

# The Word of God Brings Blessing II

*Psalms*

By Mike Stewart

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**Bible Text:** Palm 119:1-8  
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**Heritage Primitive Baptist Church**  
390 Johns Road Northwest  
Huntsville, Alabama 35806

**Website:** [www.heritagepbc.org](http://www.heritagepbc.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/heritagepbc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/heritagepbc)

The word in the alphabet of the Hebrew is Aleph and we're calling this message, "The Word of God Brings Blessing." We saw, first, that it keeps us undefiled and looked at the meaning of that word in relation to seeking God with a whole heart. Secondly, we looked at the result of seeking God that way is that they also do no iniquity, and then looked at the New Testament and what that really means is not that we don't sin anymore, but the power of canceled sin has been broken and the Spirit is with us on a pathway of faith and repentance and walking in the ways of the Lord as verse 3 expresses.

4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

When you read some of the Psalms, particularly the first three verses of the Psalms, the undefiled are walking in the way, they're walking in the law of the Lord, they're keeping testimonies, they're seeking with a whole heart, they're doing no iniquity, they're walking in the ways, they're keeping the commandments of the Lord diligently. The first thing you may think is this psalmist really has it all together. You think, "I don't appear to be like that at all." It would appear that this psalmist seems to be crossing every T and dotting every I. But right here at the beginning, he changes from third person plural to first person singular. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." The word reveals our need. If we're going to be the undefiled, walking in the way of the Lord, walking in his blessings, walking on the pathway of happiness for the soul, we've got to recognize our need for God, and the Word is what exposes our need. When you read the Bible and see the high commands of God, when you see how far above they are from us, when you see like the psalmist has seen, this is where I want to be, this is my desire, and I've experienced the grace of God, but I see myself so far from where I need to be. So he cries out with a plea to God right in the middle of this psalm that the Word brings the blessing of recognizing with honesty our deep need for God.

See, the gospel is a revelation of God's righteousness from faith to faith because the justified shall live by faith, so the gospel is not something you believe and then you move past because it's a revelation from one degree of faith to the next and the justified keep living by the same revelation. We keep unpacking the gospel. We keep seeing the benefits of the gospel, the revelation of God's righteousness, how it rescues us every day.

It delivers us. It transforms us. It sanctifies. It saves us. It helps us. It strengthens us. So when we receive the revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel, we come back to the place again and again where Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be bankrupt, to be impoverished is not to be poor with money in the bank. It's not to be poor, but I've got my house, I've got some assets. It's not to be really poor, but I've got some land I can sell. Poverty in Old Testament Israel, or in New Testament times, when Jesus spoke those words, the mendicant was someone that had no bank account, no property, no food on the table, and no one they could turn to like the beggar, blind Bartimaeus. The word beggar there means a mendicant. It means he had nothing and nowhere to turn. And so the blessing, again the word in the New Testament, means happy. The happiness of the impoverished is we're turning to no one but Christ alone and in that turning, the Word of God reveals to us how deeply we need Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Listen to the fifth strophe, verse 33. Just listen to the number of times the psalmist will make this known. Verse 33, "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes"; 34, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law"; 35, "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments"; 36, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies"; 37, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity"; 38, "Stablish thy word unto thy servant"; 39, "Turn away my reproach which I fear." Verse 133 of the same psalm the psalmist would write, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." So there's both a resolve, "I will keep thy commandments, I will keep your judgments, I will keep your statutes," with a recognition of a deep need for God in order to do what he calls us and the Word of God itself, the revelation of God in his high commands, is the very instrument that reminds us and shows us how much we need God himself.

It was Jesus in Matthew chapter 9, you'll remember when the Pharisees asked the disciples, "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" Jesus heard that and answered the question this way with a relationship between a doctor and a patient. He said, "They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick. Go and learn what this means. I will have mercy and not sacrifice because I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to the repentance." So Jesus answered to the Pharisees of why he's eating with publicans and sinners, the centerpiece of what he said is, "You don't know what this means that's why you're asking me this question. That's why you're wondering why I would spend time with sinners and publicans. This is something you don't know. You need to learn this, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." The word "will" means "I intend to. I am determined. I am resolved. I desire. I take delight and pleasure in having mercy."

