

Psalm 119: 25-32; "You shall enlarge my Heart", A Communion Sermon
delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 1st, 2007,
in the Morning Worship Service.

The table of the Lord is given to believers as an ordinance to be observed, "as oft as we do so," for several very important reasons. We are told in 1 Corinthians 11: 26, that "as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death till He comes". We are told to "do this in remembrance of Him". We are to remember not only what He has done and accomplished by the offering up of Himself as a sacrifice for our sins upon the cross, but we are also to remember that He is risen from the dead and is presently seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for each of us who believe in Him, and indeed, all of God's Elect. His bodily presence is in heaven, but His spiritual presence is with us in a special sense when we gather together to observe this Supper. Listen to what our Confession says in Chapter 30, Paragraph 7. "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporately, but spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses." We are here to spiritually receive afresh, our Savior; to feed upon His faithfulness this morning.

I have a propositional statement of truth to give you so that you may think about yourself in relation to Jesus Christ. It is this. To be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, you must have and promote a regular on-going work of God's grace in your heart in connection with the truth of His blessed Word. You want to "run the way of God's commandments." You are hoping to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, and so you know that you cannot make progress unless God "enlarges your heart". You must have both. You must have the blessed grace of Christ in your heart; yes you must. But you must also promote that work through your prayers in order to make progress in becoming like your Master. If you do not do this you will become a lazy and good-for-nothing disciple and an unprofitable servant. You will either fall under the Lord's chastening hand or, worse; you may prove yourself to be no disciple at all. But if you are trusting in Jesus Christ, God will enlarge your heart. We are not speaking here, of anything that we do as meriting favor with God. But if grace is at work in us there will be an enlargement of our response to that grace. So the question of the morning is, "What should a disciple of Jesus Christ do in order to promote the progress of the work of God's grace in his heart?" Well, there are 6 requests that David, the man after God's own heart, makes here in the text, which will allow him to make progress in being a faithful disciple in connection with the heart work that God alone can do. Let's look at them and think about them together.

1st- David prays to be revived according to God's Word.

David as a true Old Testament disciple of Jesus Christ had come to know that he simply must have the principle of life and power from God at work in his soul in order to make progress in holiness and bear fruit to God's glory, in the things that he did; in the way that he lived. He says in verse 25, "My soul clings to the dust". Evidently he had fallen very low in his mind and heart in relation to all that he knew that he should be, in holiness, in the sight of God; in relation to knowing and experiencing that sweet fellowship and communion with God that he had known in the past. He knew that God's testimonies were his "delight" and that they were "his counselors," as it says in verse 24 of the last section. But he looked at the state

of his own heart and he believed that he was failing to live up to all the grace and mercy that he had been shown. "My soul clings to the dust." Is this you this morning, my friend? You have come here this morning knowing that you need to be revived. You know that you need the life and power of Christ to work in your heart, and yet you do not sense it. You do not see yourself bearing fruit to God. What should you do? You should pray and confess your need. You should pray that God's word would come to you with power when it is preached. You should pray that God will meet with you when you have your private devotions, and that He would teach you by His Spirit. Tell the Lord that you can never be encouraged in your soul with anything less. I hope that you will understand that even the greatest of the Lord's disciples need to learn to "always pray and not to faint." (Luke 18: 1) I think that you may remember this verse. But we do grow faint sometimes do we not? We do have times in our lives where "our soul clings to the dust." I think of that godly man David Brainerd. He often quotes Psalm 73, verse 28 in his journals. "But it is good for me to draw near to God..." He writes in his journal on July 3rd, 1744, "Was still very weak." "This morning was enabled to pray under a feeling sense of my need of help from God, and I trust had some faith in exercise; and, blessed be God, was enabled to plead with Him a considerable time." "Truly God is good to me." "But my soul mourned, and was grieved at my sinfulness and barrenness, and longed to be more engaged for God." "Near nine, withdrew again for prayer, and through divine goodness had the blessed spirit of prayer; my soul loved the duty, and longed for God in it." "O it is sweet to be the Lord's, to be sensibly devoted to Him!" "What a blessed portion is God!" "How glorious, how lovely in Himself!" "O my soul longed to improve time wholly for God!" Do you see what Brainerd was doing there? He was praying to be revived according to God's Word. His communion with God and His service to God needed to be revived daily. And so must ours if we would be faithful.

