

Good Leader, Good Laws, Good Outcome

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0 : 00] We're reading from Psalm 119 this morning. If you open about the middle of your Bible, Psalm 119, we'll begin reading at verse 57.

! Psalm 119, 57. This is God's Word. You are my portion, O Lord. I have promised to obey Your words.

I have sought Your face with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to Your promise. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to Your statutes.

I will hasten and not delay to obey Your commands. Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget Your law. At midnight, I rise to give You thanks for Your righteous laws.

I am a friend to all who fear You, to all who follow Your precepts. The earth is filled with Your love, O Lord. Teach me Your decrees.

[1 : 08] Do good to Your servant according to Your word, O Lord. Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in Your commands.

Before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now I obey Your word. You are good, and what You do is good.

Teach me Your decrees. Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep Your precepts with all my heart. Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in Your law.

It was good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn Your decrees. The law from Your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

You may be seated. Let us hear from God's word. Woodrow Wilson was the 28th president of the United States of America, and he was a racist.

[2 : 18] He happily showed the birth of a nation in the White House. If you haven't caught that fine flick, it's a movie that glorifies the Ku Klux Klan. And Woodrow Wilson must have been ecstatically proud when his own words were quoted in that movie.

He said this, not in the movie, but in other places. He said that the so-called black race was ignorant and inferior.

He said giving black people the right to vote was a menace to society. And when he came to the presidency, for the very first time, he began to systematically segregate the workings of the federal government.

So Wilson personally fired 15 out of the 17 black supervisors that were working in the federal government. The Treasury and the Post Office segregated all of its workers.

So before, they had all worked together, and he segregated them all. Black employees were literally hid behind screens so that the public and their fellow workers couldn't see them.

[3 : 34] They couldn't eat with their fellow employees like they always had. They couldn't share restrooms with them. No black man was allowed to be a supervisor over a white man.

And that meant personally firing or demoting all of them. And they couldn't figure out how to segregate one black clerk in the Treasury Department because of the work he was doing.

Like just the nature of his work meant they couldn't do that. And so what they did was they literally built a cage around him to separate him from the people that he had been working with for years.

Now why am I talking about that? Because it's just one example of this principle, one example of this, that laws, rules, don't just come out of nowhere.

They just don't magically appear on the surface of things. They come out of a leader's heart. They come out of a parent's heart. They come out of a king's heart, a president's heart. Good leader means good laws.

[4 : 44] Bad leader means bad laws. That's clearly true. That's true of first graders in their first grade classroom. That's true of moms and dads in their homes.

That's true all the way up to presidents. Woodrow Wilson's case. To the very, very top. To the sovereign. The Lord of heaven and earth.

Good leader. Good laws. A king pours his life, his heart, his wisdom, his kindness, his good, his goodness, pours it into his commands.

Now, Woodrow Wilson poured his life and his heart, his thoughts, his wisdom into his commands. And so did God.

So did God. And that's why in Psalm 119 in verse 66, and that's the verse I want to look at today. Psalm 119 verse 66, the psalmist says, teach me, teach me knowledge and good judgment for I believe in your commands.

[5 : 54] I believe in your commands. And that is a very unusual statement. It's a very unusual statement. It's not one of those statements that you see all over the place.

When we're reading through Psalm 119, what do you expect to hear? Well, you expect to hear, I keep your commands. I obey your statutes.

I, whatever, I want to do your law. And Psalm 119 is full of language like that. I mean, we just read 16 verses and it had that in there.

And if we were to read all of it, it'd be full of it. But here it is. It's something different. And it's something that sticks out and it stuck out to me. I believe in your commands.

I trusted them. I rely on them. I depend on them. I lean on them. I see your commands.

[6 : 57] And I welcome them. God. As a good thing. That's why he delighted in them. That's why he says, they're the joy of my heart.

That's why he put his hope in them. That's why he obeyed them. No. It's one of the great secrets to growing in obedience. Do you want to grow in obedience?

Do you want to grow in obedience? Do you want to sin less and obey more? Well, here's one way that that actually happens.

Here's one way that this actually works and it actually happens. Because I don't obey God's law because I don't think they're good. I don't think they're a good idea.

I don't think they're good for me. I don't think God has my best interest at heart. I don't trust them. I don't think they're reliable. And so when it gets right down to the moment of will I obey or will I disobey?

