

Series: Psalms

Title: When our Soul Cleaves to Dust

Text: Ps 119: 25-32

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Psalm 119: 25: DALETH. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word. 26: I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. 27: Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. 28: My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. 29: Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. 30: I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me*. 31: I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. 32: I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

God sees all things. He looks upon the heart. All things are open before him. But God our Father has a chosen people. It is a people who have found grace in his sight. He gave them to his Son in eternity. He looks upon them in Christ. He does not look upon them as standing alone in self. If so his just anger would be upon us. But God our Father beholds his children always, only, forever in his Son. To those he has quickened to believe on Christ, beholding us in his Son, the apostle says, "Ye are complete in him." (Col.2:10)

We are bought with the precious blood of Christ. By the Spirit and the word we are washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Grace has robed us in his Son's perfect righteousness. We are loved with immutable, everlasting love in his Son. Child of God, he does not look upon you in your flesh but in his Son! The child of his grace is created anew in the righteousness and holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ!

But there are times when we simply cannot set our affection on Christ above. That is the state David was in. David is a regenerated, sanctified believer here. By God choosing David, David says in verse 30, "*I have chosen the way of truth [Christ the Way, the Truth and Life]: thy judgments have I laid before me. 31: I have stuck unto thy testimonies.*" He is a believer sanctified by God. But he is still a sinner.

CONFESSION OF SIN AND INABILITY

Psalm 119: 25: My soul cleaveth unto the dust:...26: I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me:

David confesses to God his sin and inability. He has not gone to an earthly priest but he has gone to our great High Priest and laid before him all his ways. His evil, wicked ways. His wandering ways. His cold, indifferent ways. His proud ways. The way of his words. The way of his thoughts. His cares, his fears, his troubles. Everything David knew about himself (and it is always far worse than we know) he confessed to God. "*I have declared my ways*"

He confessed to God, "*My soul cleaveth unto the dust.*" We love the psalms because we hear a fellow believer experiencing the very same things we experience. We hear them crying to God the very same cries we cry. The "eth" means ongoing. This is a believer who sees himself as doing nothing but holding on to the dust. Spurgeon said, "[It was] an affair of his inmost spirit...and it was not a casual and accidental falling into the dust, but a continuous and powerful tendency, or cleaving to the earth." Dust is the place of death. Our Substitute said in Psalm 22, "Thou has brought me into the dust of death." David confesses, "My soul cleaveth to death" He felt worse than cold, he felt dead. Dust is the place of weakness. What is weaker than dust? God made man of the dust. Our flesh is dust and shall return to the dust due to sin.

Job 4: 18: Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: 19: How much less *in* them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation *is* in the dust, *which* are crushed before the moth?

Genesis 18:27: And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am* but dust and ashes:

David confessed his inability to obey God as he wanted. He confessed his sins and iniquities. He confessed his need for God to teach him and make him go the way he should go. He cried, "*teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:...I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" This shows the work of the Holy Spirit in David. He has a new heart and a new will. David wills to run the way of God's precepts, to please God.

But he confesses his own sin and weakness and inability apart from Christ his Strength. As Paul said, "to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom 7: 18-19). This proves God had begun a work of grace in the heart. This is not the "doctrine of depravity." This is the child of God knowing he is the sinner in need of God's grace and power to make him obey God.

David is heavy, "*My soul melteth for heaviness.*" He was like candle to a flame. He felt as if his soul was melting because he knew he had no strength or stability within, except by the presence of Christ in his heart.

THE PLEA FOR GRACE

Psalm 119: 25: My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word...28: My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

This is David's plea for God's grace. David knows he cannot quicken himself. He begs God to quicken him. When we are weak then are we strong and we see why (2 Cor 12: 7-10). David knows he has no strength and is casting all his care on the Lord. This is when we are strong, when we are absolutely dependent upon the Lord Jesus to be our Strength. David has been regenerated by God. He has spiritual life or else he would not be making this plea. But he knows he cannot quicken himself, enliven himself, renew himself.

There is no spiritual life for a dead sinner but by the Spirit of God quickening us. And for the believer already born-anew, there is no quickening but by the Spirit of our Lord. Even to see himself this way was of the Lord. Regeneration is a one-time work of the Holy Spirit. But the sinner quickened to spiritual life needs the Lord to continue to quicken us. We need God to renew us day-by-day (2 Cor 4: 16). We are as dependent upon God to renew us as we are for God to first regenerate us to spiritual life. He believed the Lord Jesus Christ alone could save him. David even confessed faith in the Lord in that he believed "*thou heardest me.*" These two things are vital: to know our total inability and to know Christ is all our Strength.

