

**Psalm 119: 65-72; "The Lord; Our Good and Faithful Teacher",
A Communion Sermon delivered before the observance of
Communion, by Pastor Paul Rendall, on September 2nd, 2007,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

As we draw near to the Lord's table once again, it is good for us to think about how Faithful a God our God is to us. He is kind and good to each and every one of His people. The Psalmist David, in his prayers to God, declares that God has been very faithful and good to him, in the way that He has dealt with him in his life; to teach him and move him away from his sinful and worldly ways and to lead him into the path of obedience. He now prays for God to lead him in such a way that he would not have to be chastened again. He prays that he would come to have good discernment in spiritual things; things that would enable him to make progress in holiness and to glorify God by his life. How is it with you, my friend, this morning? How is it with you in your soul? In the deepest depths of your heart, how is it that you interact with God? Do you pray in your heart and mind regularly to be able to make progress in holiness? This is glorifying to God. Are you truly thankful for all that the Lord has done for you through the Lord Jesus Christ? This thankfulness the Lord would have each one of His people express to Him. These are the greatest realities to our God. As we come to the Lord's table today, how can we show the Lord that we are thankful for the good and faithful way that He has dealt with us? I believe that David is setting a good example for us in these verses. He is teaching us something of great value. I believe that we can show the Lord that we are thankful people by recounting the ways that He is good, like David did, and tell Him what our own response will be to His goodness and kindness. There are 3 ways that we can do this.

1st- Let us praise Him and thank Him that He has dealt well with us according to His Word. (Verses 65 and 66)

Our God is a God Who is Faithful to all of what He has said in the Bible. All people who are ever saved, having intelligence of what is going on in their salvation know that it is so. It is according to the truth of the Word of God that our salvation begins, according to God's Faithfulness to His own purpose to do good to repentant sinners. David calls himself God's servant here in verse 65. We who believe in Christ are His servants; He is the master. But He is the best of Masters. He is good and kind. God deals kindly with us because of Jesus Christ. And Christ knows how to deal well with us as His servants. 1 Corinthians 1: 9 says, "God is faithful, by whom

you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Our service to God is made good and pleasant by the realization that it is a "fellowship" with the Father and the Son. And this fellowship consists in our very real interaction with the Father and the Son around God's Word. He is showing us His goodness and kindness by dealing well with us. We have really come to know that God exists, and so now we find ourselves praying to Him and seeking Him for every good thing. We used to pursue after vain things, things that would not profit our souls, but now we have been convinced by God's Spirit working with us that the Bible is the best of books and serving God according to truth is very desirable. If you as a Christian have been convinced of this when you first came to Christ, but you are not currently pursuing God Himself in your thoughts and meditations of your heart; if you are not regularly reading His Word and hearing God's voice speak to through it, you are in the very sad and pitiable condition of being backslidden. He has dealt well with you; He is dealing well with you, but you are not repaying his kindnesses. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." God is most certainly and definitely faithful. He has dealt well with me. Some people who become Christians have greatly mistaken the Christian life. They see the holy, devotional interaction with God over all the issues of their heart and life, as something secondary to their earthly interests, and so they are failing to recognize that God through Jesus Christ is standing at the door of their heart and He is knocking seeking entrance. He is faithful to stand and to knock each day, but the question is; will He gain admittance? It is not just that some Christians are lax in their everyday set-aside times of devotion. It is that some Christians are not really understanding that this life of devotion to God and to Christ within our hearts is our life, our real life. They allow themselves to become too busily preoccupied with earthly things to be of much service to God, and yet they are supposedly His servant. They would have their pastor be spiritually minded, but they forget that God would have them to be just as spiritually minded.

But Colossians 3: 1-3 says, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Let me ask you this morning whether you are cultivating this hidden life? God is faithfully dealing with you in order that you can come to this. By His Holy Spirit within you, He is faithfully communicating to you of Christ's grace and

leading you into situations in your life, providentially ordering things in your life, so as to show you God's goodness and kindness. It is God's kindness to wean us away from worldly attitudes of our own greatness and glory, and personal worldly peace and pleasure, in order to bring us to the place where we can say, "I have died, and my life is hidden with Christ in God." There are better and higher pleasures in the Christian life. There is a peace which the world cannot give which Christ can give unto you.

Now, this cannot mean asceticism. This cannot mean that Christians should cloister themselves away from the world and not go out to fulfill their responsibilities to provide and care for their family. It cannot mean that we are to be in personal and private devotions for the whole of the day. What then does it mean? I believe that the meaning is found in verse 66. God deals in goodness and faithfulness with us according to His Word it says in verse 65. prayer and the response of our heart is that God would, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments." It is that we would be taught good judgment; that we would be taught by God's Spirit to be wise and discerning, and by that means we will become young people and adults, who believing in Jesus Christ, have a taste and relish for spiritual things and will apply God's commandments to the decisions that we make. We will pray about how we will use our time, our strength, our money, and our talents, to serve Him. Christ is our Master and so we serve Him. We don't simply serve God and Jesus Christ when we are at church, or when we feel like it. We serve Him at all times, and in all things in accordance with His commandments, believing that His commandments are good for us to observe.