[7 : 59] I disobey. Because I'm not going to do something that I think is against my own personal interest. I think it will be better for me to disobey. Now, have you ever found out that it is better for you to disobey?

No. But in that moment, I don't trust God's law. I don't trust his commands that they're for my good and so I disobey. And so this is what we really need to get.

This is why the gospel is so important. It's so important to get into our hearts that our God is good. He's a good king. He's wise and he's kind and he's full of love.

He's a good king. And a good king makes good laws. And good laws create good results. A bad king makes bad laws and bad laws create bad results.

But a good king makes good laws and good laws end up creating good results. And so do you think God is good?

[9 : 06] Well, do you think God is good? Like from the very bottom to the very top, is he good? Again, this is why we need to really believe and appreciate the gospel because in the gospel we see the fullness of God's goodness.

But do you think God is good? Do you think he makes good laws? And if you do, you'll trust those laws and you'll do them and you'll reap the rewards of them and you'll obey.

So if you're a Christian, I take it for granted that you want to obey more and disobey less. If that is true, then we need to get, you need to get to the point where you can say with the psalmist, I believe in your commands.

I trust them. They're good and I lean hard into them. And so, well, we need to talk about what do we need to believe about God's commands? We have to be very careful about that.

What do we need to believe about them? And first, there's something we shouldn't believe about God's commands. So we're going to get the negative out of the way, the thing that we can't believe.

[10 : 16] What we shouldn't believe about God's commands and we shouldn't believe that God, obeying God's commands can secure us salvation. Now, you probably know that and we talked all about that in Sunday school, but we shouldn't believe that obeying them secures God's acceptance,

God's forgiveness.

So when we've sinned, do we think, oh, if I can just do a little good thing, if I turn over the new leaf, if I do the certain thing, then I know that God will forgive me when I come and ask him. Well, we can't think that.

We can't think that and we can't believe God's commandments will save us. We talked again about that in Sunday school at length. But for you who weren't there, we saw that the gospel can be summed up in three little words.

It is finished. And maybe three other little words, not by works. It's finished, not by works. It's finished by Jesus Christ. My salvation is done.

It's accomplished. Everything that needed to be done was done at the cross. So my standing, brother, sister, you're standing before God.

[11:27] Secure, solid ground standing. My standing, my forgiveness, my acceptance, my righteousness, my hope, my salvation, my everything is done.

Not by me, but by Jesus. So Jesus did it, not by works. Not my own works. And that's what Paul said again and again, not by works.

The Lord in love saves us through faith. Through looking away from our works and looking to Jesus. From looking away from our commandment keeping, not by obeying the law, but by running to Jesus.

Now, you have to understand this. If you're going to be saved by your commandment keeping, then what you need to realize is that the law requires perfect, perpetual obedience.

obedience. You need to always, always have, always have done that, always will do that, always am doing that, always perpetually, perfectly obeying everything that is written in the law.

[12:38] Not nine commandments out of ten, but all ten. The law will announce you righteous. The law will declare you righteous if you obey it perfectly.

forever. And no one here has done that. No one here has done that. No one alive has done that except for one person, Jesus Christ, the Savior.

And that's why we have to look to him. He's the only way that we can survive the law's scathing judgment. The law is powerless to save. Why? Because the law comes to sinners and says to them obey and that's precisely what we can't, precisely what we won't do.

And so the psalmist isn't saying, I'm believing your law will save me. Will bring about my forgiveness. So it's not going to be how I feel. It's not going to be what I say.

It's not going to be what I do. It's not going to be the shell of the life I put together. It's not going to be because I'm going to church. It's not because I'm going to be a good dad or a good mom or I go to work or all the rest. No. No.

[13:47] It's not going to be because I obey any commandment. Paul said that if there was a law that could save then Christ died for nothing. There would be no need for God to send a savior if there was a law somewhere out there where we can obey and keep it because, well then, we don't need this salvation.

We can cobble up our own. But God in love saw the impossibility of our situation. The impossibility of your situation and my situation and he saw that we were absolutely stuck.

Hopeless. We're under the law. We're under the demand of this law and we can't meet all of its demands and so he sent his son born under the law.

