

---

# Psalm 119:25

2013-02-03

## The Psalmist's Prayer

- I. His Confession
- II. His Request

## Introduction

Beloved Congregation of Our Lord Jesus Christ

One of the most distinguishing marks of a Christian compared to an unbeliever is their relationship towards sin. It's not that the believer stops sinning when he comes to Christ in faith – but he does hate sin with a passion and he longs to live a perfectly holy life. Paul speaks about the grief that sin brings to us as Christians in Romans 7 when he states:

*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice...O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:19, 24)*

**Do you know something of this same grief over the presence of sin?** Do you struggle with the same tension in your life? The Psalmist expresses this same struggle in our text this morning:

**Psalm 119:25** *My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to your word.*

We consider this text under the theme:

## The Psalmist's Prayer

- I. His Confession
- II. His Request

### I. His Confession

First then, notice the **confession** of the Psalmist. *"My soul clings to the dust."* In this confession the psalmist is speaking from his innermost being for *my soul* refers to his person; his being; his existence. He is saying: *I myself, with my being, cling to the dust!* This is the Psalmist *confession!*

The **KJV** has *'My soul cleaves unto the dust.'* The word, *cling* as in the NKJ or *cleave* as in the KJV, is a very graphic word. It is used to describe marriage in the beginning in **Genesis 2:24** where we read in the KJV:

**Genesis 2:24** *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

The NKJ version translates it as **joined to** his wife, but I prefer the translation: **cleave to his wife**. It has the idea of **sticking to**; staying with; closely connected; or **cling to** as our text translates it in the NKJ. In the Bible it is used to describe how the parts of the body stick to each other.

✚ So Job speaks in **Job 19:20**: My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh...

✚ It is said of **Ruth** that she **clung** to Naomi.

---

✚ In the same way the **Israelites** were to **cleave** to the Lord their God with affection and loyalty. But the Psalmist confesses: *My soul clings to the dust!* That is his **concern**; that is his **complaint**; that is his **confession**! It is as if he is glued to the dust; to the crumbs of earth; to the ground from out of which he was formed! And because of this reference to the *dust of the earth* some have taken this to refer to the grave, as if he is in **imminent danger of dying**. The dust can refer to the grave *for dust we are, and unto dust we shall return!* (Genesis 3:19)

**However**, the context shows that the primary concern of the psalmist is **not physical, but spiritual!** That's even confirmed in the second part of our text: *Revive me according to your word* which we will consider in a few minutes. Look at **verse 28**: *My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to your word.* The continual reference in this part of the psalm is to **spiritual revival** and **renewal** through the Word of God! Never does it mention that his concern is with others, but only with himself! He doesn't speak about **physical afflictions**, but **spiritual infirmities!**

Therefore when he says: *My soul clings to the dust* he is not referring to the grave, but that he senses that he is too **earthly minded!** He is focused too much on the things of this world. The Psalmist confession is that he is overly concerned with the things of the earth! He is saying: *My soul clings to the things of this earth; my affections are too earthly; too much about the things of this life; my mood is too much based on my present material condition!* This is what gave him such deep distress and led him to cry to God for life and strength that he might break away from them.

He finds that the things of this life drag him down; keep him thinking in earthly terms rather than heavenly terms. He finds that he is continually cleaving to the dust; and this is a humbling and distressing thought to him. He has tasted of heavenly truths, but in his attempts to experience them again, he finds that he is continually being dragged down to the earth. It is this experience that leaves him troubled!

**Do you have the same troubling experience in your life?** This is a **Christian's sorrow**, is it not? This is the struggle of one who desires so much more spiritually, but in the striving experiences that he *clings to the dust!* Cannot every child of God relate to this experience of the psalmist? Is this not the confession of everyone who desires more: *My soul clings to the dust?* Don't we all who are believers sense our frailty and our limitations?

- ✚ Have you ever struggled to leave your bed in the morning that you might have some time of devotion before you go to work?
- ✚ Do you find that at times your focus is so completely different than it should be, so that you find that you spend too much time on worldly things, and not enough on spiritual things?
- ✚ Do you find it so much more attractive to watch a secular movie than to read a good solid Christian book?
- ✚ Do you find it more attractive to watch the Super Bowl on Sunday afternoon than to attend church?
- ✚ Do you find it more attractive to be involved in leisurely activities than to attend a Bible study?
- ✚ Do you find greater delight in attending a sports event than attending church?

As such, the answer to these questions could be the same for the believer as the unbeliever, but for the believer this **affection** for worldly things rather than heavenly things brings grief! This is a clear distinguishing mark between the believer and the unbeliever, the child of God and the man

---

of the world. To have a soul cleaving to the dust, and **not** to feel and admit the trouble, is the black mark of a sinner, dead in sins, dead to God. However, the believer is the one who recognizes that his *soul clings to the dust*. He acknowledges that he is yet so worldly in his thinking; so earthly focused, rather than heavenly focused! This causes him sorrow!

