

Psalm 119: 137-144; "Small and Despised, Yet I do not Forget", A Communion Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 1st, 2008, before the Observance of the Communion in the Morning Worship Service.

It is the will of God for every Christian to remember what Jesus Christ has done for them on a regular on-going basis as they live the Christian life. This is why we observe the Lord's Supper once a month on the first Sunday of the month. When we take the element of the bread, the representation of our Lord's body, into our mouths, we do so after we have heard the words of our Lord Jesus spoken to us once again in our hearing. "Take eat, this is my body which broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." And in the same manner after taking the bread, we take also the cup after hearing the words, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." "This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." When we do this we are remembering the things that Jesus suffered for our sakes on the cross. In the act of remembering there is the intention and the hope that by His grace we will not forget what Christ has suffered for us when we go back out into the world after the services of the day. We may be small, we may be despised, but it is our prayer that we will not forget God's precepts. This can only be done by the grace of our Savior. Our intention and our hope is that we will not forget what it cost the Lord Jesus to see our sins forgiven and to bring us into right relationship with the Father. This will then motivate us on to a better and greater obedience to our God.

The Christian, then, in order not to forget God's precepts, must come to highly value them as the commandments which Jesus Christ our Lord remembered to keep perfectly on our behalf. He did this so that we would be justified and seen by God as clothed in His righteousness. Jesus Christ did not forget them, and so in becoming more conformed to His image; by faith in Him, neither should we. The question that we are asking this morning is, "What is it that our Lord did not forget which we ought to remember here this day as we come once again to observe the Lord's Supper?" "What is it that He did not forget which if we do not forget, will lead us on to a better obedience to his precepts and commandments?" As we look at these verses we see that there were 4 components of our Lord Jesus Christ's obedience which made that obedience perfect in the sight of our Holy God. These 4 components secured our salvation and they merit our imitating them in relation to our own growing obedience. They are Zeal, Love, Humility, and Delight. I will now, with the time that we have, attempt to open these up in such a way that when we come to the table that each of us will pray that they will also be seen more in us in the days to come in relation to our own obedience.

1st of all - The Component of Zeal - The Lord Jesus was zealous for the honor of God in terms of God's standard of righteousness. (Verses 137-139)

In order to serve and worship the Lord God in a way that is pleasing to Him, we must come to understand what He is, in His essential Being. He is righteous, and everything that He does is right. There is nothing which God does that is wrong; there is nothing that He commands that we should object to. He is righteous in the exercise of His sovereignty. He is always right in the way that He providentially orders all things concerning us in this life. He is not only a God who is intrinsically just; but we must understand that everything that He has said and had written down for us is righteous as well. "Your testimonies, which you have commanded, are righteous and very faithful." This is a somewhat awkward rendering here in verse 138 of the NKJV. Matthew Poole says in his commentary that it should be rendered, "Thou hast commanded righteousness, even Thy testimonies." In other words, seeing that He is inherently righteous Himself, His expectation is that we as men would be just and true in all of our actions as well. Verse 139 is the outworking, or the result, of a sober reflection upon the meaning of this in one's life. This verse is saying that the Psalmist had the component related to doing righteousness which we should have, but we often find lacking in ourselves - zeal. "My zeal has consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words." Zeal, when it is righteous zeal, is that great and passionate desire to do what is right in order to see God honored and His name glorified. Unholy zeal leads to the persecution of others; being passionate to kill those who the Lord does not want to see killed. Holy zeal, under the example of our Lord Jesus, leads to our suffering for God's cause and for the people that we would see won to it.

It is the zeal of the Lord Jesus Christ that we come to remember this morning, and we hope that His precious grace will create the same kind of zeal in our hearts. What do you do when people around you, even Christians around you, forget God's Words? Are you zealous and jealous for the honor and glory of God? Holy zeal does desire the death of something and that something is sin. Are you zealous against the immorality of our day? Turn with me to Numbers 25 for a moment. Here we find that Israel, in their wanderings are camped in the Acacia Grove on the plains of Moab. Since Balaam could not be convinced to curse the people of Israel for Balak he still thought that he could help them with shrewd and sinful counsel. He put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, as it says in Revelation 2: 14, to commit immorality. "Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit immorality with the women of Moab." "They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods." "So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel." "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel." "So Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.'" "And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

"Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body." "So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel." "And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand." "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.'" "Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.'"

