

**Psalm 119: 145-152; "The Cry of the True Believer", A Communion
Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on July 6th, 2008,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

All of these 26 sections of Psalm 119 are dealing with the subject of the importance and the preciousness of the Word of God to the true believer. Each of them represents a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet, and each section consists of eight verses. Each of the 8 verses of each section begins with that letter of the Alphabet that it falls under. In this nineteenth section, the Koph or the letter K section, we find a man; we suppose him to be King David, praying and crying out to God. From the verses that we have read we should understand that here we are listening to a man who desperately wants to be a holy man of God. In this he represents the desire of every one of God's people, both New Testament and Old. He knows that he cannot be holy without God's Almighty power working in his heart and life. In order to make progress in holiness every true believer learns to cry out to God for greater measures of grace and help to do what will please God. We who are New Testament believers have come to understand that all the grace and all the help that any person will ever need to be holy is found in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was perfect in obedience to God's Word and perfect in holiness. He was perfect, but we are not; but that is why we come to observe the Lord's Supper once again today. We know that we need Him to be holy. And now that we have come to know Him, we know that He would have us to be holy and obedience servants of God as well.

These verses are teaching us that to become more holy and obedient we must learn to pray in the way that these verses describe. We are going to see that Christ Himself prayed in the way that these verses describe, and when He did so, He had His requests answered in relation to His own obedience to God's Word. So what I want to do this morning is to take the words of David the Psalmist and apply them to the experience of the Lord Jesus and to our own experience. The question that we are asking this morning is this. Based upon the prayers of David, what did the Lord Jesus pray for then, that He would have us to pray for now, if we would become holy even as He is holy? 1st of all - He would have us to pray earnestly to be able to keep God's Word. 2nd - He would have us to pray earnestly in order to apply God's Word. And then 3rdly - He would have us to pray earnestly in order to be faithful to God's Word, even when surrounded by wicked men.

1st of all - The Lord Jesus would have us to pray earnestly to be able to keep God's Word. (Verses 145 and 146)

"I cry out with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord!" "I will keep your statutes." "I cry out to You; save me, and I will keep Your testimonies." I want you to take notice of what these words say. The kind of praying that David engaged in here was the prayer of crying. It is not a simple statement or a casual desire of the heart, that is being talked about here. A cry is that sound which is uttered out of

the deepest feelings of our hearts. It is that sound which comes from ardent and vehement desire. A baby or a child cries because it really senses and feels deeply its need. It cries because it knows that it cannot live, it cannot obtain what it desires without crying to its mother for it. So too, this is the reason that the true Christian cries. He really senses and feels deeply his need of God's assistance and God's help. But notice, too, that verse 145 says that the cry of the Psalmist is made with his heart. It is the heart cry that God listens to. It is not just any cry that God will hear, when He chooses to hear your prayers. It is the cry of one who is troubled; yes. But it is the cry of a heart that wants to do what God commands, and to be delivered from what God opposes. God opposes sin and He opposes sinners; but He will deliver those who call upon Him in truth. He will deliver them from their own sin and he will deliver them from the influences of sinful men. Turn over to Psalm 34, verse 15 with me. It says there, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." "The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles." "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit." Let me ask you if you have this kind of a spirit? If you have this kind of a spirit, you can cry out to God for the forgiveness of your sins and find them all taken away. If you have this kind of spirit, you can cry out to God and the Lord will deliver you from all of your troubles.

The reason that a person first cries out unto the Lord may not be for salvation from sin. It might be because they are afraid of dying, of being killed in some natural disaster or war, or some other trouble that they feel threatens their physical life. They are like the mariners in the book of Jonah. Turn with me to Jonah Chapter 1. After Jonah decided that he was not going to obey the Lord's commandment to him to go down to Nineveh and preach to them, and cry out against it because of their wickedness; he arose to flee to Tarshish. He thought that he could run away from the Lord. Verse 3 says, "But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." He didn't pray about what he did. How can a man pray when he is trying to flee from God's presence? He went down in the hold and went to sleep. But the Lord knew how to bring Jonah to conviction of his personal sin. The Lord hurled a great storm upon the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. It says in verse 5 that "the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god." "They threw the cargo the was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load." This is the reason that people pray sometimes. They are afraid of dying. They are afraid of dying because their physical life is all that they know. They are pretty sure that they are sinners in some ways, and so to ease their conscience and make up for the bad things, the sinful things that they think that they have done, they throw overboard their cargo; their bad habits. And they turn to earnestly to prayer. They have their own conception of religion, their own gods, but they do not know the true and living God. Their crying to their own gods did not help them.