Born of a woman under law. Born under all these demands to live the life we haven't lived and to die the death that we would never ever want to die. To rescue us.

To actually save us. To redeem us. To buy us out of slavery. To make us God's children. And so, no. Don't. Don't.

[15:00] Don't believe in God's commandments to save you. If you lean on that stick, it will break and it will pierce you. You'll be crucified on that stick yourself.

You try to roll that rock and that rock will roll back on you. You try to stand on that ground and what you're going to find is that ground is sinking sand.

And so, are you leaning on this stick of, I'm going to do this. I'm going to turn over a new leaf. I'm going to be a better person. I'm going to get to it eventually. I'm going to obey these commandments.

I'm going to be a good person. Is that the stick you're leaning on? Well, I'm going to tell you that stick will break and let you down. That rock that you're trying to roll up that hill will roll back on you

and destroy you.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. And so, don't believe in his commandments to save you. And that's not what Psalm 119.66 is saying.

[16:02] But it is saying something, isn't it? It's saying something. And so, what do you need to believe? What do you need to see is, this is good. And I need to believe this.

What's your happy joy? Your happy joy to believe about God's commandments. Well, I have three things.

commandments. Number one is obeying them will do you good. You want to know something that you can and you should believe about God's commands?

That obeying them will do you good. Now, is that mercenary? Is that sort of like, I don't do it for God, I just do it for me?

No, that's how the Pharisees looked at obeying God's commandments. They were always like, we'll do it because I can get something out of it. I can get man's approval out of it and so, that's what they live for. I can look like a good guy.

[17:00] And so, the way they obeyed God's law and saw it as a good was something that had nothing to do with God himself. But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about what the psalmist here is saying. The psalmist really believes that obeying God's law will do me good.

This will be for my good. This is the way to flourishing. Flourishing. prospering. Just look at verse 65.

Do good to your servant according to your word, O Lord. So, what does this psalmist want? He wants God to do him good according to his word. So, is pursuing your own good something evil? No. Is pursuing your own life something evil? No. There is such a there's a proper thing. There's a proper self-love. And a while back I preached a whole sermon on self-hate and how wrong and damaging that is.

Well, here's the other side. Do me good according to your word. Or verse 68. You are good and what you do is good. Teach me your decrees. You're good.

[18:14] What you do is good. And God, I believe that your decrees are good. They're for my good. God's law is one way that he does us good.

Verse 71. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I learned that I might learn your decrees. The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

Now, what is he saying? He's saying something that Christians here have learned. It's better to be afflicted and learn to obey than to never have been afflicted at all.

It's better to be afflicted and through that to learn to obey God's law than to not be afflicted at all because as bad as affliction is, disobedience is worse.

Disobedience leads to something worse than that. Affliction is hard not obeying is worse. Affliction is hard but this greater good comes from when we learn to obey.

[19:21] And so what should you believe about his commandments? That they're for your good. And when you do them you will prosper. Good will come to you.

In keeping them there is a great reward. Do you believe that? God's so good that he's constructed his world and his law that when we do what he says there's a great reward.

That's what we're supposed to do. But God's so good that he ties this great good this great reward to it. Proverbs 14 11 the house of the wicked will be destroyed but the tent of the upright will flourish.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that about your family? About your marriage? The tent of the upright will flourish. I love that word flourish. I love it.

I have a book called Flourish and it's all about how humans can flourish and it's full of good things good ideas but you know what the ultimate book about human flourishing is?

[20:29] Is this book. Is this word. Flourishing is something that we should want for ourselves for our families for our husbands or wives our workplaces our children our friends.

So how do humans flourish? The tent of the upright will flourish. Those who do God's law will flourish. So you know what obeying God's law is like?

It's like a greenhouse. Have you ever been to one of those really really really big greenhouses at like a botanical gardens or at the zoo?

We were just at one at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo. So like right in the middle of Indiana there this thing is this big huge gigantic greenhouse greenhouse.

And it's humid and it's wet and it's full of these rainforest plants and everything is just flourishing. It's growing.

[21 : 32] It's full of life. And so right here in the middle of Indiana there's this jungle this rainforest and it's flourishing. So bamboos in the wild in the rainforest can grow up to 36 inches in a day.

So imagine you plant your seed I don't know how long it takes for it to sprout or whatever but there it is it's three feet tall and you come back the next day and it's taller than you are.

