

**Psalm 119: 1-8; “Longing for God’s Direction”, A Devotional given at The
Prayer and Sharing Time, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on April 24th, 2024 in the Library Room of the church.**

How can a Christian find greater happiness and blessedness in keeping the commandments of God; more than anything that he has ever attained to in pursuing self and sin? In verse 5 David says – “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! This was the longing of his heart. He was longing for God to direct him into a better obedience to God. He wanted to do better at keeping God’s commandments. Is this what you are longing for, yourself, today? If this is what you are longing for, you have come to the right place in the Scriptures.

For these verses, in the first and greatest sense refer to our Lord Jesus Christ, and ourselves in Him. And so we need to see our own obedience in relation to His perfect obedience. We want to be directed into the perfect obedience of Christ, so that our own obedience will be more perfect, by His grace. We want our ways to be directed to keep God’s statutes, even as Christ was directed by the Father.

1st of all – Our longing is to be directed into the blessing of being undefiled. (verses 1-3)

“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord!” “Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!” “They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways.” So we see here that it is the person who has not been tainted and touched by sin who is the most blessed and happy of all people. But all of us, in the human race, with the exception of Jesus Christ, we are sinners. And we are defiled by it. Sin’s influences are defiling in every way to the hearts, the souls, and the bodies of people who were created originally in the image and likeness of God.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden in the beginning, they not only brought guilt to themselves, but they also were defiled and polluted by sin. Sin was that which entered their souls to defile them. Sin poisoned the pure fountain of their hearts. Adam and Eve did not walk in the law of the Lord. They broke the one holy and good commandment that was given to them in their time in the garden of paradise. Sin stained them with guilt, but the reality of their disobedience defiled them in soul and in body. It polluted and defiled their nature, which before was holy.

This is why sin is often compared to a disease when its effects are mentioned in the Bible. Sin brought not only guilt to man; it brought defilement which is pictured in the most accurate sense by the disease of leprosy. You will recall that when the person who was diagnosed by a priest, in the Old Covenant times, would be examined for the signs of the defilement of the disease, if he found those defiling white spots, the priest would pronounce him unclean. The unfortunate person would be isolated from the camp of the congregation of Israel.

He was unclean and defiled by his disease. All that he touched and whoever he touched was affected by this disease. So it is with sin. Sin is the condition which we are born in and with, because of Adam’s sin. An unbelieving person does not see sin in himself the way that he should. He does not see himself as defiling himself or others. He does not understand that his nature is defiled, and that it leads him to thoughts and feelings that are defiled. It leads to words that are defiled, and actions which are defiled, and which defile others.

Listen to Titus 1: 15 – “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Christians are being called “the pure” in these verses, is put in contrast to other people who are called “unbelieving”. So it must be, by reasonable conclusion, that to be pure in heart, that you must be believing. And you must be believing in Jesus Christ in particular. But what is the reason that you must believe in Him? It is because He is the great physician of souls. It is because Jesus Christ was not tainted with sin; not the least tincture of it in all of His nature. There was no sin in any of His words and nothing sinful in all that He did. He was perfectly pure and holy.

How then do we ourselves learn to walk in a blameless way, in an undefiled way, in the law of the Lord? It is by seeking Christ with our whole heart. It is by our seeking Him in faith, seeking Him in complete sincerity for the grace to do what is right. For we know that Christ our Savior is the One who brings us to God when we are first converted. But He is also our Mediator and our Intercessor. He is our Advocate, and our Friend also, all through our living this Christian life. Yes, it is true that our heart is defiled by indwelling remaining corruption after we believe in Christ. In me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells, Paul says in Romans 7: 17.

But with Christ, by faith, and by living a life of principled obedience to God's word, there is every good thing. As we confess our sins, we are washed from them in His blood. There is a continual cleansing that takes place in us as we walk in the law of the Lord and keep His testimonies of truth. 1st John 1: 7-9 – "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "If we say that we have no sin (present tense), we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Are you aware that the cleansing of the blood completely erases not only the guilt of your sin, but it also washes and cleanses your soul from the many defilements of your heart that take place each and every day of your life? Can you rejoice today that you have been made clean by His blood, and that you are being made clean with His blood in an on-going fashion? This takes place as you seek Him with your whole heart. You have this continual longing for God to direct your ways to better keep His statutes. You come, more and more to realize that you will be most happy, most blessed, when you are undefiled in the way, and when you walking in the law of the Lord.

