

**Psalm 119: 73-80; "I Know, O Lord, that Your Judgments are Right",
A Communion Sermon, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on October 14th, 2007, in the Morning Worship Service.**

When we think about the Lord's judgments, we may have in our mind the things that He decides and does in relation to wicked people and societies in punishing them for their sins. We think of the Lord's judgments upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the flood in Noah's Day and the judgments which the Lord brought against Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt so that Pharaoh would let the people of Israel go. Certainly this is a very real part of the Lord's judgments. But what we are looking at here in these verses is a person who knows the Lord, and he is speaking of "knowing that the Lord's judgments are right." He knows that they are right toward himself. We live in a day when people would like to take all judgment away from Almighty God. They desperately want to believe that God is a God of Love alone, and they want to believe that they can sweep his justice out of the road of their having eternal life and going to heaven, by the strength of their own convictions of what they think that He is like. But we should understand that God cannot lie. He has stated in His Word that He is a God of strict justice, in the Bible, and it is certain that He will prove Himself to be so in the Day of judgment. What is further evident, as we think about Christians in our day, is that many of them think that God is not as sovereign as He really is. And they do not want to believe that now that they are Christians, that there are any judgments that God makes concerning their life at all. He has taken away their sins, and He is favorable to them, but they do not think about His intervention in their lives as being a judgment. As we begin to think about this subject this morning we must acknowledge that it is true, according to Romans 8, verse 1, that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The one who believes in Jesus, as it says in John 5: 24, "shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." The one who believes in Jesus shall not have their sins brought up in the day of judgment to condemn them. Jesus has died, and if we abide in Him, we shall not be ashamed in the day of His coming.

We will be coming to the Lord's table in a few minutes and when we do, we should come realizing that we as Christians have many things to learn after we come to Christ. The New Birth and faith in Christ are just the beginning of eternal life. But receiving the gift of eternal life means that God will be faithful to teach us all that we will need to learn to become like our blessed Savior. The judgments of the Lord which are being talked about in verse 75 are the decisions that God makes in relation to His Elect people; the things which He decides will be of eternal benefit to them in relation to His own purpose in regard to their salvation and in answer to their prayers. His judgments are always right. The question that we should ask ourselves in relation to these verses is this. "How should a Christian pray and think about the judgments of the Lord in relation to making progress in

holiness in living the Christian life? As we look at our text we will find that a Christian, in order to make progress in holiness, should reason and pray in the following ways.

1st- He should reason that since God has made him and fashioned him, that he can also give him understanding so that he can become holy.

(Verses 73 and 74)

"Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments." To learn God's commandments, to really learn them practically, is to become holy. Since God has made us, He can give us this understanding. I want you to think about this wondrous truth, that God has made you for a moment. God did not consult with you or with any other persons when He made you. He didn't even consult your parents. Oh, He used the genetics that He had given them; but He had a design in mind, and He brought it into being to make you a unique individual. You did not have any choice in the matter regarding what you were to look like and what kind of natural physical abilities that you would be given; God simply decided what those qualities and abilities should be, and He brought them about. This should show us His sovereignty over all people and things. It should show us that we should rest happy in it. Many people do not rest happy in it. They do not want to believe that God's hands made them and formed them for His own good purposes. Sometimes even if a person does realize that God has made them, they do not like the way the God has made them. They think that certain aspects of their body were not done right. They are either too short or too tall, too stout or too thin; they believe that their nose is not right or their ears are too big or too small, their eyes are too wide set, or too squinty; their head is too small or too big. And the list goes on and on. What is this but an unwillingness to admit that God is sovereign over them, and they would not have done things for themselves in the way that God has done them for them. God has taken particular care in the formation of your physical frame, your mind and its abilities, your emotions; what you would be capable of feeling, your will and the strength of that will in your determining what you wanted to do. Turn with me to Psalm 139. In verse 13 we find the truth about ourselves. "For You formed my inward parts; You covered (wove) me in my mother's womb." God is the author of all of this, and He did His work in secret in your mother's womb. He took His time and thought through all you would be capable of, and all that He wanted to accomplish in and through your life. He is not a God who is ever disappointed with His own handiwork. He may be displeased with what you do with what He has given to you, but His work is perfect. You should learn from our verses to reason this way; "If God has made me and fashioned me, then surely He can also come to my soul and by grace change me.

