

**Psalm 119: 17-24; "Open my eyes that I may see", A Communion Sermon  
prepared for March 4th, 2007, by Pastor Paul Rendall to be delivered in the  
Morning Worship Service in preparation for taking the Lord's Supper.**

In order to grow in the Christian life, the one who is following Jesus Christ needs often to remember what His dear Lord has done for Him at the cross. This is why we come back once a month to the table set before us to observe the Lord's Supper. We need to remember; for in the act of remembering it becomes for us, a means of grace to our souls, if we have really listened, if we have really taken notice of what He has done. Along with the remembering of Christ there should be prayer going up from each of our hearts; prayer that these times would really produce in us the kind of changes in our hearts that will lead us to a greater obedience to our heavenly Father. It should be a prayer of purpose; that we would be able to put away the sins of the flesh, so that we are not eating and drinking judgment to ourselves. It should lead us to greatly desire and pray for, more of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we might keep God's Word. I hope that you realize, that here in our text, it is the one who knows God who is praying the prayer, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." It is the Christian who sincerely prays this way, who will really make progress in beholding spiritual things and who will make progress in obedience to God. He has come to know that it is not only the unbeliever who needs his eyes opened to see and to appreciate the value of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; it is also the one who has been a Christian for many years. The person who desires to be mature has come to realize the importance of knowing the Bible; but they have also come to realize their need of experience related to obedience to God in relation to that Word which they are learning. This is really having our eyes opened.

The development of Christian character, then, in the heart of a believer, only takes place when the eyes of their heart are opened to appreciate this truth, and to pray that the reality of it will come to pass in their life. It is not the person who, once they are converted, has made a little progress in the knowledge of God's Word, and then rests content in that knowledge, thinking that they know it all. It is the person who after a number of years of knowing the Lord, is still crying out in their spirit in prayer to the Almighty that he or she might still behold wonderful things, might still behold the preciousness of Christ and His grace. This is the person who is making progress in their faith. We are here this morning to remember Christ, so that our faith will not dwindle down to weakness. We are here this morning so that our faith may be strengthened so that God will be honored by the way that we think and what we do with our lives in the time that God has allotted for us here in our earthly pilgrimage. Here in this section of Psalm 119, there are 3 prayers that are made, along with 3 explanations made to the Lord as to why those requests are being made. So what I will do this morning is to ask the question, "How is Christian Character to be prayed for and developed in our lives, once we have been converted?" I believe that Christian character should be prayed for and developed in the following 3 ways:

**1st- A Christian who would be a servant will pray for great grace in order to live and keep God's Word.** (Verses 17 - 19)

Every Christian here today should pray as the Psalmist does in this verse, "Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep Your word." He is praying for God to generously supply him with grace that he may live and do what would be pleasing to God, who is his Master. The Christian is a servant of God and a bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder if you consider yourself a servant in the sight of God, in this holy way?

Many people who profess to be Christians in our day seem to be unconscious of the nature of their relationship with God and with Jesus Christ. If you are a believer, then you are God's servant. You are to be, in the words of Romans 12: 11, "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." If you are God's servant you are serving Him with your spirit, in spiritual activities such as speaking of Him to others and praying for His grace to make progress in your own heart and in the hearts of others. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 1: 9, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." To serve God in our spirit is to consciously place Him and his word before us, in the thoughts of our heart and mind. "I have set the Lord always before me;" it says in Psalm 16, verse 8, "Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." To know God is to worship God in this way. And to worship God at all times is our service to Him. Our service to Him consists of our obedience to Him; that is, that by faith in Jesus Christ we go about to keep His commandments in all the various situations of our life. This, we see from our text, requires much prayer. "Deal bountifully with your servant." This is our prayer, as ones who have been bought and paid for by the purchase of redemption. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, from your aimless conduct, your futile way of life, inherited from your forefathers," Peter says in 1st Peter 1: 18, "but you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb with blemish and without spot." Our life is futile, and it is aimless, unless the direction and focus of our attention is God and His Word.

Let me ask you now, whether you have, and whether you are, on a regular basis, presenting yourself to God as one who will serve Him in the way of obedience to His Word? You see this in Romans 6: 16 if you will turn with me there. After telling his readers about what took place in their hearts when they believed in Christ for salvation, he is telling them that they are now free. They are not under law as a means of being saved; they are under grace. But they do have a choice to make about the matter of their future obedience. Are they going to continue in sin, or are they going to go on to become righteous and holy? He says, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" If you are uncertain whether you are a Christian, you should ask yourself, when you hear a verse like this, "Whose slave am I?" Am I the servant and slave of my own selfish and worldly and sinful desires?" Or, you might then ask, "Have I given my life to God, through Jesus Christ, in order to serve Him?" I am not talking about what you profess, I am talking about what you actually are doing. Paul says in verse 17, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." They became Christians by obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is called "that form of doctrine" which was delivered to them. This was the obedience of their hearts. "That form of doctrine" which was delivered unto them was the preaching of the gospel of grace that is found only in Jesus Christ because of His obedience to God's law, His death for our transgressions, His burial so that our sins and our former manner of sinful living might die and be buried with Him. It is the preaching of the great power which is in Christ, because of His resurrection, to free us from sin and to enable us to have life and power to obey God in Jesus name. Verse 18 says, "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Now, what do we do first as slaves of God, Paul? In verse 19 he tells us. "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. "For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness." You must ask yourself, as you approach the communion table today, "Am I really serving God through Jesus Christ my

