

**Psalm 119: 57-64; "You are my Portion, O Lord", A Communion Sermon prepared for August 5th, 2007, by Pastor Paul Rendall, Delivered in the Morning Worship Service.**

The word "portion" is often found in the Bible being used in reference to food given or to an inheritance given to someone. This morning we have come here to remember both. We have come here to remember that God is our Portion, in this life and the next. And more specifically we have come here to remember that Jesus Christ has become our portion in everything related to eternal life. He is the bread of life, whose body was broken for us, and He is the One who has so lived and so died, as a sacrifice for our sins, that He has brought to everyone who believes in Him, an everlasting inheritance. We will partake this morning of the emblematic food of Christ Himself, remembering that in Him we have an everlasting inheritance. In the case of the Psalmist, he uses these words in terms of his relationship with God. He here declares that the Lord is his portion. These are words which indicate that he had learned some things about walking with God but that he wanted to learn more. In other words he saw himself as a disciple. He was a learner and a doer in relation to God Himself. He not only wanted to be saved from his past sins, but he wanted to learn to please the Lord in all his ways, and to be pleased with the Lord in every situation of life. Can you say that the Lord is your portion this morning? Is He your all-in-all? When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, we come to realize that He is our portion in everything in this life and the next. The believer who wants to walk closely with their Lord will make certain promises in relation to their having the Lord as their portion. This is what it means to try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. We promise Him that we will do certain things in relation to the mercy which He has been pleased to show to us and the grace that He has been pleased to give to us each day. What kind of promises should the sincere believer make to His Lord; especially at a time like this when we are coming to the Lord's table? Here in our text we find the Psalmist making 4 promises which he lifts up to the Lord as a prayer for mercy and grace which he needed at that time and at all times.

**1st - There was the promise that he would keep God's words.**

(Verses 57 and 58)

"You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your words." This is what happens when a person is converted to Jesus Christ. He is receiving God's Words concerning the most important thing in his

life; the saving of his eternal soul. He comes to believe in God's testimony concerning His only-begotten Son in the gospel and receives it to himself. But the saving of the soul is not simply the initial exercise of saving faith. It is not simply a decision that you made 20 years ago, or however long ago it was that you were converted. It is the on-going exercise of saving faith that continues to receive all of God's words and which will apply them to every situation in their life. This is one of the ways that we can know that we are a true disciple. It is if we continue to abide in God's words and the words of His Son Jesus Christ. This is the promise that we declare at our entrance upon the narrow gate of taking Christ as our Savior, and beginning to walk upon the path of righteousness. And it is our continued and unceasing declaration as we walk along that pathway to heaven. Listen to 1 Corinthians 15: 1 and 2. "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain." Now, there is no "if" in God's part in salvation. God is the One who undertakes the work, and if He has begun a good work, He will continue it until the Day of Christ. But there is an "if" in regard to our part in salvation, and it is mentioned here. It is; "if" you hold fast that word which has been preached to you, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. That is something which you must continue in, no matter what happens to you in your Christian life; you must continue in that truth in order to please God and to be pleased with Him. If you do not, you do not have a true and saving faith; you have believed in vain. And if you have believed in vain, then it sure that you will not be able to keep promises to God by His grace. You do not have grace. But when you believe in Jesus with a saving faith, you begin to have grace that is based on God's promise to you through Him, and on the basis of His finished work. He alone has died upon the cross for our sins. He alone, it is, that can give the grace to receive and abide in His words. But we must nevertheless very really hold fast that word of the gospel and the words of the Bible and build our life upon them. This is doing the will of God.

Turn to Matthew 7 with me. In verses 13 and 14 Jesus has said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it." "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Having then told us about the entrance in, He goes on to say that we must go on to bear good fruit for God. We must beware, He says, "of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are

ravenous wolves." "You will know them by their fruits." They come pretending to be Christians and yet they want to devour your soul. How will you know them? He says, "You will know them by their fruits." "Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?" "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit." In verse 21 Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." How do we know whether we are doing the will of the Father in heaven? In verse 24 Jesus tells us. "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock." "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who build his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell." "And great was its fall."

So what Jesus is saying here is that we are, all of us, building something with our lives. And each of us here this morning is either building upon the rock of Jesus' words or else we are building upon the sand of our own and others ideas of life, without those words. You must ask yourself which is it in my case? When we become a Christian we are promising that we will keep God's words and live by them. We do this by the grace of Christ, and because of the grace of Christ we will continue every day to live by the words of our God and our Christ. We must take them in, just as regularly and just as frequently as our daily bread. "For man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4: 4) "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it." "For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." "Have I not commanded you?" "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." You see, this is what you need to promise God as you come to the Lord's table today. I will take your words into my heart and I will meditate upon them. I will not let them depart from my mouth, but I will so abide in your word that I will commit portions of it to my memory. This is not legalism. This is love. And love to God and Christ makes promises, and by His grace goes about to keep them. This is making God your portion.

