

The Walk, the Talk, & the Salt

Psalm 119

INTRODUCTION

- A. Alexander Duff, the first foreign missionary for a denominational group, got off to a rough start.
 - 1. He was young, only twenty-three, and bright and innovative.
 - 2. But on his way to India in 1829 with his new wife, he was shipwrecked—not once, but twice!
 - 3. The most serious wreck occurred when his ship, the *Lady Holland*, was within a few miles of India.
 - a. At ten o'clock PM, Duff was half-undressed when a shock and shudder ran through the vessel.
 - 1) He rushed to the deck where the captain met him with terrifying words: "Oh, she's gone! She's gone!"
 - 2) The ship split apart, but a portion clung precariously to a reef.
 - a) Through the night the passengers huddled in terror in the surviving portion, expecting every moment to be swept away.
 - b) They were saved the next day, but their clothes and prized possessions were lost, including Duff's entire library of eight hundred books.
 - b. Later, standing on the shore and looking sadly toward the reef, Duff saw a small package bobbing atop the water.
 - 1) He watched and waited as it floated close enough for him to wade out and retrieve.
 - 2) It was his Bible. Of all his precious books, it alone survived. His heart soared, for he took it as a sign from the Lord that this one book alone was worth more than all the others put together.
- B. I must confess that I greatly doubt that Duff's Bible's surviving that shipwreck was a sign from God, but it is true that the Bible is worth more than all other books put together.
- C. Psalm 119 stands as the centerpiece of that most precious book.
 - 1. The psalm's theme is the glorious law of God and the importance of observing it.
 - a. God has made his Word known to man through Scripture, and man's attitude toward God is determined by his attitude toward Scripture, the Word of God.
 - b. This Word is the expression of the divine will and the one who loves God will love his Word.
 - 2. In Hebrew, Psalm 119 is an acrostic; the psalm contains 22 divisions, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
 - a. Each section contains eight verses, beginning with the initial letter of the Hebrew alphabet heading that division.
 - b. But tonight we will focus on the 20 times the author of this psalm says "I will."
 - c. When it comes to God's Word, I will walk the walk, talk the talk, and be the salt.

I WILL WALK THE WALK

- A. The priority of the walk, vv. 1-6.
 - 1. This Psalm is about one's walk with God. According to these verses, the one who walks in God's ways is blameless and does nothing wrong.
 - 2. The psalmist's life first and foremost was a walk of applying the Word of God to his own life; we need to be applying the Word of God to our own lives,
 - a. The Scriptures admonishes us to make such application.
 - 1) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 7:21).

- 2) “The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does” (Jas 1:25).
 - b. How are we doing at applying the Word of God to our own lives?
 - 1) When we read that we’re to be a forgiving people, do we stand ready and willing to forgive, or do we think, “You know, that just fits so-and-so. He holds grudges like no one I’ve ever seen”? In other words, do we look at how we can apply the text to our own lives, or do we think about how it applies to our neighbors?
 - 2) Do we regularly spend time in Scripture that we might see what God expects for us to do?
 3. “I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts” (vv. 44-45).
 - a. The psalmist declares that his priority was to remain faithful to the Lord throughout his life.
 - b. Also, notice the paradox evident in this text—the writer says that he will obey God’s law, but he will walk about in freedom.
 - 1) We generally equate freedom as an absence of law—we consider ourselves a free country, in large part, because we elect our leaders who make the laws we live by, and if we’re not happy with the laws, we are free to elect another set of leaders.
 - 2) Yet, biblically true freedom is *always* found in obeying God.
 - a) If we are not obeying God, we are in slavery to sin; “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (Jn 3:34).
 - b) But, if we are obeying God, we are free—free to be what God created us to be, free from the penalty of sin, and free to have fellowship with our Creator.
- B. Performance of walk.
1. This psalm is additionally about making one’s walk with God a performance (an accomplishment).
 2. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end” (vv. 105-106,112).
 - a. The writer is determined to be loyal to the Lord no matter what comes his way. He is not only going to read God’s Word, but it is God’s Word that is going to light his path so that he can walk a walk of performance.
 - b. When you go to the store to purchase a product, you want one that is going to perform, last, and accomplished what it was purchased for. You aren’t going to want to buy a product that’s going to break down as soon as you buy it.
 - 1) The Kentucky Wildcats win games based upon their performance; because Tubby Smith was having trouble getting the team to accomplish what he needed them to, he’s in Minnesota. You don’t last; Kentucky as a coach or a player unless you are able to win basketball games.
 - 2) Employees are rewarded based on their performance.
 - a) In many businesses, employees may get bonuses based upon their performances.
 - b) In nearly all organizations, employees sit down with supervisors at least once a year to go over performance.
 3. God wants us to perform in our walk with him what God desires for us to do.
- C. Production of the walk.
1. This psalm is also about what one’s walk with God produces.
 2. “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free” (v. 32)—the writer will not only “walk” (vv. 1, 3) in the “path of your commands,” but he will “run.”
 3. His prayer is that his lifestyle, in response to the revealed will of God—will keep him from anxiety and further adversity.
 4. By obeying the Word of God, the Lord provides the writer with a sense of freedom from anxiety and care.

