by the eternal God, about his eternal Son, who is the Word of God.

Are you relying on God's eternal word and on his great salvation?

Amen