Why does God in Christ delight to show mercy? Well, first of all, we know the Bible says he is aiming to exalt that mercy. His aim is to magnify the capstone of his nature, which Exodus 33 says it is his mercy that he will have, it is his compassion and his grace that he'll show freely to whomsoever he wills. So God's delight in magnifying his mercy is his delight in meeting the needs of sinners because when sinners get their needs met by Christ, God's mercy is magnified not by their sacrifices, right, that would go against God's design, God's delight, God's desire. He does not receive sacrifices. The Pharisees

were bringing their prescription to the doctor and asking the doctor, "Sign your name on my prescription of self-righteousness. What I want, here's what I need. You just sign it and approve me as I am." Well, they that are whole don't need a doctor but those that are sick, they need the physician.

Have you ever met someone that had an experience in the hospital where the nursing staff, the doctors were superb, and when they came out of the hospital, they did nothing but sing the praises and the worth of the staff in that hospital. Why? Because they met their needs. Whatever they needed in a medical sense, whatever was good for them, they met their need. They came when they called. They did what was necessary to meet the needs to bring about healing. Jesus is magnified when we see our need for him, and when we delight in the mercy of God, and that mercy meets our needs, like a doctor to a patient, we sing his praises, we sing his worth, we sing his glory. So the Word of God is going to be the instrument, and the psalmist experiences it himself. He's speaking all these things about God's commands and walking in them, and then he says in exclamation, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. You're demanding that I keep statutes. I want to keep statutes. My heart seeks you, but Lord, I need you. I need you." Is that your prayer? And that must be our prayer for 2024. "Lord, I want, I desire to be in your Word, to study your Word, to meditate on your Word. I desire to walk in your commandments. But Lord, I need you."

"O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." Are your ways directed toward God, or rather, do you feel a need for God's grace and mercy in order to walk in the very paths that God has called you to walk in? Beloved, you're never more whole in heart before God than at the time when you're completely wholly broken before God. You can hear kind of his brokenness. That's where I want to be. It was David in Psalm 51 that said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken heart, a broken and a contrite spirit thou wilt not despise. If you desired sacrifice, I would do it. If you delighted in burnt offerings, I would do that." God delights in mercy, not sacrifices.

So what are the sacrifices that God delights in? A broken and a contrite heart. An expression like the psalmist that says, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." Why is God delighted in a broken and a contrite heart? Why will he not despise such a heart? Because God's mercy, his grace, his glory, again, is going to be exalted through people that are broken. Now why is he broken? Because he understands in his sin with Bathsheba what was the problem. He didn't need God. He despised God's commandments, which means he thought little of God. When Nathan said, "You've despised the commandment of the Lord," we learn through this psalm that he despised God himself because the commandment is a revelation of who God is and he turned his heart away to idols. And so through that brokenness, David says that God's delight, God's pleasure is in a kind of brokenness that says, "I know I need to be there, I need to be here, but I'm not. So Lord, I'm crying out, whether in repentance, whether in forgiveness, whether in help and rescue, I'm crying out for the gospel that you would direct my ways to keep thy statutes." And the God of this psalm, the God of the Bible, hears such prayers. He builds up Zion with such people.

And so when we go to the Word of God and we feel that need, that is still in the pathway of a whole heart that's seeking God because we're coming under the revelation of God, the authority of God, the Word of God, and we're experiencing from that revelation our deep need of Jesus Christ. It's that hymn we sing that says,

"I need Thee every hour  
Most gracious Lord  
No tender voice like Thine  
Can peace afford

I need Thee every hour  
Stay Thou nearby  
Temptations lose their power  
When Thou art nigh

I need Thee every hour  
In joy or pain  
Come quickly and abide  
Or life is vain

I need Thee, O I need Thee  
Every hour I need Thee  
O bless me now..."

According to the Psalm 119, "O make me happy now." How would that happen?

"... my Savior  
I come to Thee"

So how is the psalmist coming to God? How is the songwriter expressing that he comes to God? He's bringing his need to God on the basis of what God has revealed in Scripture and that need is brought to Christ and then what happens? Jesus dwells with us there. He dwells with us in our need. That's why he's with publicans and sinners, because his grace is going to be glorified through their need, not their sacrifice.

So beloved, put away your sacrifices as the basis of coming to God and David says, when we come with that need before God, whether it's the need for forgiveness or help or strength or rescue in the gospel, what does then David say? How will God respond to a broken and a contrite spirit? "Do good in thy good pleasure. Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then thou shalt be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness." When? When we bring our need to God. What flows out of our needs being met, our souls being blessed, our souls being like a well-watered garden, then God is pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness because then the sacrifices are flowing out of a relationship of a patient to a physician, of a sinner to a Savior, of a poor man to a rich man, and that symbolism expresses the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So beloved, when we read the Word of God, we should expect to feel a deeper need for Christ because the deeper our need, the more our growth. What is sanctification? Sanctification is knowing the day after more than the day before that I need Jesus more than I ever knew or the next week or the next month. Do you feel today more of your need for Christ than you did a year ago or two years ago? Well, in the Bible, that is growth. That gives God pleasure.

