

**Psalm 119: 89-96; "Unless Your law had been my Delight", A
Communion Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
December 2nd, 2007, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The text that I just read to you has for its theme the Christian's delight in the Word of God. The law of God is being spoken of here as being God's written Word, in its entirety, and it is spoken of as something very needful for the Christian to delight in it. And so the question that I want to ask of the text this morning is, "What is it, exactly, that God does for the Christian who delights himself in His Word?" And as we look more carefully into these words we find that there are 4 things that are done for the Christian who delights himself in God's Word. 1st - He comes to know more, the faithfulness of God. (Verses 89-91) 2ndly- He comes to know more, how to be sustained in his times of affliction.(Verse 92) 3rd- He comes to know more, how God's precepts give him life. (Verse 93, 94) 4th- He comes to know more, how to act when wicked men lie in wait for him. (Verses 95 and 96) We will look at each of these this morning in the context of Christ's sufferings for us, as we will be coming to the Lord's table toward the end of this message.

1st- When the Christian delights himself in God's Word he comes to know more, the faithfulness of God. (Verses 89-91)

"Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven." "Your faithfulness endures to all generations..." The word "settled" in the first sentence literally means, "stands firm". This should show us that as we read the written Word of God, that we would understand that the righteous precepts, the moral principles, the holy testimonies, and the good commandments of the Word are something which are settled and fixed forever in the mind of God and in the heart of God as a perfect reflection of His righteous and holy character. He stands firm in them from everlasting to everlasting. He is faithful to His own Word because it is a perfect representation of Himself. He is not only faithful to Himself in relation to His blessed Word, but He is faithful, as the text says, "to all generations." That takes in you and I most definitely. He is faithful to all of His people as well, in all generations. This means that God has had a definite plan from before the foundation of the World, concerning all the people that He would ever create and all of the people that He would ever save and call to Himself in each and every generation. The Word was settled in heaven long before the World was created in the counsels of the Divine Trinity. Isaiah 25: 1 says, "O Lord, You are my God, I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." The NAS says, "For You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness."

When a Christian delights himself in the law of the Lord, His blessed Word to him, He comes to know something of God's faithfulness in regard to these plans. He sees that God does all things for His people in relation to His covenant ordinances. He has taken counsel with Himself and all of His counsel is going to stand. "Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides." "They continue this day according to Your ordinances." The Christian who delights himself in God's Word sees that God's faithfulness endures to all generations in His having made and established the earth. It stands and it abides to this very day and this very hour because God wills that it be so. The one who is trusting in God then reasons to Himself; "If God does this with the earth and the motions of the sun, moon, and stars, then He will and He must do this for me, if He is to be faithful to Himself. And you are right. Turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 33. Here, in the days of Jeremiah, some of the people of Judah and Jerusalem were beginning to question whether the promises that had been given to David concerning the Messiah would be fulfilled. They were on a great decline as a nation. They had fallen under the Lord's judgments and they were going into captivity. They were wondering whether God would cast off His people because of their great sins. Specifically they were questioning the promise that had been made to David that he would never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel and whether the priests and the Levites would lack a man to offer burnt offerings before God; to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually as it says in verses 17 and 18. Verse 19 says, "And the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'If you can break My covenant with the day My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers.'" "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to me." "Have you not considered what these people have spoken, saying, "The two families which the Lord has chosen, He has also cast them off?" "Thus they have despised My people, as if they should no more be a nation before them." "Thus says the Lord: 'If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'" "For I will cause their captivity to return, and will have mercy on them." Thus we see the faithfulness of God to the Old Covenant people of God awaiting the advent of their Messiah and wondering whether the promises of God had failed to His true-hearted remnant.

Sometimes we may feel this way as New Covenant Christians. But we need to read these same verses and apply the spiritual principle to our own hearts.