God gives more grace (Ja 4: 6). The Lord Jesus will be our Strength. The Spirit will quicken. David confessed his soul cleaveth to the dust. And God knows. Christ knew no sin but he knows the weakness of our flesh. He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He said, "The spirit, indeed, is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). God pities his children.

Psalm 103: Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14: For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

Due to the fact our Lord Jesus tasted the dust of death for his people because he bore the curse and redeemed his people, he will not make us go on our belly in the dust like the serpent. Since Christ is our Righteousness, our Life--our Sanctifier and our Sanctification--he will hear and answer this plea for new mercies. He put it in our heart in the first place.

Are you the poor and needy beggar needing the Lord to raise you from the dust? Here is the good news:

Psalm 113: 7: He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; 8: That he may set *him* with princes, *even* with the princes of his people.

Psalm 71:20: *Thou*, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

THE PLEA FOR GOD TO TEACH

Ps 119: 26...teach me thy statutes. 27: Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works....29: Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

He asked God to be his teacher. David prays for God to give him understanding. He asks for a renewed revelation of Christ. He wants every false imagination in his flesh removed from him. His desire is for God to teach him the gospel again.

David asks, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts." The Way of all God's precepts is Christ. Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The law God graciously grants to his child is not the law of the ministration of sin and death--the ten commandments. That law had done its work in David. It is why he saw that his soul cleaves to the dust of death. He needs to hear that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"--the gospel of Christ (Rom 8: 1-2).

The one Way David, and all God's elect, were made the righteousness of God is by Christ's obedience. This is the good news we long to hear. We long for God to teach us in the heart again and again. David longs to be quickened with the word of the gospel again. He longs for Christ to enlarge his heart and speak the good news in power into his heart.

David cannot stop cleaving to the dust. But he knew that when God quickened him, when God taught him, he would. He said, "*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" Christ speaks the command into the heart in power, saying,

John 14: 1: Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me....6...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me

By his grace, the Lord quickens and enlarges the heart by speaking this reviving word into the soul. The Sun of Righteousness shines forth through the darkness and heals us by his beams. The Great Physician applies his soul healing ointment. It is impossible not to believe on Christ when he enlarges the heart and turns our affection to him. Then we run in the way of his commandment. Christ commands,

John 15: 3: Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me

God commands us "to love one another." "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13:34). But we find ourselves cleaving to the dust. We become offended. We become full of bitterness, wrath, clamor, evil speaking. We cleave to our old man of dust. We cannot even pretend to love. We cannot quicken ourselves out of this dust.

But the Spirit of our merciful, gracious, loving Redeemer quickens our heart. He shows us God's love in our Substitute bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. He shows how we had forgiveness in him before as yet he ever made us know it. He forgave us for Christ's sake before we asked him. He renews you to behold he has forgiven all our trespasses against him, even our present sins of cleaving to the dust again.

He enlarges our understanding of his dying love for us. He renews us to know how he has removed our transgression from us as far east is from the west. He reveals again how God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. Again God teaches us how he has made us one with him and our brethren so that we are inseparably united in the same Righteousness by the Same Holy Spirit. We are given one faith, the same faith, in the same Redeemer. We are each in the household of our one heavenly Father. His word enlarges our heart. With the commandment comes the power to love as he loved us. Then we can even love and forgive our enemies when he does this work anew in us.

We can try and try to put off the old man and put on the new. But all we do is cleave to the dust. It takes this renewing of our minds by the Spirit of Christ. The believer is often cleaving to the dust, shut up, cold and dead. But by God's grace, he makes this misery to us. It grieves us and troubles that we cannot run in the way of God's commandments.

But then our Savior graciously grants us the gospel by his quickening power. He enlarges our heart. He strengthens our souls. He causes us to run the race he has set before us. This is our rejoicing in Christ, our happiness.

May he keeps us praying as David did here, "Precious Savior! Give me grace to lie low in the dust before you, convinced that I am nothing and less than nothing! Keep me knowing that I can do nothing except by Christ my Strength. Make us look to you, alone, for all our need. Speak the commandment and give us grace to behold your face."

It was by God renewing David that he was given these precious words concerning our Savior. This is where Christ brings us when he renews us to behold him.

Psalm 18: 2: The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

Psalm 27:1: The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Psalm 28:7: The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

Psalm 118:14: The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

Amen!