

Assurance in God's Way

Psalm 25:8-15

Halifax: June 22, 2008

Introduction:

As most you know,

- every few weeks I select a Psalm for us to sing that has something to do with our regular sermon series.
 - We call this Psalm our Psalm of Focus, and I break from our regular sermon series to preach from this Psalm...
 - and that is what we are going to do today.
- But of course, as I have been away, we have not exactly had a regular sermon series;
 - but if I can stretch your memory, you will recall that we were working our way through the book of Ephesians,
 - and that for some time, we had been looking at what God's Spirit says to us in the second half of Ephesians...
 - were we are exhorted to walk worthy of calling we have in Christ Jesus.
 - The first half of Ephesians explains how God has graciously chosen us, if we are in Christ, to be forgiven of our sins and to live in eternal communion with God,
 - called to live as own His sons and daughters forever and ever in His own house...
 - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have lived in perfect love from all eternity,
 - and now we, we who are unworthy, lowly sinners, have been called through Jesus Christ to enter into that same household...
 - not as equals with God
 - but as creatures made in His image, reflecting His glory.
 - It is so wonderful to think that when God has finished His saving work in us,
 - we will be free of all corruption, all sin, all selfishness...
 - and we will live in that perfect love as His children.
 - With such a glorious calling to live in such a glorious house,
 - we are exhorted in Ephesians to put off our old sinful ways and to put on the new man that is being renewed in holiness and righteousness.
 - We are instructed how to live as God's children ought to live.

Once again, if I can stretch your memory, you will recall that some ten weeks ago or so,

- we began using the first seven verses of Psalm 25 as our Psalm of Focus—Psalm 25-A as it is called in our Psalter.
 - This Psalm is very well suited to our Ephesians study because in it we plead with God to so work in us that we might walk in His ways.
 - We are, to put it in New Testament language, yearning for Him to make us more like Christ...
 - To make us into those sons and daughters of God that we ought to be...
 - We beseech Him to show us His ways and then teach us to walk in His ways.
 - That is what the first seven verses of Psalm 25 are about...
- Well this morning I want to move on to the next section of this Psalm (Psalm 25 B in our Psalter) which includes verses 8-15.
 - In this portion of the Psalm,
 - we move from asking God to cause us to walk in His way to declaring our assurance that He will cause us to walk in His way and that when He does, it will be good.
 - There are two assurances you affirm when you sing this Psalm...
 - That God does transform His people to walk in His way...
 - And that His way is truly good.
 - Christian, you need these two assurances!
 - You need to know that He will teach you so you will not be discouraged and give up when your progress seems slow...
 - If you are truly in Christ, God is at work in you and His work will not fail.
 - You will become like Christ...
 - And you need to know that His way is good so that you will be all the more eager to walk in it...
 - Inasmuch as you think His way will be ugly or dull or unfruitful,
 - you will be disinclined to walk in it.
 - The more certain you are, the more motivated you will be to pursue God's way, even when it involves suffering and hardship.

Let's turn to Psalm 25 and look at each of these assurances that we are given to sing about.

I. Assurance #1: Be assured that the Lord teaches sinners to walk in His way.

A. Verse 8 says so:

- Ps 25:8: “Good and upright is the Lord, therefore, He teaches sinners in the way.”

- 1. This is a marvellous thing—I mean, we are sinners!
 - a. What is the Lord doing teaching us His way?
 - You would think He would just condemn us and be done with it!
 - We are sinners—we don’t deserve to be taught by Him...
 - We deserve to be cast into the Lake of Fire forever and ever.

 - But instead, He is shaping us and guiding us and leading us into those glorious ways that are pleasing to Him...
 - He is making every believer like Jesus!
 - to love as He loves, to live as He lives, to be holy as He is holy!
 - What a marvellous transformation is going on—and all of you in Christ are undergoing this transformation!
 - You are not stuck to go on as you are!

 - b. We are often quite reluctant to look at how far we have fallen because we are not confident that there is any help for us...
 - Jay Adams tells of a teenage girl who came to him for counselling with her mother...
 - The girl had withdrawn and would hardly do anything.
 - At last, Dr Adams got her to begin talking,
 - She began speaking about what a wretched person she had been...
 - And no sooner did she begin than her mother interrupted her to correct her and to say what a good girl she was.

 - But Dr. Adams told the mother to be quite...
 - He said, “If she tells me what a wicked person she is, I believe her—let her speak...”
 - And immediately he saw hope in the girl...
 - Before this, she thought her condition was so bad that there was no hope for her, for everyone she spoke to only tried to tell her that it wasn’t that bad...
 - But now, from Scripture, Dr. Adams was able to give her hope that the Lord teaches sinners in the way!

