

Psalm 119: 9 and 10; "Christ Cleansing the Sinner's Way", Delivered
By Pastor Paul Rendall at the Carrington Place Nursing Home,
on the afternoon of May 5th, 2013.

The great question in life; the question of questions that God is asking each one of us here this afternoon is this: "Are you walking with Me?" The great questions in this life are not, "Are you having fun," or "Are you doing what you want to do?" The questions that God would pose to us here at this time are: "Are your mind and your heart with Me;" "Are you walking with me, closely and faithfully?" Our text in verse 9 says, "How shall a young man cleanse his way?" "By taking heed according to God's Word." The verses seem to be implying that out of all people, that young men have the greatest temptations, the greatest tendencies toward sin, and the greatest pull to sin; more so than anyone else. Young men have the tendency to be prone to self-assertiveness, and to pride. Many young men are also prone to strong passions and to trying to insist upon establishing their own selfish interests rather than those of their parents and concerned friends. They often lead the way in needing to be cleansed of these sins, but they are sometimes very reluctant and resistant to heed the reproofs of God's Word. Here we find the question asked and the answer given to the cleansing of our ways. Since it is not only young men who are not righteous by nature but all men, this message will be good for all. The lesson for us now to learn is to realize that no person on the earth is righteous in themselves. It is very important that we understand that the only way that our heart and our way can be cleansed, is by the grace of Christ at work there in our heart, to help us on to do what is right. This afternoon I want to give you 2 examples of men who needed to be cleansed; one did not have grace, and the other did.

1st- Let's look a young man who did not have the grace to cleanse his way; the young man Absalom.

"How can a young man cleanse his way?" "By taking heed according to Your word." But not all young men take heed to God's word. This does not mean that they are not taught. No, David taught Absalom the true and the right way which is found by faith in God. But Absalom did not avail himself of his father's teaching, and his father's God; the God of the Scriptures. It is a great mercy indeed, when through reading the Bible, or listening to good preaching, a young man comes to understand the defilement of his heart because of sin. When this is revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, it is a great mercy. What a great thing right discernment and wisdom are! For without them, a young man will fall into a myriad of evils in relation to the thoughts of his own heart. But when he has spiritual understanding, through Jesus Christ the Lord, he will be able to "cleanse himself from all defilement of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." This only comes to a young man or to any person by "taking heed to God's Word".

Let's think about Absalom the son of David. Ah, there was not a handsomer nor a more impressive young man in the kingdom in that day. It says in 2 Samuel 14: 25, "Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks." "From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." He was very skillful in his words and his ways, in establishing his own interests and his own goals; but he did not heed the word of God. Let us understand that just because a man is handsome, does not mean that he is wise. And it does not appear that Absalom prayed for wisdom when he was young; the wisdom to heed God's word.

And so, to begin the list of the major things which he was not wise in, he sought his own revenge in the matter of his sister Tamar being raped by another of David's sons Amnon. The story is found in 2 Samuel 13. We haven't time to read it now. But we must grant that it was a terribly unrighteous thing that Amnon did to Tamar. It was a very treacherous and very unkind thing that he did; pretending to be sick, and his asking for her to come serve him in private and then pulling her down to the bed with him, and forcing her to lie with him sexually, and then hating her by kicking her out of his house afterwards. All of this came from his following the sinful counsel of his friend Jonadab who a very crafty man. Young people, beware of friends who are crafty in a sinful way. They will lead you to do sinful things which you did not know that you are capable of doing. In this case Jonadab convinced Amnon to trick Tamar into a situation of moral compromise. And then instead of hating himself for his foul deed, he hated her after he had perpetrated his crime upon her. Such is fallen, sinful nature. And we do not read of David's doing anything about this to confront him.

Well, two full years went by, and Absalom kept thinking about how much he hated Amnon for having done this vile deed to his sister. He did not check himself in his mind and heart and commit his way to the Lord. That would have been cleansing his way. Instead, he let his feelings of anger and resentment build up until his hatred conceived treachery and murder. He goes to David in 2 Samuel 13: 25 and very cunningly asks of his father David if he and David's other sons would not come to a sheep-shearing get together. David does not want to go, but Absalom persists and asks that if he would not go, that he would at least let Amnon go. David decides to allow all of his sons to go, but he himself would not go. When the party takes place, Absalom then commands his servants to watch, and to see when Amnon's heart was merry with wine, and then to "strike Amnon and kill him." "Do not be afraid." "Have I not commanded you?" "Be courageous and valiant." He thinks that what he is doing is the outworking of justice. But his heart is not cleansed of self-serving interests and ambitions. Not only would he revenge the evil deed committed upon his sister, but he would put himself next in position to the crown, with Amnon now gone. He had not cleansed himself by taking heed according to God's Word. No doubt, David had taught Absalom the Word of the Lord. Leviticus 19: 17 and following says, "You shall not hate your brother in your