Let me ask you this morning; what kind of a prayer life do you have? What kind of fellowship and communion with God over His blessed Word is yours? If you say, "Not much," or "none at all," then there is a great problem with you, whether you will acknowledge it or not. The true Christian, the real Christian, knows when his soul is clinging to the dust, and it bothers him very much. But do you know this morning that at such times, you should pray "revive me according to Your Word?" There is precious and needed grace to found looking to the crucified Savior, in pleading the promises of God back to Him with a believing heart. The Lord Jesus says in John 10: 10, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." You need to pray and ask for life, that is, an abundance of the grace of Christ so that you might be lifted up to bring glory to God by the way that you live. I like what Charles Bridges says in his commentary on Psalm 119, at this verse. He says, "Quickening grace is not the ground or warrant for duty." "Indisposition to duty is not our weakness, but our sin--it is not therefore to be indulged, but resisted." "We must mourn over the dullness that hinders us, and diligently wait for the 'help we every moment need.'" "God keeps the grace in his own hands, and gives it at His pleasure, to exercise our daily dependence upon Him." This is very good. We must not sit still. We must pray to be revived on a daily basis. We must pray to especially be revived through the time we have here today in the Lord's Supper. Do we see and remember what it cost our Savior to bring us life? He had to lay His life down for you to have this kind of grace.

2ndly- In order to promote the progress of the work of God's grace in his heart, David prays to be taught God's statutes. (Verse 26)

He prays confessing, "I have declared my ways, and You answered me; teach me Your statutes." It does not promote the work of God's grace in our souls when we remain silent in prayer about what we know we have been like in our heart. Why should God give grace to one who thinks themselves just fine for the most part, most of the time. God is opposed to the

proud and the self-sufficient. He gives grace to the humble. He looks to the one who is contrite in spirit. The situations of what takes place in our hearts can, and often times they do, change greatly from moment to moment as we go through a day, and the responses and reactions of our heart and mind to people around us require real grace and help from God. David here declares his ways before God. It is only the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit that will lead us to declare our ways to God. "You know the way that I take," says holy Job in Job 23: 10, "and when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." But passing the tests which are related to obedience and fighting the spiritual battles that we face against our fleshly desires is going to require instruction from God Himself. Job states that he had, "treasured the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food." And yet a further teaching was necessary even for this righteous man. He was justifying himself and not God. This is sometimes the case with the true disciple of Jesus Christ. We learn certain truths from God's Word, and then we begin to apply them to our lives, and then God will test us to see whether we have really learned them. God is the One who brings the tests. We forget this sometimes, and we think that the real problem is people in our lives who don't understand us, or we don't understand them. But in the end God knows where the real problem lies and what we really need. In the end Job confesses in Chapter 40, verse 3, "Behold I am vile." Then God instructs him further. This is what you and I must learn to do as well. We must not assume that we know all about everything, in relation to God's ways and His statutes. It is one thing to know the 10 commandments. It is another thing to trace the progress of our spirituality in relation to keeping them. We must continue to pray as David, "teach me your statutes." Teach me what it means, O Lord to have no other gods before You. Teach me what it means to take Your Name upon my lips, and not to take it in vain. Teach me O Lord to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Teach me O Lord how to love my neighbor as myself.

What does it mean to acknowledge our ways; to declare our ways, before God? It most definitely means that we acknowledge before God in prayer, the things that we have sinned and erred in, in regard to not keeping His precious commandments. These failings and sins may have been "the way" that we thought would be the easiest or the best, to go about to obtain things or do things. It may have been the way we were taught by our parents and friends; the counsel that they gave us, to seek only our own interests, but now we find that it was not the counsel of God. We may have to painfully come to learn the truth of Isaiah 55, verse 8 and 9. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord." "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." And God will faithfully bring us to the place where we will acknowledge it. Psalm 32, verse 5 says, "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden." "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." Sometimes this takes a diligent search of our own hearts, as you find it mentioned in Psalm 77, verse 6. "I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, and my spirit makes diligent search." In other words, beloved, you ponder things seriously, and especially when you come to the Lord's table as we are doing here this morning. You think deeply and you search diligently in your spirit for what God the Holy Spirit might show you to be sinful thoughts and tendencies in your heart. Where have I been proud? Where have I been unloving? Where have I promoted my own glory instead of Christ's. Where have I been sensual? Where have I borne false witness and slandered or reviled a brother? Where have I been insensitive and have caused pain to be brought to another because I will not consider what my brother or my neighbor needs?

