

**Psalm 119: 97-104; "Oh How I Love Your Law", A Communion
Sermon Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 6th, 2008,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

In coming to the Communion Table this morning I want to stimulate your thoughts in our remembrance of our Savior by showing you how it was that our Lord Jesus fulfilled these verses in the primary sense on our behalf. And then in presenting that truth, I want to urge each believer here on, to a sincere obedience of their Savior and Master and Lord so that they will become more like Him in their everyday life. It was by means of the Lord Jesus obeying the Law of God and fulfilling the Law of God in relation to each and every command, that you and I who believe, are justified in the sight of a holy and righteous God. We are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This righteousness is imputed to us in our Justification. It is not that the Law no longer has any relevance in the life of the Christian. The Law was indeed fulfilled and set aside as a Covenant of works by our Lord Jesus. No man can be justified by the works of the Law. But it is rather that the Law's righteous demands and requirements are still there for all men to do and to keep. They are kept out of love to God for what God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ. They are not kept to merit any favor with God, for only the Lord Jesus could and did do that. They are kept, when they are kept, because we are in favor with God and we want to learn to please Him. Being "in Christ" means that we stand in perfect favor with God, both now and forever, because of what Jesus Christ did in His life and His death. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The Christian is not under law; he is under grace. Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant. The Christian attempts to do and keep the commandments of the Law and all of the commands of the New Testament which flow out of that Law, by the grace of Christ. The believer is "in Christ." And as such he keeps the commandments of God and Christ, and all of the Word that was written down in the Bible. This is the "law" that the Christian loves in the first verse of our text.

There are many people who call themselves Christians in our day who do not understand this truth that I just explained to you. They are what many in the past have called, "Antinomians". They are "against Law". Often they speak of not being under law, but under grace. They see the Law in terms of the Old Testament and Grace in terms of the New, as though there were no grace given to men from Moses to Christ. They cannot refute the idea of grace coming to Abraham to justify him, but they know that he was justified before the giving of the Law. And so they see him as an Old Testament saint. But Moses and everyone forward to the coming of Christ is somehow saved and justified in a different way, they think. It was because they attempted to be justified by works

that they failed so miserably. No doubt, in the case of many Israelites in the Old Testament, this is true. But it is no less true in the New Testament than it was in the Old. It is not a good thing for a true Christian to be against Law. A Christian can most surely preach against justification by Law, and even sanctification by Law, because this is what the Bible clearly teaches. Christ has become our Wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. But surely he should not preach against the Law itself. The Law, it says in Romans 7: 12, is "holy and just and good." And the Apostle Paul in Romans 3: 31 says, "Do we then make void the law through faith?" "Certainly not!" "On the contrary, we establish the law." "The law is good, it says in 1 Timothy 1: 8, "if one uses it lawfully". The Law is meant to point out sin in our lives. And the Law gives us the perfect standard of God's expectations and demands in righteousness. The first and greatest commandment that we should love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our strength came directly from the Law of God in Deuteronomy 6: 5. Jesus Christ fulfilled this commandment perfectly and yet He did not tell his disciples that they did not need to keep it. The Law's demands are righteous, but The Law, however, cannot give life. Only Jesus Christ can give spiritual life and eternal life. And that is what we will remember this morning as we come to the Lord's table. As we come to the table each one of us ought to be able to exclaim, "Oh how I love Your law, O Lord!" All of your Word is a Word of life to me today because of Jesus Christ my Lord. Perhaps it was David who wrote the words of this Psalm. But it was the Lord Jesus who personified them perfectly. David loved God's law because of the grace of Christ promised for him and purchased for him. He accomplished this, on our behalf, by 3 disciplines of obedience in His life in relation to God's holy law. These disciplines of obedience we also should cultivate in order to be more pleasing to God in our walk with Christ. The three disciplines of Christ are - 1st - His Meditation. 2nd - His Restraint. And 3rd- His Taste. Let's look into them a little before we partake the Supper.

