

Cleansing and Curing a Wandering Heart

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Preacher: Mark Aikins

[0 : 00] so reading from again the new king james version this is the second stanza of the 119th psalm beginning at verse 9 beth how can a young man cleanse his way by taking heed according to your word with my whole heart i have sought you oh let me not wander from your commands your word have i hidden in my heart that i might not sin against you blessed are you oh lord teach me your statutes with my lips i have declared all the judgments of your mouth i have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies as much as in all riches i will meditate on your precepts and contemplate your ways i will delight myself in your statutes i will not forget your word i've labeled the theme of this stanza cleansing and curing a wandering heart by delighting in god's word cleansing and curing a wandering heart by delighting in god's word king david became not only a great king in israel in the old testament but also the most famous psalm writer who has ever lived we saw him last time as he's credited with writing this psalm psalm psalm psalm 119 the psalm of psalms the longest one in the bible's book of psalms 22 stanzas each with eight verses and each verse beginning with the same hebrew letter going right through the alphabet david wrote this magnificent poem to glorify god the god he so deeply loved by telling all the excellent qualities of God's inspired Word.

Now, without looking, cover your copy of the Bible, without looking, let's name some of those terms David used for the Word of God.

Precepts. Statutes. I'm sorry. Light. Commandments.

Word. Law. Okay, ordinances. Okay, precepts has been mentioned.

Okay. And the list goes on. Judgments. Testimonies. Rules.

[3 : 17] Ways. And commands or commandments are all used in this psalm, referring to the Word of God.

And in the first stanza we talked about, the Aleph stanza, we saw the psalmist's deep longing to be just like the blessed ones who were walking in the ways of God.

He could see the most blessed and the most joyful people around him were those who were seeking to walk in God's ways, according to the law of God.

Not just out of guilt or out of obligation, but with the whole what? With the whole heart. And David's longing came from a heart of gratitude and humility as well as being aware of the sins he's been forgiven of and is still capable of as a human being.

In the middle of that first stanza, he wrote, Oh that my ways were directed to keep your statutes. It was this heart cry, this word oh, that's often left out of modern translations.

[4 : 43] He realized that without God's help, there was no way he could properly keep all of God's rules diligently. And that word means conscientiously, industriously, laboriously, with a concerted effort.

He needed God's help to create that industrious approach to keeping his commands. We also saw that David's heart had a supernatural cause for bringing that about.

Going beyond the fleshly motives of say the Pharisees or the older son in the prodigal parable. That older son is quoted as saying, But he answered his father, Look, all these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders.

And he revealed his heart, didn't he? With how he put that. Slaving for you. He lacked that heart of love toward his father that David has in his heart.

Unlike his father's love for the prodigal son that they were celebrating his return home. So this entire stanza in David's Psalm of Psalms is addressed personally to his God, Yahweh.

[6 : 22] You'll notice as I read through it, I emphasize the you and the your and the name of the Lord is used in this stanza 14 times.

It's a personal expression to his God. David's inmost desires are expressed in this stanza, stanza Beth, by terms of intention and resolution.

Because of my longing, he's saying, here is what I've been doing and what I intend to do. Heed your word. Sought for you.

Hidden your word in my heart. Be taught your precepts. Declared your judgments. Rejoice in your testimonies. Meditate on your precepts.

Delight in your statutes. And never forget your word. These are David's expressions to the God that he loves.

[7 : 30] Elizabeth Browning wrote, How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach when feeling out of sight for the ends of being and ideal grace.

I love thee to the level of every day's most quiet need by sun and candlelight. I love thee freely as men strive for right.

I love thee purely as they turn from praise. I love thee with the passion put to use in my old griefs and with my childhood's faith. I love thee with a love I seemed to lose when I when with my lost saints.