So the captain of the ship goes down to Jonah who was sleeping and he says to him in verse 6, "What do you mean, sleeper?" "Arise and call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish." Now this is something that we need to consider this morning as well. Prayer is pleading with God to consider us. But a Christian, a believing man, as Jonah was, can also fall into a state where he does not want to do God's will. And he doesn't see his need at all to call upon God or cry to Him because he has certain personal prejudices against a certain person or a group of people. And he doesn't want to see them shown mercy from God. Rather, he would have them to know God's judgment. This was the case with Jonah. After the captain and the men on the ship cast lots to know for whose cause the trouble of the storm had come upon them, the lot fell to Jonah. When the captain of the ship woke Jonah up, he asked him in verse 8, "For whose cause is this trouble upon us?" "What is your occupation?" "And what is your country?" "And of what people are you?" "So he said to them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." "Then," it says, "the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, 'Why have you done this?' "For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them." I think that we need to pause and consider, the Christians among us here this morning, if we understand that trouble can come to ourselves and trouble can come to other people around us, and trouble can come to even our whole society because of our personal disobedience and our unwillingness to pray about it. Yes, it is so. Why does this happen? It is because either we are not willing or not wanting to cry out to God with our whole heart. This is not holiness even though we may say that we fear God.

So then the men say to Jonah in verse 11, "Then what shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?" "For the sea was very tempestuous." By the way, this is also the way our heart is when sin is at work in it. "And he said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you.'" "For I know that this great tempest is because of me." "Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them." Now look at how these pagan men suddenly learned to pray in the right way. Verse 14- "Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, 'We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.'" "So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raging." "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows." I would say that they had truly been taught the fear of God that day. But what about you and I? Do we fear the Lord as we come to the Lord's table today? For God truly sees our hearts, our lives, and all of our obedience or disobedience. And He will deal with us accordingly.

Now let me speak to you about our Savior who is compared to Jonah in the New Testament. He is compared to him in his death and burial for 3 days and nights in the belly of the fish. But O how different they are in their going after

obedience. Our Lord Jesus Christ was a man who cried out with His whole heart. "Hear me, O Lord!" "I will keep Your statutes." He was not disobedient like Jonah. His was a perfect and true hearted obedience. When God the Father sent Him to a fallen, sinful world to preach to them repent and believe in the gospel; He went. Jonah would rather see the Ninevites judged. But the Lord Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come into the world to judge the world but that the World might be saved through Him." But before He went to cross, He cried out to God with strong cries and tears, crying out to God who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His godly fear it says in Hebrews 5: 7. But the Lord was not pleased to deliver Him from death, the death of the cross. Jonah cried out from the belly of the great fish which God had prepared to swallow him and keep him alive. And the Lord delivered him. Jesus cried out from the lowest depths of dread of the cross that awaited Him, but God, although He heard Him, He did not hear His cries for deliverance. That is because the Father was delivering Him up for us all. This is what you and I have come to the Lord's table to remember once again. It is because Jesus cried out to God with all of His in order to be able to keep God's Word, that you and I have the salvation from sin, the deliverance from the wrath of God, and His mighty help to us when men become our enemies. When we cry to God for help and grace to keep God's Word, God remembers Jesus and hears our cries.