Before when I told you that God did not consult any other person in the formation of you as a person, perhaps I was not altogether correct. He did not consult anyone in relation to the unique qualities and abilities that He has placed in you. But there is another person who should be mentioned in relation to your

being created and formed and fashioned; and that is Adam. Adam has also had an influence in the formation of your nature because he was designated by God as the representative head of our whole human race in regard to obedience. He was given one good and holy commandment in the Beginning, in the garden, and he did not keep it. He listened to his wife's voice, more than remembering and heeding the Word of God to keep that commandment not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He had been told that in the day that he ate of it, he would die. He did die that day. And we also all eventually die physically because he disobeyed God's Word. But Adam and Eve died immediately, spiritually, that day. And now because of that disobedience, Adam's sin has marred the perfect work of God in us. Every person born into the world has a nature which is marred and defaced by sin, and they are dead spiritually. Each one is born into the world separated from God spiritually because of Adam's sin. The perfect work of God has lost its glory even before it emerges from the womb. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." (Psalm 58: 3) So we must say it, and we must face it; every single person who is born into the world is formed by God having the effects of sin upon them. This is not God's fault and sin is not God's workmanship. But it is Adam's sin passed on to us, and we confirm our sinnership in him. We would have not done any differently than Adam and Eve did in the garden. God knew this; but it had to be shown to us. Salvation is not by the Covenant of Works.

The good news that we celebrate this morning is that God has had, does have, and will have reference to another person in relation to the way that He has made us. And that person is His Only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ there is a New Creation. So the same Divine hands that made and fashioned me, can give me a New Nature, a New Heart and Mind. The Lord Jesus Christ was sent into this fallen World to seek and to save that which is lost. The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Lord Jesus obeyed God's Holy Law so perfectly, so willingly, so lovingly, that He went to the cruel death of the cross and there suffered as a substitute, the punishment which Adam and all sinners trusting in Him, deserved. We trust in Him when we believe in God's Word concerning Him. And when we trust in God's Word, we often use the words of verse 73, "Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments." We pray to God asking for spiritual understanding. This is what all true Christians do or should be doing every day. How does a Christian learn God's commandments, to do them in a way which is pleasing to Him? It is found for us in John's gospel, Chapter 6. In verse 26, after having fed the five thousand, Jesus had walked upon the water across the sea of Tiberius. Those who had been fed the miraculous bread were following Jesus, but they were not following Him for true spiritual reasons. Listen to what Jesus says in verse 26. "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled." "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man

will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." "Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do that we may work the works of God?' "Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." This is how all the works of the Christian are done, by faith in Jesus Christ and by praying for understanding about how to learn and keep God's commandments. This all requires grace. It also requires that we not isolate ourselves from other Christians. Verse 74 says, "Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Your Word." True Christians are always encouraged and made glad to see others come to the place where they are living their life according to God's Word; "hoping in it". Nothing encourages the hearts of God's people more. And this means that a Christian who is walking in the Spirit loves to have fellowship with other Christians, sharing spiritual truths and experiences with other Christians. Ask yourself if this is you, dear Christian, this morning? Are you making glad the hearts of those who fear God? Are they turning to you to speak to about spiritual things. Is there this holy interaction between you and others who are walking in the fear of God all the day long?

2nd- He should pray and reason that since God is righteous in bringing affliction into his life, that He can also show mercy and bring comfort along with it. (Verses 75 and 76)

Verse 75 says, "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." "Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your Word to Your servant." "Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for Your law is my delight." I wonder, beloved, if you will stop and think about the fact that it is faithfulness in God to afflict you? You say to me, "Well, its sounds rather cruel to me; that God would willingly afflict those whom He loves." My answer to you is that God does not do this because he loves to cause us pain. He does it because He knows that there is sometimes no other or better way to teach us. It is a matter of His faithfulness. Turn with me to Lamentations Chapter 3. Jeremiah was a righteous man. But he had seen some very terrible afflictions come to the nation of Israel and also to himself as a prophet of the Lord. Verse 1 says, "I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath." "He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light." He then for the next 16 verses reviews the great afflictions that he had come into. Then he began to pray about it to the Lord in verse 19. "Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall." "My soul still remembers and sinks within me." "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope." What could possibly give you hope, Jeremiah? "It is through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." "They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness." "The Lord is my portion, says, my soul, therefore I have hope in Him!" This is what we have come to this table to remember once again, anew and afresh. It is His great faithfulness that He afflicts us. It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. This is because His compassions fail not! The Lord is our portion. The Lord Jesus is ours! Let us focus on how good He is not to let us