I love thee with the breath smiles tears of all my life and if God choose I shall but love thee better after death.

we've all heard that sonnet quoted at least the first part. Well in David's poem he's only enumerating the many ways that he loves his God Yahweh by confessing the many ways of delighting in every word that proceeds from his holy mouth.

[8 : 49] And David's love here is expressed in many forms both public and private both physical and mental. This stanza is an image from David of loving God with all your heart soul mind and strength.

It's a vivid image of that kind of love. So it's a highly personal stanza in a very highly personal psalm or poem.

So who was David? David was hailed even by God himself as a man after his own heart. Acts 13.22 But this extraordinary man wrote of himself as a young man who must cleanse his way.

In verse 9 when King Saul offered David his daughter's hand in marriage David humbly rejected or objected to this who am I and what is my clan in Israel that I should become the king's son-in-law?

1 Samuel 18.18 Perhaps this stanza was written early in David's career when he was indeed a young man.

[10 : 17] But even as an older man this first verse of stanza 2 can be a watchword for even David's own sons.

He says how can a young man cleanse his way son? By taking heed according to your word to Yahweh's word.

throughout Psalm 119 the writer admits his continual need to be instructed taught directed and reproved by the Lord.

My considered opinion is that David is referring here in verse 9 to himself as a young man who needs to cleanse his way. He longs to be cleansed and for his way to be cleansed as well.

Why? Only because he's afraid of God's wrath and punishment? No. This first verse is primarily a confession of David's love for his Lord and his ways.

[11 : 31] Think of a young man in love. Some of you will have to think back a long way. He wouldn't dream of meeting his lady friend having just come from the job a day of hard labor in the factory or the field with grease and grime all over him.

Such a filthy appearance wouldn't be appropriate an appropriate expression of his love. His desire is to please her to be worthy of her.

He wants to feel worthy and he wants to be deemed worthy of her favor and courting her favor. And David the blessed life he offers or he longs after is one in which regular cleansing is a part.

That's why he starts this stanza talking about cleansing. He wants to grow in maturity to progress in the things of God. Not to remain a young man.

To grow up in his faith and in his devotion. Our little ones delight sometimes in playing in the dirt and they don't care how they come home covered with dirt or with mud all over their faces.

[12 : 53] But God desires holiness in his little ones. He desires that we be holy so that we can display his glory and for our own good.

For holiness in God's eyes brings happiness. David is in loving agreement with God's desire for him to be holy.

And he hopes to be free of moral defilement by taking heed according to your word Yahweh.

Taking heed according. That word according means in agreement with. He agrees with the Lord that he must be cleansed. What about taking heed?

To take heed means to hear doesn't it? But taking heed of the word means going beyond just hearing it. Be doers of the word.

[13 : 57] James tells us in his epistles. Not hearers only. Deceiving yourselves. Taking heed of what the Bible teaches means taking possession of its truth for the purpose of living it out.

So often a father or mother might say to their child, child, you know, I've told you this again and again, but you're not listening. You don't really hear me. You're not heeding me.

Or the child might obey but have the wrong attitude. They're not in agreement with what their parent has said.

They're not obeying according to their word. They're obeying in spite of it being their word. And David wants to obey in a way that says, I'll obey because I love this person and agree what they say is best.

It's an obedience by faith. An obedience that includes a loving faith. Millions of people call the Bible the good book.

[15 : 11] book. But how many of them prove how good it is by practicing what it says? Or obeying like this, I obey because I must.

I obey because I'm threatened with wrath. Or I'll obey because I'll benefit by it. I've been bribed to obey. David wants to obey because he's in agreement.

with the Lord's word. And he wants to put it into practice. How do we put something into practice? Well, years and years ago, I wanted to play the guitar.

Okay? And I had to practice. Those who take up a musical instrument have to take steps to put their learning into practice.

They have to place their fingers just right. Move them in the right ways. They must go over the music again and again until it's learned and becomes automatic.