2ndly - The Lord Jesus would have us to pray earnestly to apply the Word of God to every situation in our life. (Verses 147 and 148)

"I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word." "My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word." The Lord Jesus Himself is the ultimate fulfillment of these verses. We read in Mark 1: 35 that He "having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." We hear of His example and sometimes we do not believe that we can follow Him in it. Sometimes I wonder if you and I as Christians have really understood what the implications are, of having the Holy Spirit in our heart and in our life. We have one who is constantly with us, who is the representative of the Father and the Son, but One who is no less a full associate in the Deity of the Godhead than those who sent Him. And He is there observing you. He is there as "your Helper", the One given to you by the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to be our helper in prayer, and out of those prayers hope comes to our heart in relation to our being able to keep the Word of God. God is going to help us to apply the truth of His Word to every situation of our life. This begins with prayer, but out of prayer, the Spirit brings us to the hope that His power and grace will lead us to a sincere obedience to Him. This is a sure hope because it is based upon His promise of help. When we hope in His Word, we deliberately engage in further meditation upon it; even day and night. Turn with me to Romans Chapter 8. Here in Romans 8 we find out how essential it is that we consider the Holy Spirit in relation to our prayers and our obedience. "There is therefore now no

condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." There it is; the Christian lives His life "according to the Spirit." He lives His whole Christian life by Christ's being in Him; Christ's Spirit working His grace into me, leading me according to a plan, providentially ordering, then leading me and guiding me by His providence so that because of His help, I come to a sincere obedience to Christ. I am not left to go about trying to obey God's holy law in my own strength or according to my own determination. It is not that I do not love God's holy law, if I am a Christian. If I look over to verse 22 of Chapter 7, I find these words which are characteristic of all true believers in Jesus Christ. "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man." "But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." "O wretched man that I am!" This is what happens to us when we go about trying to keep God's law in our own strength. We fail repeatedly and we are sad and downcast and grieved that we are such disobedient children. We confess our sins and God forgives those sins because of Jesus, but have we really learned the lesson of crying to God for help that we would not constantly remain in that God-dishonoring condition?

Have you experienced this in terms of your obedience? You must have the Spirit's help and power to have the victory over sin and self. In Chapter 7, verse 18 it says, "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." But in Chapter 8 we find the glorious solution to this predicament. Jesus Christ came and He has set me free from the law of sin and death by condemning sin in the flesh. He did this by His perfect obedience to God's holy law. His righteous fulfillment of the law became the basis of the righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled in me. This is something that you and I should give Him great and everlasting thanksgiving for. It is what we come to remember in the Lord's Supper. But how is the requirement of the law fulfilled in me? It is fulfilled it says in verse 4 when I walk according to the Spirit. And what does that mean? It means that in every situation of my life I must learn to distinguish between what is carnal and what is spiritual in my thinking and my actions in relation to what God has commanded. Then, He, the Holy Spirit, will so work in my heart and mind in accordance with my reading and meditation upon the Word of God that I will come in time to a more sincere obedience, an obedience which is an obedience of faith; faith that Christ is my helper, and His Spirit is going to give me the power to have the victory over my habits of sin. I will learn how to deal with the fleshly part of myself. Verse 12 says, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to

the flesh." "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." "For as many as are led of the Spirit of God, these are the Sons of God." The flesh and the Spirit are continually at odds with each other in our lives as Christians. You must come to understand that you are being led by the Spirit of God and He expects you to follow. How do you follow? You follow by putting to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit. The "deeds of the body are those things which you think, do, and say that are contrary to God's law and the principles of truth which are found in the Bible. When you are led by the Spirit you follow the motions and impulses of Christ's grace that He places in your heart by communicating with the triune God in prayer. You do this in conjunction with the principles of truth and grace that Christ Himself has given to you in His blessed Word. You see how far beyond a mere outward obedience this is.

