

Norman C. Schwab
Yacolt EV Free
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Which Way Are you Headed? Psalm 119:1-16

Sometimes rules can be very annoying can't they. Especially when we don't readily see the purpose behind them, or feel our situation is such that the rule was not designed for us...therefore we decide to exempt ourselves from under it's authority. When I need to get some place fast, it is tempting to exempt myself from under the authority of the white sign on the side of the road. The sign that says 35 mph speed limit does not match up to my needs and desires. It's very tempting to ignore that sign, especially when I look around and see there is nobody around that I could hurt. Especially when I look around and see there are no policemen that would make my speeding painful to my pocketbook. Especially when there is little chance that I will be caught or hurt, after all I'm a great driver with years of accident free experience...so why not speed?

Maybe be some of you are like me. I hate people telling me what to do. I am a natural rebel when I can't see any great reason for following the rules. Rules and redtape are frustrating. We want to do our own thing, at our own pace, in our own way. Yet, most of us realize that we can't live that way very long and survive. If we ran every red light just because it was inconvenient for us...we would eventually crash. There are good rules out there for our benefit. If we ignore or fight those good rules, they will eventually crush us or shame us. Neither of those are healthy options. So we learn to follow the good rules.

Now we must also admit there will be some good rules that we don't fully know the purpose behind them, but because of the authority and wisdom of the one issuing the rule, we must follow that rule or endure the consequences. For instance, a family puts a fence around the yard to keep their dog, Spike from getting out. Yet, Spike loves his freedom, so every other day, Spike digs out under the fence, runs into the neighbors yard and trots down the busy road. We know it is far more healthy for Spike to stay in his yard. We know about the neighbor's

threats with his shotgun. We know the logging trucks that could make a new hood ornament of poor little Spike. But...as much as we tell Spike and discipline Spike. Spike just doesn't get it. Ignorance is not bliss for Spike. It's deadly.

We are just like Spike at times. We want to dig our way outside of the fences, the rules that God has put up for our own good. We get a taste of freedom. We run around the neighborhood of sin for a few days. We don't get hurt, we don't get shot. We don't get run over. So we think that rule must not apply to us. After all at the end of the week we can always run back to where we know we'll get fed when were hungry...we like our freedom because we are rebels at heart and are obviously much smarter than the Master. Do you ever see that rebel streak flash across your mind?

How can you deal with rules? Not only just deal with them but begin to enjoy them and even delight in them. I'm talking about the good rules, the godly ones. The ones that God has clearly laid out for our own good right in His Word. Is worthwhile following them? Can rules ever become our friends instead of our enemy? This morning my purpose is to motivate God's people to want to do right, to desire to follow God's way. To want to live righteous and clean live life God's way. Turn with me in your Bibles to the middle section. Psalm 119. Psalms are short poetic portions of scripture filled with wisdom that hit us right where we live. Read through these Psalms and you will find the writers are transparent and very real with what they feel. He also shares with the reader what works in the long run. He gives us a Godly and right perspective on life. Psalm 119 is a chapter about God's word and the wisdom in clinging to it's truth. This Psalm also happens to be an acrostic, with each stanza beginning with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. A- All have sinned. B- Be kind to one another. Interesting technique we used to help children memorize. The Psalmist wants us to hide these words of God in our hearts as well. Notice how often the Psalmist refers to God's truth and in many different ways. Read with me Psalm 119:1-16. READ.

How many different words are used to describe God's truth. Law; Testimony; precepts; word; ways; statutes; commandments; judgments; ordinances. This Psalm is about the rule for living well given by the one who made our hearts. In v. 23 the writer of this Psalm has been ridiculed

for following these rules from God, ridiculed for his beliefs by princes and men in power, yet we see that He has been strengthened by meditating on God's truth, His Word. The powerful people around wanted to ridicule and shame him because he clung to the Bible. Yet it became His prized possession and source of strength. Do you want to keep clean? Do you want to live your life with joy? Do you want to be blessed? Do you want to live life with no regrets, no shame? Well, there is encouragement here that we too can live life well with integrity even though we aren't perfect. We can be blessed even though we have doubts of Gods presence, we when we at times wander away. There are some things in this Psalm that will encourage and challenge us to keep on walking down God's road. It's walking down that road that will make us strong and strengthen us all at the same time.