Next. The Word defends us from shame. This is how we're blessed by the Word of God. So then in verse 6, and it connects with verse 5, the psalmist says,

6 Then I shall not be ashamed [when?] when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

So you see the then and when relationship. Then, points back to verse 4, when I'm keeping precepts, when I'm pleading to God for help to direct me in his statutes, then shame is lifted. When does that happen? When I have respect unto all thy commandments. Shame could come in two directions in the Bible, at least two. One is outside of us. Hebrews 12:2, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame. That shame, or the attempt to shame him was from outside of himself. He was bearing shame and scoffing rude. They were heaping shame upon him, but it didn't work because he thought little of the shame, simply because he thought little of himself, and he was thinking of God. But the direction I think the psalmist is speaking of here is shame within us. It's the shame of a conscience that is condemning us from within side of us.

So then shall I not be ashamed, when? When I'm having respect or I'm looking to all the commandments of God. See? When your conscience is condemning you, it's because you're actively in disobedience or passively neglecting God's Word. That's when you ignore the signal of conscience. When your conscience is not shaming you, then you're listening to conscience, which is an ally to faith, and when the conscience says, "Hey, you're talking about that, but you're not doing it." Okay, you hear the voice of conscience. Or the conscience says, "Hey, you're doing something wrong here," and you know it's wrong. Okay, then you move out in obedience to the good conscience, the conscience that's been purged by the blood of Christ because it's an ally to faith. What's happening? Shame is lifting. What happens when you ignore conscience? Then shame comes from the conscience condemning us.

But notice he says, "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments." That's really key, isn't it? If it's not all God's commandments, maybe it's selective obedience. Are you the kind of person that would be selective in your obedience? And if you are selective in your obedience, what is the root of that obedience? You can illustrate it like a child, right? A child is all about selective obedience. They're going to select the commands they want to obey based on what? Their own will. "I command you this day, you go to the table, you sit down and I'm going to feed you whatever food you want. Your wish is my command." Now, tell one command to your child that is not in harmony with their will and you will hear it very quickly.

So selective obedience in reality is no obedience at all, is it? Because it's really living life according to your own will and not God's will, God's ways, God's pleasures, God's statutes, God's precepts. That's when the conscience is going to condemn us because we're actively disobeying God in a selective way, choosing the commandments that are okay and the ones we don't like, we're disinterested. We could illustrate that as adults, right? "I don't mind going to church once a week, Sunday morning, and listening to a little singing, and hearing some preaching but don't ask me to do anything else." What is that? That's life according to me. That's not obedience at all because the root of my obedience is really, if I like what God says, if I'm okay with what he commands, then I'm okay with doing it but if his will is against my will, then I want to do what is right in my own eyes or according to my own ways. And so that is when conscience is not going to lift with regard to shame.

Now listen to 1 Peter, how Peter speaks about a good conscience and how it works with regard to our confession of faith or confession of hope. This is in 1 Peter 3:15. He would say, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Here's a participle, "Having a good conscience." Why? So "that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." So there's a confession of hope that someone asked you about. This confession of hope, you want it to be coupled with a good conscience and a good conversation. In 1 Peter 1, a good conversation is a holy conversation. It's a holy lifestyle.

So if your confession of hope, if your confession of faith is not coupled with a good conscience and a good conversation, when they accuse you falsely, in reality, the accusation is what? It's not false, it's true. Right? See, when you don't have a good conscience, the accusation sticks. See, I've been talking about my hope. I talk about the commands of God. I talk about my faith in Christ. But then when somebody accuses me of evil doing, if it's true, I don't have a good conscience because I'm not listening to the conscience that's telling me. You know you're not walking in a lifestyle of hope, but you talk about your hope. You know you're not living a life of faith, but yet you keep talking about a life of faith, and now what's happening? Shame. You're captured by shame because you don't have a good conscience and you don't have a good conversation. But now what happens here, when you do have a good conscience and you do have a good conversation, they are ashamed because they falsely accuse you. Your conscience justifies you and tells you you're on the right track. You've been aligning yourself with the Word of God through faith and repentance and when I tell you something is wrong regarding a commandment, you adjust. Or if I tell you you're neglecting something, you keep adjusting to all the commandments of God. This is not perfection. It's just the pathway of wholeness. So what does the conscience do? Justifies you, and the shame is heaped upon the accuser specifically because it's false. It's false.

