

Summer Psalms
NEAR & FAR
Wednesday, July 23
Reading: Psalms 119:137-152

Psalm 119:150 *Those who devise wicked schemes are near, but they are far from Your law. 151 Yet You are near, LORD, and all Your commands are true.*

A little boy and his sister were playing outside. The boy said something ugly to his sister. She said, "God hears what you say." The boy said, "No, God didn't hear me, He is too far away." ¹ That is how we often think of God - that He is far away; that He is not listening. What should we do when God seems far away?

In these two sections of Psalm 119, the psalmist cries out to God who seems far away. Notice his short bursts of prayer: "Answer me!" (119:145). "Save me!" (119:146). "Preserve my life!" (119:149). These are cries of a heart in pain; a heart that feels the enemy pressing in (119:150).

Notice the persistence in his prayers. He calls with his whole heart (119:145). He rises before dawn and stays up all night meditating on God's promises and placing a firm hope in God's Word (119:147-148). Sometimes we don't have a breakthrough in our spiritual lives because we give up too easily. If God doesn't answer quickly, we stop praying and meditating on His Word. This is something the psalmist is unwilling to do.

Though "trouble and distress have come upon" him (119:143) and his enemies seem near (119:150), the psalmist knows the opposite is true. His enemies are far from God and God is near" (119:150-151). God does not abandon His faithful people or forget His promises (119:138, 142, 152). In fact, God's promises have been thoroughly tested" and always shown to be right and trustworthy (119:137-140).

The fact is, when God seems far away it is because we have moved away from Him. We have neglected to read and apply His Word and stay in close communion with Him in prayer. We have allowed what is going on around us to distract us from the most important thing in our lives - our fellowship with God.

A song written by Jonathan Ogden on his album "Spring" puts it well:

I find You, I find You
When I seek You with my whole heart
Seek You with my whole heart

And I find that You have never left my side
Even when I felt so far away
You were always there with me
I can't be silent
When I think about your faithfulness to me

You're not far away
You are with me here and now
And there's nothing that can separate me
I cannot be separated
From your love
So I come boldly to the throne of grace ¹

¹ <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/84016/wisdom-by-bruce-lee?ref=TextIllustrationSerps->

² Jonathan Ogden (Manchester, UK). "Far Away" on the album Spring
<https://jonathanogden.bandcamp.com/track/far-away>