The Psalmist is not necessarily speaking about participating in sinful activities as such, but that his focus is wrong. There is nothing wrong with attending a sports event; or participating in leisurely activities; or watching a good movie; or taking time for rest; but what brings him grief is that these activities seem to be **so much easier than those which are more heavenly focused** – *my soul clings to the dust!*

This is not to say that the unbeliever is **never** distressed by his bondage to the dust. Living in a broken world means that all are subject to the troubles of this earthly life. At times, unbelievers too will become distressed because of the effects of living in this fallen world.

- ✚ **Envy** is the rottenness of the bones.
- ✚ **Pride** is restless as the wind!
- ✚ What a torment is the spirit of revenge!
- ✚ And what must be the fear and apprehension of the thief!
- ✚ What terrors must dwell in the heart of a murderer!

Oh! There can be remorse on account of sin that brings distress. How it can even lay them low in the dust!

- Think of how distressed **Saul** was before the **witch of Endor** (I Samuel 28) He was sore troubled and fell full length to the ground!
- Think of **Esau** who lamented before Isaac with *“a great and exceeding bitter cry.”*(Genesis 27:34)
- Think of **Cain** who when made a fugitive and vagabond (wanderer) in the earth, said unto the Lord, *“my punishment is greater than I can bear.”* (Genesis 4:13)
- And what about **Judas**, who when he saw that he was condemned cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed and went and hanged himself in total despair. (Matthew 27:5)
- Oh yes, the wicked are often distressed by their bondage to the dust, and they can be burdened by it. However, their trouble comes only because of the **consequences or the circumstances!** The Psalmist is distressed about himself – about his spiritual condition before God, not about the circumstances around him! The Psalmist is looking for more intimate and closer communion with the Lord – and the things of this life so often interfere with the fulfillment of that desire! That’s why he confesses: *My soul clings to the dust!*

The Psalmist, which is plain from the context, is one who delights himself in the statutes of the Lord. He loves to **hide the Word of God in his heart!** He even says: *“I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies, as much as in all riches.”* (Psalm 119:14) What troubles him is that **he knows** of the riches of the LORD, but finds that his focus is so often on the **trinkets of this life**. He, as our Belgic Confession states it often sighs, *desiring to be delivered from the body of this death*. He is not necessarily involved in any specific open sin, but he wants his desires to change so that his focus is more on the Lord and less on the dust of this earth!

The psalmist is crying out in our text:

- ❑ Why, Oh God, why do I **ever** find your precepts grievous to me? Why can't I **always** delight in your law?
- ❑ Oh God, why do I **ever** find divided devotions in my heart? Why can't I **always** focus on the LORD?
- ❑ Oh God, why do I **ever** find my love for Christ cold? Why is not my love for the Saviour **always** warm?
- ❑ Oh God, why do I **ever** commit any sin? Why can't I **always** live thankfully to you?
- ❑ Oh God, why am I **ever** slack in my devotion to you? Why can't I **always be** completely devoted to you?

These are the struggles of the Psalmist! He desired to go in the way of God's commandments but he found his old nature constantly dragging him down and keeping him from that way and so he confesses: *My soul clings unto the dust; revive me according to your word!*

Now next week, the Lord willing, we hope to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This is a week of preparation in which we are called to examine ourselves. **“Do you know something of this burden, this confession of the psalmist?”** Is it true of you as our Form for the Lord's Supper puts it, *“that you feel many infirmities and miseries in yourselves, as namely, that you have not perfect faith, and that you do not give yourselves to serve God with that zeal as you are bound, but have daily to strive with the weakness of your faith, and the evil lusts of your flesh? And are you by the grace of the Holy Spirit sorry for these weaknesses, and earnestly desirous to fight against your unbelief, and to live according to all the commandments of God?”*

Do you know this confession of the psalmist in your own heart and life? **Can you identify with it?** Then you will also know something of the psalmist's hope and confidence. As such, you must know this confession of the psalmist is the language of **conflict and contrition and not of despondency or despair**. In this prayer here of the psalmist we meet with a man who is exercised in the way of godliness. It is only those who are in the exercise of faith who cry for this quickening grace. Charles Bridges, who has an entire volume dedicated to this Psalm states:

*For it is not only the complaint of sickness, but the application to the physician, that advances the recovery of the patient. (Bridges, pg. 57)*

Therefore the Psalmist not only confesses: *My soul clings to the dust*, but he knows where to go for he turns to the Lord making the request: *Revive me according to your Word!*

## II. His Request

That is **his request**. Now isn't that exactly the reason for the institution of the Lord's Supper? Is it not to remind us again where we can be refreshed and revived for our life? **Doesn't the Lord's Supper bring to our remembrance the promises of the Word of God?** Is it not to strengthen us and encourage us in our faith so that we can face the battles of life? What is the request of the Psalmist? *Revive me according to your word!* Shouldn't this be our request even as we come to the table of the Lord?

*My soul clings to the dust, revive me according to your word.* What is the confidence of the psalmist in his bitter need? **It is the promises of God as revealed in His word.** *“According to your word,”* the psalmist says. This is a phrase that the psalmist uses over and over again in this psalm. **He has faith in the Word of God – in the revelation of God!** Sometimes people make a distinction between **faith in God** and **faith in the Word of God**. But to believe in his promises is to believe in

---

him! Paul Helm in a little book titled *The Beginnings* makes the following comment about *faith in the Word of God*.