Verses 14 - 16 which came just before the verses that I read to you show us the covenant faithfulness of God. "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.'" "In those days, Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely." "And this is the name by which she will be called: 'The Lord our Righteousness.'" Now certainly this is a New Covenant blessing being promised to the Old Testament people of God, to continue them in their faith in the coming Messiah. But we now know who that promise is fulfilled in. It is fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lord our Righteousness. He was pure and perfect in His soul in all of His obedience to God's holy law. He worked out a perfect righteousness in His obedience to all of the commandments of God so that it would become the righteousness of anyone believing in Him. Do you have that righteousness this morning? It comes by faith in Jesus. God will not cast away any who believe in Him. His faithfulness endures to all generations; New Covenant and Old. The blessings of His salvation and His righteousness are applied to both. This is why all believers should delight in the Lord's Word. You come to know and to see more, the faithfulness not only of God in His plans, but also His faithfulness in the execution of them through Jesus Christ. Remember this as you come to the table this morning; God cannot and will not cast off the one trusting in Jesus Christ. He is faithful to His Word. The way to deal with all of your sins is to bring them to Jesus, repent of them in His presence, and then pray for grace to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil age.

2ndly- When the Christian delights himself in God's Word he comes to know more, how to be sustained in his times of affliction. (Verse 92)

"Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction." I wonder if this has become a blessed reality to all of you here who are trusting in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? The writer of our text would have perished "in" his affliction. He was experiencing the crushing painful burden of his affliction. Was it persecution? Was it that people were slandering and defaming him? Was it that his life was in constant danger from wicked men? It was probably all of these. But still he finds great delight in God's Word. It kept him from being crushed and overwhelmed with fear, grief, and sorrow in that awful condition that he found himself in. You and I must come to understand more of how we might be kept from perishing in our afflictions. They can destroy us if we are not trusting in Christ. Turn with me to Psalm 34. Here is one of the most precious portions of Scripture in the whole word of God. It is a Psalm which gives us much instruction on what the Christian should realize and do in regard to all of his afflictions. Look at verse 19. We will start with the conclusion of the matter and then work backwards. The Psalmist says,

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." "He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken." This states the truth of the Christian's experience in this life; in this fallen, evil world. He is going to have many afflictions. Plan on it, O Christian. It shall surely come if it has not already. There are, of course, many times of life where little affliction is felt or known. This is because of the Lord's goodness. But there are also times and seasons of life in which there are afflictions. And how are they to be faced? They must be faced in light of this promise. "The Lord delivers him out of them all." How does He do this? How can He promise this? Well, notice the fact that the promise is given to "the righteous". And notice further that the promise to the righteous is that the Lord shall guard all of his bones and not one of them would be broken. That narrows the direct and immediate fulfillment of the promise to someone who would not have one of his bones broken. In fact the Scripture itself tells us who that one would be to whom this verse refers. In John chapter 19, verse 32, when Jesus died on the cross, it says, "Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him." "But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs." Verse 36 explains this. "For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.'" So the promise is to "the righteous"; that is, it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ the righteous. The Lord delivered Him out of all His afflictions and so He is able to deliver us from or through all of our afflictions. What are we to do practically then, in order to realize this deliverance? We are to bless the Lord at all times; verses 1-3. We are to seek the Lord that He might deliver us from all of our fears. We are to cry out to Him to be saved out of all of our troubles; verses 4-7. We are to trust in Him and fear Him and seek Him and find that He is good; verse 8-10. We are to keep our tongue from speaking evil, and our lips from speaking deceit if we would live a long life and many days. We are to seek peace and to pursue it with all men. We are to depart from evil and do good remembering that the Lord is the righteous Judge. His eye is on us, and His ear is open to our cry. What is the basis of the Lord helping us from perishing in our affliction? It is found in verse 22. "The Lord redeems the soul of His servants." "And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned." The real question whether you are a believer or an unbeliever is whether you are trusting in Him and taking refuge in Him. Verse 8 says, "Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good: Blessed is the man that takes refuge in Him," it says in the American Standard Version. Plumer says, "To taste is to make proof by experience." "To see either to gain the result of such tasting, or it is to enjoy." The way to avoid despair and to find delight when affliction comes; the way to face all kinds of trials and difficulties in the Christian life; is to make Christ and His Word your refuge. Let me ask if you are doing this? It is possible that you are a true Christian and you are not doing this. You have neglected God's Word, your

meditation upon it, your drawing strength and comfort from its promises. You are tasting all the good things of the world but your spiritual life is dry and barren. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. We will come to the Lord's table in a few minutes and we will be tasting the bread and the wine which represent the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. He suffered, bled, and died that you might taste and see and know spiritual realities. Remember Him suffering so that you might live, and having life you might have it more abundantly. Oh taste and see.