What a great comfort it is to know that God knows all about us. When we acknowledge our sin, it is good for us that we come to see what He has seen all along, and then to declare it.

Perhaps it is a great burden or great grief, or great affliction that is the thing that has brought us low. When we confess this as a part of "our ways," then we may cast it upon the Lord. Psalm 55, verse 22 says, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." These things that burden you and cause you to go mourning all the day long, need to be acknowledged and dealt with in the presence of the Almighty. Psalm 90 says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Our text says, "You answered me." This is the answer to our being in the dust. It is to take refuge in God. Psalm 91: 14 and 15 say, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high because he has known My name." "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him." You say to me, "Well I have not set my love upon God the way that I should have." Perhaps not, but this verse refers in the first place to Jesus Christ. He set His love upon God in the perfect way. And if you will trust in Him, then the promise shall apply to you as well. Remember the Lord Jesus has gone before you. It is His love and His faithfulness that makes you perfect and complete in the sight of a holy God. Confess your sins and failures and come to table to feed on Christ's faithfulness.

3rdly- In order to make progress as a disciple of Jesus Christ you should pray to understand the way of God's precepts. (Verse 27)

"Make me to understand the way of Your precepts; so shall I meditate on Your wonderful works." This is referring to our coming to understand how God would have us to go about to keep His commandments. This is the pursuit of holiness and righteousness. When we would study to learn how to be pleasing to God, God does not consider it enough, when we can outwardly perform a set of duties in relation to His commandments. It is more important, and of great value in God's sight, that our heart is right in keeping those commandments, and that our heart is engaged to Him in the performance of those duties. This is "understanding the way" of God's precepts. The way that we come to that right understanding is to "meditate on God's wonderful works". This comes by our thinking about His glorious attributes and the perfections of His Being, not only in relation to His having created all things, and His providential ordering of all things; but we must understand that He has a particular concern for whether or not my life is bringing glory to Him. He is the One who sustains all things. He is the One who is working in me according to His mighty power, the same power by which He raised Jesus from the dead. He is the One who is leading me and guiding me into all the truth concerning all His commandments. That is why we pray, "Make me understand the way of Your precepts." Let me know how I can keep Your commandments in such a way that I glorify You, O God. When I think upon God's ways, it brings me more and more into line with this purpose of God to transform my life into a righteous life.

In Deuteronomy 32 Moses sets forth this way for believers to make progress. He tells of it in a song which he gives to all the assembly of Israel. "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." "Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass." "For I proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God." "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He." This song of Moses is only really learned by grace. Whether you are a ruler in the Church's heavens or whether you are a door-keeper in the house of our God upon the earth, still grace must rain down as the dew upon your heart so that you may understand this truth. For you to make progress in being Christ's disciple, it is going to take your praying and asking the Lord to "Make you understand the way of His precepts." Say to Him, "Show me, Lord, the wisdom and the rightness of living by your precepts of truth." "May your precepts, the truths that I should live by, which are found in Your Word, become precious to me." "May

I know them in my heart as a well established reality." "May I see them worked out into my experience so that I am a doer of the Word." It is when I see that in Christ that there is all wisdom that I need to know how to approach the keeping of all of God's commandments, in all of their details, that then we will begin to pray to have that wisdom; to know how we should do them and keep them. It was God's law that was in Christ's heart when He walked upon the earth, when He walked among men. It is now that same Christ who fulfilled God's law, who will teach us to understand the way of God's precepts. Pray to God to have Ephesians 4: 30 and following become a reality in your experience. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children." "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." This is understanding the way of God's precepts. Ask yourself, "Am I doing this with every believer that I know? This is especially important in light of the Supper that we will take shortly. For it is the death of Christ and His resurrection power that alone can bring this into being in our hearts and lives.