[16 : 21] This takes time. It takes years. It takes months and years. And it's the same with the word of God. If our hearts really want to imitate the character of Christ that we see in others who are the blessed ones, we must practice the Bible's teaching.

Practice it and know it well enough to apply it to our way, to our step by step, to our path in life.

To practice it, we have to know it well enough. David wants to be clean and he wants to live clean and in agreement with God's word. Let's look at verse 10.

With my whole heart I have sought you. Oh, let me not wander from your commands. David's heart was in the right place, wasn't it?

With his whole heart. He saw himself needing to mature, to be instructed, but he confessed that his whole heart was in this pursuit of pleasing God.

[17 : 42] I've sought you, I've sought you, gone after you, I've hunted for you with my whole heart. You know, there are places in the Bible that are just filled with the glory of God and reveal who he is.

but sometimes we go through passages where glory just doesn't pop out at us. And then we come to that passage where it just amazes us with how vivid God is revealing himself.

We have to pursue, we have to dig. His heart was crying out with that deep longing word, oh, oh, let me not wander from your commandments.

He had a road map for pleasing God. And that road map for every Christian begins with the big ten.

Please God by keeping his commandments. God's moral law, the ten commandments. But I ask myself, how many people calling themselves Christians can even name all ten?

[18 : 57] of the ten commandments. These rules for life and for happiness, for that's what the ten commandments are. Now the thief, who died alongside Jesus on the cross, had led a life of crime and rank, continual disobedience to these commandments.

Yet, he was ushered into paradise, along with his Savior, having turned to Christ in simple belief and trust, just before his death.

Because of God's amazing grace, his slate of offenses was wiped clean, paid for by the blood of his Redeemer. No, our salvation doesn't rest on our flawless obedience to the ten commandments.

But, but, even though he had only an hour or two to please his new master before he died, surely the Holy Spirit had changed his heart, had made him new, and if he had, by some miracle, survived crucifixion, his life would have taken a completely different path, turning toward obedience.

He would surely have agreed with the Apostle Paul, let him who steals, steal no more. Ephesians 4.28 And his regenerated desires would have been redirected away from pleasing himself, even as David prayed, Lord, direct me in your statutes to pleasing God who cleansed and forgiven him.

[20 : 51] Like King David, his heart desire would be not to wander from his commands. So God miraculously used that thief's sin that put him on that cross as a way to get him next to the Savior.

Isn't that amazing? that the Lord saved this man whose only reason for being on that cross was the way he had lived and broken God's law.

And David, a redeemed Israelite, looking forward to the coming of this Messiah, had a deep, deep longing not to wander from these commands.

Where are they found? They're found in Exodus 20 and in other places. And they're definitely to be included in the basic training for every believer who trusts in Christ to save them.

What of those who have no seeming desire to please the Lord or obey him? Well, they can't really claim to know and love him, can they?

[22 : 08] memorizing these blessed rules should be a top priority and a daily source of self-examination for you and me to keep our pathway cleansed as we walk in it with our beloved one, the God we so deeply love.

Verse 11 goes, your word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you. Again, he's expressing this deep desire to please the one he loves.

Are we making any effort to memorize God's word? This is David's own personal defense against sin. So that I do not sin against you, I'm hiding your word.

I have hidden your word in my heart. I've stored it away in my memory where it's always available to get it out and handle it and look at it and go over it again and again.

Remember that this man, David, was keenly aware of the sins he was liable to commit, threatened to overtake him. people in at levels of authority.

[23 : 40] Maybe we can't understand what temptations there are at that level where you have authority over others but there's no visible authority over you.

The sins that you are liable to commit can be greater than the sins committed by the rank and file who are under you.

biblical figures all had their blind areas and their human weaknesses where Satan attacked them and gained temporary victories.

David's fall into adultery and murder was catastrophic in his own life, in his family, in his nation, because for a time he had forsaken his first love.

love. His heart had been drawn aside and wandered from God's commandments. They all needed, all these leaders who fell, needed to learn God's lessons, confess, admit their mistakes, repent, turn away from their sins.