3rdly- When the Christian delights himself in God's Word, he comes to know more, how God's precepts give life. (Verses 93 and 94)

"I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life." "I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts." It is evident from reading this section of the Psalm over that this man's physical life was being laid in wait for. He needed deliverance in a physical sense, it is true. He is crying out to God on the basis of his belonging to God and having found the righteous precepts of truth to be the basis of living a holy and comfortable life, that he would have God to deliver him. But he is looking for more here, than just a physical deliverance. The Psalmist is not saying here that he obtained salvation from God on the basis of his resolve to remember the precepts of the Word or even by his own efforts in seeking to know all about God's ways and His Word. The Psalmist is, however, telling us how he was saved. He was saved by believing in the Old Testament gospel, which is the same as the New Testament gospel. Salvation in both Old Testament and New is found in Jesus Christ and in no other. Even though those people who were saved in the Old Testament did not know the name of Jesus yet, still they were commanded to believe the promises related to the coming Messiah. Salvation was still, only obtained, by grace through faith and by no other means. But this means of grace involves also keeping the commandments of the gospel to repent and to believe. These were the precepts which had given the Psalmist life. "Go outside, Abraham, and count the stars if you can..." "So shall your descendants be." "And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." This was his saving faith. "I am Almighty God," Abraham, "Walk before Me and be blameless." This was his command to repent. This is what God commands all men everywhere to do. Acts 17: 30 says, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained." "He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." It is by obeying this command to repent that we come to find assurance that we have Christ's resurrection power at work in our life to change us, and to turn us away from the sinfulness of our nature. He commands all men to believe. John 3: 17 and 18 - "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." "He who believes in

Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Have you believed in Jesus? Have you repented of your sins? Then ask yourself this question if you have repented and believed and have come to know the assurance that you are a true Christian. Do you still continue to repent of all and every known sin? Do you continue to believe and live the life of faith, meditating on God's promises and seeking Him through His blessed Word when the trials and difficulties of life are pressing down upon you? "Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction." My faith would have failed and I would have caved in to abandoning it. But that can never happen to the true Christian. Why? Because Jesus Christ died that it should not be so; and that instead you will repent and come to be a joyful, persevering, loving, faithful Christian. If that is something that you are not experiencing now; you should know from these verses that when you repent and believe in relation to all of God's precepts that it will come about in your life. That is why you will never forget God's precepts. You have come to know and love Jesus Christ and you long to keep His commandments and do God's will. God's grace is at work in your heart because Jesus died, and because He lives. Because He died; you can really live spiritually and joyfully. Because He lives; you now have the power to live a godly life. Let us now come down front and observe the Lord's Supper with these truths in mind.

4thly - When the Christian comes to delight himself in God's Word, He comes to know how to act when wicked men lie in wait for him.

(Verses 95 and 96)

"The wicked lie in wait for me to destroy me, but I will consider Your testimonies." "I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad." These words seem to take the joy away from everything that I have just spoken to you don't they? The fact that the wicked were lying in wait to destroy the Psalmist? And you and I will have to go back into a world which hates the God of the Bible and hates Jesus Christ. But do not let this rob you of your joy. If you have believed the things which I have been preaching to you this morning, you should have come to understand, if you did not already, that Jesus Christ has dealt with sin and death by being made sin for us, and dying so that death could be overcome by the Christian and destroyed forever. You have come to know and understand that there is an end, a consummation of all perfection and it is not to be found in yourself. But it is found in our Lord Jesus Christ. God's commandment, the totality of what He teaches us in His blessed Word, is exceedingly broad. But Jesus Christ fulfilled it in terms of God's law and is applying that same truth to our lives as ones who believe in Him. Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him before He went to the cross. He knew the sufferings that awaited Him from evil men. He knew that they would mock Him, and beat Him, scourge Him, and degrade Him. Yet

He says to His disciples in John 14: 1, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." He says in John 15: 9, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love." "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full." Jesus' love toward His own and toward sinners did not stop when it came His time to suffer. He excelled still more and more to perfection on our behalf. Let us now pray that as we come to partake this supper that we will remember this commandment. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." This is what Jesus did for us. He now calls us to do this for each other and every other true believer in His name.