

**Psalm 119: 9-16; “Cleansing Your Way before God”, A Devotional given at
The Prayer and Sharing Time, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on June 30th, 2024 in the Library Room of the church.**

When David says – How can a young man cleanse his way, he is referring to the way that he lives before God. We all know, or we should know, that as we live our life before God, that each and every day, as we confess our sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1st John 1: 9) We are so very thankful for His cleansing! But let us ask ourselves whether we might be able to improve in our obedience and faithfulness to God, by cleansing our way. We are given here in these verses, 3 ways that you can cleanse your way. This is not simply given for young men, although it is specifically directed to them. It is given so that all of us might benefit from it.

1st of all – You can cleanse your way before God by taking heed to His word.

Verse 9 – “How can a young man cleanse his way?” “By taking heed according to Your word.” Let us always remember that the word of God has been given to us so that we might heed it. To heed it is to read it, to listen to it when it is spoken and preached to you. And then, you have regard to what it is saying. And then you are careful to go about to do it. In other words, you learn to pay attention to the word of God as to what it is instructing you personally to do. And then you deliberately take steps to go about to do it. To take heed to it, you must abide in it. You must be regular in reading it and taking in all the truth that God has for you.

Joshua 1: 8 & 9 – “This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.” “For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” “Have I not commanded you?” “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Now, to not let God’s word depart from your mouth means that you will be speaking verses to yourself day and night, verses that you are memorizing and meditating upon.

If you are wanting to be wise and holy, you will not worry about what other people think about you when they look at you and you seem to be talking to yourself. The only reason that you are doing this is because you want to continually remind yourself of what God’s word the Bible is saying. You want God’s word the Bible to be speaking to you, and not you speaking to it. You say that you believe that the Bible is the word of God? Then receive it, and do not become negligent in receiving it, to do it. How shall a young man cleanse his way? By observing to do all that is written in the word. When you do this, you will make your way prosperous and you will have good success.

Listen to James chapter 1, verses 21-25. “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

So you see here that in order to be blessed you have to cleanse your way by daily cleansing your heart by faith in your Savior, Jesus Christ. You have to lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness by looking to Him in faith to help you to do this. This is how the young man, or any person for that matter, cleanses their way. You have to realize as a young man that when you become a Christian, that it there is going to be a battle in your heart. Even though the Holy Spirit is now in your life, you still have the overflow of wickedness taking place in your heart as well.

You still have the flesh, the remains of your old sinful nature there, making his motions to go back to thinking and living in the way that you used to do before you became a Christian.

Great desires are striving one against the other within you. And the Lord has left the flesh there so that you will gain the ascendancy over the Old Man. Yes, the reigning power of the Old Man is gone. He has been dethroned. And you have experienced a real death to sin in your heart when you were circumcised in your flesh and you commenced to live the Christian life. But the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, as it says in Galatians 5: 17. And these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. So, how are you to cleanse your way? You are told to “walk in the Spirit”, verse 16, “and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

You are told in verse 18 that if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. You have been given the Spirit so that you will understand that you now have the power to do what is right. You now have the power to take heed according to God’s word. But you have to make the conscious decision every day to take heed to what kind of thoughts that you are thinking. Compare your thoughts with the commandments of God’s word. 1st Peter 2: 1-3 – “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

2nd – You can cleanse your way by learning to pray to the Lord about your obedience.

Verses 10-13 – “With my whole heart I have sought you; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!” “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” “Blessed are You, O Lord!” “Teach me Your statutes.” “With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth.” Ah, this is a very good thing to learn for any Christian. To learn to pray – “Let me not wander from your commandments.” Do not let me wander away from thinking about them or doing them. Wandering begins in the heart when it wants something of the world, something which God has not given you, or He doesn’t want you to have right now in the way that you want it.

Let me ask whether you are seeking God with your whole heart? Seeking God with your whole heart is a matter of focus. You are seeking Him, seeking His face continually, that He might know that you are thinking about Christ, His kingdom, and His cause of righteousness and truth. What is worldliness? It is leaving God out of your thoughts. And His word is not in your regular or immediate consideration. But when a young man, or any serious Christian is continually focusing on God Himself and what He has said in His word, there is fellowship with Him that is taking place.