TRANS> If you grasp what we are really like before a holy God, it may seem incredible—unbelievable—that He would teach us...

2. You see that Psalm 25:8 verse tells you very plainly that He does teach sinners in the way...and it tells you that He does it because He is good and upright!

a. What in the world does that mean?

- Surely God would be good and upright if He did not teach sinners, wouldn't He?
- Surely He is not under any obligation teach sinners, is He?

b. Well, the answer is yes and no...

- After our rebellion, God was under no obligation to redeem us—
 - In all justice, He might have left us to go on in our own way of corruption and sin.
 - He might have brought His judgement down upon us all—for that is what we all deserve.
- But instead, He chose to have mercy upon some...
 - He came to us and established His covenant with us, promising to us that He would be our God and that we would be His people!
 - All through the scripture we have record of this promise...
 - And in Abraham, whose seed you all are if you believe in Christ,
 - God confirmed His promise with an oath...
 - It was such an incredible thing that God Almighty should be the God of sinners, and take those sinners as His own to bless them,
 - that He entered into a covenant with Abraham,
 - God Himself promising that He would be torn apart if He did not do what He has spoken to bless Abraham and all who are brought into His covenant!
 - In Galatians 3, we are told that now that Christ has come,
 - we are recipients of the promise given to Abraham if we believe in Jesus Christ...
 - This is how the true heirs of the covenant are distinguished now from those who outside the covenant...
 - Gal 3:29 says, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

TRANS> And so you see that if you are trusting in God's covenant promise, God is obligated to bless you—

- He is obligated because He obligated Himself by entering into a covenant with us.

- c. Now that God has promised, you see,
 - we can say that He is not good and upright unless He keeps His promise.
 - He did not have to make the promise in the first place,
 - but now that He has made it, He cannot be good and upright unless He keeps it...

 - The Lord is a holy God and He will not go back on His word!

 - His covenant is ordered in all things and sure...
 - You can be sure that He will teach sinners because He is good and upright...

B. But understand that this promise is not everyone's promise.

1. Psalm 25:8 does not say that He teaches **every** sinner in the way,
 - It only says that He teaches sinners...
 - There are many sinners that He does not teach...

 - Everyone is a sinner, but not every sinner is taught in the way.

2. The sinners who are taught in His way are described in two ways...
 - a. First, in verse 9, they are called the humble...
 - The implication here is that the proud are not taught in the way.

 - If you think you are a pretty good person—
 - that you have never done much wrong...

 - We recently told a Muslim man who visited here how foolish he was to think he could stand before God on the Day of Judgement without a Saviour...

 - If you can't see why Christ would have to go to the cross for your sins,
 - If you can't see that apart from Him, you are fit for nothing but condemnation...
 - Then however lowly you may claim to be,
 - you are full of the most outrageous pride and God does not promise to teach you in His way.

- Not until you are humbled to see that you are completely undone before a holy God,
 - and that you desperately need to be saved...
 - and that your condition is so desperate that you could never save yourself and that no mere human being could ever save you...
 - are you able to claim this promise...
- But isn't it marvellous that the qualification for God's salvation is not that you be something great or do some great work...
 - It is rather that you humble yourself, realise that you can't change yourself—

TRANS> But of course it is not enough to simply see that you are undone...

- b. In verse 10, you can see secondly that it is those who keep God's covenant and His testimonies that are blessed in that covenant.
 - 1) Keeping the covenant means that you are one who embraces God's promises and repents of your sin...
 - In other words, you have to get to the place where you want God to change you and where you begin looking to Him to do it...
 - That is what Abraham did—
 - When he heard God's promise that God would bless him, he believed... and it was counted to Him as righteousness...
 - He began to live in the hope of that Covenant...
 - He began to trust the Lord and to follow the Lord as his own God.
 - He turned from His own way to walk in God's way—to keep His testimonies.
 - 2) Now of course this does not mean that you never again commit a sin after you enter into God's covenant...
 - It rather means that your direction is changed so that you do not pursue sin—
 - you look to God to deliver you from it and you turn from it as you discover it in your life...
 - And you rest in the salvation that He has promised...
 - The salvation that is now all the more fully revealed to us than it was to Abraham...

- now that we have seen what God did in sending His Son to die for us and to give us the Holy Spirit.