Look and you will see the root of the difference in verse 15. "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" A spirit of bondage comes from being under the law as a covenant of works; we are convicted by the law as sinners who see ourselves not fulfilling it in the way that God commands and requires. This leads to fear. A fear of God punishing us as we so richly deserve to be punished. A fear that He does not and cannot love us in this state, which leads us then to draw back from Him instead of drawing near to Him. But because of Jesus Christ, and what He has done on the cross; we can draw near to God. And what is still more exciting is the thought that when we received the Holy Spirit, we received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit's presence and power working in our hearts convince us that we are children of God. "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." And when you look over to verse 26 you find that the Spirit is the One who helps us in our prayers. "Likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses." "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The Spirit makes intercession by taking the prayers of our heart, which He is very familiar with, if we are regularly engaged in prayer, and brings them before the Father and the Son. He faithfully represents our state of mind, our deepest feelings, and the groaning of our souls which could not be expressed any better than by what the Spirit Himself communicates to the Father and the Son. Then it says, "Now He who searches the hearts (that is Christ) knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according the will of God." That is, Christ's intercession makes our prayers acceptable for His sake. He has suffered for us. He has died on the cross for us. Our prayers are dipped in His precious blood and the merits of Christ's righteousness and His sufferings are applied to all our prayers. Then the answer to our prayers is given which is according to the will of God.

The importance and significance of this ought to be apparent to you by now. You must learn to pray in regard to every situation in your life; not just the hard

and difficult providences that He brings, but the routine and every day things that He orders in your life. This is where you will grow to please Him more. This is how you will grow to a greater obedience, a greater faith, and do more for His kingdom's sake. It will not happen without prayer. The only way to begin to pray is to begin to meditate often upon what God has called you to do and to be for Him. Psalm 5 says, Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. (My groaning it says in the margin.) "Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and My God, for to you I will pray." "My voice you shall hear in the morning." There must be resolution on your part, but also the realization that you need the Spirit's help. "In the morning I will direct it to You and I will look up." You must ask yourself as you come to the table today; am I even sometimes "rising before the dawning of the morning to cry for help?" Are "my eyes awake through the night watches that I may meditate on Your word?" You say, "Well it sounds like it would be quite impossible for me...." O my beloved brethren, "All things are possible with God." Christ died so that you could become more like this text in your prayers. The Holy Spirit will strive with you in relation to the words that I am speaking to you this morning if you have any sensitivity to Him and to the Word of God. It is when you arise before the dawning of the morning and cry to God for help, that His help really comes. I am going to ask that you will come down front now and observe the Lord's Supper with me. But as you do, will you not covenant with God that you want more of the precious influences of the Holy Spirit to be given to you, so that you will become more holy and more devoted to Christ? I think that it will be a prayer that He will answer. Let's come down front and I will give you a few more words there.

Thirdly, The Lord Jesus would have us to pray earnestly to be faithful to God's Word, even when we are surrounded by wicked men. (Verses 149-152)

"Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O Lord, revive me according to Your justice." "They draw near who follow after wickedness; they are far from Your law." "You are near, O Lord, and all Your commandments are truth." The reason that God hears our voice in prayer is because of His lovingkindness which is only found in Jesus Christ our Lord. As we come to the table to remember Him, let us remember that this a soul-reviving, soul-refreshing ordinance because Christ has satisfied God's justice. "Revive me according to your justice." As we draw near to Him now, we are given fresh strength to serve God, and fresh courage to take our stand for truth and righteousness because His body was broken; because His blood was shed. When we go away from this place today we will find that there will be people who will draw near to us who follow after wickedness. They are far from God's law and they may pressure us to compromise our faith and our obedience. What will prevent us from giving in to their requests or following after their evil example? It will be the knowledge of verse 151 which the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind at that very time. "You are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are truth." Will you not remember as you take this bread and

drink this cup today, that the Lord has given you this ordinance so that you and all of us as a church together, would realize that He is near to us in a special way at this hour? But will you not also remember Him, that He will be near you in your most trying hours of temptation as well in the time when those who follow after wickedness draw near? That is the time to pray and ask for His help. It is not the time to give in to the World, the flesh, and the Devil. It is the time to realize that our Lord Jesus Christ is very near. It is the time when we should remember the words of Psalm 73: 27 and 28. "For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; you have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry." "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works. We draw near to this table now in order to declare all God's works; the greatest of which is the giving us His dear Son.