

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

6 September 2020

English Worship Service

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851

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Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 10.45 am

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.30 pm

**Rev Colin Wong (HP : 9665 8160); Elder Daniel Tau (HP : 9761 5415);
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WHO ARE THE HAPPY PEOPLE?

Everybody wants to be a happy people. The world seeks happiness in the things of the world. This is only temporal. The Christian seeks happiness in the Word of God. This is eternal. Jeremiah said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16, NKJV).

From this Lord's Day onward, I shall meditate with you on Psalm 119. I will share with you the importance of reading, meditating, memorizing and practicing the eternal Word which is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89).

The people of the world desire happiness but sadly they seek it in the wrong place. Countless people turn to materialism, fame, prestige, friends, pleasure and even religion for happiness. Unfortunately, their search for a happy life fails miserably. Little do they know that the temporal things of the world are not the answer to a full and meaningful life. John reminds us, "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it..." (1 John 2:17). Since the fall of mankind, the world has already begun to decay. If that is so, you and I should not set our affection on earthly things but on heavenly things (Colossian 3:2).

The Psalmist makes it clear that God's Word alone reveals true happiness, and the one who diligently seeks it will experience the blessedness of life.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD (1).

The meaning of Psalm 119:1 is plain. The Psalmist asks: Who are the blessed people? Who are

the ones who live happily on earth? (Psalm 1:1 also teaches the same truth). The answer is before our eyes. There is no hidden truth here. There is no “if” or “but” or “may be.” The Psalmist says, “Blessed are those who walk uprightly.”

The word “walk” speaks of the way of a man’s life. A blessed man is one whose life is not only governed by the Law of the LORD, but he also practices it. To walk in the Law is to keep it. James asks, “What is true religion?” (James 1:27) True religion is not cold and dry. True religion is always practical, for it does not permit us to delight ourselves in a perfect rule without exciting in us a longing to be conformed to it in our daily lives. To hear, read and understand God’s Word is a great blessing, but to practice it is even better. Someone said, “Blessed is the man whose life is the practical transcript of the will of God.”

An upright man makes every effort to live righteously before God and men. He endeavours to keep himself from sin and iniquity (Psalm 18:23). He strives to have a good conscience before God and men (Acts 23:1; 24:16). He is not ashamed to enter into the presence of God (Psalm 16:11). He has great confidence and boldness before God because his heart is pure (1 John 3:21; Hebrews 4:16; Psalm 15). Therefore, let us read, meditate, memorize and practice the Word in order to walk sincerely and boldly before God and men.

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart (2).

Blessed are the ones who keep or observe God’s testimonies. What testimonies was the Psalmist talking about? “Testimonies are more particularly God’s revealed law: the witnesses and confirmation of his promises made to his people, an earnest of his future salvation” (Jebb). “The Scripture is called God’s testimony, as it contains the witnesses of God’s mind and will, and of man’s duty” (Matthew Pool). “The things contained in the Scripture are called God’s testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction” (Matthew Henry).

Notice the words “*and that*” are in italic. They are added for smooth reading by the translators. Some commentators prefer to make the latter clause entirely independent and read, “With all the heart they will seek him.”

What the Psalmist was saying here is that those who keep God’s testimonies are those who also seek God with all their hearts. I think this is a good test for us. Do we practice the Word? If we do, then we also seek God with all our hearts. If not, then we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:22).

They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways (3).

A happy man is one who does not do iniquity or unrighteousness. The teaching is similar to 1 John 3:9 which says, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” Blessed are those who do not practice sin

habitually. Blessed are those who walk in God's way. That is to say, they habitually behave as the Lord requires in his Word (1 John 2:6).

Reading the Word requires prayer. You and I need to pray to God for spiritual understanding (Psalm 119:18) and obedient to the Word. James rightly said, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently (4).

Here is a command from Jehovah God. God knows his children well. He knows their waywardness. He knows how often they wander away from him and his Word. Therefore, he commands his children to keep his Word.

Every Christian is commanded to keep, observe, take heed to, regard, look narrowly to or watch God's precepts. Furthermore, he or she is to keep it diligently.