1st- Let's look at Christ's Meditation -

Verses 97-99 say, "Oh how I love Your law!" "It is my meditation all the day." "You through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever mine." "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts." It is very evident from a study of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is the perfect fulfillment of these verses. Who is it who ever meditated upon God's Word more than He did? He began His meditation upon it in His youth and He continued successfully to hold it in His heart, to ponder it and to keep it, for the rest of His life when He was here upon the earth. You can see this if you will turn with me to Luke Chapter 2, verse 41 and following. "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover." "And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according the custom of the feast." "When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in

Jerusalem." "And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances." "So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him." "Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." "And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." He understood more than the ancients. Now here we see a very great evidence of the love of the Lord Jesus for the law of God. He was only 12 years old, but He loved the law of God so much that His meditation upon it led him to actually temporarily "forget about" His dear and beloved parents in His pursuit of Scripture knowledge and the insights which the teachers of the law, there in the temple, could give Him upon it. He was so absorbed in these holy pursuits that he was there in the temple for 3 days, it says here. While he was there he was listening and asking questions, it says.

This is the kind of love that we as parents should long to see develop in our children, and yet it is so strange a thing that it seems to be a violation of duty toward parental authority when it actually does take place. Look at verse 48 and you will see the reaction of Mary, His mother. "So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son why have You done this to us?' "Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." Now we know from what is said in many other places of the Scriptures that our Lord Jesus never committed a sin, nor was there any unrighteousness in His speech, nor was there any violation of the law ever ascribed to Him. And yet here we find His mother reproaching Him for what He had done. "Honor your father and mother," it says in God's holy law. She was no doubt very concerned and anxious about him, not knowing what had happened to Him, but when she found out that it had been his own will to linger behind and spend his time in this way instead of thinking about how he could have caught up with them and explained things to them, his parents in the earthly sense, what he was doing and why he was doing it; Mary plainly thought that he was wrong. But he gently reproves her in her concerns and says, "Why did you seek Me?" "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" The Lord Jesus had to be about His heavenly Father's business at the age of 12. And there was no sin in this. Indeed, it was positive righteousness in Him to pursue the knowledge and business of His Father and the Scriptures in this holy way, even if it meant that His dear mother did not understand.

This is something for us as parents and children to think about. If Jesus loved the law of God this much, that he would even pursue His Father's business more than even love to His earthly mother, what should this say to us about what our love to God and the Scriptures should be like? It does not mean that children should neglect submission to their parents in favor of this love, because it says in verse 51, "Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and

was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart." Jesus was not being unsubmitive to His mother; He was simply showing her in His perfect and holy way, that there is a greater obedience and a greater submission and love that belongs to God from children, than even the love that they have for their parents. Mary didn't understand the saying but she thought about it. The reason why Mary did not take offense at His answer, but rather "kept all these things in her heart", was that she knew after thinking about it for awhile, that her son was wise in acting in the way that He did. She pondered this matter. And this is the very thing that we as parents ought to do in relation to our children, those dear and precious children of ours who we desire come to know God and to walk in His ways. Do they love the Scriptures? Do they love the law of God so much that they are caught up reading it to the exclusion of all other books and concerns in their young life? This is a work of grace in them if it is so. It should not be squelched, but rather cultivated in them if we ever see it. It should not be squelched, but often prayed for. And if our children are to come to this, it must be something that they have seen in us their parents.

Let me ask you parents, if your young children see you reading the Scriptures, and they are coming to know that you are reading the Scriptures because you love them. And they know that you love them more than any other book because they have led you to salvation in Christ. They know that you love them because they see that this law of God's has made you wiser than your enemies and has given you more understanding than all your teachers. They understand that this wisdom has not come because you are such a great intellect, but it is rather because the wisdom of the Scriptures is something which was taught to you by the power of the Holy Spirit who is now with you and in you. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." His mother and Joseph, his earthly father, did not understand the statement about His being about His Father's business. But everyone who has been taught by grace and has come to Jesus for salvation and wisdom in how to live, has come to understand.

