

**Psalm 119: 169-176; "My Lips shall Utter Praise", A Communion
Sermon delivered before partaking of the Lord's Supper,
by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 2nd, 2008,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We have now reached the end of our study of Psalm 119 in terms of Communion Sermons. It does not mean that we have in any sense exhausted what is here for the sincere, seeking believer. If the Lord permits me to continue to preach to you, there will, no doubt, be more sermons that I will bring to you from this blessed chapter of the Psalms. How does the Psalmist David end his alphabetical exposition on the value of the word of God? He does so by showing us the value of prayer in relation to it. If you love the word of God; if you love God Himself, you will pray to Him over it. And you will not only pray over it, but you will also ask God to help you to apply it to how you should conduct yourself in this fallen world of sin and sinners. What you will come to desire, and what you will come to need more than anything else as a Christian walking through this life and on your way to glory, is to have God Himself become your helper in everything, to learn to do what pleases Him most. This is called glorifying God. This is what you and I are called to, as Christians. We are called to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. How do we glorify God? We glorify Him by keeping His word. And how do we come to keep His word? We come to it through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by looking at the example of His life, and by looking at His love for us in His sufferings and death; the death of the cross. And we pray that His life would be found more and more in our life. This is the kind of praying that we will learn to engage in, in relation to taking the Lord's Supper today. So taking this concluding prayer of David, the psalmist, let us think about the things that he prayed which are things that we should pray for as well. I know that there are more specific requests in this section than I care to make into heads in a sermon, so I will place all the requests together under 3 heads. First - David prayed, and we also ought to pray, to be taught God's statutes. (verses 169-171) 2nd - David prayed, as we also ought to pray, that God would be with us as we go about to live out God's word. (Verses 172 - 174). 3rd - David prayed, and we also ought to pray, that God would help us to stay upon the path of righteousness. (verses 175 and 176).

First - David prayed, and we also ought to pray, to be taught God's statutes.

David has a certain approach in prayer that he takes. He sees God as a great King. He sees Him as a holy and heavenly Monarch who holds all things and all power and authority in His hands. He says, "Let my cry come before You, O Lord..." And in verse 170 he says, "Let my supplication come before You..." The requests were two-fold. "Give me understanding," and "deliver me according to Your word." We have already seen in past sermons how often the words of this Psalm apply to David's having been persecuted by Saul, and by those loyal to Saul.

Or, by Absalom his own son, and those loyal to him. It was no doubt one of those two situations that he was in the midst of here, when he penned these words. He needed wisdom and understanding from God as to how he ought to conduct himself under such circumstances. His life was in danger and he greatly needed God's help to him; help to soul and body. This making request in this way, asking that his words might come before God, as though his words were waiting outside in the corridor, outside of the throne room where the king was, reminds me very much of the book of Esther. It reminds me of that time when the whole people of God were put into the danger of their being exterminated in their captivity in Persia. It happened when wicked Haman concocted a plan to destroy them. The king had promoted Haman and commanded that the people would pay homage to him because of this high position that he had been appointed to; above all the princes who were with him, but Esther's uncle Mordecai would not bow. Haman then concocted the plan of going to the king with a decree that a certain people among the king's own people were "different" from all other peoples, and they did not keep the king's laws." People who know the Lord and love the Lord are always, to the wicked unbeliever, "different." Therefore," he told the king, "it is not fitting that they remain." Haman even went so far as to promise that he would personally pay ten thousand talents of silver to be brought into the king's treasuries in order that those who did this dastardly deed, would be certain to do the work. And the king went along with this plan. But Haman did not reckon upon Queen Esther who was a Jew as well, although she had not revealed herself as a Jew to the king until things came to quite a crisis. A date had been set for the work of exterminating the Jews, and the Queen knew that she should "go in to the king" to plead and petition for the lives of her people. In Esther 4: 16 she says, "And so I will go in to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." She fasted for three days, she put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance to the house." "So it was," it says, "when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand." "Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter." "And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther?" "What is your request?"