Point number one this morning. Dive in head first. If you want to be blessed. If you want to be one who walks in integrity, walks in the laws of God, and observes his truth. You will be the one who seeks God with all your heart, You will be a whole heart Christian. There are far too many toe testers out there. Toe-Testers are like some of the people you see up at Yale lake this time of year. They dip there big toe in the water and pull it out. Why? because it's so cold. They come back a few minutes later and dip try to dip their ankle in but it is so cold. They end up just sitting on the shore getting burned, never having any fun. Just watching the others splashing and swimming and laughing down in the water. Toe testers have very little fun if that is where they stay. Toe testers will eventually get bored, loose interest and walk away. It's only fun to watch for so long.

So it is with following God. If you want the exhilarating refreshment that God promises, run down the beach while you are striping off your T-shirts and dive in head first. Now that's commitment with your whole heart. It may feel cold and biting at first but after a few moments, it feels pretty good. Are you ready to stop the toe testing and get off that towel on your chair and dive into doing life God's way? The writer of this Psalm is challenging us to dive into following and seeking after God's word with our whole heart. Those who do will be blessed. They will life a life of clean and refreshing excitement. Folks, if you are bored living the Christian life then you have not dived in. If you are

losing interest in God then you are a beach sitting toe tester. Get in the water. I dare you to go for God. I've talked to a lot of disappointed and discouraged Christian toe testers, but everyone I know who has fully dove into the refreshing waters of God's truth, seeking after God and following His way, even when at first it was so cold it hurt, has not been disappointed. Look at the end of v.2 these are the ones who seek Him with their whole heart, they dive right in, totally wet.

Now this assumes you want to be righteous and enjoy the feeling of living clean. There will be some here who would say, righteous living is overrated, they always get the short end of the stick. They say in this world there is no honor...just ridicule and joke. They say there is no value, you just get left out of all the fun, never invited to the popular parties and vacations. They say there is no reason to be clean, because everybody else is ignoring God's law...even in the church. So why should I? They seem to be doing just fine. Some say "I don't want to live righteously, I'm tired of others telling what to do and not do. I want to do what I think sounds fun to me for once. Some say, The Bible can't possibly know or understand what it's like to live in the year 2000. It's not relevant today. Some may say, "I've tried to do the Christian thing and it just doesn't work for me. Have you heard any of those before? Maybe you have thought them yourself.

The Psalmist is very clear. Those whom God blesses are those who dive in head first. They live by the book and observe God's commands. They are seeking it out, looking for it and pursuing how best they can live it out. They seek Him with their whole heart. Never thinking they have arrived at perfect spirituality they continue to seek God. Never complacent and a content religious "know-it-all", they seek God. In v. 1 They want to walk in the Law of the Lord. The law is the Hebrew word for Torah. It refers broadly to all of God's instructions from Moses to the prophets. The Law was never designed as a means of salvation. No one can be saved by keeping the Law. It was a means for the Israelite people to learn how to live as God's holy people. God's gave them the law for their own good.

The testimonies in v.2 refers to the two tablets of the 10 commandments, called the two tablets of testimony in Ex. 31:18. These were a testimony to Israel's faithfulness or unfaithfulness to God. One

only had to compare their actions to the commandments to see how faithful to God one was.

In v. 4 we see it does not come from the mind or mouth of men but of God. And that leads us to point number 2. It's all God's idea. If we are going to be motivated to follow the good and godly rules of life, we must understand that it is all God's idea, not mans. In v.4 the Psalmist changes out of the third person plural, to talk directly to God. You are the one who ordained your precepts God, and you did it for us to be diligent in keeping. To ordain means to set in order, row by row, to arrange, to plan. to co-ordinate. These good and godly rules were not by whim or random chance, but by a carefully laid out well-co-ordinated plan. It is the maker of our hearts who carefully prescribe the right way for us to live. It's God's idea.