Verse 58 tells you where you will find the power to live this way. It says, "I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me

according to Your word." He prayed about it. And he did not pray casual prayers about it. It was with his whole heart that he prayed, entreating God's favor. He didn't just set himself to do it, thinking that he could do it by his own wisdom, strength, and power. He set himself to do it by humbly pleading that God would have mercy upon him and grant him this advance in holiness. It does not come from fleshly strength. It does not proceed from having Bible knowledge alone. It is; having the Bible knowledge, we plead to go forward to do and keep God's words. This is true discipleship. This is making progress in holiness.

**2ndly- The Psalmist makes the promise that he would make haste in regard to issues of repentance and obedience.** (Verses 59 and 60)

"I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies." "I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments." I think that there are many Christians who think that they can live the rest of their lives without taking much of any initiative in their own sanctification. They believe in God's sovereignty. They believe that salvation is all of God, and so they come to view the Christian life as something that God brings and that God does, and so they drift through life. But God has given you commandments to keep, O believer. And He cannot and does not keep them for you. He cannot obey for you; you must do it. He cannot repent for you; you must do it. You must deliberately take up holy initiative by faith, or fall under God's holy displeasure. You should be often thinking upon your ways. You are the one who should turn your feet to His testimonies. You should make haste and not delay in the matters of obedience. And all that, you should be doing out of the faith and hope and love that He has placed in your heart because you have come to know Him through Jesus Christ. He is your portion; not this world. He is your portion and not your earthly pursuits. He is your portion and not fleshly lusts. Therefore, because of what Christ has done for you, you should learn to move more quickly away from sin and to God. Repentance is turning from sin with a sorrow over it, and a hatred of it, and a loathing of yourself for having fallen into it. It is thinking about your ways in your mind and heart, and realizing that you, as a believer are continually in His Holy Presence and under His loving scrutiny. He is your portion and does see when you love something of this world or of sin more than you love Him. He also sees when your heart longs to do His will, and that you desire to turn to His testimonies. This is very pleasing to Him.

Do you think about your ways? And do you turn your feet to his testimonies? Do you think about how God views your life? How are you

consciously and deliberately trying to please Him today? Think about the 10 commandments. Are you keeping them outwardly before God and men? And are you also striving to keep them inwardly by the principle of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus? The Psalmist "turned his feet to God's testimonies." He compared the way that he was living, with the Word of God, to see if his attitudes and actions, the whole way that he lived, was in line with the way that God had said that it should be lived. This involves reviewing in our thoughts the way that we think, the way that we live, and the way that we do things. Do we do them to God's glory or to our own? Do we keep his commandments to be seen by men or to be seen by him?

He is very concerned with how you go about to obey Him. He would have us to make haste in regard to both repentance and obedience. "I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments." When you fall into a fleshly lust in your mind and heart, do you deal with it in the way that shows God that you realize that you are being burned in your soul. "Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" "Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared?" No you would immediately move away from it. So too, you must immediately move to the place of spiritual safety away from the sins of fornication and adultery. If you have taken something from someone else that does not belong to you; are you quick to restore it? Make haste in your repentance. Make haste in doing the right thing. If you are generally compliant to your parents children, do you realize how hurtful it is to them and dishonoring to God when you feel that you have to argue and disagree with them over simple things that they ask you to do? Make haste to honor and obey them, that it may go well with you upon the earth. When you fall into sin in your heart, where no one else sees but God, are you grieved with yourself? Do you sigh and cry over the secret sins which no one else sees, but your loving heavenly Father? When you sin in this way, do you make haste to come back to the place where your fellowship and communion with Him are restored? Do you agonize over the sins of your heart to the place where you will promise that by Christ's grace that you will do better? Are you really then thinking about what you can do in order to be spiritually-minded and pursuing righteousness in your life? Do you have an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ? This too is repentance. Only Christ can help you to make progress in holiness. But this is why He died for you. He died that you might die to sin and live to righteousness. Make haste and do not delay to go about keeping His commandments. What a beautiful thing it is to be holy. What an awful thing it is to fall into the sin of procrastination over repentance and obedience; to put God and His commandments into the back of your mind.

But making haste in matters of faith and obedience are very pleasing to Him.