It is this scene that I think of when I hear David say the words, "Let my cry come before You, O Lord...." "Let my supplication come before You, O Lord...." Esther was married to the king Ahasuerus but he was such a great and mighty monarch that she had to remain in the outer court, awaiting his recognition of her, awaiting his showing her that she had found favor in his sight, before she could come forward, having had the golden scepter extended to her, she could touch it and make her request. She could have died if she had not found favor from him that day. That is how great a monarch this man Ahasuerus was. She and her people needed protection and deliverance from this wicked man Ahasuerus, and she got it through this approach. David, in his words here is expressing himself in

his prayer, in a similar way to Esther's approach to her husband-king. "Let my cry come before you; give me understanding according to your word." Don't let my supplication just sit by You, O God; don't let it remain in the outer court of your consideration, but let it come before you. Don't put it on hold; don't let it be delayed. "Let my supplication come before You; deliver me according to Your word." And he is even thanking God ahead of time for the answer to his request. "My lips shall utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes." Sometimes we do not believe that God can change the difficult situations we are in, in relation to unbelieving wicked people oppressing our soul, and persecuting us unrighteously. And sometimes, because of the difficult or trying circumstances that we are in, we think that God is not hearing, He is not listening, He is not answering because we have been praying over and over.

We need to learn to pray in this way; "Give me understanding." "Teach me your statutes." Teach me how to think, what to think, how to react, and especially how I might glorify you even when I am not yet delivered from the particular trial that I am passing through. And even when we pray for deliverance from the trial that we would pray, "Deliver me according to Your Word." Do you know, O believer that you can not be delivered from any of your trials without the Lord's granting it to you? But O, dear believer, how gracious He is to all of His people who pray to Him. "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." "They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed." "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." (Psalm 34: 4-7) The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." David found this on many occasions of his life, both before and after he became king. It is the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we have come here to remember this morning, that is the basis of all these answers to prayer. David often speaks of the Lord "who has delivered his soul from all distress." Some of you may be weary and distressed in your living your Christian life. There may be many reasons for this. You may be saying, "Why do I have these kind of trials with men?" The answer from this text is apparent. It is so that God might teach you and give you understanding in your soul that there are things for you to learn about having a right heart; right thinking and actions, which flow from prayerful meditation upon God's word. They do not flow from brooding over your troubles and woes and why you cannot change them. God is the only one who can change both you and others for the better. The way that He does this with His own is to first show them that the answers only come from him and not from arguing with men. But always remember that the answer is always found in prayer. This is where God convinces you of how you need to think and what you need to change in your own life, if anything. And this is the place, when you are prayerfully meditating upon the word, that He shows you how to bear up under all your soul's pain and anguish, and how by faith in His promises that you can overcome.

And when you stop to think that although the Lord Jesus is much higher and much mightier than all the kings of the earth, both past and present; He is much more easy to approach than the man whom Esther had to deal with. You too, are married to a King if you have believed in Jesus. You are married to Christ the King in a spiritual sense. You are one spirit with Him. You are not an outer court worshiper if you have believed in Jesus Christ. You are an inner-court worshiper. You have been brought right into the throne room of God through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Why be sorrowful and sad over what men have done to you when you have the King of Kings to converse with, to commune with, to take counsel with, and bring all your woes to. Will you not come to Him in prayer and be refreshed? Will you not come to Him in prayer and ask Him to teach you? Fast and pray if you think that God is not listening. He will come to your mind and heart when you come in the name of the Lord Jesus. He will come and speak to your soul through His mighty word. All of your soul's strength rests upon this. This is why Jesus died. This is why He suffered. This is why He shed His precious blood. It is so that your faith would not fail, but rather overcome. God must teach you this, dear Christian, very practically when you come into the situations of difficulty. He is well able to do this. Please receive it from His hand, just as you receive the Supper, spiritually, from His hand today. Come even as David prayed here. Come even as the Apostle Peter instructs us in 1 Peter 5: 6 and 7, "Humble yourself under His mighty hand, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." And remember Hebrews 4: 15 and 16, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Now 2ndly - David prayed, as we also ought to pray, that God would be with us to help us as we go about to live out His word. (Verses 172 -175)

"My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commands are righteousness." "Let Your hand become my help, for I have chosen Your precepts." "I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my delight." "Let my soul live, and it shall praise You; and let your judgments help me." Let me ask you this morning if, as a believer, you are one who speaks of God's word? What part of it do you speak of to others? David thought that He would speak of the commandments of God's word; His moral precepts and His righteous laws. David knew that this really brings glory to God, to speak of things which He commands us to do. This is not only the 10 commandments, but all of the righteous moral principles which are found in the Bible. When we see that "all God's commands are not only right, but righteousness itself, and we deliberately choose to pursue the keeping of them, then we are making progress in our sanctification. It is something that we deliberately choose, it says in our text. "Let your hand become my help, for I have chosen Your precepts." You see, David did not believe that he could keep God's righteous commandments by the power of his own observation

