

June 23, 2019

The Blessedness of an Experimental Christian

Psalm 119:1-8

What is a Christian?

Last week we began a new series in Psalm 119: looking at what the Puritans and Reformers called experimental Christianity. The claim I made was that what our age needs *most* at this present hour is to know what a Christian *is*. The line between the world and the church has become confused. The world has crept into the church, and the church has become worldly.¹ We live in an age in which the church needs to rediscover what a Christian is. A Christian is *not* one who can *merely* say the right things about God and the Bible and sin and salvation. Christianity is not intellectualism or a philosophy of life. **1 Corinthians 4:20** says “For the kingdom of God *does not* consist in *words* but in power.” Nor is Christianity a type of moralism. A Christian is not one who *merely* says the right things, thinks the right things, eats the right things and drinks the right things. **Romans 14:17** says “For the kingdom of God is *not* a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” No a Christian is one who has miraculously, inexplicably come into a vital union with Jesus Christ through the new birth. A Christian is one who has been delivered from the domain of darkness and has been transferred into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son (**Col. 1:13**). “He is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (**2 Cor. 5:17**). There is nothing in this universe comparable to the creation of a Christian.

What is an experimental Christian?

An experimental Christian is *simply* that new creation lived out. An experimental Christian is an experiential Christian. These are interchangeable

¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, 2nd Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pg. 28

terms. The word *experimental* stresses the idea of being tested and proved and examined by the Word of God. The word *experiential* stresses the need that the truth must be experienced. Joel Beeke has rightly said:

“...unless our [Christianity] is experiential, we will perish, not because experience itself saves, but because the Christ who saves sinners must be *experienced personally* as the foundation upon which our eternal hope is built.”²

Some preliminary considerations

That’s what Psalm 119 shows us. It shows us what personally experiencing salvation in Jesus Christ looks like. There are three vital truths that you must hold onto as we go through this. **First**, Psalm 119 is not a code of ethics. It is *not* saying “Do this and you will be saved.” In other words, Psalm 119 is not for non-Christians. “To expect Christian conduct from a person who is *not* born again is heresy.”³ No Psalm 119 is the portrait of a person who has already been saved. Some of you think that sounds very discouraging. I spoke with Pastor Arlan last week and he said that after he heard all of Psalm 119 last week, his first reaction was “...this guy sounds way more spiritual and devoted to God than I am. I would constantly feel inadequate and intimidated in his presence.” Perhaps some of you feel like that. “If that’s what being a Christian looks like, then I don’t think I am a Christian.”

Well that brings us to our **second** truth that you must hold onto as we go through Psalm 119. Psalm 119, like all the Bible, shows us how things *ought* to go, how things *do* go, and what is the *ultimate goal*.⁴ First, Psalm 119 will show us how things *ought* to go in the Christian life. **v.57** “The Lord is my portion; I promise to keep your words.” He sees God as his greatest treasure, and his

² Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*, (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press USA, 2006), pg.426

³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, 2nd Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pg. 17

⁴ Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2018), pg. 55

resolve is to follow Him *always*. Is this not how the Christian life ought to go? Yes. But secondly, Psalm 119 will show us how things often *do* go in the Christian life. v.28-29 “My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law!” Why is his soul so sorrowful? Because he sees his sin. He sees his false ways. Is that not how the Christian life often goes? Thirdly, Psalm 119 shows us the *ultimate goal*. v.165 “Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.” There is a final decisive victory coming for the people of God, and nothing, nothing can stop that. So as we go through this study, ask yourself: is this verse telling me how things ought to go, how things do go, or is it pointing to the ultimate goal?

Our **third** truth that you must hold onto as we go through Psalm 119 is that each section covers a different principle or season relating to the Christian life. Therefore as we go through it we will not be addressing every part and portion, rather we will be asking the question: what is the psalmist’s burden in this section? What’s his theme? What season is he in?