4thly- David prays to be strengthened according to God's Word. (Verse 28)

"My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your Word." It literally reads, "My soul drops from grief, strengthen me according to Your Word." I think that it is all too true that when we really begin to see how great the problem of indwelling, remaining corruption is in our hearts, that we often become weighed down in our spirit. This is why if we would make progress as a disciple that we must pray to be strengthened. We must have the strength of Christ's grace to overcome our flesh. We must have strength to rise up and do battle with our sins. We must have strength come to our soul so that we will do God's will. How does this come? It comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 45: 22-24 says, "Look unto Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!" "For I am God, and there is no other." "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath." "He shall say, 'Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.'" "To Him men shall come." To whom, we may well ask, can we come? The answer is; to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we remember when we come to the Lord's Table and to the Lord's supper this morning. We remember, and our souls know right well, that "only in the Lord are righteousness and strength." Is this your unashamed confession this morning? Do you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory that you have found such a One as Jesus? Has His righteousness has become your righteousness? Has His strength has become your strength? The Apostle Paul went through tribulations so that all of God's saints would know of this blessed truth. He says in Ephesians 3: 14, "Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations which are for your glory." "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever, Amen." It is this love, it is this power, it is this strength of grace that we extol this morning. I would ask you all to come down to the front so that we may eat this Supper together.

5thly- David prays to have the way of lying removed from him. (Verse 29)

When we become a Christian we have become so because we have come to know and believe the truth. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free, and you shall be free indeed." David had a problem with lying at several points in his life. You read of it in 1 Samuel 21: 8 when he was fleeing from Saul, and he came to Ahimelech looking for bread and a sword. He lied to him telling him that he was on the king's business. And then there was 1 Samuel 27: 8 when he thought it would be good to elude being captured by Saul by going into reside in the land of the Philistines with Achish. While he was there he went on raids with his men against the Geshurites, Gergizites, and Amalekites. He would leave none alive, but he would take the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, and the clothes and when Achish asked about it; he would tell him that he had made a raid against the southern area of Judah. He lied about where he had made the raids to make Achish think that he didn't care any longer about his native land and people; that he was making himself odious in their sight. Why did he, a man who knew God, fall so low that he felt that he had to do this? It was because he had fallen into the sin unbelief. He felt that he couldn't give others the true explanation because he was afraid that he could not obtain their protection and favor and that God would not protect and help him. "Someday I will surely die at the hand of Saul," he thought. Let us understand as we come to take the Supper that if David needed to pray in this way; "Remove from me the way of lying, and graciously grant me Your law, that it is possible that any of us could fall into such a habit, or other sins for which the Lord would have to deal with us, with His chastening hand. We may have come to believe that we need to lie occasionally to get through difficult situations. This "way of lying" we must pray to have removed from us. If we do not, and we come to this table, we will be eating and drinking judgment to ourselves.

And David's 6th and last request is that the Lord would not put him to shame.

(Verses 30-32)

Let us understand as we come to take this Supper that Jesus had to die for all these sins and shortcomings that we have seen in David. And the Lord Jesus had to lay down His life for the sins in our lives as well. But now that He has done this; and now that God has begun a good work in us, He will continue it until the Day when we see Him face to face; until the day when Jesus returns. If your prayer is, "Let me be found in Christ," then you shall never be put to ultimate shame. Psalm 34: 5 says, "They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed." The beauty and reality of the grace of Jesus Christ is this; not only will He save us when we come to Him, but He will also enlarge our hearts to run in the way of His commandments. God Himself is the One who will give us a greater capacity to love Him and engage ourselves in running this race of obedience. This is what the grace of Christ will give us. This Supper is a token not only of the forgiveness of our sins, which would have been great enough by itself. But it is also a token of that promised enlargement of our hearts. Christ's love for His people is spoken of as that which enlarges our hearts. He is the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. So, in meditating upon Christ, Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us. Let us run the race of life by running in the way of God's commandments. We will learn to love others as He loved us. We will grow in our ability to give of ourselves in service to our King as we remember the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."