[24 : 58] sins. Well, the first step in avoiding the breaking of God's law, surely, is to know the laws that are in danger of being broken.

People who really care, for example, about driving will be careful to read and commit to memory the rules for the road, the rules for safe driving.

David resolved in his heart that he might not sin against God, the God he so greatly loved. So part of keeping that resolution was hiding God's word in his heart.

And remember the word keep, remember that word keep, hiding God's word is like storing it in a chest with our most precious treasures, treasures.

But not so that we can save it for a rainy day, keep it locked out of sight. That's what David was doing when he fell for Bathsheba. He had it locked away.

[26 : 03] He wasn't taking it out and handling it throughout the day and remembering it. Finding delight in its richness, the richness of these laws and the source.

Who are they coming from? they're not just on a tablet somewhere carved in stone. They're God's loving prescriptions for us to be holy and to be happy.

Know it, treasure it, agree with it, be in accordance with it, and practice it. Pray like this, beloved Father, one, I would have no other gods besides you.

Two, I want to think of you only as you've revealed yourself, not some vain image. Three, I want to honor your name and never take it in vain.

Four, I want always to keep your special day holy and special. Five, I want to honor my parents and everybody who's you've placed an authority over me.

[27 : 14] Six, I want to cherish my own life and protect and enhance others' lives. Seven, I want to cherish and honor my spouse.

Never defile my own or somebody else's marriage. Eight, I want to honor the property of others and protect their ownership.

Nine, I want to speak, accept, and serve the truth. Always. And ten, and I always want to be contented with the way you've provided for me and my family.

In all these things, help me Lord to live for you, love you and delight in you. Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.

Human hearts are wandering hearts by nature. All we like sheep have gone, astray, wrote Isaiah.

[28 : 20] We have turned everyone to his own way. We all have our own personal version of the flesh calling out to us.

It's okay to wander. Wandering sheep go astray. Wandering sheep get in trouble. They get dirty, they get trapped by enemies.

They make messes the shepherd must deal with. But thank the Lord we have a good shepherd who not only lays down his life for the sheep, but keeps watching over them and brings them back to the fold when they wander away and he cleanses them.

He makes them clean again. Lord, here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it from thy courts above. True believers like King David make plans so they don't wander from the Lord, for they know they're in danger of wandering.

The first step in David's plan is in verse 12. Blessed are you, O Lord, Lord, teach me your statutes. That word are is supplied, not in the original.

[29 : 39] It's like he's coming off of verse 11. That I might not sin against you, blessed you, O Lord. Teach me your commandments. Teach me your statutes.

He goes from talking about those who are blessed by the Lord to the blessed Lord himself. the one who is totally blessed and the fountain of all blessing and all goodness.

And he wants him to be his teacher, his own tutor, his professor in the school of blessing. And what David asks to be taught are your statutes.

Statutes are rules that are prescribed. They're appointed behaviors that are to be expected by those in authority. to receive good things in life.

There are certain behaviors, prescribed behaviors. If I want to make money, what do I have to do?

[30 : 47] Work. That's a prescribed behavior for life. You want to earn money, you need to earn it. You need to work to get money.

or having a pleasing appearance to attract a mate. These are prescribed behaviors, prescribed by society.

Likewise, in order to receive God's greatest blessings, he gives us these statutes, he gives us these prescriptions, things prescribed in his word.

David wants to be taught those statutes so his life will be free from sin, cleansed, and open to all the blessings God can give him.

In the Bible, God's loving revelation, he not only gives us orders, he's not just ordering us around, he gives promises, he gives warnings, principles, sharing his heart with us.

[31 : 57] This is his testimony. These are the words from his mouth. Being taught by God means learning and delighting in his words, treasuring and entrust and treasuring and trusting the instruction he gives us in the Bible.