The great question confronting mankind

Which brings us to today’s text. What is the Psalmist burden as he begins this Psalm? Quite simply this, he is addressing *the* great question confronting mankind: where can we find true happiness? This is *the* thing that all men seek after above everything else. As Blaise Pascal famously said:

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. [Happiness] is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”⁵

⁵ Quoted in *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, Ed. Sam Storms & Justin Taylor, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2010), pg. 52

God is directing us towards true happiness this morning. Oh dear saint, the implications of these opening verses are stunning. “It is the will of God that we should...seek happiness.”⁶ Yet it is true that our happiness must be sought in the right manner—namely *in* the glory and honor of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—yet we must not say, we cannot say, that God doesn’t want our happiness. The whole Bible was written to secure this very thing. This is the blessedness of an experimental Christian.

The Big Idea...

There is no happier life than walking in the law of the LORD for in this path we experience His own presence

- ☆ An Unearthly People
- ☆ An Unearthly Law
- ☆ An Unearthly Happiness

I. An Unearthly People

A description of an ordinary Christian

Let’s look at v.1-3 “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!” Who are these people? This is one of the reasons we can be discouraged with Psalm 119 because we read these words and say “That’s not me. I’m not blameless. I don’t always seek Him with my whole heart. I still do wrong. Therefore this isn’t

⁶ W. S. Plumer, *Geneva Series of Commentaries: Psalms*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2016), pg. 1024

speaking about me.” And so the Christian can be defeated before we even get past v.3. But what if I told you that this is a description of every single Christian? This is a description not of super Christians, but of ordinary ones, of those who have been born from above. It’s a shocking description, only because we have not fully embraced the shocking nature of what Jesus accomplished. So let’s take these descriptions one at a time.

Every Christian is blameless

First, he says “Blessed are those whose way is *blameless*.” The Bible divides up all humanity into two groups: the blameless and the wicked. **Proverbs 13:6** says “Righteousness guards him whose way is *blameless*, but sin overthrows the *wicked*.”⁷ Either our way is blameless or we are wicked. So the question is: who are the blameless ones? All the people of God.

Noah was called blameless. **Genesis 6:8-9** “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD...Noah was a righteous man, *blameless* in his generation.”

Job was called blameless. **Job 1:1** “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was *blameless* and upright..”

Blameless is the description of every single Christian. **Colossians 2:15** “...he [Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and *blameless* and above reproach before him...”⁸ Why is this hard to so hard to believe? Because we forget the doctrine of justification. Martin Luther said “Every week I preach justification by faith to my people, because every week they forget it.”⁹ Dear Christian, you are blameless. Why? Not because of you. But because of Him. Christ’s righteousness has been imputed

⁷ Proverbs 11:20 “Those of *crooked heart* are an abomination to the Lord, but those of *blameless* ways are his delight.”

⁸ Ephesians 1:4 “...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

⁹ Source: <https://www.danielakin.com/10-quotes-from-martin-luther/> Accessed Jun 22, 2019

to you by faith alone. **Romans 4:5** “And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.” You are blameless because you have been given Christ’s own record.

Every Christian walks in the law of the Lord

Secondly, the Psalmist describes those who are blessed as those “...who walk in the law of the Lord!” (v.1); as those “...who keep his testimonies,” (v.2); as those “who walk in his ways!” (v.3). Who does this describe? Everyone who has been born again. This was the great promise that the gospel would accomplish in God’s people. **Ezekiel 36:27** “And I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*”

Every Christian seeks Him with their whole heart

Thirdly, the Psalmist describes those who are blessed as those “...who seek him with their whole heart” (v.2). Who does this describe? The Christian. This is the very miracle that God worked in us at the new birth. **Deuteronomy 30:6** “...the Lord your God will circumcise your heart...so that *you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*”

Every Christian ‘does no wrong’

Lastly, the Psalmist describes those who are blessed as those “who also do no wrong” (v.3). Surely, pastor Josh, you cannot be saying that Christians no longer sin? Of course not. **Ecclesiastes 7:20** says “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”¹⁰ We know we still sin, but we have a fundamentally different relationship with it. What do you think Paul meant when he said “the old has passed away; behold, the new has come?” (**2 Cor. 5:17**). What *old* has passed away? Your bondage to sin. Yes you still sin, I still sin, to our shame. But sin is no longer our master. “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin...[but] if the Son

¹⁰ 1 John 1:8, 10 “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

sets you free, you will be free indeed” (**John 8:34, 36**). What has Christ set you free from? The dominion of sin. **Romans 6:14** “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” What does that mean practically? It means that your practice of sin, your slavery to sin, your love affair with sin has been put to death in your life. Christians cannot sin *just like* the world. God won’t let them. **1 John 3:9** says “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and *he cannot keep on sinning*, because he has been born of God.”