Psalm 34: 8 says, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" "Oh fear the Lord, you his saints!" "There is no want to those who fear Him." "The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." This is something that some Christians even, have a hard time believing. I have many things to do, they think. I cannot give to God one whole day in seven. I will never be able to accomplish all that needs to be done in my busy life. But God has said, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God." "In it you shall do not work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates." "For in six day the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day." "Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." You see, this may be the least of the 10 commandments of God, but if you "break one of

the least of these commandments and teach others to do so," Jesus says in Matthew 5: 19, "then you shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." But the Psalmist David says, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments. Do you believe that God's commandments are for your good? Then keep them, and you will prove that it is so, and God will bless you. The words "good judgment" in the Hebrew of verse 66 have the meaning of "taste" associated with them. "The goodness of taste", says Matthew Poole in his commentary; "an experimental sense and relish of divine things." "A judicious, solid, practical knowledge." "I have believed Your commandments." "I have believed the Divine authority of them, and the truth and certainty of those promises and threatenings which you have annexed to them." All of the commandments of God are precious to the Christian who is walking in the Light. The commandments are not precious and they are not pursued when we are walking in darkness or sin; or when we want the world more than Jesus. Oh, I beg of you to search your heart this morning as you come to the Lord's table and see if this taste, this desire for this kind of walk with Christ is within you. Read Psalm 139 through and you come to the place where David says in verse 23, "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!" "How great is the sum of them!" "If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You." He knows of God's omniscience and His goodness and he extols them. But then he prays for good discernment of his own heart in verses 23 and 24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." This is what we want to do this morning as we come to the Lord's Supper, because we do want to keep His commandments. We have tasted of his goodness and kindness in our salvation. But we want to know it better.

2ndly- Let us praise Him and thank the Lord, today, that He has been good and kind to us even in our afflictions. (Verses 67, 68, and 71)

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word." "You are good and do good; teach me your statutes." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." Sometimes a Christian can become unthankful for all the blessings that he or she has received. This can happen in regard to both the temporal earthly blessings of this life, and also the spiritual blessings which are given to us through our Lord Jesus. We can take all that the Lord is doing for us for granted and become very lazy and thoughtless in our learning to become doers of His Word, or in our giving of thanks in our spirit, in prayer, for blessings that we have

received. In everything we ought to say, as David did, "You are good and do good." We do need to take heed to our spirit and to God's word. "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away." (Hebrews 2: 1) Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. He is faithful to take the shepherd's crook and to guide us in the way that we should go. "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." He will be faithful to our souls to not turn away from us to do us good. In 1st Thessalonians 5; 18, Paul says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." We have an example of this here in David's prayer. He is suffering affliction, but he is at the same time rejoicing in God's goodness to him in his prayers. I like what Thomas Manton says in his commentary. "It is a disingenuous spirit to ask mercy for supplying our wants or delivering us from troubles, and not acknowledge mercy when that supply or deliverance is received." "Prayer is a work of necessity, but praise of mere duty." "Self love will put us upon prayer, but the love of God upon praise and thanksgiving; we pray because we need God, we praise because we love God, and have a sense of his goodness to us." Well, David had this sense even when he was afflicted. He was afflicted by God for a good purpose. It was because he had been straying from God's Word. Since he had suffered this affliction, he now "kept God's word." So he had come to see the affliction as God's goodness to him. I think that often true Christians think that when and if everything goes well with them that then they will joyfully serve God. But God knowing the trickiness of our hearts, knows best what afflictions to lay upon us so that we will actually become what His Word teaches us that we should be. Listen to the words of the hymn by John Newton. "I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith and love and every grace, might more of His salvation know, and seek more earnestly His face." "'Twas He who taught me thus to pray, and he, I trust has answered prayer; but it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair." "I hoped that in some favored hour, at once He'd answer my request; and by His love's constraining power, subdue my sins and give me rest." "Instead of this He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart, and let the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part." "Yea, more, with His own hand He seemed intent to aggravate my woe, crossed all the fair designs I schemed, blasted my gourds and laid me low." "Lord, why is it this?" I trembling cried, 'Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?' "'Tis in this way,' the Lord replied, 'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'" "These inward trials I employ, from self and pride to set thee free, and break thy schemes of earthly joy, that thou mayest seek thy all in Me." The Lord, he is saying, has a far more noble and lofty purpose to

accomplish in our lives than simply our earthly blessing and well-being. And he cannot accomplish that purpose without "crossing our fair designs." And our God is good and faithful to bless our afflictions to best fulfill His holy purposes and designs.