Here we see a godly zeal under the law. It is the kind of zeal that each of us ought to have in regard to putting sexual sin to death. God's holy law, His precepts and His commandments are righteous and they are holy, and they are good. Sexual immorality is a great sin in the sight of God; especially among those called to be His saints. What the law always requires is the death of the sinner; especially the willful sinner who acts in a provoking way as this man did who Phinehas put to death. Phinehas was not acting as a private person when he killed this man. He acted in His official capacity as a priest of God, and God approved of his actions. God would not approve of our actions if we acted in a similar fashion. God Himself killed 24 thousand people by bringing a plague against them for their immorality, it says here. But what I want you to notice is that Phinehas, under the law, was zealous and "made an atonement for the children of Israel." In this, he was a type of our Savior. Phinehas was "zealous with God's zeal" against this immorality being committed in the midst of Israel. He knew that this sin deserved death and he in his zeal he went about to administer the sentence. God approved of this zeal. Phinehas made atonement by putting to death the blatant sinners in their midst. He turned the wrath of God away from continuing to destroy all those who approved of the offense of these two. God's justice in His righteous zeal to deal with these sins of the people, was satisfied. Our Lord Jesus Christ also made atonement for all of God's Elect people, Jew and Gentile, in a much greater and more abiding sense by making peace between God and man through the blood of His cross. It was His zeal, however, to have the Father point His javelin of righteous judgment at Himself rather than at us who so much deserve it. If Phinehas' actions were righteous and his zeal was the zeal of God against sin; how much more is that zeal of the Lord Jesus.

Turn with me to Psalm 69. Here is recorded prophetically, the prayers of the Lord Jesus as He hung upon the cross. David is speaking in verse 5 about his sins and foolishness, but in the verses that follow we find the fulfillment in our Lord Jesus' sufferings. Verse 7 says, "Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face." "I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and

the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." This is referring to the Lord Jesus because it is quoted in John 2: 17 in reference to the Lord Jesus' cleansing of the temple, driving out the moneychangers and turning over their tables. It is also quoted in Romans 15: 3 about Christ not pleasing himself. In verse 139 of our passage that we are studying it says, "My zeal has consumed me," and in the margin of my Bible it says, "My zeal has "put an end" to me. This is what the zeal of the Lord Jesus led to; it led to His own death. It led to his suffering for all who would believe in Him. He became the substitute sacrifice and was punished there at the cross for my sins. This is what we remember; that Jesus Christ did not forget the words of God. He knew that God was perfectly righteous and must punish sin and the sinner who commits it. His justice must be satisfied. But He was willing to have it fall on Himself. Are you zealous to put sin to death in yourself, in your own heart, so that God might be honored and glorified in your life? It is because Jesus Christ died that you who believe in Him can be like Phinehas in regard to the sexual sins of your own heart. It is a covenant of peace which he has purchased. God is satisfied. Repent of all sexual sin and go and sin no more. * - There is a footnote to this point on the last page of this sermon.

The 2nd Component of the perfect obedience which secured our salvation and which merits our imitation is Love; the Love of God's Word. (Verse 140)

The Lord Jesus loved the Lord His God with all of His heart knowing that His word was very pure. The way that He loved God was by loving His Word. The way that He was sustained and upheld in His ministry upon this earth was by believing this truth. "Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it." Let us ask ourselves this morning if this is the way that we regard God's precious Word. Do we regard it as very pure? Do we love it because it is pure? Are we upheld, encouraged, and strengthened to go on to do God's will because we regard God's words as Christ did? Turn with me to Psalm 12. Here in this Psalm a contrast is being drawn between the words of wicked men, and the words of the Lord. "Help Lord, for the godly ceases!" "For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men." "They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak." "May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things, who have said, 'With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?'" "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise says the Lord; I will set him in the safety for which he yearns." "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." "You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever." "The wicked prowl about on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men." Let us remember this morning that every generation of men is the same in terms of the wickedness of their tongues. "With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" The times are evil in every generation. Sinful men think to prevail with their lips against God Himself and all those who love His name. But it was never greater

than in the days of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was great oppression of spirit among the poor and the needy in His day. There is great oppression of spirit among people today as well because of false religion's suppression of the truth of God's word and their oppression of those who believe and preach the truth. Each and every generation needs to know that the Lord Jesus came to deliver His people from such oppression. In Isaiah 53: 7 it says of our Lord Jesus, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth." The Lord Jesus was oppressed by the words and the conduct of wicked religious men towards Himself. These oppressions are a part of what He suffered on our behalf so that we could be delivered from oppression of our spirit in relation to our own sin and the sins of others against us. The way that the Lord Jesus endured these sufferings Himself was because He loved the Word of God and saw it as very pure. Here in Psalm 12 it relates how sinners are poor and needy creatures who need the deliverance that will only come by trusting in the proven worth of the Word of God. The Lord Jesus did this. The words of the Lord were so pure as He stored them up in His holy mind and heart and meditated upon them continually. His blessed experience was that He proved them true in every respect in the furnace of His afflictions and His sufferings on our behalf. He now gives us of His Spirit to work in our hearts so that we will be able to prove them true as well. Christ does set his people free from all oppressions of spirit. The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth. They lead us to righteousness. They lead us to true freedom to rejoice always in the Lord and to lovingly keep His word.