You belong to an unearthly people

Who is the Psalmist speaking about *fundamentally* in v.1-3? Those who have been born of God. Dear Christian this is you. Dear saint, if you don’t see yourself in these first three verses, perhaps you have forgotten what it means to have been born again. You see the problem with being a Christian for any length of time is that you tend to slowly underestimate, under-realize, under-appreciate, what Christ has accomplished *in you* at the new birth. You are the blind Bartimaeus who has been given eyes that have never seen (**Matthew 10:46-52**). You are the woman at the well who has been given living water with which you will never thirst again (**John 4:13**) You were the insane demonic who is now clothed and in your right mind (**Mark 4:15**). You are the Lazarus who laid dead in his tomb but now has been raised to life (**John 11:44**). You were the criminal Barabbas who was released from certain death at the eleventh hour (**John 18:40**). That is what the new birth accomplishes! It removes your heart of stone and replaces it with a soft tender heart for God. It transfers you into a whole new realm—the kingdom of God. You have been ingrafted into the Living Vine. You have become a partaker of the Divine nature itself. You now belong to an unearthly people. That is our **first point**. If you are a Christian, the Psalmist is talking about you. You are the one that has been blessed.

II. An Unearthly Law

Which law is the Psalmist speaking about?

The Psalmist makes a transition now. Those first three verses serve as the preface to the entire Psalm. This is the blessed man—he who has been born from above. Now in v.4 he shows us our duty: to diligently keep God’s law. After service last week, I was asked which law the Psalmist is speaking about? There is so much confusion regarding how the law relates to the Christian today. The Puritan Samuel Bolton said that “...handling the the law correctly as Christians is ‘the greatest knot in the practical part of divinity.’” John Newton wrote “Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes.”¹¹ So first of all, which law is the Psalmist speaking about when he says “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!” I believe there are two answers. The **first** answer is that the Psalmist is speaking about “the whole revelation of God as contained in the Scriptures.”¹² That’s why I believe all these different terms are used to describe it: law, testimony, precepts, statutes, rules, judgments or word (et. al.). If you were to take in the whole of this chapter, the Psalmist sometimes speaks about meditating on it (v.15), at other times praising it (v.162), at other times obeying it (v.44), at other times gaining understanding from it (v.130), at other times longing after it (v.20). So we have to conclude that the Psalmist is *mainly* and *ultimately* referring to the whole Word of God, the whole revelation of God.

The first problem: dispensationalism

However, there is a second answer. Look at v.4. The Psalmist says “You have commanded your *precepts* to be kept diligently.” Yes the Psalmist is talking

¹¹ Lewis Allen, *The Preacher’s Catechism*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2018), pg. 114

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It is not an accident that the first subject that Paul instructed his young Timothy with was the law of God, cf. 1 Timothy 1.

¹² Charles Hodge, *Princeton Sermons: Outlines of Discourses Doctrinal and Practical*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2011), pg. 249

about the whole revelation of God, but he also has in mind specific laws that God would have us obey. v.4 “You have commanded your *precepts* to be kept diligently.” So which precepts or commands are we supposed to keep? I’m afraid that we have two problems when we ask this question. The **first problem** comes from dispensational theology and it’s different forms. Dispensationalism radically separates the Bible into two parts—the OT and the Jews is part one; the NT and the church is part two. So this verse, according to different streams of dispensationalism, has nothing to do with us. ‘That’s OT. That’s for the Jews. That doesn’t apply today,’ it’s said. Now that’s tragic my friends. Certainly we must understand the different categories of law within the OT. There are three categories.