5. Walking with God will not lead to ruin but not walking with him absolutely WILL.
- D. To be faithful to God, one MUST walk with walk.

I WILL TALK THE TALK

- A. Priority of the talk.
1. The psalm before us tonight is about talking, praising God. For the psalmist, praising God was a priority for his life.
 2. In verse 4, the author tells of searching the Law of God and having his eyes fixed on all of God's commandments; in verse 1, he praises God as he learns God's command: "I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous, laws."
 3. Praise God! As we study the Word of God, we learn of his tremendous goodness.
 4. We need to make praise a priority of our talk:
 - a. In our lives, we need to pour out our hearts to God in praise.
 - 1) We have been instructed to do so:
 - a) "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name" (Heb 13:15).
 - b) "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9).
 - 2) How well are we doing in our praise to God?
 - a) Do we spend time in prayer that we might pour out our hearts to God in praise?
 - b) Do sing hymns that we might pour out our hearts to God in praise?
 - b. Will you pour out your praise to God this very day?
- B. The performance of the talk.
1. One's performance for God cannot be complete without the talk.
 - a. "I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame" (v. 46).
 - b. The psalmist vows that he will speak of God's statutes unashamedly, even in the presence of kings.
 - c. The psalmist was so full of love for God and filled with the prospect of salvation that he just had to talk.
 2. There are so many times people need to talk:
 - a. When our team wins the game, we've gotta tell somebody about it; when we face crises, we've gotta talk to someone.
 - b. God has done so much that the psalmist just had to tell someone.
- C. Production of the walk.
1. The psalmist is so overwhelmed with the goodness of God that the talk produces thanks.
 - a. He must awake even at midnight to give thanks to God.
 - b. "At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws" (v. 62).
 2. One's true praise of God will always result in giving him thanks. Are you giving God thanks?

THE SALT

- A. Priority of the salt.
1. Salt is used, of course, to preserve.
 - a. For as long as I can remember, Dad has bought a country ham every Christmas.
 - b. Why is country ham so terribly salty? Because it's been preserved with salt and hung.
 2. "I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your words" (vv. 15-16).

- a. Notice that the psalmist says that he will keep God's Words; he's going to be the salt and preserve the Word of God.
 - b. Throughout this psalm, the author talks about preserving the Word of God.
 - 1) "Do good to your servant, and I will live; I will obey your Word" (v. 17).
 - 2) "I will always obey your law, for ever and ever" (v. 44),
 3. Are we the salt? How well are we doing in preserving the Word?
 - a. Do we treat those around us with the respect they deserve as people made in God's image, like God's Word tells us?
 - b. Do we obey our employer, no matter how mean he may be, because that's what the Word of God instructs?
 - c. Do we tell others of God's love, no matter how nervous we may be, because that's what God's Word teaches?
- B. The performance of the salt.
1. God will sustain the psalmist: "Sustain me according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed. Uphold me, and I will be delivered; I will always have regard for your decrees" (vs. 116-117).
 2. Because God's Word is the salt, and the psalmist is the salt is preserving God's Word, God will uphold him and keep him.
 - a. What a blessing it is to know that God will uphold us!
 - 1) When enemies want to bring me down because I am faithful to God, God is going to preserve me.
 - 2) When I am struggling with temptation, if I look to God, he will preserve me.
 - 3) When I am facing the end of this life it's only God who can preserve me, and we know that he will.
 - b. Is God preserving you because you are preserving his Word?
- C. The production of the salt.
1. "I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life" (v. 93).
 2. Because of the Word of God, the psalmist is preserved; through that Word he has learned of God, his mercy, and his love.
 3. Therefore, the psalmist says at v. 94: "I am yours." Can you say the same? Are you the Lord's?