The Psalmist changes tense again going to first person in verse 5. Oh that MY WAYS be established to keep your statutes. The writer desires to learn the judgments and work at keeping them. His desire was to become more and more obedient, establish his way, cut in deep godly habit ruts in his road, to discipline himself spiritually, so that he could fully enjoy the benefits and blessings found by making his way, line up with God's way. He realized that he was the one that needed to conform to God's rules, not try to force God into his own rules. It doesn't work that way, because these were all God's idea, not mans. Because of this he is able to thank God v.7 for the rules, the laws, the statutes, the truth, the principles, the commands. Do you thank God for the good and godly rules He has given us? Even the ones you struggle with? Even the ones that are not always convenient for you to follow?

Look at v. 8. The Psalmist struggled. Don't forsake me utterly God. Don't let me down God. This can get very tough. Don't string me along God just to see me fall down miserably. God I need to know that you are here and real. This is not going to be easy. Don't forsake me when it gets tough. Transparency. Realism. v. 10 we see more of that realism. Don't let me wander away from your commands. Do you think he would have cried that out to God if he wasn't tempted sometimes to walk away and just bag the old Christian things when it got tough? God wants us to be real with Him. We can boldly share our doubts and fears, our temptations and bad days with God. He is big enough to handle our

gripes and fears and whines and doubts. God will honor a heart that is willing to be real with Him. We can be transparent to God with our failures and temptations. We can pray, "God this is tough right now. I don't feel like following your way. I know what I should say to this person, but I would rather say that. I know I shouldn't go and do that but I'm struggling God. Help me. I'm prone to wander Lord I feel it wander from the way, the One I love. Take my heart Lord take and seal it seal it for Thy courts above. Don't let me wander away from your commands.

Do you want to enjoy the pleasure and benefits of living a good and righteous life? First, Dive in head first to following after God's truth. Second, understand it's not mans invention, but God's idea given to us for our own good. Third, It's well worth the good nights sleep. If one follows God's way, we see the motivation in v. 6. THEN, I shall not be ashamed. There will be respect and honor and integrity instead of shame. The root meaning of shame is to cover up having been exposed for some failure. It is the guilt one experiences when exposed for wrong. Its the stuff that keeps you up at night. To live a clean and godly life is giving you the pleasure of going to bed at night without fear of shame or worry about exposure. It means you can go to sleep at night with no regrets on how your lived your life that day. No regrets with what you may have said or did to others. No regrets with what you may have processed through your thoughts and allowed to enter into your mind. Wouldn't it be great to live life clean and fresh with no regrets? Wouldn't that be well worth the good nights sleep? No shame. No fear. No regrets are powerful motivators to following God's way. Doing life right the way God set up.

The Psalmist doesn't want to be ashamed when he reads the Bible. v. 6 Then I will not be ashamed when I look upon all They commandments. Some people have a tough time reading God's word because it exposes all the stuff they are doing that doesn't line up with going God's way. It exposes evil in their heart. It fans the flame of their own shame. It keeps them from sleeping well at night because it reminds them they are not doing it right with God. Most people do not want to be reminded of their sin. That's why when people fall away from God they then to fall out of reading God's word. They tend to stop coming to youth

group and church. Why? They don't want to be reminded of the things God wants to deal with. We can so easily rationalize away our own moral failures. It's easy for us to pass off the blame on others. But it is very tough to rationalize the Word of God. When I sit down with the Bible, It's no longer about blaming someone else...it's about god wanting to deal with me. The bible tends to strip away excuses. Many times I have been frustrated, angry, upset...and I pick up the Bible. The worst is during family devotion time when I've just spoken harshly with my kids or something and open the bible and read and all the kids get real quiet because they know dad has just been exposed by God's word. It's humbling to be exposed by God's word. But it strips away our excuses and deals with our sin issues.

A school teacher lost her whole life savings in an elaborate swindling business scheme. When her investment disappeared and her dream was shattered, she went to the Better Business Bureau. They asked her, "Why didn't you come to us first? Didn't you know about the Better Business Bureau? Oh yes said the lady sadly. "I've always know about you, but I didn't come because I was afraid you'd tell me not to do it." Even when we know where truth is. Even when we know where the answers for good and godly living are, God's Word, we don't turn there for fear of what it will say. We simply like our sin far too much and don't really want to change.