*It is sometimes said that true faith is not faith in the word of God but faith in God. But this contrast is based upon a misunderstanding. For if faith is taking God at His word then there is no opposition between God and the Word of God. The word of God is God's speech, without which the character and intentions and promises of God would not be known. And in relying upon God's speech a person is relying upon God. If a person believes Christ's invitation: 'Come unto me...and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28) and as a result comes to Christ and gains rest, then in relying upon Christ's word he has relied upon Christ and in responding to Christ's invitation he has come to Christ. Faith is faith in the word of God and such faith is faith in God himself!*

So when the Psalmist asks: *Revive me according to your Word* he is asking **God to do as he has promised!** His hope lies not in himself, but in his God. If he may be strengthened from on high, he will yet shake off his heaviness. The psalmist pleads the word of God, and he asks for nothing more than to be dealt with as God has promised! Oh, what a sure confidence this is! Indeed, for can God's word ever fail? **Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one iota from God's Word!** He is faithful who promised. (Hebrew 1:23, Luke 21:33) Cling not to the dust of the earth, but cling to this Word of God!

For what is the promise which He has fulfilled? What promise of the Word of God is pictured for us in the Lord's Supper? You know, don't you? **That our sins have been paid for by the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ!** You see in coming to the Lord's Supper we are in faith trusting in the Word of God; trusting in the promise of God; trusting that our sins are as certainly washed away in the blood of Christ as we see the wine poured out and the bread broken!

Christ has taken the burden of sin away from you and He Himself bears that burden. So He came to pay the guilt of your sin, bearing the just wrath of God against it. This caused Him, the just for the unjust, **to lie in the dust** with His face to the ground sweating as it were great drops of blood. On the cruel cross His strength was dried up like a potsherd, and his tongue cleaved to his jaws. He was brought into the **dust of death**, shedding his blood as a ransom for many. So everyone who pleads with the Psalmist: *Revive me according to your word* might be assured that the Lord will **revive, renew, restore according to the promises of the gospel** on the basis of Christ finished work!

Are you weighed down because you are not what you should be? Does your soul again and again cleave to the dust? Take courage, take heart! Our Lord Jesus came down to the dust of the earth! He was one who lived on this earth in perfect obedience that you might be righteous in him! His perfect obedience becomes our obedience so that we are now seen whole in him! When we believe in the Lord Jesus than his perfect obedience to the divine law is imputed to us! You see, not only are our sins forgiven in Christ, but our perfection is in him as well.

Sometimes in the reformed circles this truth of the application of the active obedience to Christ is missing from our experience. We understand that we needed forgiveness through the shedding of the blood of Christ. We come in faith to him for forgiveness, but then we waver thinking that our standing before God depends on our holy living. But that's a mistaken view for when we come to Christ not only are we forgiven of all our sin, but his perfect obedience is imputed to us!

---

Christ by his passive obedience paid for our sins and by his active obedience gives us righteousness! Our salvation is complete in him.

What a rich gospel comes through the life and death of Christ! When you cry to Him, struggling sinner, *“Revive me according to your word* you may be assured, as our Catechism puts it in **Question and Answer 60** that: *“though your conscience accuse you, that you have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and are still inclined to all evil, notwithstanding, God, without any merit of yours, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to you, the **perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ**; even so, as if you never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if you had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for you.”*

And it is this same gospel which the Lord more fully declares and seals to us in the sacrament of Holy Supper. There He would assure us with visible signs that He grants us freely the remission of sin and life eternal for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross.

*“My soul clings to the dust, Revive me according to your word.”* This is the psalmist's prayer as a true child of God! **We have looked at his confession and his request.** This week is preparatory week and we are to examine ourselves. Can you identify with this confession – *My soul clings to the dust?* Is that your confession to your grief? Is this request of the Psalmist: *Revive me according to your word* – is that your request as well?

Both this confession and request of the psalmist are born of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray in this week of preparation, as Charles Bridges did regarding our text:

*“Oh Lord, make me more deeply ashamed, that my soul cleaves to the dust. Breathe upon me fresh influences from Thy quickening Spirit. Help me to plead Thy word of promise, and oh!, may every fresh view of my sinfulness, while it prostrates me in self abasement before Thee, be over ruled to make the Saviour daily and hourly more precious to my soul. For defiled as I am in myself, in every service of my heart, what but the unceasing application of Thy blood, and the uninterrupted prevalence of Thy intercession, can give me a moment's confidence before Thee, or prevent the very sins that mingle with my prayers from sealing my condemnation? Blessed Saviour, it is nothing but Thy everlasting merit, covering my person, and honouring my sacrifice, that satisfies the justice of an offended God, and restrains it from breaking forth as a devouring fire, to consume me even upon my very knees.*

So too pray as you prepare yourself to come to the Lord's Supper and then come.

Amen.