

## PSALM 119:9-16

## LOVE FOR THE LORD'S WORD

“Wherewithal shall a young man” – or a young lady, either – “cleanse his way?” How shall he become and remain practically holy? He is only a young man – full of hot passions, and poor in knowledge and experience. How shall he get right, and stay right? Never was there a more important question for any person, and never was there a better time for asking it than in one’s childhood. It is by no means an easy task which the prudent man sets before him. He wishes to choose a clean way, to be clean in it, to cleanse it of any foulness which may arise in the future, and to end by showing a clear course from the first step to the last. But alas! His way is already unclean by actual sin which he has already committed; and he himself has, within his nature, a tendency toward that which defiles. The ability of being always able to know and choose the right, and of continuing in the right until perfection is ultimately reached – that is a hard task for any person; how, then, shall a youth accomplish it?

No nobler ambition can lie before a young person, but there is also none in which greater difficulties can be found. Let him not, however, shrink from the glorious determination of living a pure and gracious life; rather, let him enquire the way by which all these obstacles may be overcome. Let him not think that he knows the road to easy victory, nor dream that he can keep himself by his own wisdom; he will do well to follow the Psalmist, and become an earnest enquirer asking how he may cleanse his way. Let him become a practical disciple of the holy God, Who alone can teach him how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil – that unholy trinity of defilers, by whom many a hopeful life has been spoiled.

Our “way” is a subject which concerns us deeply, and it is far better to enquire about it than to speculate upon mysterious themes which puzzle the mind instead of enlightening it. Among all the questions which a young man asks (and they are many indeed!), let this be the first and chief: “Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way?” This is a question suggested by common sense and pressed home by daily occurrences, but it is not to be answered by unaided human reason; nor, when it is answered, can the directions be carried out by unsupported human power. It is our duty to ask the question; it is God’s responsibility to give the answer and enable us to carry it out.

So what is the answer? “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” “By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Even for the experienced and aged saint, this is the only means by which their “way” is to be cleansed; and it is no different for you, young man or young lady! The Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life, as well as study your Bible; and you must study your Bible, in order that you may know how to take heed to your daily life. Despite the greatest care, a man will still go astray if his map

misleads him; and even with the most accurate map, he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it. The narrow way was never hit upon by chance, neither did any heedless person ever lead a holy life. We can sin without thought; it requires no effort to neglect the great salvation and ruin our souls. But to obey the Lord and walk uprightly will need all our heart and soul and mind! Let the careless remember this.

Yet we must never forget that the “Word” is absolutely necessary; for otherwise, our carefulness and caution will darken into morbid anxiety, and our conscientiousness may become superstition. A captain may watch from his deck all night; but if he knows nothing of the coast, and has no pilot on board, he may be carefully hastening on to shipwreck. It is not enough to desire to be right; ignorance may make us think that



we are doing God service, when we are actually provoking Him – and the fact of our ignorance will not reverse the character of our action, however much it may mitigate its criminality. If a man carefully measures out what he believes to be a dose of useful medicine, he will die if it should turn out that he has taken up the wrong vial and poured out a deadly poison! The fact that he did it ignorantly will not alter the result. Even so, a young person may still surround himself with ten thousand ills by carefully using an unenlightened judgment, and refusing to receive instruction from the Word of God. Therefore, everyone – whether young or old – who desires to be holy must have a holy watchfulness in his heart, and keep his Holy Bible before his open eye. There he will find every turn of the road marked down, and every slough and miry place pointed out, with the way to go through unsoiled; and there, too, he will find light for his darkness, comfort for his weariness, and company for his loneliness – so that, by its help, he shall reach the blessing of the first verse of this Psalm.

Notice how the first section of this Psalm has, for its opening words, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way”; and the second section runs parallel to it, with the question, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” The blessedness which is set before us in a conditional promise should be practically sought for in the way that the Lord has appointed for the obtaining of it. Let us pray for grace so to do.

*Lord, we praise You for giving us the Bible, wherein we find the directions for our way – telling us which road to take when we come to a crossroads in life. In light of the fact that the narrow way was never hit upon by chance, we pray that we may never find ourselves in the effortless path that leads to the neglect of our great salvation. We ask You, dear Lord, for grace and strength to obey You, and to walk uprightly with all our heart and soul and mind! Amen.*