When we walk in the way of God and begin to seek His truth and live by it, we will no longer be ashamed to read God's word and be with God's people. We will want to know more and more and even come to the point where we are thankful to God for Him giving us good and godly rules.

This morning we have seen was a good clean life looks like. It comes from diving in head first seeking Him with your whole heart. We have seen that the rules are not inventions of man, but really God's idea given for our own good. We follow God's rules motivated by the blessing of a good nights sleep, resting on the pillow of no regrets, under the sheets of Gods' blessing, and blankets of integrity. So how can we move closer to this truth? How can we live a fresh and clean life before God? Look with me at verse 9? How can we live clean and pure? by keeping or way lined up with God's Word. Point number three this morning. A clean

life will treasure the good stuff. The psalmist remembers how difficult it was and tempting to remain pure as a young man. Even a young man can stay pure by keeping his life lined up with God's word. Conduct, behavior and attitudes get cleaned up by obeying God's Word. Some may wonder how its possible. Will they ever be able to get out of the sin mess they've gotten themselves into. How will they ever be able to unwind themselves from the sin spaghetti of their life? It is not easy, but it is quite simple. Obey God. It's never too late. Now is always the right time to start obeying God and lining up your life with God's commands and truth.

It is a clean life that will treasure the good stuff. Look at verse 11 Thy Word have I treasured, some of your Bibles read hid, have I treasured in my Heart that I may not sin against whom? Against God. See the first person again. The writer is getting personal with God. It's not about someone else and God. Not about a sister and God. A son and God. Your husband and God. It's is personal. This is about me and God, yourself and God. When we treasure God's truth instead of rebel against it, we are going to keep pure and clean. When we keep pure and clean we will live godly lives of integrity and we will be blessed with a good nights sleep, no regrets, no shame. Do you want to stay clean? They read God's Word? Memorize God's word. Hide it in y our heart. This whole Psalm written in an acrostic was a tool to help aid memory of the words. If you have never memorized a verse this is a good one to start with. Pick v. 8 or 11. If you find yourself not as pure as you'd like begin to treasure God's word. Rote memory of a verse will get you on the right track but it's not enough. I know people who have memorized books of the Bible, but don't treasure God's Word, so they don't live it out. It's just words to them.

In the courtyard of the O.T. Tabernacle there was a huge bronze bowl filled with water. It was called the bronze laver. All throughout the day the priests would stop at this laver and wash their hands. The Word of God can be thought of in terms of a laver. It too has the power to clean. While the O.T. could only remove the physical dirt from the hands, following the truth, and Jesus of the Bible possesses the ability to remove moral filth from human hearts. The Psalm writer is saying, "I

have banked all my promises, and stored them in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself spiritually bankrupt.

What are you banking on? What have you dived into completely? What is your treasure? If it is the Word of God then you will enjoy the benefits from banking on God's truth. If you treasure something else you will only receive what it has to offer. Materialism only continues to cry out more. more. What do you treasure? play? Work? relationship? fishing? intelligence? sensuality? financial investment? physical security? Those treasure pay back only so much dividend and then go bankrupt and let you down. God's Word will continue to pay returns and has never been tested fully and found empty. V. 14 The truths in the Bible are worth are more than great riches. He gets more walking on Gods way then all the money in the world.

Are you ready to learn from God? Are you teachable? The psalm writer in v. 12 says "teach me" I want to learn. I need to change. A seeker of God's truth will not be a know it all who has already arrived but teachable and ready to change where God's truth says change. Are you teachable? Do you want to experience joy? V. 16 Sums it all up. Commitment. Dive in head first. Here he does. I shall delight in They statutes and not forget thy word. Dive into God's truth. It's God's idea and His rules were given for our benefits so we can live well and enjoy a life with no regrets and a deep sleep. What verse do you need to begin treasuring in your heart? What truth do you need to walk in even when its difficult? What command have you forgotten? Get back with God, dive in head first and experience the joy God intended.