They reach their full height of 80 feet in one growing season. 80 feet I don't know how tall those oak trees are out there but it's probably about 80 feet maybe a little higher I don't know.

Now that's flourishing. growing full of life. So you want to flourish? You want to flourish spiritually? You want to flourish relationally? You want to flourish at your work? God's law will do you that good. Satan would say that obeying them will stunt you it will make you miserable it will ruin your life but you know what he's a liar.

[22 : 46] he's a liar. In keeping them there is a great reward. It's as great as God's heart is.

So you want to be a happy man. Men you want to be happy. You want to flourish. Love your wife. Love her faithfully.

Do not commit adultery. Guard your eyes. Guard your heart. That's the way to flourishing. Children you want to flourish. You want to be happy. You want to grow. Honor your father and your mother. This is the first commandment with a promise that you might live long in the land. This is what we need to get into our heads and into our heart and when temptation comes our way and there's this bait and the bait is saying this will be really good we have to say no you know what my king is good. I know he's good and his commands are good and his commands will do me good and so when I say no to sin I'm saying no to a bunch of other things.

[23 : 54] Did you know that when you say no to sin you're saying no to pain no to misery no to no to disease no to guilt no to shame no to poverty no to emotional spiritual broken relationships no to what hurts me no to what harms me when I say no to sin I am saying yes to everything that is good and helpful in my life to flourishing saying yes is the best way to live so I believe in your commands just read Psalm 119 I know it's extremely long just break it into chunks but what I want you to do is as you read look at his heart the law is not some sort of bad thing he's wildly in love with it he's emotionally engaged and why is he because he's like

I found life secondly what do we need to believe about God's commands why should we say I believe in your commands well because they're the path of wisdom they're the path of wisdom look look over at verses 97 98 99 there he says oh how I love your law I meditate on it all day long I told you that he's emotionally engaged he's not pretending I love your law I meditate on it all day long now why why is he doing that well he has a really good reason for it your commands make me wiser than my enemies for they're ever with me I have more insight than my teachers for I meditate on your statutes I have more understanding than the elders for I obey your precepts the law of God is not just a bunch of arbitrary rules that God just made up it's our father's wisdom for his children dads the best thing that you can give your child is wisdom more than money is wisdom give child wisdom and you've given him everything he needs without wisdom if you give him no wisdom but a lot of money he'll lose the money soon soon enough the fool and his money are quickly parted but you give him wisdom and you have given him everything he needs to live and that's not my words that's

God's words God's law is wisdom itself the best way to live so Proverbs 3 here's this father pleading with his son and listen to what he says my son so daughters you put yourself in here my son do not forget my teaching but keep my commands in your heart for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity Proverbs chapter 4 wisdom is supreme therefore get wisdom now young people I'm talking to you I'm begging you get wisdom you don't know what it is ask your parents but get wisdom wisdom is supreme grades are good sports are good having lots of friends is good whatever else there's a lot of good things there's but wisdom is supreme therefore get wisdom though it costs all you have get understanding esteem her and she will exalt you embrace her and she will honor you so exaltation honor people esteeming you wisdom goes on with me are riches and honor enduring wealth and prosperity my fruit is better than fine gold what I yield surpasses choice silver

I walk in the way of righteousness along the paths of justice so you want to find wisdom you want to find wisdom so you're out you're in potato creek and you're you're looking for wisdom she's somewhere well where can you find her wisdom says I have some favorite paths that I like to walk

on you'll always find me there the path of righteousness the path of justice doing doing what is right you'll find me there you walk on those paths and you'll get wisdom and so you want to find wisdom find where she walks and go to her her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace do you want that young people honor peace pleasant paths prosperity the way of the wicked is hedged with thorns the way of the wicked is hedged with thorns walking against

God's laws are like walking right into a bunch of thorn bushes it's like walking into a pile of thorns and you don't have to take it from me look out there look out there and not out the windows out in the world look out in the world look at cause and effect look at how people are living look at the results of what they're doing and where that ends up open your eyes the way of the wicked is hard will you say that with me the way of the wicked is hard do you believe that God isn't just standing behind us with a stick saying obey or else he's standing in front of us saying this is the way to life this is the way to pleasant paths this is the way of happiness this is wisdom this is the good life here it is walk in these ways