go on in our sins and false conceptions of Him and life. We would, if it were not for His grace. Think about this. There is always a beginning and an end to the afflictions that God's saints endure. They are measured and they are bounded by God's perfect love and care and His great wisdom to know what is best for us in particular. Listen to verse 31. "For the Lord will not cast off forever." "Though He cause grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies." "For He do not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." "To crush under one's feet all the prisoners of the earth., to turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High, or subvert a man in his cause--the Lord does not approve." Oh, how gracious the Lord is; how full of tender mercies.

This is why we should always pray and not faint, as Jesus says in Luke 18: 1. We are not going to hell when the Lord afflicts us as a Christian. We are going to heaven because he faithfully and lovingly deals with the sins of His dear children. So here, with this in mind, our Psalmist prays as well. "Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your Word to Your servant." "Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for Your law is my delight." Do you pray this way beloved, when you are down and discouraged with the trials and afflictions that have come to you? You say to me, "Why is it that a Christian, who has been forgiven of his sins and whose sins have been born by Jesus Christ on the cross has to be afflicted at the hand of God?" Well turn with me to 1 Peter 4: 12 with me. Here we find statements which will answer your questions. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." In afflictions, we become by grace partakers of Christ's sufferings if they are for the sake of righteousness; that is when they are brought to us by God in order to build godly character in the formation of holiness in our lives. "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." "On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified." "But let none of you suffer as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters." "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." Now this is the verse that I wanted you especially to see. Verse 17. "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" You see from these verses that "judgment" begins here in this life for the saint of God. It is the judgment of God's providentially ordering things in relation to the remains of our sinful nature and life so that we come to see where we are falling short and so that we might repent and change and grow into the image of Christ. It is a most certain work of God in a Christian's life. It is not something that the Christian chooses to participate in. God chooses it for him. It is that which establishes his inheritance and that which allows us to share in His holiness. God is faithful in the afflictions that He brings.

But if God is faithful to afflict, He is also faithful to answer the prayers of His people that "His merciful kindness would be for their comfort." God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 1: 4. Paul here is saying that God "comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. This is what we celebrate as we come to the Lord's Table this morning. There is real tangible comfort that comes to God's people by means of the death and resurrection of Christ, in all their afflictions. We know that whatever befalls us in this life, that it will be because Christ suffered, that we shall be comforted in all of our afflictions. Because Christ has been raised from the dead, that He Himself comes to our soul and brings comfort and power to endure the sufferings and the afflictions that each of His people who are living for Him must go through. This works for the believer's good in that he learns to trust in God and not in himself. Look at verse 8 and following. "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life." "Yes we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us." As you come to the Lord's table will you not only learn to endure the Lord's chastenings but also to praise and thank Him for them, and resolve to learn from them and by them to trust in God all the more? He is faithful. Ask Him to enable you to learn and grow in this way of His appointment.

3rdly - A Christian should pray and reason that if men treat him wrongfully, yet God is full of tender mercies. (Verses 77 -79)

"Let your tender mercies come to me, that I may live." It is indeed a mercy, a tender mercy of God to live long enough in this life that you as a Christian can come to the assurance that you have glorified God in the things that you have done. What a mercy it is to think that even though many mistakes were made, and many sins were committed, that the Lord has permitted you to come to the place where you have and are bringing glory to His holy name by the way that you live. You recall don't you, the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 71: 17? "O God you have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works." "Now when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come." This is what the Christian wants. This is how he wants to live his life and to end his life. This is the way that you and I need to think and need to live. And we want other Christians who fear God to turn to us and encourage us with God's truth, as it says in verse 79. Perhaps you have never heard about the conversation that took place between George Whitfield and Gilbert Tennent where George was speaking to a small group of close friends about how glad he was that he soon would be able to die and go to heaven; the sooner the better. Everyone seemed to agree with him