Ceremonial law: the rituals that governed Israel’s worship

Judicial law: the regulations that governed Israel’s society

Moral law: the rules that governed Israel’s heart

So yes it’s true that we are not under the **ceremonial law** today. All the sacrifices and rituals and dietary laws not only set Israel’s religion apart from the nations of the world but these were all a drama pre-figuring Jesus Christ. That’s how Paul interprets the entire ceremonial law. **Colossians 2:17** “These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”¹³ So we are not required to obey the ceremonial law. Just read the book of Galatians and you will see the Apostle Paul make this case clear.

Nor are we under the **judicial law** of Israel today. The penal code that existed for Israel existed under the theocracy—when Israel was both church and

¹³ The ceremonial law was fulfilled and met it’s designed end when Christ came and accomplished it. (cf. Matt. 5:17 Mark 7:18-23; Gal. 4:1-7; 1 Cor. 7:19)

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 “That the Bible commands a diet of only ceremonially clean food at one stage of redemptive history and then abandons this requirement when Jesus comes to fulfill God’s purposes for humankind is not some form of contrariness, or worse, an inherent contradiction in the Bible’s teaching. Rather, it is part of God’s intended plan in preparing his people for the coming of the Messiah Jesus. The apostle Paul likens this transition to that of a minor coming of age (Galatians 4:1-7). It reflects the unfolding purposes of God’s plan through the distinctive ages of human existence.” <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/09/04/3841412.htm>

state. When Christ came, the people of God were no longer confined to one nation, but to all people everywhere. The church doesn't have the power of the sword, that is the state's power (**Romans 13**).

However the **moral law**, which are summarized in the ten commandments, the Christian is bound to obey. Because it reflects God's own character. Which means that God couldn't have commanded them otherwise. When God said "You shall have no other gods before me" He could not have said 'worship as many gods as you choose.'" God could not have commanded us to do be murderers and thieves and adulterers and liars. He couldn't have commanded us to blaspheme His name and ignore the Sabbath. All of these commands reflect His holy unchanging nature.

The second problem: antinomianism

Which brings us to our **second problem** with v.4. There is a stream within evangelicalism that would say "Ok I agree that God's moral law is fixed and unchanging, but now that I have been saved by Christ, I'm no longer under law, but under grace, therefore I don't have to obey the law." This is the attitude of antinomianism. It's a very serious heresy. Because it is both misunderstands the gospel and the law. It is 100% to say that salvation is by grace alone and that we are not made Christians by obeying the law. But it is 100% wrong to say that now we are saved, we have nothing to do with the law because we are under grace. Consider these three serious consequences that follow if the Christian is not bound to obey the law today.

First, if the Christian is not obligated to obey God's law, then all we must admit that all Christians are now sinless. **Romans 4:15** says "...where there is no law there is no transgression." If there is no obligation to obey, then there is no wrong doing. The Christian has become perfect.

Second, if the Christian is not obligated to obey God's law, then why did the Holy Spirit write this law on our hearts, so that we would carefully walk in it? **Jeremiah 31:33** "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their

hearts.” “This is promised as the great blessing of the covenant of grace.”¹⁴

Third, if the Christian is not obligated to obey God’s law then we are not under any obligation to love God or love our neighbor. This is how Jesus summarized the whole law: to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. “On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. (**Matt. 22:40**)”

How can we say that the Christian is not bound to obey the law today? The whole law is aimed at loving God and neighbor.

A legalistic wedding vow?

Now I understand that the very idea of being bound to obey the law still sounds like legalism to some Christians. A God who requires obedience doesn’t sound like a God that you want to be around. But that is to think about salvation in entirely fleshly unspiritual terms. Imagine yourself at a wedding. The bride and the groom are exchanging their vows in the front. And it comes to that point in the ceremony where the pastor tells the groom to repeat after me: I Johnny, take you Susie, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part. Now imagine Johnny leaning over to the pastor at this point and saying: ‘Pastor, you sound a little legalist here. Why all these obligations?’