Lord?" "Am I really changing in my mind so that I see Christ as my Master?" Do I see myself as entirely dependent upon Him to do the least thing spiritual in the way of obeying God's commandments? Jesus says, "Without Me you can do nothing." Do I ask God to deal bountifully with me that I might live and keep His Word? To keep God's Word means to take heed to it; to regularly and repeatedly and continually to have regard to it to do it. It does not mean that we will do it perfectly at every point. We will, even in the best of our actions and works still fall short of what God would consider perfection. But still we strive in accordance with His powerful grace. Let us remember this morning why we need Christ and his grace. If we could do things perfectly, surely we would not need grace. But we pray, "Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word."

When God's bountiful grace comes to us we find ourselves thinking of our Master, Jesus Christ, thinking first of how we can satisfy Him rather than ourselves. Turn with me to Luke 17: 7. It says here, "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?" "But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?' "Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?" "I think not." "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants.' "We have done what was our duty to do." This is why we pray, "Deal bountifully with your servant." This is why we pray that God would open our eyes. How easy it is for the servants of God to take for granted the greatness of the grace of the Master whom they serve. We need to remember how great this grace is. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1. Having spoken of God's eternal purpose in Election and Predestination in verses 3-6, Paul tells us in verse 7, "In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on the earth." God it says here has made His grace abound toward us in Christ; He has dealt bountifully with me as a believer in Christ. He has lavished His grace upon me in my conversion to Christ. He has purposed to give me this grace from before time began. And as I pray to Him after I come to Him for salvation from my sins, I pray, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." There is an on-going revelation of the grace of Christ which is to be found in God's law, His revealed Word and will which are found in the Scriptures. And there will be a further revelation of Himself through that word to my spirit. He will deal even more bountifully with me as the days go by after my conversion to Christ. Paul says in verse 15 of Ephesians 1, "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." This is truly asking that God would deal bountifully with His servants. "Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law." You see it now, I think. Our prayer which asks for God to deal bountifully with us in our service to him is answered when we have our eyes opened to see the wondrous things which He has done for us in Christ. We need to have our eyes opened to the greatness of the power

and the wisdom that will come to us by believing in Him for every aspect of our obedience in keeping God's law, His Word. You and I must pray, "Show me more of Christ, O God, in your blessed word, so that I will have the power and the grace and the wisdom to observe all that You have commanded Me. This is prayer of our hearts to the God of our life. That is how I will become mature in my faith.

**2ndly- A Christian who would be God's servant will express the longings of his soul to God in relation to keeping God's commandments.**

(Verses 19-21)

The Psalmist says, "I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide your commandments from me." "My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times." You can see here that it is the great desire of the Christian, who has no lasting portion or inheritance in this world, and who is moving toward holiness and heavenly-mindedness, that God would reveal more of His will to him, so that he can pursue it, and find God Himself blessing him in it. This is his all consuming desire. It is what he longs for, and this is what crushes and breaks his heart when he does not see it in his life. How is it that the Christian can come to believe that God is hiding His commandments from him? He knows and has read and has memorized the 10 commandments. He remembers the first and greatest commandment from Deuteronomy 6: 5 - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." He remembers what God said to Israel in Deuteronomy 10: 12, "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which He commanded you this day for your good?" The key to understand this "hiding" is found in the first part of verse 19 in our text. We are strangers and aliens in this world. We are pilgrims traveling from this world to the next. God hides His will and the glory of keeping His commandments from the person who is determined to live to himself or herself. This is particularly true if a person is trying to hold on to worldly ways of thinking and doing things and yet believes that they are already a mature Christian. God will hide from that person the power and the pleasure of keeping His commandments. Psalm 25: 12-15 says, "Who is the man that fears the Lord?" "Him shall he teach in the way He chooses." "He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth." "The secret of the Lord (that which God keeps hidden for a time until the lesson of obedience is learned) is for those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." "My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net. What net is it that the Psalmist is talking about here? It is the net of the worldly wisdom, it is the schemes of the Devil, it is the deceitfulness of our fleshly minds which become puffed up with what we think that we know. It is when he leaves us to our own natural discernment, without a further revelation of what it will take to deliver us in any given situation of difficulty that we are facing, because we refuse to consider His way and wisdom which are found in His Word, as being the right way and the best way for us. This is the worst of situations to a Christian who wants to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant" at the end of his life's journey. We will ultimately fail in all of our attempts to live for ourselves, rather than to God and obedience to His glorious Word. No, this is a spiritual battle that we must face.

*Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb, and shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His Name?*

*Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while other fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?*

*Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God?*

*Sure I must fight if I would reign: Increase my courage, Lord; I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word. --Isaac Watts*

There may be some here today living in just such a way that you are offering up your time, your strength, and your money to the gods of this world. You are tempted to find pleasure pursuing the idols of this world; all the newest material possessions, all the pleasures and entertainments of earthly sense, all the activities and approval of worldly people. You may not have thought deeply about it, but this is what you love more than God. This is what you must have more than God and His all-satisfying and all-sustaining grace. His commandments you will keep when they do not interfere with what means the most to you. And so, God will "hide His commandments" from you. He will hide their beauty, and the glory of what it means to keep them by His grace. "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" "And what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" And it will only be by His grace and mercy in Christ that you will ever change. But if you belong to Christ; you will, and you must be brought back. Our text says in verse 21, "You rebuke the proud--the cursed, who stray from your commandments." A true Christian walking in the fear of the Lord, wanting to know "His secret", will pray to be delivered from this net. 1 Corinthians 8: 1 says, "Now concerning things which are offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge." "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." "And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he nothing yet as he ought to know." "But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him." What is the Lord looking for? He is looking for "a broken and a contrite spirit," a spirit which "breaks with longing for His judgments at all times." It is the best of situations when a Christian has longings and anguish of spirit and then he expresses those in prayer to His God, through His Savior and Mediator Jesus Christ. "My soul breaks with longing for your judgments," for your ordinances it says in the NAS, "at all times." You come to remember verses like Psalm 19: 7-11, "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." "Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward." Oh how our souls ought to break for longing if we do not find ourselves glorying and rejoicing in these words which I just read to you. Let not the idols of this world become the idols of your heart. Fellowship with the Father and with the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit is the remedy for this. You must ask yourself as you come down to the table and partake of the communion with me, whether this is the great desire, the great longing of your heart, to have God's commandments and to keep them. Listen to the Lord Jesus in John 14: 21 - "He who has My commandments and keeps them, 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." This is what each of us should desire as we come to the communion table. I will ask you now to come forward and meet me there.

**Now 3rdly and finally- A Christian who would be God's servant will humbly pray for the reproach of men to be removed from himself if he knows that he has kept God's commandments.** (Verses 22- 24)

Verse 22 says, "Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept Your testimonies." "Princes also sit and speak against me, but Your servant meditates on Your

statutes. Reproaches are those things that are spoken against us when the person who is speaking them thinks that we have done something stupid or wrong in their sight, whether it was wrong in God's sight, or not. David was attempting to serve God in all that he did. He was very conscious that in many ways he fell short in his obedience. In the particular case of our text, David had done nothing wrong. He had "kept God's testimonies." And on account of that he was being reproached. Things were being said about him and against him that simply were not right conclusions in relation to what God would have David to do. This is suffering for righteousness sake; when you do what is right, and yet others speak against you because of it, and try to bring you into disrepute, and trouble you with their words on account of what you have done. The way that David counteracted this was, "he meditated on God's statutes." It was God's "testimonies that were his delight and his counselors." He did pray that God would "remove from him the reproach and the contempt" of those who were speaking against him. This is certainly permissible when we have kept the commands of the Lord. "For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?" (1 Peter 3: 17) "But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed." (1 Peter 3: 13) How is it that we can be blessed in the midst of being misrepresented, maligned, and reproached when we have done the will of God? It is by remembering Jesus Christ. Remember what it says of Him in Romans 15: 3: "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.'" Christ willingly bore those reproaches which were made against His Father so that you and I might be forgiven of our sins. You see this if you turn to Matthew 27: 39 and following. "And those who passed blasphemed Him, waging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! 'If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.'" "Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved other; Himself He cannot save.'" "If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Now, what is this but reproaching God for His whole plan of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. God has sent His Son out of love to lost and fallen humanity. He gave His very heart in sending Him and then He is reproached by unbelievers in His own chosen covenant nation for His great gift. This is what Christ bore, so that you and I could be saved. He certainly did not deserve this. God the Father certainly did not deserve to be reproached. But unrepentant sinners will always reproach God for the way that He has chosen to save sinners and the way that He has chosen to make them holy. It is by the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord, whose obedience to God's law and whose sufferings on the cross it took, to purchase that grace for all who will believe and receive it. Those who are partaking this morning do not reproach God, but bless Him for it, and will bless Him through all eternity for sending Christ to bear our reproach, the reproach of our sins which we so richly deserved and yet do not now bear in God's sight, because of our Savior's dying love.