The word "precepts" means "to place in trust." God has entrusted something to us Christians, for which we are held responsible for it. "Precepts signify that this will of God is imposed by the authority of our sovereign Lawgiver" (David Dickson). God has given us his Word and Christians are commanded to keep it diligently. The way to do it is to study it diligently (2 Timothy 2:15) and to hide in our hearts (Psalm 119:11).

May I encourage you to read God's Word faithfully and study it diligently for the good of your soul.

O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! (5).

Here is a prayer of the Psalmist for guidance to keep his Word. He acknowledges his weakness and his inability to keep his Word. The same is with us. We also are not able to keep God's Word. Our ways are by nature opposed to God's way. Our hearts are prone to leave the God we love. That is why we need his direction. We need him to direct our steps to keep his statutes.

What statutes the Psalmist pleaded with God to direct him to keep? According to Clarke, "Statutes, from a word signifying to mark, trace out, describe and ordain; because they mark out our way, describe the line of conduct we are to pursue, and order or ordain what we are to observe."

Christians need God's help to keep his Word because evil is present with us. Paul said in Romans 7:14-25 "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what

I will not do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

Is this our struggle also? Let us plead with God earnestly for help to keep his Word.

Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments (6).

The Psalmist knows what shame is. Many commentators believe David was the author of Psalm 119. If that is so, then David must have known what shame is. In his confession in Psalm 51, he lamented, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight (4a). He said in Psalm 44:15, “My dishonor is continually before me, And the shame of my face has covered me.” Again he said in Psalm 69:19, “You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor.”

Sin brings shame to God, Christ, God’s people, self, family, relatives, friends and society. Proverbs reminds us that sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34). But when sin is gone, the reason for being ashamed is banished.

However, now David rejoices in the prospect of being delivered from shame. How was he delivered? The latter part of the verse says, “When I have respect unto all thy commandments.” When God’s commandments are observed and kept, there is deliverance from shame.

Commandments here are God’s Law. “They are called commandments because they show us what we should do, and what we should leave undone, and exact our obedience” (Adam Clarke).

This verse suggests a cure to many of our spiritual problems. The Psalmist said, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). Blessed are they that keep God’s Word; for nothing shall make them stumble (Proverbs 3:1, 2).

Knowing the importance of reading and keeping the Word, let us make every effort, with God’s help, to keep, observe and obey his Word.

I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments (7).

Now the Psalmist is able to rejoice and give thanks to God for deliverance from shame. Now he is able to praise God with upright of heart because he has confessed his sin and God has forgiven him (1 John 1:9; Isaiah 1:18; 43:25; 44:22). Now he has accessed into God’s presence and commune with him (Romans 5:2; Isaiah 59:1). All these are made possible because the repentant Psalmist has learned God’s righteous judgments.

God’s judgments are righteous. What are God’s judgments? “Judgments” mean “judicial ordinances” or “God’s judicial decree.” Pool said, “God’s judgments are so called, because they proceed from the great Judge of the world, and are his judicial sentence to which all men must

submit.”

David said, “... That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge” (Psalm 51:4b). When Nathan confronted David’s sin, he did not find excuses but acknowledged it (2 Samuel 12; Psalm 32:1-5) and submitted to the Lord’s will, acknowledging that anything God decided about him would be just. God’s judgments are always righteous. Therefore, when God judges, his sentence is always right. There is no re-trial.

The lesson before us is clear. When you and I sin against God, we must not try to justify ourselves. We must simply admit it and humble ourselves before God and submit ourselves to his righteous judgment, for he never misjudges a person.

I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly (8).

The first part of this verse is a promise made to the Lord – “I will keep thy statutes.” Matthew Henry said, “They are called his statutes, because they are fixed and determined and of perpetual obligation.” Many of us make promises to God. But not many of us make promises to keep them in our heart (Job 31:1).

On the one hand, the Psalmist makes a promise to keep God’s Word; on the other hand, he is conscious of his own weakness. He trembles lest he should fail to fulfil it. Therefore, he cries to the Lord, “O forsake me not utterly.” This should be our attitude when it comes to making promises to God.

Jesus teaches us to pray, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13). Let us pray for grace and strength to keep God’s Word. Amen.

Pastor Colin Wong

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Theme for the Quarter :
FREE IN CHRIST
(An Exposition on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians)

English Worship Service :
Elder Daniel Tau speaks on God’s Grace in Suffering (1 Peter 5:10-11)