So the psalmist says, "Then will I not be ashamed." Alright, so the Word of God that blesses us, we're reading it, we're studying it, we're looking to the commandments of God, and the shame lifts by the Word of God when? "When I look to all his commandments." If I'm not looking to them all, which doesn't mean I know all

commandments, it just means when I learn of those commandments and God's will, I'm looking to that. When I'm not, the shame is not lifted. We're captured in shame because the conscience that's been purged by the Holy Spirit, when working properly, informed by the Word of God, not by your conscience being your guide, the Word of God informing it, it's communicating, 'Hey, that's not the way of God's will or this is the way of God's will," and so the shame is lifted by means of the Word of God because we are looking to all the commandments of God. Is your obedience selective? Imperfect, many flaws, even in our obedience, there are some flaws, always there, notwithstanding, you want to look to all the commandments, because all are good, all are the will of God, and all are good and bring the blessed life.

And then lastly, in our text, the psalmist ends with these verses. I'll read verse 6 again.

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. 7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

So finally, the Word then leads us to praise. Leads us to praise. The shame is lifted. We're having respect to all the commandments as a matter of lifestyle. It's continuous lifestyle. And then, "I will praise you with a rightness of heart." The heart that's seeking God, the heart that is seeking fulfillment in God now is the heart that bursts forth into praise.

The phrase "praise and worship" in our current culture of Christianity is shorthand for good music and feeling good, isn't it? "I had good praise and worship." Now, for the record, I am not against good singing, good music, and feeling good, but it needs to be the feeling good that is based on God's Word. And I know I've had times when I felt good and probably thought it was from God's Word and it was just my own feel good, and you probably have had some of the same experiences. So, I do not oppose, we should not oppose praise and worship where there's good singing and there's a good feel based on what? Revelation. This is what we've been talking about. But here's the question, how does praise and worship happen? If you were to ask me, "Brother Mike, if the singing's good and we feel good about the singing, what is going to be the basis of authentic worship?" When I learned your statutes. If there's praise and worship without any learning or knowing, well then it's not based on the revelation. When will I praise thee with uprightness of heart? When I shall have learned your righteous judgments.

Now we come full circle again to that word law or instruction. So many times in our society of microwave ovens and quick comforts and conveniences, we want to bypass the learning experience. "Just zap me and make me feel good. Let's have praise and worship." No, it's through the mind. It's through learning that we experience God by revelation, praise and worship. That's why Paul told the preacher Timothy, "Consider what I say and the Lord give you understanding in all things." To think about it and think about it hard and the Lord works through natural thinking, just like you think with your brain, over the text, over the Bible, and you get the meaning from the text, and you need to present the text to the people, it's through thinking Paul says that you're going to have

this understanding, and it's through learning, the psalmist says, you're going to be thankful, you're going to laud God, you're going to praise him, and your singing will be authentic.

Have you ever sung a song without worship? I just can't tell you how many times, right? You ever just the words are just pumping and you thought, "What was I even singing? I don't even remember singing." We all as sinners have that experience. That's not a condemnation, that's just a reality of where we are as sinners but when would we have an authentic kind of singing and worship and when praise is falling off our lips and thanksgiving in a way that is genuine, where we feel good? It's when we're learning the revelation. So Jesus says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find," what? "Rest for your soul." Well, see, we want to bypass the learning. "Give me the rest. Give me the peace. Give me the comfort." He said, "Learn about me by revelation."

Are you learning about Jesus? 2 Timothy 3:14, Paul told Timothy that "from a child you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ." He knew them. He said "continue in the things which you've learned, being assured of whom you've learned them from." He knew scripture because he'd learned them and at some point in time in Timothy's life, he knew them in a different way. He'd learned them by the Holy Spirit, and the revelation became a treasure to him.

Now what's he to do? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," which means Psalm 119. It's referring to the Old Testament scripture. The New Testament is inspired too. But at that time it was being collected by the writings of Paul and the apostles and prophets and by his preaching that was being recorded. So "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine." The word doctrine means teaching and instruction. So all scripture, including Psalm 119, is meant to be taught, instructed, learned, heard, thought about, and applied, we'll see.