TRANS> So you see that these two things characterise those sinners whom God teaches in His way...

- First, that they are humble, seeing that they need His salvation...
- And secondly, that they embrace His salvation, keeping His covenant and testimonies...
 - turning from sin and looking to Jesus for salvation...

3. Verse 11 is an expression of what this very thing...

a. In singing this Psalm, having just now expressed the assurance that God teaches sinners who are humble and keep His covenant,

- You are then given to sing:
 - “For Your name’s sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.”

b. When you pray this with sincerity, you are doing what those who are truly taught of the LORD do...

- 1) You are being humble, confessing the greatness of your sin,
- 2) And you are keeping covenant, crying out to God on the basis of His promise to pardon you—
 - for His name’s sake who promised...
 - For His name’s sake who has now come to earth in human flesh to secure our pardon...
 - You look to Him and Him alone to do what He has promised lest His name be dragged in the mud...

3) You trust in the One who was so intent on keeping His promise to bless His people that He rather sent His only Son to die on the cross than to break His promise...

- How His name is honoured by keeping His covenant!
- How His righteousness is seen in pardoning you!
- How His love is seen in pardoning you!

c. What assurance!

- What confidence when you realise that God cannot refuse to pardon you without destroying His reputation as a good and upright!
 - For the honour of His good name, He must do what He has promised.

- He cannot go back on His promise...
- If you come to Him, broken over your sin and looking to Christ for your salvation,
 - He will surely be pleased you save you—and to teach you in His way.

TRANS> That is the first assurance that you are given to sing about in this Psalm.

II. Assurance #2: Be assured that the Lord's way is good.

- As I pointed out in the introduction, if you do not believe that God's way is good—that it brings about good—you are not very likely to seek out His way.
 - But this Psalm teaches you confess that God's way is good—it is an excellent way—it is a desirable way.
- A. This is brought out in verse 10 where it describes what God's paths are like for those who keep His covenant...
1. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies!"
 - a. Every one of God's paths for you—if you belong to God—is designed to bring about good for you...
 - They are all subordinate to His loving purpose for you.
 - Every single path is all mercy and truth...
 - Not one path into which He leads you takes you in any other direction than to the goal of glory—of peace—of sanctification.
 - b. The word translated **mercy** is *hesed* which speaks of faithful covenant love.
 - and the word **truth** speaks of God's consistency with His promise—His being true to His purpose of blessing us.
 - Together these words make a strong affirmation that everything that God does concerning us is subordinate to His purpose of salvation for us.
 2. Now my brothers and sisters, this is extremely comforting!
 - Do you see what this means?
 - It means that if you are one who is truly in Christ—if you are walking faithfully in God's Covenant—
 - Then there is not one thing that comes into your life that is not designed to make you more like Jesus Christ—

- to bring you into God's ways—
 - to shape you as His child into His glorious image—
 - to draw you nearer to Himself!
- I did not say there will be no hard things...
 - Jesus said there would be much tribulation—
 - but you can be sure that all these things—no matter how difficult—are caught up in God's great purpose to bring you into His way...
 - No suffering he puts you through is unnecessary.
 - All His paths for you who keep His covenant are mercy and truth.
 - As the Apostle Paul put it in Romans 8:28,
 - God causes all things to work together for God to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose...
 - It is for you to fully trust that this is so!
 - It is for you to fully trust Him!
- B. The Psalm goes on to set forth the good that will come to you if you are one of the ones that the Lord teaches in His way...
1. In verse 12, it says that He will teach you in the way that He chooses...
 - a. God has a way that He wants His people to be...
 - He wants them to be conformed to the image of His Son...
 - That is the way He has chosen for us...
 - We each have a unique personality,
 - but we are each being shaped by God
 - to love as Christ loves,
 - to be holy as He is holy,
 - to worship as He worships,
 - to serve as He serves,
 - to walk as He walked,
 - to pray as He prayed
 - b. In Romans 8:28, when Paul says that God works all things together for good,
 - He explains that the good spoken of is that we might be conformed to the image of God's Son.

- You are being made like Jesus Christ if you are being taught in the way of the Lord—
 - If you are humble and see your need of salvation, and therefore rest in God’s provision through Christ for that salvation!
 - That is the way that God has chosen for you—and He is teaching you—guiding you—and shaping you into this good way.

TRANS> But this does not exhaust the good that God has for us.