except Mr. Tennant. George tapped him on the knee and said, "Brother Tennant, you are the oldest man among us; do you not rejoice to think that your time is so near at hand when you will be called home?" Mr. Tennant bluntly answered that he had no wish about it. He said, "I have nothing to do with death." "My business is to live as long as I can, as well as I can, and serve my Master as faithfully as I can until He shall think proper to call me home." This was a great help to Whitefield to patiently persevere in the work of the ministry. But you will notice from our text, that there are many proud people in this world that do not want this to be so for the one who follows Jesus. Our text says, "Let the proud be ashamed, for they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; but I will meditate on Your precepts." This is the way for the Christian to make progress in holiness; when others treat him wrongfully, when others do not tell the truth about him; the way he handles the matter is to "meditate on God's precepts." How would God have me to address those who speak falsehoods against me? By meditation upon God's Word the answers come. That is; you understand do you not, that the Holy Lord Jesus Himself was lied about and falsely represented by wicked men? Your strength is not found in trying to get back at such people. Your strength is found in prayer and remembering that God is faithful to all the promises of His word. Your prayer is that such people as slander your good name will be put to shame. But your hope above all hopes is to be able to so speak and act in that difficult situation that God would be honored and glorified. That is what you seek even more than personal justice. We do want to defend ourselves in a God-honoring way. But we also know that God is the great judge, and He will look after us in the matter of our greatest concerns when we are suffering for righteousness sake. If we suffer in this way, let us remember the Lord Jesus, and what He went through in order to bring about our salvation, and remember that we who are about to partake of this Supper are being made over into His image. Let us come down to the front now so that we can partake. There I will give you a few more appropriate words.

4th- A Christian should reason and pray that if Christ's heart was blameless as He went to the cross, that his own heart would be blameless in present afflictions. (Verse 80)

What did the Lord Jesus go through in order to bring about our salvation? I would assert to you that it was a great part of His sufferings for us that He endured the destruction of His reputation in the sight of men. "The proud treated Him wrongfully with falsehood." But the cry of His heart and mind was what we find in verse 80. "Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes, that I may not be ashamed." This was a part of the sufferings that He was called to bear on our behalf. We were sinners. We are sinners. We needed and we still need not only the good reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God for our salvation; we need His perfect righteousness which He worked out on our behalf. Let me show you how the Lord Jesus suffered on our behalf. Turn with me to Mark Chapter 14, verse 53. Let us think of ourselves as standing with the Apostle Peter watching there that night so long ago. "And they led Jesus away to the high priest;

and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes." "But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest." "And he sat with servants and warmed himself at the fire." "Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none." "For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree." "Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" "But not even then did their testimony agree." "And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do you answer nothing?' "What is it these men testify against You?" "But He kept silent and answered nothing." "Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' "Jesus said, 'I am.'" "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." "Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses.'" "You have heard the blasphemy!" "What do you think?" "And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death." "Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophecy!'" "And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands." It was at this time that Peter denied his Lord three times.

Now as we come to this Supper, let us think together of the perfect and pure Lord Jesus who was maligned and lied about, and His good reputation destroyed as the Son of God. Then think of what our sins really and actually deserve. We may have a good reputation in the sight of men. Such is very desirable. But if the depth and extent and number of our sins was actually known this morning, I believe that we would be unable to look one another in the face. But we are here because the good reputation of the Lord Jesus was destroyed in the eyes of many men, so that we, among many men, should come to have His reputation of spotless integrity in the sight of God. Do you see now why He died? Do you now see how better to handle the difficult situations involving the loss of your own reputation to falsehoods? It is to do as the Lord Jesus did; to be silent at the right time, and to speak in the right way. The Lord Jesus did not speak when it concerned the things spoken about Him which were false which He needed to suffer for our redemption. And the Lord Jesus did speak when it concerned the things that He needed to suffer to establish the truth of His essential personhood. He could not deny Himself. He was the Son of God. These things regarding the Truth made certain that the value and efficacy of His sufferings would come to us. When we suffer in like manner, knowing what we are guilty of and deserving of, and yet being willing to suffer the loss of our reputation so that a brother or sister is helped, or a sinner who needs to be saved comes to understand their need of the grace of Christ; then this Supper and the reality of the greatness of Christ's grace and power to save are established. This is the thing that we should desire for ourselves as we approach the table today.