**Then 3rdly- Here is found a promise made by the Psalmist that he would continue his private devotion to God at all times of the day and night.**

(Verses 61 and 62)

It is pretty evident from verse 61 that wicked people who lived around the Psalmist, had opposed his pursuit of righteousness and godliness. His life and testimony had probably been such a powerful witness to them against their sins and against the way that they were living, that they had taken up persecuting him. "The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law." When a Christian begins to receive opposition of this kind, he should remember that his greatest strength and the way that he can best endure and triumph through these oppositions is to remember the words and promises of Scripture. Our Psalmist did not forget God's law. He even rose at midnight to give thanks to God, because of His righteous judgments. Sometimes it is true that you will find that you cannot sleep during the night. You are troubled and you are restless. But you will find great comfort, great encouragement, and great blessing in seeking God and reading your Bible and praying at such times. It may not at all be a time for a sleeping pill. It may be that this is the time that God wants to have dealings with you, over the issues of your soul and your life. Will you not arise to give thanks?

This was how it was with the Apostle Paul and his fellow-preacher Silas when they were at Philippi. In Acts 16 Paul had cast out a spirit of divination from a certain slave girl, and they got into real trouble over it. Verse 19 says, "But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities." "And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." "Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods." "And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely." "Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks." "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening." "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed."

Now if ever there was a time in the history of the Church that that these verses that we are looking at from Psalm 119 were fulfilled, it was this. "The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law." "At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments." Paul and Silas were bound in prison, laying in the stocks, but they were able to continue their devotion to God both in prayer and in the singing of hymns. And God's righteous judgments of the truth of His Word, the power of His gospel, and His providential intervention to rescue his persecuted preachers all came together that night. People were saved from their sins that night who were never expecting to be saved. The Philippian jailer and all of his household. What giving of thanks there was then. But there was giving of thanks even before, when the Lord's saints were bound; when they were sore and bruised from persecution. We should commit ourselves, my brethren, to this kind of devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. And we should remember where this kind of devotion comes from. It comes from having Christ in us, the hope of glory. He lives and dwells in our hearts by faith, and it is His being in us and with us that gives us the desire and the power to continue in devotion at all times. He is the One who we will now come down to the front and remember, by taking His Supper. And when you come to partake, will you not, O dear believers promise Him anew and afresh that your devotion to Him will continue both day and night, if He will give you the grace? This is why it is so good to remember Him now. Let us now come down to the front and sit at His table at this time.

**4thly- There was a promise made to continue to be in fellowship with God's people and to be teachable in regard to God's Word.**  
(Verses 63 and 64)

The Psalmist says here, "I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts." "The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy; teach me Your statutes." We are companions here at this table today. Each of us who believes, each of us who has been baptized and has made public profession of our faith has come here in order to have their faith strengthened and renewed. But we come here to observe this Supper as a Church ordinance. The Lord's Supper was not instituted by Christ as an individual ordinance; something to be taken in private and administered in the privacy of your own home. It was instituted in relation to the gathered church. It is a communion service. This means that we share in this supper together. It is a joint participation the blessings of salvation which Christ died to bring to us. It is a sharing together in the body and blood of Christ. And this has meaning for us together as a church as well as blessing to us

individually. 1 Corinthians 10: 16 and 17 say, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Is it not the fellowship or sharing of the body of Christ? "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." When Christ saved us, His Spirit placed us into His body. We are sharers together in the blessings and benefits of salvation. Christ died for each of us individually and all of us collectively. We should so live that the things that we think, the things that we say, and the things that we do, should all be done remembering what it cost Christ to save us and to bring us together. We are here today making a promise to continue in our fellowship with each other and with all true believers in Jesus Christ. If we are holding on to sin in our lives we will affect others in the body of Christ. If we have an unforgiving spirit, or if we are bearing ill-will or grudges toward others in Christ's body, it is known and felt by our Lord today. What we are promising here in taking the Supper is that we will continue to seek to be in fellowship with all of God's people in this place, and all of God's true people in every place. May each of us be able to promise this in our hearts in sincerity today. Let us remember that the earth is full of the Lord's mercy. Let us remember that the Lord will show Himself merciful to those who will show mercy.

And then finally, then, we have this statement, "Teach me Your statutes." As we partake of these elements now, we know in our hearts and our minds that our dear Savior suffered and bled and died for our sakes. This is what we remember. But our knowledge of what that will mean in relation to our own obedience is that which must grow. And it will grow if we are teachable in regard to God's Word. Let us not conclude that we know it all, or that we have heard it all in relation to God's Word. He has many things to teach us, and we will be learning until the moment of our death. And when we die, we will no doubt come to know much more yet. But how valuable in the sight of God is a teachable spirit in His saints, while they live upon this earth. "The whole earth is full of His mercy," if we can only see it. Let us ask Him now to give us a teachable spirit in relation to His statutes, the things that He commands. And then let us promise Him that as He teaches us and gives us of His grace, that we will become doers of His Word.