It's "profitable for doctrine, for reproof," which means to bring conviction. The psalmist experiences conviction throughout this psalm. We experience our need, we experience conviction, reproof. The imagery there is kind of being bowed over but then the next word, "correction" means to stand upright. See, the Word of God and the revelation of God doesn't leave us just bowed over in conviction, then it stands us upright when we're what? Corrected and then we are instructed or trained in righteousness. Training. The Word of God is our training book. It's training us in the ways of God, in the revelation of God, in God's revelation of his glory through redemptive history and the ways of God are going to train us as we, what? Apply the Word of God. "That you may be perfect, complete, thoroughly furnished, equipped unto every good work." Now there's application. All of that is bringing us to the place where we're equipped then to do good works or the will of God.

So, "I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned," which means authentic worship comes through knowing, understanding, thinking, and learning. I'm not



gonna say that you can't ever spontaneously experience worship, but it'll still be through what you learned, what you know about God, what you think about God, what God has revealed to us through scripture and through the law of the Lord, the testimonies of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the judgments of the Lord, which are all about the Lord. And then he finishes with this in verse 8, "I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly." So we end with a resolution and so we begin the first Sunday of 2024 with a resolution, "I will keep. I will keep thy statutes." We sing the song, "I will keep thy judgments all." That's resolution. Here's a resolution for all of us in 2024, "I will, I'm determined, I'm resolved to observe your statutes, all of them."

Now there's a confession. You can hear it in his plea. "I will keep your statutes: O forsake me not utterly." What's the confession? I can't unless you enable me. Right? I can't do this. I'm resolved. I'm determined. I will keep your statutes. "O forsake me not utterly," his confession is, I cannot keep them unless you enable me but grace is an enabler, isn't it? God is an enabler through grace. He works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So you have sufficient grace. He gives more grace. You have grace within, you have grace in the Word. God mediates his grace through the Word and so he is the great enabler to keep the statutes which he commands so we confess together in 2024, "I cannot unless you enable me," and we find throughout the Bible that God is working in us that which is pleasing in his own sight as we, what? Go to the revelation. Go to where God is given this means that's going to bring grace in our lives in sanctification through faith as we trust and go to the book, God's Word.

Then his plea is "forsake me not utterly." Now I don't think his concern is that God is going to ultimately forsake him and he's going to lose his salvation. Hebrews 13 tells us he will never leave us nor forsake us and the psalmist was sure of that as you read some of the words of Psalm 119. But his resolve is coupled with faith and grace. So his confession and admission that he cannot do this without God is now a request. It's as if the writer is thinking of that hymn, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart. O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above." He knows he's resolved, he's committed, but he also knows he has a tendency, like a sheep, prone to wander. You ever feel that tendency? You ever feel strongly in your affections and in your soul a great desire for God and a commitment to resolve, to do whatever his Word says and then you realize in that moment, maybe just shortly after, how prone you are, how prone I am to wander, to neglect. the Word of God.

So this final plea of this first strophe of eight verses, all 22 having eight verses, is looking with this resolve to the grace of God for God will not utterly forsake you, and God is determined to be with you. And so the plea of the psalmist is actually a promise of God, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the age." So may God bless us in this new year to be resolved to walk in his way, to look to all his commandments, to seek the happy life, not in the things we possess, not in events and activities, although there is a measure of enjoyment that God gives us in it. We know those will fade quickly. We know they're only temporary. And if we know that, then we'll be seeking with a whole heart the glory of God, seeking with a whole heart through the revelation, the blessings, the happiness that we find in Christ alone. May the Queen of Sheba rise up in our

generation and say about this church, "O how happy are your servants, how happy are the people of God who hear the wisdom of a greater than Solomon," because beloved, he is here.

Let's pray.

*Father, thank you for the great wisdom you've put in your Word. It's not a wisdom that's disconnected from you. It's not just principles of ways and things we should put in life to make good decisions. It's your will. It's a revelation of your glory. It's what you desire. It's who you are. And it's the life that we should live in relation to walking in the way of the Lord, in the instruction of God, in what you've revealed to us through scripture. And Lord, we thank you for revealing it. We know that flesh and blood did not reveal it to Simon Peter but you revealed it to him as you reveal it to all. We know you hide the gospel from the wise and the prudent because they glory in their own wisdom, but you revealed it unto babes because it gives you pleasure in your own eyes. Thank you, Lord, for revealing it to us. May we be what the metaphor applies, like children or babes that glory in the strength and the power and the wisdom of another and not ourselves, and may we in 2024 be resolved to keep your Word by your grace, your enabling power and we say with the psalmist, "O Lord, forsake us not utterly." In Jesus' name we pray.*