1st John 1: 6 & 7 – “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” “But if we walk in the light (that is, in the truth of His word as it is illumined by the Holy Spirit) we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” What we have here is real spiritual interaction taking place between God and ourselves, between Christ and ourselves, and between the Holy Spirit and ourselves. Does this fellowship include the cleansing of all of the sins that you find, and He finds, in your heart? Does the Holy Spirit in connection with the word, actually point these things out to you as you read the word, and as you interact with the Father and the Lord Jesus in prayer? Yes, it is so.

Verses 8 and 9 say – “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” But – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Ah, it is good to remember how close to us the Holy Spirit is at all times. It is good to be able to say to the Lord in prayer – Your word have I have hidden in heart, that I might not sin against You. Are you consciously hiding God’s word in your heart so that you might not sin against Him in thought, word, and deed? Are prayers continually being attached to your thoughts, and in relation to the prayers that you pray to Him?

Are your prayers connected with your hiding of God's word in your heart, that you might not sin against Him? John Calvin says: "This saying, to hide, importeth that David studied not to be ambitious to set forth himself and to make a glorious show before men; but that he had God for a witness of that secret desire which was within him." "He never looked to worldly creatures; but being content that he had so great a treasure, he knew full well that God who had given it him would surely and safely guard it, as that it should not be laid open to Satan to be taken away." "Saint Paul also declareth unto us in 1st Timothy 1: 19 that the chest wherein this treasure must be hid is a good conscience."

"For it is said, that many being void of this good conscience, have lost also their faith, and have been robbed thereof." "As if a man should forsake his goods and put them in hazard, without shutting a door, it were an easy matter for thieves to come in a rob and spoil him all; even so, if we leave at random to Satan the treasures which God hath given us in His word, without it be hidden in this good conscience, and in the very bottom of our heart David here speaketh, we shall be spoiled thereof." (Taken from Spurgeon's Treasury of David, the Exposition of Psalm 119: 11)

This leads me to ask if you are hiding God's word in your heart, all the while meditating upon it and praying over how you will put it into practice in your life? Do you, with your lips declare, all the judgments of God's mouth; that they are good? Do you speak this back to God in prayer, and then when you go out into public, that you are able to say to people that the judgments of His word, those things which He has declared to be true and good in His word, are good for all of us to think about? That it is a good thing to think deeply about the things that God has declared to be true and right and good for people to observe. Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe. You are cleansing your way when your prayers lead you to obedience to God's commands.

3rd – You are cleansing your way when you rejoice in the way of God's testimonies and delight yourself in His statutes.

Verses 14-16 – "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches." "I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways." "I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word." Matthew Poole says in regard to the word testimonies – "The Scripture is called God's testimony, as it contains the witnesses of God's mind and His will, and man's duty." David Dickson says – "Testimonies signify that this revealed will of God testifies of our duty and our doings, whether *they* conform or not to the rule; and testifies also what even may be expected by our believing or misbelieving, by our obedience or our disobedience." Let me ask whether you rejoice in the way of God's testimonies as much as in all riches?

Is it your delight to mediate on God's precepts and delight yourself in His statutes, and try hard not to forget God's word? Indeed if you will study to remember it, you will be cleansing your way before God when you contemplate your own ways, in light of all that God is teaching you in His word. Adam Clarke says that the Scriptures are called "precepts" from a word signifying to take notice, or care of thing, to attend, have respect to, to appoint, to visit; because they take notice of our way, have respect to the whole of our life and conversation, superintend, overlook and visit us in all the concerns and duties of life."

The word "statutes", he says, is from a word signifying to mark, trace out, describe and ordain; because they mark out our way, describe the line of conduct we are to pursue, and order or ordain what we are to observe." (end of quote) You will notice that in verse 14 David says – "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches." And in verses 15 and 16 he says he will meditate on God's precepts, contemplate His ways, and delight himself in His statutes. He moves from what he has done in rejoicing in God's testimonies to what he will do so that he will not forget God's word.

Let me simply ask you now whether you have this rejoicing, and whether you will delight yourself in all that God asks you do in order to live to Him? For if you do so, you will be cleansing your way before Him.