Let me show you a few verses that may help you to understand this truth better. God's bringing affliction to our lives may be the means of our being converted and coming to know Him. You see this in Isaiah 48, if you will turn with me there. In this chapter we find that many in Israel really did not know God, even though they claimed to. In verse 1 it says that they "make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth and righteousness." They had a "know-it-all attitude" toward all that God had done for them to bless their earthly lives. Verse 6 says, "You have heard; see all this." "And will you not declare it?" "I have made you hear new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them." "They are created now and not from the beginning; and before this day you have not heard them, lest you should say, 'Of course I knew them.'" "Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; surely from long ago your ear was not opened." "For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." Now listen to what He says He will do for them to bring them to a true understanding. Verse 9 - "For My name's sake I will defer My anger, and for My praise I will restrain it from you, so that I do not cut you off." "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction." "For My name's sake I will do it; for how should My name be profaned?" "And I will not give My glory to another." So the Lord thought it best to bring them affliction in order that they might come to know Him in Truth. He would take them from a know-it-all attitude toward Himself and even through bringing afflictions He would show them how much He loved them. He would show them great things in terms of their salvation which would lead them to worship Him alone, and not idols along with Him. A good example of this is Manasseh in the Old Testament. What a wicked man he was for so many years. It says in 2 Chronicles 33: 10, "And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen." "Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon." "Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his father, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom." "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God. What mercy this wicked man was shown. How greatly the Lord's

name was magnified through this trophy of grace. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word."

In the life of a Christian, the afflictions that God ordains for them are most definitely designed in all their details, for their good. Turn with me to Job chapter 36. In verse 5 we are told of God's great wisdom in these things that pertain so much to our spiritual growth and well-being. These things were said by Elihu to Job to show him the goodness of God in His afflictions given to the righteous to learn by. "Behold, God is mighty, but despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding." "He does not preserve the life of the wicked, but gives justice to the oppressed." "He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but they are on the throne with kings, for He has seated them forever, and they are exalted." "And if they are bound in fetters, held in the cords of affliction, then He tells them their work and their transgressions--that they have acted defiantly." "He also opens their ear to instruction, and commands that they turn from iniquity." "If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures." "But if they do not obey, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge." In verse 21, he says to Job, "Take heed, do not turn to iniquity, for you have chosen this rather than affliction." Sometimes it is true that we do not see affliction as good for us. We choose to sin against God in thinking hard thoughts of Him. We choose to sin against other people who we believe are responsible for our afflicted condition. But God is a master at teaching us His way and giving us grace to accept it. Verse 22 says, "Behold God is exalted by His power; who teaches like Him?" "Who has assigned Him His way, or who has said, 'You have done wrong'?" "Remember to magnify His work, of which men have sung."

This is what we are doing today, as we come to the Lord's Table. We are remembering the Lord Jesus Christ. We are remembering to magnify His work, and will sing in just a minute of what He has done for us. We rejoice in the fact that is given to us to have One Who, "in all our afflictions, He was afflicted." In Isaiah 53: 7 it says that the Lord Jesus Christ "was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." Verse 4 says, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. He, of all men, was the man who said, "It is good for me to be afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." The Lord Jesus, "even though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." We obey Jesus when we trust in Him not only for our

salvation, but also to come to the place where we see the good that afflictions bring to us. In the hand of the Spirit of God, these afflictions become the very means of turning from sins in our hearts, sins in our words and actions, and bring us to be more like Christ Himself. So let us come down to the front to partake of the Supper with these thoughts in mind, and remember that it is Jesus Christ who sanctifies our of our afflictions and works them for our good and our growth.

3rdly- Let us praise Him and thank Him that when wicked men treat us badly and lie about us that God and His precious Word will truly sustain us.

(Verses 69, 70, and 72)

David knew that proud men had forged a lie against him. But even so, he was resolved to keep God's precepts with all of his heart. They forged a lie; they hammered it out on the anvil of their selfish hatred for him. Lies are something which can greatly damage the testimony of God's people. Or; if we show by our good behavior that it is not so, God can turn it to our advantage. It says of those that lied against David, "Their heart was as fat as grease." It literally reads, "They have smeared me with a lie." Certainly it is something which we would dread. But it happened to our Lord Jesus. The Pharisees and the leaders of the Jews forged a lie against Him. In Mark 14: 55 it says, "Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none." "for many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree." "And the High Priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus , saying "Do You answer nothing?" "What is it these men testify against You?" "But He kept silent and answered nothing." "Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" "Jesus said, 'I am." "and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." This was what convinced them that they should put Him to death. He had told them the truth about Himself. They chose to believe a lie. We should praise and thank our Lord Jesus for suffering for our sakes in this way. Because He endured these things, when wicked men treat us badly; when we are lied about and falsely represented, still God and His precious Word will truly sustain us. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. But we as Christians can say with all confidence as we approach this table, that "the law of God's mouth is better to us than thousands of coins of gold and silver. Christ was betrayed so that we can know the reality of this in our lives. We do not need much money to find happiness, satisfaction and pleasure in this life. We have Christ, and we have God's word which better than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

He is more precious than gold. Let us thank our God and our Christ for giving us the true riches, even the riches of His grace and truth.