What would a marriage look like with no such obligations? It wouldn’t be love. The Bible never, never presents the commands given to the believer as a burden. But always presents them to us as “the way we enjoy daily fellowship with Christ.”¹⁵ **1 John 5:3** “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”

¹⁴ Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton Vol. 6*, Nabu Public Domain Reprints, pg. 10

¹⁵ Lewis Allen, *The Preacher’s Catechism*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2018), pg. 115

Not under law, but under grace

When Paul argued in **Romans 6:14** that we “...are not under law but under grace,” he gave us one of the most glorious truths of the gospel. Dear saint, the law can never condemn you. Christ was already condemned for you. Jesus kept the law perfectly for you. Obeying every part of it, not because He needed righteousness, but because you did. And Jesus suffered the penalty of the law for you—death, not because He was guilty, but because you were. What this means is that now that Christ has brought you into union with Himself, is that everything that is true about Him, in regards to redemption, is also true about you. Christ can never be condemned by the law again. He was already condemned once for all. And so, because of your union to Him, you can never be condemned either. You are not under the condemnation of the law, but under the grace of Jesus Christ. Now ask yourself, what does that truth do to a redeemed heart? How does that truth affect a Christian’s heart towards the law? Now when you hear the law to love to have no other gods before Him, to honor His name, to not worship idols, what do you hear? William Cowper expressed it this way:

To see the Law by Christ fulfilled,
To hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.¹⁶

Dear saint, that is the first thing the Psalmist is getting at in Psalm 119. God’s people stand in a new wonderful relationship to the law. No longer does the Christian look at obedience to the law as simply a way to avoid danger and have

¹⁶ Ralph Erskine the great Scottish preacher of the 18th century put it this way:

A rigid master was the law,
Demanding brick, denying straw;
But when with gospel-tongue it sings,
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.

a good life. No the Christian looks at the law as a way to love and know Jesus for who He is. That's our **second point**. When God commands that His precepts be kept diligently in **v.4**, He is showing us the way to enjoy daily fellowship with Him.

III. An Unearthly Happiness

The longing of the Christian

Now this is why the Psalmist responds like he does in **v.5**. He cries out in prayer. "Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!" Two things to see here. **First** do you see the longing? Dear saint, do you not hear the your own heart cry out here? Let me ask you: if you could have your way, would you *not* choose to never sin again? Where does misery come from? From sin. Oh to be set free from sin. Charles Spurgeon says here "We will have reached the state of pure blessedness when we cease from sin altogether."¹⁷ This is why the Psalmist wants to keep God's statutes. The more he obeys, the less he sins.

The limping of the Christian

Secondly, just ask yourself: why would the Psalmist say this in **v.5**? "Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!" What does this imply about the Psalmist *himself*? That he is completely unable to obey God's law *on his own*. Don't you see? Far from the Psalmist being this super-saint, one home we cannot relate with at all, we can very much relate with him. This thing he says about himself. The first three verses give us the theme of the whole. The fourth verse tells us what God requires. And now in **v.5**, the Psalmist speaks of himself. "I can't do it Lord. I don't find any power within myself." Beloved, the Psalmist is just like you. He's giving voice to your inner most being. 'Lord I

¹⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *The Golden Alphabet: An Exposition of Psalm 119*, (Abbotsford, WI.,: Aneko Press, 2018), pg. 12

want to obey you, but I find weakness. I want to love you, but I find a straying heart. I want to follow your ways, but my heart is often divided.’ Do you see? God does not issue His commands, expecting that we could turn our own hearts to Him. But He commands us to that we can feel our own helplessness and cast ourselves entirely upon Him.¹⁸ God’s commandments drive us to confession. “Lord I can’t.” This confession drives us to communion. “Lord please help me.” This communion drives us to conformity, because the more we commune with the Lord, the more we are conformed to the image of His Son.