This perfect love of Christ for God's holy word is also a proven love if you will turn over with me to Psalm 18: 28. David is boasting with a holy boasting in the Lord. He says, "For You will light my lamp; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." "For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall." "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven;(it is refined it says in the margin) He is a shield to all who trust in Him." The Lord is the one who gave David this blessed experience of wisdom and strength to accomplish all that he had been called to do in his battles. And God is the one who does the same for us through our Lord Jesus Christ who is the greater David. Hebrews 5: 8 says, "...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...." Jesus had a great spiritual battle to fight on our behalf. In His love for us, He loved the Scriptures pre-eminently. Whether it was His being tempted by Satan in the Wilderness or whether He was answering the hypocritical Pharisees who hated Him for telling them the truth about themselves in regard to their false understanding of God's pure Word, the Lord Jesus knew and proved the words of God to be pure, and He knew of the sufficiency of the Scriptures to uphold Him in His experiences of facing both. The Word of God was pure food to him. This is how He faced the temptations of Satan in the Wilderness. He said, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the

mouth of God." "I have food to eat of which you do not know," he says to His disciples in John 4: 32. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." The teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and Satan himself tried to pervert Scriptures and pollute it for all of us. But Jesus sets things right. He says in John 8: 43, "Why do you not understand My speech?" "Because you are not able to listen to My word." "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him." "When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me." "Which you convicts Me of sin?" "And if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?" "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." "Then the Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?' "Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor me.' A little later in verse 54 He says to them, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing." "It is My Father who honors Me of whom you say that He is your God." "Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him." "And if I say 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His Word." How could Jesus keep God's Word in every particular and in every situation? Because He loved it as God's servant. If we do not come to see God's word in this precious way of its purity, how will we be able to honor God in all of our conflicts with what is false? But here is where we see the love of Jesus for the pure Word of God; He will not compromise the truth in order to please the false religionists of His day. And He will give us the strength and wisdom to do the same. The Lord Jesus loved God's word and saw it as very pure. He knew the truth of our text and the truth of Proverbs 30, verse 5. "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." "Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar." O let us thank our God as we approach the Lord's table today, that the word which He loved, we love because it is very pure, even as He is. We can learn from this component of Jesus' perfect obedience how we can be faithful to the truth.

The 3rd Component of the Lord Jesus' perfect obedience which secured our salvation is Humility . (Verses 141 and 142)

"I am small and despised, yet I do not forget Your precepts." "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness." The Lord Jesus was small in His own eyes and despised in the eyes of men, but He knew that it would take this to perfectly establish God's righteousness in His obedience." "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility." (Proverbs 15: 33) Philippians 2: 7 says of the Lord Jesus, "He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of bondservant, and came in the likeness of men...." He "humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." When the Lord Jesus came, he came in true humility; in true obscurity, making Himself small in the sight of men, not great. Our Lord was called to this for our

sakes, because we are not great or mighty in our own obedience or holiness before God. Indeed, because of our sin and unbelief we are very small. But turn with me to Isaiah 49 and listen to the prophetic words that relate to our Lord Jesus. "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, and take heed, you peoples from afar!" "The Lord has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name." "And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver He has hidden Me." "And He said to me, 'You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.'" "Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; yet surely my just reward is with the Lord, and my work with my God.'" The Lord Jesus was destined by His Father to become very great, but in terms of the way that He looked at Himself; in terms of the obedience of humility, He must become very small. Have you learned this tremendous secret of obedience?

This is one of the keys of true greatness. You see yourself as small, yet you do not forget God's law. There is a tendency in the sinful human heart to think this way. If I am small and insignificant in the sight of God and man, then it does not matter how I live. Beloved, this is very wrong reasoning. Christ was God's servant at this very basic level, and so we also should be. When the Lord Jesus looked at His ministry, how he was so despised and rejected of men, even his own countrymen and people, He might rightly say to Himself, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain...." But here is where he exercised faith. Here is where he knew that He was small and despised, and yet He "did not forget God's precepts." No, He will have faith in God. He will say in His heart, "Yet surely my just reward is with the Lord, and my work with my God." And so it was. I love the words that follow. Verse 5 says, "And now the Lord says, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength), Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'" "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers: kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel; and He has chosen You." What greatness comes out of such true humility. Not only will Israel be gathered to Christ but He shall also become God's salvation to the ends of the earth. This is what we celebrate today, in regard to our own souls. O beloved, do not be deceived into thinking that your small and little life means nothing in the sight of God. It means very much if only you could see. But it is hidden from you so that in your smallness and littleness you should see God's greatness and the greatness of the gift of Christ. God considers it a very great thing that you should be "content to fill a little space", that He might be glorified in your obedience in the sphere in which

He has placed you. I will now ask that you come down to the table now and renew your vows to Him, and to celebrate the Supper that Christ has prepared for you by His sufferings.