heart.” “You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and shall not bear sin because of him.” “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Could anything be more clear than this? And yet Absalom did not cleanse his ways. A few sins like this, led to a few more sins, just as grievous.

For Absalom was also a very persuasive talker. He was so good at talking that he undermined his own father's credibility with the people. Absalom was full of selfish ambition and pride. He did not cleanse himself of these things. Turn with me over to 2nd Samuel 15: 1-6. Here it says, “After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.” “Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate.” “So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, ‘What city are you from?’” “And he would say, ‘Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel.’” “Then Absalom would say to him, ‘Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you.’” “Moreover Absalom would say, ‘Oh, that I were made a judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.’” “And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him.” “In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment.” “So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” Now, you can see, can't you, that Absalom did not cleanse his heart of his many sins. He did not take heed to the Word of God. It isn't but four verses later that we find him sending spies throughout all the tribes of Israel saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, ‘Absalom reigns in Hebron.’” This is a very sad story. And it shows us the reason that all of us, and especially young men need to cleanse their way. It is so that we can walk with God. You should remember the end of this young man's selfish pride, selfish ambition, and taking matters into his own hands was to enact what he called “justice”. But I will wait a moment to tell you of how he came to a sad end.

Now 2ndly - Let's look at the example of a man who did cleanse his way - David.

David showed his love for his son Absalom all through this trial of Absalom's sinful deeds, even when Absalom rebelled against him and was trying to kill him and get his crown. At that time, God came to David's rescue and He thwarted the evil counsel of Ahithophel, and David sent out Joab and others of his captains and men to apprehend Absalom. But as the Lord would have it, Absalom got his head caught in the boughs of a terebinth tree and was made an easy prey for Joab when he found out about it. Here we see the difference between the one who cleanses his ways and the one who doesn't. Listen to what it says of David in 2 Samuel 18: 33 – “Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept.” “And as he went, he said thus: “O my son Absalom--my son, my son

Absalom--if only I had died in your place!" You see, David was cleansing his heart. He did not seek revenge, but Absalom's good. He sought the restoration of their relationship which had been broken because of Absalom's sin. He loved his neighbor as himself. He cleansed himself according to God's word. He did this because of his faith in the promised Messiah. David himself, although he is called the "man after God's heart" still had a great need to cleanse his way. It was his sins with Bathsheba and against her husband that led to his falling under the chastening rod of God for a time, and Absalom's rebellion was a part of it. But David passes the test with flying colors, while Absalom failed utterly. What was the difference? It was grace; the grace of Christ. This is why Christ had to die for David, and why He had to die for each of us who would have eternal life. It was so that we will not end up like Absalom in the thoughts of our heart, and the actions that proceed from our heart.

This is why we thank and praise God for giving us such a Savior in whom we are trusting. Christ took heed to God's Word in every particular. He learned obedience by the things that he suffered, and having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. David couldn't die in his son's place, but Christ died in our place when we trust in Him. This we remember with joy this afternoon because it means that we can truly cleanse ourselves and see our ways change. We are then able to say, "With my whole heart I have sought You; let me not wander from Your commandments!" When we take heed to God's Word, we will "hide it in our hearts". This is what enables us to keep from sinning against God, and from wandering away from His commandments. When you have Christ, you will review the commandments of God in your heart one by one, and you will compare your thoughts with them. You will ask yourself, "Am I cleansing my way?" "Am I taking heed to God's word?" "Does my soul walk the path of righteousness with Christ?" Christ died so that this process of self-evaluation would succeed and that you would really be able to cleanse yourself, and keep yourself from sin. As you grow in grace you will learn to pray as David did, "With my whole heart I have sought You." Total sincerity and earnestness of spirit will be heard in your prayers. But you will still add, "Oh, let me not wander from Your commands." Oh, that God may impress this vital truth upon each of our hearts. We are able to take heed to God's Word because Christ died.