The leaping of a Christian

And this is what leads to an unearthly happiness. The Psalmist says in **v.6** “Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.” Where does shame come from? From sin. Shame comes when we disobey God’s law. “When we disobey, our conscience passes judgment, leading to shame. But obedience banishes shame.”¹⁹ Spurgeon says here “There is nothing to be ashamed of in a holy life. A man may be ashamed of his pride, ashamed of his wealth, [ashamed of many things] but he will never be ashamed of regarding the will of the Lord his God in all things.”²⁰

That’s why the Psalmist moves to praise in **v.7** “I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.” Notice the order. Praise comes as the result of obedience. It is 100% that all Christians are blessed because they have been born again. But part of the Psalmist’s point here is that there is a greater blessing for Christians when they walk in obedience. Blessing “is a by-

¹⁸ Charles Bridges, *An Exposition of Psalm 119*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2002), pg. 10

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If we put **v.4** and **v.5** together we have Augustines’s prayer “Lord command what you will, but will what you command.”

¹⁹ J. Stephen Yuille, *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 20

²⁰ Charles Spurgeon, *The Golden Alphabet: An Exposition of Psalm 119*, (Abbotsford, WI.: Aneko Press, 2018), pg. 18

product...it is when we seek righteousness that we find blessedness.”²¹ Isn't this what the Biblical record teaches us? Which David was happier? The David who humbly sought God's even in times of great distress, or the David abused his privileges as king with Bathsheba? Which Peter was happier? The Peter that was learning at the Masters feet, or the Peter that was denying the Master at his trial? Don't we know this from our own experience? When are you most blessed? When are you most ready to praise God? Is it not when you are walking in His ways, and being careful to keep His commands?

The livelihood of a Christian

Please look lastly at v.8 with me. He says “I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.” We have to look at this in two parts. First, the Psalmist makes a resolution to keep God's commands. He wants to obey. And this actually a very helpful resolution here. What is the surest way to abstain from doing evil? Being fully occupied in doing good.²² But notice the second part. The Psalmist says “do not utterly forsake me.” Why would the Psalmist say that? This is where we have to just pause and take in the whole. If we suspect that the Psalmist is this self-confident, self-sufficient man, then why would he ever pray ever pray “do not utterly forsake me?” He wouldn't. No the opposite is true. The Psalmist is very unsure of his resolution. In fact, as Jay Adams says “[The Psalmist] wants to observe God's statutes so as to please Him. But as he looks as the results of his endeavors, he wonders how the Lord can continue to put up with him.”²³ Oh dear saint, isn't that how you feel so often? “Lord, how can you continue to put up with me? Why do you still love me? Why will you not utterly forsake me?

²¹ J. Stephen Yuille, *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 19

²² Charles Spurgeon, *The Golden Alphabet: An Exposition of Psalm 119*, (Abbotsford, WI.,: Aneko Press, 2018), pg. 13

²³ J. Stephen Yuille, *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 21

This cry foreshadows a similar cry by Jesus Christ. On that cross, when Jesus was suffering and making satisfaction for our sins, He cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (**Matthew 27:46**). There wasn’t an answer from heaven. But the answer is obvious. “Son I have forsaken You, so that I would never forsake them. I want to show them mercy, so I cannot show you any. I want them to follow my commandments, so I must treat You as if You never have.”

That is where our strength comes from to obey God’s law. Not by our own resolve, but by the resolve of our Savior Jesus Christ, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

[If you’re here this morning...]

Application

What kind of a Word has God given us?

As Pascal said, all men seek after happiness. The problem is that mankind seeks after it in the wrong place. You see man is not just a body. He is a body and soul. Our soul is spiritual. Material things can never satisfy us. Augustine in his seminal work “The City of God” spoke about the three ingredients that are necessary for true happiness. He said that in order for something to satisfy your soul, **first of all**, it must be certain. It must be a sure thing. But this is the problem isn’t it. There is no certainty in this world. Only God’s Word is certain. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” (**Isaiah 40:8**). **Secondly**, in order for something to make you truly happy, it must be everlasting. But there is no created thing that is everlasting. All is fleeting, all is passing away. But what do we find in God’s Word? Truths, eternal truths, that will never pass away. “Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens” (**Psalms 119:89**). Thirdly, in order for something to truly satisfy you, it must be ever-increasing. That’s what God’s word promises us: “...in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures

forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11). That is the word that God has given us. A word where we find all our joy, all our pleasure, all our happiness, because we find Him.