The 4th Component of Christ's obedience that established our salvation is Delight

(Verses 143 and 144)

The Lord Jesus delighted in keeping God's commandments even when it came His time to suffer for our sakes. It was not as though he delighted in pain. Obviously not! He says, "Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet your commandments are My delights." This is how the Lord Jesus was sustained during His time of trouble and anguish. His delight was to do reflect upon, and to remember the Father's will and to please Him during that awful time. Was it God's will that the Lord Jesus think of the delights of His obedience as He suffered? Very definitely. Turn to Psalm 22 with me. Here is recorded for us prophetically by David, the very experience of the Lord Jesus as He hung upon the cross. Sometimes, here in the Psalms, more is related of the actual experience of the Lord Jesus than is related for us in the New Testament. These words show us the thoughts of His own heart at that time. Verse 6 says, "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people." "All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!'" These words are not found in any of the gospels although they relate what those who wanted to see Him suffer were thinking when they mocked His holy obedience upon the cross. If the Lord Jesus delights in God, if He is the Messiah and the Holy One of God, as some say that He is, then surely God will deliver Him. But we know that He will not. They thought that He would not be delivered because He was not the promised Messiah. The Pharisees and the Sadducees, most of them, would not believe that He could be. Were these sufferings in vain? No, we know that they were not. If only the veil could be lifted to see what was going on in the spiritual realm, it would have all become immediately clear. Our Lord Jesus was suffering there, not for Himself, but for all the sinners who would trust in Him for their salvation. It was because of His sins that He was crucified, but for our sins that He hung there. What was His delight at this time? His delight was that even though men were reviling Him, dishonoring Him, scourging Him and crucifying Him; even though His own Father must see Him at this time upon the cross as the sacrifice and substitute for sinners; even though the Father saw Him as a criminal in our place; yet His delight was in God. He remembered the Love of His Father for perfect obedience, and He knew that out of love, that He could render that obedience even when He knew that His Father was punishing Him for the sins of others. He knew that by these sufferings He was fulfilling the loving purpose of the Father to save sinners and have a people for His own possession. He knew that these people could be transformed by the grace that He would purchase by

His death. O how this ought to draw out your heart to Him this morning; the King of Glory suffering on the cross.

But this is not all. This King of glory who suffered is also raised from the dead. "The righteousness of your testimonies is everlasting; give me understanding, and I shall live." Jesus Christ knew, He was given this understanding, that if He was willing to endure these sufferings that He would live! "Behold," He says, "I was dead, but I am alive forevermore!" This proves the righteousness of God's testimonies is everlasting, for the work that our Lord has accomplished has brought in the everlasting righteousness which is ours in Him. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Let us partake of this supper with gladness and may it become the motivation for our greater obedience to God's blessed word in the days to come.

This is a footnote to the 1st Point.

The Apostle Paul, before his conversion is a good example of unholy zeal. He says in Philippians 3: 6, in listing those things which were gain to him, "concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." In other words, when other Jewish men, who did not see their need to believe in Jesus; looked at Saul's life, they thought that he was very righteous in persecuting the church. His zeal was not based upon God's righteousness and the knowledge which He reveals and communicates. All of Saul's conduct and behavior, as far as it was outwardly observable to men, was righteous. As he analyzed his own life, before conversion to Jesus Christ, he approved of his own zeal. He says in Acts 26: 9, "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus Christ." Why was Paul's zeal in this direction, to do things contrary to the name of Christ? It was because his zeal was his own passion to establish his own righteousness in relation to the things which God had commanded in His holy law. In this same regard, we here this morning must ask ourselves, "What are we zealous for?" Are we zealous for the honor and glory of God? Are we zealous for the Righteousness of God which is found in Jesus Christ? Or are we actually zealous for righteousness in trying to be self righteous in regard to God's word and His holy law? When we are this way, we may become zealous only to force people to our conclusions of what a religious system teaches. That system may center around the Bible. But if we do not watch it we may come to see ourselves as better than others, and superior to others because we have knowledge of God's righteousness and we are comparing ourselves with others, trusting in ourselves that we are righteous in what we are doing to keep God's law. Rather than this, we should desire to see people set free in Christ from bondage to sin and false self-righteousness to live to God's glory and to keep His commandments from the right motive of love to Him. God, by His grace, can then create within our hearts a true zeal for Christ's kingdom and living to His honor and glory.