David takes part in this teaching process in four ways mentioned in the remaining part of this stanza. Declaring, rejoicing, meditating, and delighting.

Declaring and rejoicing in the word of God are public matters. They're done with the mouth, audibly. We declare, we rejoice.

Meditating and delighting are on that private side, usually done in private. But notice that every one of these four strategies of David requires diligence, concerted effort and devoted discipline.

It takes time. Our sanctification, like our justification, comes by God's grace. grace. But faithful obedience means that we cooperate with that grace in our sanctification, saying amen to those new desires that God has given us.

[33 : 30] It's the difference between saying, boy, I wish I had more time to spend with my beloved and making more time to spend with him or her.

that's the difference. Are we willing to make time with the Lord and with his commandments, with his word? So first of all, with my lips I have declared all the judgments of your mouth.

Judgments are just statements. For example, listen to this. Listen to my declaration. Here I'm speaking publicly.

Here's what God's love says about same-sex unions and what true marriage means. Declaring that.

That takes effort. That takes commitment. Speaking God's truth out loud in the presence of others is a sure evidence that one is committed to that truth.

[34 : 40] We show that we're so gladly convinced of the truth of God that we're willing, happy, excited to share it with others. This is truth that I'm declaring that comes from the one I love.

And even more, I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies as much as in all riches. Do you tell your friends and your relatives when you receive a large sum of money?

Unexpectedly? We get pretty happy about that and rejoice in that. But the psalmist can hardly contain the joy in learning and understanding the ways mapped out by the testimonies of his God.

testimonies are sworn statements under examination. Here's a testimony of God. I, God, created the universe in six days.

That's God's testimony. It's the only one we have. Nobody else was there. So God's testimony is what we should be rejoicing in.

[35 : 57] The psalmist is rejoicing in these ways mapped out by God's testimony. What God says about something.

Let God be true and every man a liar. Then he goes on, I will meditate on your precepts and contemplate your ways.

What we do and focus on when we're by ourselves reveals how our hearts truly are, where they are. The scribes and the Pharisees did a lot of public declaration and rejoicing to impress others with their piety.

But they were denounced by Jesus as having hearts full of greed and wickedness. The time we devote to personal meditation on the word might seem just like inactivity to other people.

But to the true lover of God and his word, it leads to a deep delight, the delight David felt that he mentions next.

[37 : 11] I will delight myself in your statutes, will not forget your word. that's the hunger of his soul.

To not forget the word, to not set it aside, to not neglect it. To not forget something means that we don't neglect it.

If I'm not making time for memorization, meditation, my delight factor is going to peter out.

okay, we usually delight in that with which we spend the most time or that person with whom we spend the most time.

So committing the truths of the Bible to memory, meditating on the wisdom, beauty, goodness, and sorry, pain, meditating on the goodness and eternal value of those truths, letting those truths confront us and challenge us and heal our hearts of wanting to wander.

[38 : 31] All of these take place in the inner privacy of our minds and hearts. It's when we start to forget God's faithful words that we begin to slip back and backslide into sinful habits and activities that pollute our path, pollute our hearts and lives.

But taking heed according to, in agreement with, the Word of God points us to the Savior's fountain for cleansing. The shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His gospel promises not only eternal life in a perfect heaven and earth to come, but also daily purification from our sin as we learn to walk in His ways.

Taking heed according to Your Word. Hearing and agreeing with the living Word. Jesus, who came to shed His blood for our initial and our daily cleansing.

that's stanza Beth of the Psalm of Psalms. Cleansing and curing a wandering heart by delighting in God's Word, delighting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[39 : 52] Let's pray. Father in heaven, help us to make more time for meditation so that we may delight in Your truth and not forget it, not neglect it.

Remind us day by day to confess our sins and seek the cleansing provided by Your Son's precious blood shed on the cross for us. Thank You for loving us and saving us and cleansing us from all sin.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.