[31 : 06] God God's law are good ways and so the psalmist says I believe in your commands I believe in them so I'm walking in them and that's why you can say oh how I love your law I've tasted the fruit and I've tasted it right now and it is good I'm finding comfort I'm finding peace I'm finding joy right now this is the!

path of! Now third I believe in your commands what can we believe I believe this is the way to joy and confidence joy and confidence you want to walk without fear in your life you know with your head held high not afraid to be seen well God's commands are highways to joy to confidence verse 165 great peace have they who love your law great peace have they who love your law ah it's good everything is peaceful confidence all is well you want that

God's commands I believe in your commands that's the way to confidence so Proverbs 28 1 the wicked man flees though no one pursues him but the righteous are as bold as a lion I think we all know what that is to have a guilty conscience pursuing us no one else knows no one else realizes what we've done but we know and we're running though no one is pursuing us but the righteous are as bold as a lion so so who's that man over there so confident he's not afraid of having his internet history looked over at any time he's not afraid of being asked what have you been doing he's not afraid of having he's confident he doesn't run from the grand jury he doesn't run from the special counsel he says here I am ask away

I'm nothing to hide who is that man it's the righteous man who's been obeying God's laws so brothers and sisters you want boldness you want confidence in your life you want to be able to walk around without feeling like you're being pursued when Adam obeyed he walked around naked in the cool of the garden he walked with God as soon as he disobeyed started sowing up fig leaves and hiding in bushes God's commands are ways to confidence and so you know let the world do what it's going to do I'm going to be okay people can criticize me and that's fine and that's what he says in verse 69 though the arrogant have smeared me with lies there's the arrogant the proud and they don't have anything truthful to say though they smear him with lies and he says

I keep your precepts with all my heart they're going to do what they're going to do aren't they they're going to criticize and they're going to find faults when there is no fault but you know what I don't have to cower in fear because I keep your precepts I'm living before an audience of one and I'm on good ground here I believe in your commands and it's all good and so we need to get more of this perspective we need more of this perspective I believe in your commands this is for my good and when I do it I am blessed God's law when it's our salvation is nothing but death nothing but death Jesus Christ is our savior I'm in him bought by his blood on this solid rock I stand but now that he's my trust now that both of my feet are on

[35 : 53] Jesus Christ and I'm saying not by works but by what he's done Jesus alone now that he's my trust God's law is now this perfect way of life life God's saying I'm good and I love you and here are my commands and if you keep them oh there's a great reward there's a great reward and so what have we seen you want to flourish you want to flourish in your marriages you want to flourish in your families at work individually you want to flourish believe God's commands do you want wisdom again young people get wisdom get understanding well how believe God's commands you want confidence and courage you want to be able to walk through life confidently without shame unafraid ready to face people ready to have dealings with

God ready to stand well believe in God's commands well we started out with Woodrow Wilson and I want to end with Jesus Christ because he's our savior and he's our king and he's good from the

inside out he has my best interest at heart how do I know that because he took all my sin and he took it to the cross he bore the pain and he bore the shame he loved me until he had nothing else to give he has my best interest at heart he is good from the inside out from top to bottom and now he gives us his commands and just like him they're good they're perfect and they're good and you know what we disobey and we run to that king we run to that king and instead of finding judgment and condemnation we come confessing our sins and we find forgiveness we find forgiveness we find mercy and then he says try again dear child believe again everything

I am and everything I tell you to do is for your good so believe me believing God's commands are believing him so believe me let's pray God you are so sweet so wonderful and so good so much grace so much love so much mercy for sinners like us so we thank you and we praise you teach us how to how to live with your law not trusting it for our salvation not trusting it for our standing but keeping both eyes on

Jesus at all times and yet show us that your goodness is so good that now you you give us that law and you say this is the way of blessing so help us to take to take it as that way of blessing and for all of our sins and all of our falls which there will be many oh Holy Spirit pick us up testify whisper speak into our ears again that there is mercy in Jesus keep us standing and looking to the cross and may it be our glory ever and yet help us to trust your heart that we might trust your commands and so do them pray for those who are lost this morning don't let them be confused about the way of salvation show them their sin show them their guilt show them their need and show them Jesus the perfect Savior it's in his name I pray!