Now how can we apply this truth further yet? Are you a Christian who loves God's law the Bible? If you love it, if it is really going to become your meditation all the day, then you may really have to sometimes "forget", for just a few minutes every day, your earthly responsibilities toward those whom you love, and others, in order that you might be caught up in the Father's business. Children, when you see this in your parents; or parents when you see this in your children, you ought not to be anxious about it. You need to ponder it. You need to rejoice in it, and you need to store it up in your hearts. You need to make provision for it in relation to others around you. How often this love of God's law was the strength of the Lord Jesus' heart when He faced His enemies. He was wiser than all of them because of it. It was because He loved God's law that He was able to show love and mercy to men in the face of His enemies, and

not be paralyzed with fear. He did what was good and right even when others were angry with him for it; even when they sought to put Him to death because of it. In Matthew 12: 1-8 we find the Lord Jesus permitting His disciples to pick the heads of grain and rub them in their hands. But the Pharisees thought that this was unlawful on the Sabbath. It was their tradition imposed upon the Word of God. But Jesus reproved them by using the Scriptures which He had often meditated upon. "Have you not read," He says to them, "what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?" "Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priest in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless" "Yet I say that in this place there is One greater than the temple." "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." It was Christ's love of God's law that led him to show mercy, even in the face of His enemies. He knew that mercy and love were the more weighty matters of God's law that He should consider. And loving God's law will do the same for any of us who will abide in it. Ask yourself if this year, the year 2008, is the year when you will read the Bible through in accordance with a daily reading schedule? The only way that you can do this is if you "forget" your responsibilities to people around you for a few minutes each day and come apart to be with God. If you say that you love God, that you love His law, this is what you will do. You will make time for His Word. Remember this as you come to the Lord's table. There is One here in our midst which is greater than the temple. A relationship with Him is greater than going to church.

2ndly- Let's look at Christ's holy discipline of Restraint. (Verses 101 and 102)

"I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word." "I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me." The restraint that is being spoken of here is restraint in relation to "every evil way." The Psalmist David is saying that he could never had done this unless God Himself had taught Him how this was to be done. He "restrained his feet", he says, "from every evil way." Our feet are those members of our body that we use to get where are going. But it says that he restrained them from evil ways. Let us ask ourselves whether our Christianity is a real Christianity in which we consciously restrain ourselves from participation in evil, in relation to the things that we say and do. As one who believes in Jesus, your meditation upon the Word of God leads you, it consciously leads you more and more to depart from the ways of evil and sin. You want to do this to please God. You restrain yourself so that you will keep His Word. "He who has my commandments and keeps them," Jesus says, "it is he who loves Me." "And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." We have

already seen how we come to "have" the commandments of God and Christ. It is when we meditate upon His law, His Word, all the day. But in order to make progress in doing and keeping them involves great restraint. We do not go into evil ways. If we are practicing or allowing evil in our hearts, good cannot come from our heart into our actions. If we let ourselves say and do things and participate in things that have even some evil in them, then we compromise our obedience to God and our witness before men. If we say to ourselves and others, "I have only a few bad and sinful habits that I allow myself the pleasure of indulging in," we have not understood what God has called us to. He has called us to be holy, even as He is holy. This means that we will learn to separate ourselves from sin. We will learn to separate the precious from the vile in our thoughts and our actions. In order to become the holy disciple of our Lord Jesus, you must see the importance of self-restraint and self-denial. It is not the Spirit of Christ that leads men to self-indulgence. It is not His work to allow sensuality, pride, foolishness, envy, or greed, and all the practices of men that flow from these sins of the flesh. It is His blessed work to lead us to restraint. If you do not restrain your feet from every evil way, it is not God's fault if you are overcome and your last state in sin becomes worse than your first. A person who says that they are a Christian but who will not repent of sins that they find in their heart cannot be a true Christian at all. God's goodness and kindness are shown to you in order to lead you to repentance; not to tolerate or go into any evil way. As a Christian your desire and your goal, every day, is to keep God's Word; not to see how close you can come to resembling a worldling in your behavior, and still be a Christian. If you are addicted to various vices such as smoking and drinking and gambling and watching movies that have sensual and sexually compromising themes running through them, you need to know that you are not only in danger of falling into sin, you are in sin. You need to restrain your feet from participation in every evil way. You need to cut off your looking and your going to these things for pleasure and satisfaction in life, and come to Christ. When you come to Him you will find your greatest joy in spiritual things. Once you discover that anger, and envy, and the boastful pride of what you have done or can do to get what you want in this life, are not from God, but from the World, then you must learn to restrain yourself from these sins of the flesh. They are not glorifying God and they are not loving to other people. If you persevere in them, you will not prove yourself to be Christ's disciple at all. The fruit of the Spirit is not to be confused with the deeds of the flesh. A true disciple of Christ will pray for the ability to restrain his feet from every evil way.