2. In verse 12, we sing that the man God teaches will be made to dwell in prosperity.
 - a. This speaks of prosperity as your lodging place—the place where you dwell—the place that will be home for you...
 - b. And it is not just any sort of prosperity—it is prosperity from God Almighty!
 - He knows how to bless His creatures better anyone!
 - The prosperity He gives us will be wonderfully full and magnificent...
 - He does not give shabby gifts...
 - And this prosperity is, in its completeness, heaven!
 - The place where we will have pleasures forever more!
 - The place where there is feasting and never famine...
 - The place where sickness and poverty are no more...
 - The place where death and loss are not known!
 - But instead lasting fullness of all good and excellent things.
 - c. It is hard to even imagine what blessings we will know when divine power is directed toward our happiness...
 - Surely when we see it all, we will say as the Queen of Sheba said when she saw the glory of Solomon’s palace,
 - “The half was not told to me!”

TRANS> And brothers and sisters, God’s promise is not only for you, but also for your children...

3. You cannot bless them any more than you can bless yourself,
 - but the LORD says that the godly man’s descendents will inherit the earth!
 - a. This is really a parallel statement with the promise that we will dwell in prosperity...

- For you see, at the last day, the Lord is going to give the earth in its glorious new form to us and to our children!
 - The curse will be no more!
 - We will have full dominion over the earth once again—
 - Nature will be subject to us so that the ground will produce what it is supposed to produce, and the weather will do what we want it to do...
- b. And this blessing will be not only for us, but also for our children with us—if we keep God’s covenant.
- Throughout the scripture, the Lord promises to bless the children of His people along with His people...
 - He says, “The promise is to you and to your children.”
 - That is why it for you to have faith, not only that God will bless you, but also that He will bless your children...
 - This does not mean that they can never be cut off by unbelief...
 - This has always been so and it is still so...
 - but the promise is there for faith to receive and it is for us to trust the Lord for the salvation of our children as we do for our own salvation.

TRANS> So we have seen three good things that God’s way leads too...

- First, that He teaches us in the way that pleases Him—that He chooses...
 - Second, that He brings us into prosperity...
 - Third, that He brings our children into prosperity with us—giving us the earth as our inheritance...
 - And now I want you to see the fourth thing which I think is the best one of all...
4. If you are led in the way of God, verse 14 says that “His secret will be with you and that He will show you His covenant.”
- a. What does it mean when it says His secret will be with you?
- The Hebrew word translated **secret** in this verse has a broad meaning...
 - At the most basic level, it simply refers to an assembly,
 - but it is used more specially to refer to an assembly of friends who are intimate with each other,
 - and so it is also used to refer to counsel and the secrets that they share when they are together...

- In other words, they unveil themselves to one another...
 - The idea is that if you go in God's way, it will lead to intimacy with Him!
 - You will know Him!
 - You will see His glory!
 - You will behold the glory that Christ had with Him from before the foundation of the world!
 - There is no greater blessing than this!
 - This is the blessing that Christ craved for His people when He went to the cross, as recorded in His prayer in John 17...
 - Nothing pleased Him more than to know that we,
 - who are cut off from the glory of God by sin,
 - would at last behold that glory...
 - Jesus knew how wonderful that would be for us!
 - How it would delight us as it had delighted Him for all eternity!
 - He knew that there was nothing better for us than this!
- b. The parallel to having the secret of the Lord with us is that God will show us His covenant...
- This surely refers to what Paul prayed for in Ephesians when he prayed that we would know the love of Christ that passes all knowledge...
 - and that we would know the height and depth, and breadth of His love...
 - It is in God's covenant that we see just how great His love for us is—
 - so great that He sent His only Son to bear the curse for us...
 - We see how pure and holy He is—that He required so great a sacrifice.
 - We see how faithful He is—that He continued on the cross until our salvation was complete...
 - Brothers and sisters,
 - Don't you see?
 - As you go on in the way of the Lord,
 - you see more and more of His glory and of the glorious work that He has done for our salvation...
 - You see the richness and the fullness and the wonder of all.

TRANS> And so you see this morning that this Psalm shows you two things you can be sure of if you go in God's way—if you go after Jesus Christ...

- First that God will surely teach you in His way—He never rejects anyone who comes to be Him as a broken sinner to be redeemed by Christ...
- And second, that God's way will be good—it will lead to marvellous good if you follow it.

Conclusion

And so, my friends, there is but one reasonable thing for you to do!

- Fix your eyes upon the Lord Jesus, knowing that He will deliver you!
- When you sing verse 15 of this Psalm, you confess that this is so concerning you—unless you sing these words without meaning...
 - Psalm 25:11: “My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.”