What kind of a world do we live in?

We live in a world that longs to see a life lived better than what they are living. The law that culture follows today is the law of expressive individualism. Expressive individualism can be summed up in the slogans that we hear all the time: “You be you....Be true to yourself...Follow your heart...Find yourself.”²⁴ In our individualistic age: “The highest good, is individual freedom...self-definition, and self-expression.”²⁵ In other words, true happiness comes from finding your true self. But as it turns out, this doesn’t lead to happiness at all. As one author has said “The modern process of identity formation...tells you to go out and create a self from scratch. You must identify your dreams, especially the most vivid ones, and fulfill them—or feel like a failure.”²⁶ This is why America’s teenagers have the highest suicide rate in the world.²⁷ They are obeying the world’s gospel and they are finding that the more true to themselves they are, the more miserable that they become.²⁸

What kind of a church should we want?

Part of the problem with the church today, with our church even, is that we have largely bought into this type of expressive individualism. We don’t couch it in the same terms as the world does, but we often practice it the same

²⁴ Source: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/expressive-individualism-what-is-it/>
Accessed June 23, 2019

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ Tim Keller, *Preaching*, (New York, NY.: Viking, 2015), pg. 137

²⁷ J. Stephen Yuille, *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 12

²⁸ This is why socialism is on the rise today. This is how culture always works. When one ism doesn’t cut it, it seeks for another one. See D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, 2nd Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pg. 13

way. The church has become largely superficial today, because it is trying to look like the world. The question the church must answer correctly is not “who am I?” but “whose am I?”²⁹ The world asks the question “who am I?” and tries to find an identity within. But the church should ask the question “whose am I?” Who do I belong to? The church is most attractive to the world when she is absolutely different from the world. The glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that we have been set free from the bondage to self-worship. As Paul said “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (**Galatians 2:20**). That is what makes the church a light shining in a dark place. Not that we live like everybody else, not that we live like the world. But rather, we make it our ambition “to be as different from everybody who is not a Christian as we can possibly be.”³⁰ To do that, we make it our delight to walk in the law of the Lord.

What kind of Savior do we need?³¹

Monica and I have been walking together 3-4 times a week over the last month or so. And it has been really sweet, because we feel that our relationship is getting stronger. We talk about how our day went. We tell each other about our plans. We talk about the struggles we are having. We are fellowshiping together. We don't see our walk as a burden, but as a blessing. Notice that is how the Psalmist describes obeying the Lord? It's *walking* in the law of the Lord (**v.1**). It's *walking* in his ways (**v.3**). We need a Savior that will walk with us. As we saw last week, this Word that the Psalmist is calling us to, is not an abstract concept. It is a Person. Jesus is the living Word. In fact Jesus is the full embodiment of the law itself. Lewis Allen summarized the Ten Commandments in a way where Jesus is seen more clearly. And when we

²⁹ Tim Keller, *Preaching*, (New York, NY.: Viking, 2015), pg. 138

³⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, 2nd Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pg. 28

³¹ With the exception of the first question, the last three are from Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross, Preaching the Word Series*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2014), pg. 17-23

understand the commandments like this, it makes it a joy to walk in the law of the Lord:

1. Put nothing in the place of Jesus.
2. Make nothing which gets in the way of your love for Jesus
3. Honor Jesus' Name in all you do.
4. See your soul's rest in Jesus.
5. Honor your parents, as a love-expression for Jesus.
6. Do not murder, as Jesus brings life, never death.
7. Keep sexually pure, because Jesus has won your body, as well as your heart.
8. Do not steal, because Jesus is enough.
9. Do not lie, because Jesus is the truth, and loves the truth.
10. don't set your heart on anything, because Jesus really is enough.³²

Brothers and sisters, that is why the Psalmist is calling us to walk in the law of the Lord. Because it is in the law that we find our Savior walking with us, and talking with us, and calling us His own.

³² Lewis Allen, *The Preacher's Catechism*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2018), pg. 116