How is this to happen in our lives? It can only happen, first of all, when we are taught by God. You must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. You must be born of water and of the Spirit. To be born of water is to be made clean of your sins through the work of Christ's Spirit washing you in relation to the blessed truth of the Word of God. You must believe in the gospel,

and the Spirit must come to open your eyes in relation to truth. You have come here today in order to place yourself in the path of the Spirit's working. Cry out to Him for a New Heart and a New Mind if you do not have them. To be born of the Spirit is to be taught the truth that is found in the Word of God, having it come to you with power to change. If you are a true Christian you have the power within you now to change and turn away from sin and turn toward the practice of righteousness. God the Spirit is continually with you to encourage you in that direction. You do not want to depart from God's judgments in relation to you. You know that you will not be condemned for your failures because you are trusting in Christ, but you want to make progress in holiness and righteousness.

This is why we are coming, once again, to the table of our Lord to have Supper with Him. We are coming to His table because we want to remind ourselves, anew and afresh, that it was our Lord Jesus alone who has restrained His feet from every evil way. It was the Lord Jesus alone who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He was tempted in every way as we are, and yet He was without sin. That is why we believed in Him in the first place, and that is why we need Him every hour of our life, even now. This is why we shall always need Him in the future, and why we shall praise Him to all eternity and through all eternity. God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5: 21) Let us now come down front and partake of the Supper remembering these truths.

3rdly- I would have us to look at Christ's holy discipline of Taste.

(Verses 103 and 104)

In verse 103 David confesses, "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" This taste of God's Word as being sweet to David; where did it come from? The Word was sweet to him because of everything in it related to the grace of his promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. David had tasted and seen that the Lord was good, as he says in Psalm 34: 8 - "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." And when he tasted of the Lord's goodness and kindness to him, it was sweet, very sweet. The sweetness of the Word of God all focuses upon the reality of Christ's person and grace. This is the "honey from the Rock" that God would satisfy us with. Christ is the rock of our salvation. How can honey come from something as hard as a rock? Christ was and is hard as a rock toward His enemies. He restrained Himself from every evil way that He might keep God's law. But towards those who are seeking mercy and grace, He is has the honey of promised forgiveness and blessing to give you. It is that which brighten the eyes of your soul today. You taste honey in the promises of God's

Word, but it is because Christ tasted of death for every man who comes to Him by faith.

You remember the story of Sampson in the Old Testament book of Judges. In Chapter 14 Sampson was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines, the enemies of Israel. He had asked his parents to get for him a daughter of the Philistines to be his wife. It was not in Sampson to "restrain himself from every evil way." He was not wise in regard to the choice that he made for a wife. But in verse 4 it says that, "it was of the Lord." God Himself had to teach Sampson the right way. And he would even use Sampson's moral weakness to accomplish His purpose. Sampson is the picture of all sinners. Everything of any strength that they have is from God. What is it that you have, that you have not received? And if you have received it, why is it that you boast as though you did not receive it? Well in verse 5 it says that Sampson went down to Timnah to collect his wife and "to his surprise , a young lion came roaring against him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand." "But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done." "Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well." "After some time when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion." "And behold a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the Lion." "He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating." Later on, he poses a riddle to some of the young men of Timnah to solve. It was this - "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." I would say that it is a good picture of Christ for us to remember as we come to partake of the Supper today.

The lion is a picture of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Sampson, setting himself to go down the path of the sin met this lion, and he killed him. But later on, when he went back down this path again, he came across the carcass of this lion, and he saw something very amazing in it. It was a swarm of bees and honey. It was in the carcass of this lion that he found these things. In Psalm 118, verse 10 it says, "All nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them, They surrounded me, yes they surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." "They surrounded me like bees; they were quenched like a fire of thorns; for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." This is what Christ has done with our sins by His death. He has defeated all of our enemies and taken our sins away in His death. And now, like Sampson, we find honey in the dead body of Christ. We find grace that will brighten the eyes of our heart. We must take some of it here today and go along eating of it. Out of the eater, the One who will come as a lion against all sin and sinners on the last day as a mighty Judge, came something to eat. Out of his death came this sweetness. Out of the strong came something very sweet to our taste - grace. Grace that is greater than all our sin. Let us remember this and cry out to Him today that we would be able to learn the same disciplines of

obedience that He exhibited perfectly, in a greater measure than we have thus far.