You remember Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist? It says in Luke 1: 6 that they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child? Then when the angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias when he was fulfilling his priestly duties, and told him that he was going to have a son, and that they would have joy and gladness in his birth and many would rejoice at his birth, Zacharias could not believe it. He was told by the angel that he would be great and that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

And he was also told that he would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He was told that John would also go before the Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Now, you would think that he would have greatly rejoiced, being a righteous man that he was. But instead he fell in to unbelief. He said – How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.

And the angel answered and said to him – I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time. Ah, what a sad state of unbelief Zacharias had fallen into! I would apply this to what we are studying concerning not being defiled by sin. Will you not pray about yourself, that you will not be unbelieving but believing?

Sometimes even godly men and women, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, can still fall into unbelief about what great things that the Lord can do for them. And also what He will do to fulfill His own word in terms of the progress of the gospel among all the nations. Can we be so blessed as to be undefiled in the way? Can we be so strengthened by Christ's grace as to be able to walk in the law of the Lord, and actually keep His testimonies? Yes, we can! For it says here in verse 3 – They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways. Does this mean that we will reach a state of sinless perfection in this life? No. But it means that as we incline our hearts to do God's will, that with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will most certainly walk in the ways of holiness, and keep the path of righteousness. We will do this for Christ sake, and because of the power of His holy working in our heart and life.

2nd – Our Longing is that our ways would be directed to keep God’s statutes.

Verses 4-8 say – “You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.” “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!” “Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments.” “I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments.” “I will keep Your statutes; oh, do not forsake me utterly!” You can see here the importance of prayer to God for the grace to be diligent in keeping God’s commandments. It is important that God know that it is the longing of your heart to keep His commandments. Oh, that my heart and the ways of my heart were directed to keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments.

God’s commands are called here in these verses precepts, statutes, and righteous judgments. The 1825 Webster’s Dictionary says that a precept is any commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule of action; but applies particularly to commands respecting moral conduct.” “The ten commandments are so many precepts for the regulation of our moral conduct.” Statutes are – God’s commanding or prohibiting something in particular; that which He has written down in His word of law, that He expects us to obey. His testimonies are His declarations of truth, what He has stated in His written word. And these are made for the purpose of establishing what His will is for us.

There are many commandments in the word of God. And it is important that you and I would be diligent in learning what they are, and then in learning to do them. This is so that we will not simply be hearers of the word, or readers of the word, but doers of the word. You do not want to be ashamed as you look into all commandments, because you picked and chose those commands which you thought that you could keep, and the ones that you thought that you could not, for whatever reasons. The reason could be that you have been held by some particular sins so much that you don’t believe that you could ever forsake them.

This, however, is nothing but unbelief. Is anything too difficult for God? When you pray, will you not remember that God is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that you ask or think according to the power that works within you? (Ephesians 3: 20) Ah, this is what we have to learn. This is what we have to prove to ourselves concerning our obedience to God. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4: 13) Christ can give you strength to overcome everything that defiles you, which proceeds from your sinful heart.

Remember what Jesus said in Mark 7: 20 & 21 – “It is what comes out of a man, that defiles a man.” “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, and evil eye, blasphemy pride or foolishness.” “All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” But remember, beloved, that never did the Lord Jesus, even once, commit any of the sins that are mentioned in this list of sins. He overcame every temptation that ever came to Him to commit sin. He was not ashamed as He looked into all the commandments of God.

And He can give grace to you so that you will not be ashamed to look into all of God’s commandments. And when you are continually looking to Him for grace, He will enable you to overcome temptations and put away all the sins that you find trying to gain ground in your heart. And you will praise Him with uprightness of heart, when you learn His righteous judgments. How God the Father laid all of His righteous judgments upon His Son, for your sake, so that you would no longer be a slave of sin, but become a slave of righteousness. Remember what Paul says in Romans chapter 6, verse 22 – “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Since we have been set free from sin, let us learn God’s will, what His righteous judgments are, so that we will keep His statutes. Let us pray that He will not only not forsake us, but that He will be with us always to establish these good things of our obedience unto Him.