and strength. God's hand had to be with him, to help him, in doing that. "Let your hand become my help." Each of us individually and all of us together should pray fervently that this would become a reality in our life and the life of our church. God's hand is often spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures as a symbol of Christ. Turn with me over to Psalm 89, verse 13. "You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, and high is your right hand." "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face." "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!" They walk, O Lord in the light of Your countenance." "In your name they rejoice all day long, and by Your righteousness they are exalted." Now even though the Lord Jesus is not once named in these words, it is evident that He is the One being referred to as the mighty arm and the strong hand of our God. Do you know the joyful sound of the gospel of God's righteousness being satisfied in Christ's perfectly righteous life and loving sacrificial death? If so, you will be able to walk the light of God's countenance and are given the ability by grace to rejoice all day long. God's law becomes your chief delight. You know that Christ is the righteousness of God, and by His righteousness you are exalted from your lowly position of a condemned sinner, unworthy of the least of God's mercies, to a saint; one who has been justified and cleansed by the blood of Christ and given a righteous which is not your own making or doing to wear.

Now turn over to Psalm 80 and you will see more yet. These verses show the children of Israel how to come back from their awful sins which led to Jerusalem being destroyed and themselves being taken captive because of their sin. Verse 14 says, "Return we beseech You, O God of hosts; look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself." "It is burned with fire, it is cut down; they perish at the rebuke of Your countenance." "Let your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself." "Then we will not turn back from You; revive us and we will call upon Your name." "Cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved." We can apply this to ourselves in the New Covenant era as well. Christ Jesus is the man of God's right hand, the Son of Man whom God made strong for Himself. He was strong to fulfill all righteousness. He was mighty to save by his interposing between us and our sins by going to the cross. He is the only reason; He is the main reason we do not turn back from following after God and why we do not cease longing for more of the grace of salvation to be applied to our souls. Our Lord Jesus is the One who restores our souls when we are discouraged with our faulty obedience or the oppositions of wicked men. It is God, through our Lord Jesus Christ who causes His face to shine upon us and not only has saved us, but keeps on working in us to deliver us from the power and presence of sin in our hearts and lives. This is what we are coming to the Table to remember this morning. We have come with the words of the 98th Psalm to sing to our God. "Oh sing to the Lord a new song!" "For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained

for Him the victory." "The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations." "He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." This salvation is that which our great Savior has wrought for us and for our God, and has reconciled us to each other, and given us peace. He has given us every blessing necessary to our salvation, in Him. His hand has become our help. His law has become our delight. So come down to the front with me now and let us celebrate together by partaking of this Supper, the great things that God has done in Christ.

3rdly- David prayed, and we ought to pray, that God would keep us upon the path of righteousness. (Verse 176)

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments." Now this is not a statement that you would expect to hear from a man who had been a believer for a long time. It only goes to show that it is still possible, after we become a true Christian, to go astray like a lost sheep. When we know ourselves to be out of the path of righteousness, it is a good time to examine ourselves and to pray that the Lord would seek us, and bring us back to Himself and to the good paths of His truth and righteousness. "He leads me on the path of righteousness for His own name's sake," it says in Psalm 23. It is encouraging to see here the grace at work in David's life. He knew that he had gone astray, but yet he did not forget God's commandments. Why was this? It was because of God's faithfulness through Jesus Christ, to supply Him the needed grace to remember, and to repent and to turn back from his folly and his sins. This is, thankfully, what God does with each and every one of His dear people. Turn with me to Luke 15 for just a moment before we take the Supper. "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him." "And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them.'" This is what Christ is doing with us now; receiving and eating with sinners. That is how we see ourselves, even though He has called us His saints. "So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he find it?' "and when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing." "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'" "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." This may indeed be speaking about the repentance which leads to life. But you and I need to understand that repentance is an everyday exercise with a believer. We regularly examine our hearts, and we see that we need grace to repent. We need grace to sorrow and mourn over the many sins of our hearts and our lips, and sometimes even our actions. And we need to understand as we come to this table to partake of elements of our Lord's broken body and His shed blood, that He is even now looking down upon us who are confessing our sins, and who are

repenting of them and forsaking of them, with great rejoicing. May each of us have real dealings with God over the issues of our heart, so that we might be filled with joy and gladness at receiving Christ's blessing in partaking of this Supper and remembering all that He has done for us. And let us pray also that we will be rendering to Him a sincere obedience to His word in the days to come.