

Sunday, June 5, 2015

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Stop, Look, Listen ~ Psalm 119:57-64

INTRODUCTION

If I remember right, rail road crossing signs used to have the phrase on the cross arms: “Stop, Look, Listen”.

- they wanted us to be sure there was no train coming before we crossed the tracks.
- when we lived in Ripon, CA, we were told the fog could so thick that, when people drove & came to a cross road, they would stop, look, even get out & listen to know if any cars were coming before they proceeded down the road.
- we see then, those warnings to stop, look, & listen were there for our good.

Well, according to **Bible**, the warning to stop, look, & listen makes good sense too for our spiritual & eternal well-being & safety as we proceed in life.

- that’s what Ps.119 is teaching us in the verses we read.
- & IICor.13 also tells us to “examine or test ourselves to see whether we are in the faith.”

Now that’s what **Scripture** calls us to do before we come next **Sunday** to the **Lord’s Supper**.

- you will remember in ICor.11 Paul warns the Christians at Corinth about its celebration of the Lord’s Supper.
- you see, they were going about it in the wrong way that did not fit what this supper was all about.

So **Paul** reminds them this **Supper** is very special & sacred, for it’s God’s sign & seal of salvation in Christ.

- it is then to be used only in faith & obedience to Lord, or else we will receive His judgment.
- & so ICor.11 commands to properly come to God’s table to be received by Him & to be strengthened in faith & commitment to Him,--
 - then we must 1st examine ourselves to see if we truly believe & are living for Lord.

We must, because **Bible** says **I Cor.10** we can’t sit at the table of devils,--

- we can’t fellowship with sin & be friends of Satan during the week,--
 - & then come to dine with Lord on Sunday, for that will bring His punishment.
- th’fore, we must take carefully stock of ourselves to see for whom we are living: Satan or our Savior.
 - & if it is Jesus Christ, then we can come to the Lord’s Supper & be accepted by Him.

And so we are commanded to prepare ourselves this week by examining ourselves.

- but, of course, such an examination isn’t to be done just in preparation for the Lord’s Supper.
- Ps.119 indicates we must do what that OT.Christian said he did in vs.57-64.

- constantly consider our ways to make sure we are totally trusting & obeying Lord in everything.
- then only will we grow in our faith & love to Him & be fit to eat & drink His holy meal.

Th'fore, commanded to get ready to properly partake of the **Lord's Supper**--

- & to be the Christians God wants us to be in all of life, it is good to consider Ps.119's command to **STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN** regarding our ways.
- **1st**, we notice the decisive reasons for doing it, **2nd**, it is detailed in nature, &, **3rd**, the drastic results.

I. THE DECISIVE REASONS

Now **Ps.119** is a Christian's song of thanks & praise & love for God's Word which he obeys in all of life.

- he says in vs.97&103: "O, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long. How sweet are your promises to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth."
- that's because the Psalmist says in vs.1-3: "Blessed or joyful are those whose lives are lived according to the law of the Lord; who keep His statutes; who seek Him will all their hearts; who walk in His ways."

Well, what about you & me? do we love & trust God's Word, **Bible**, & His will like that?

- do we really mediate & love & live it all day long?
- I wonder, if we are honest with ourselves, do we have to admit we don't.

We see then it is very important & imperative we do what this **OT.Christian** did in our **passage**.

- that we stop & look & listen & think about our ways.
- & without delay turn to Lord & His Word & will with renewed faith & love & obedience.

Now **1st** notice **THE DECISIVE REASONS** for this Christian's action of self-examination.

- one reason is, he says in vs.57, is because Lord Jehovah is his portion & possession.
- that means God is all he has & whom he loves & obeys only.

That is to say, this Christian has made a decisive choice to love & live for God & His Word & will instead of having the world with all its wealth & pleasures & possessions.

- & notice it is a very personal decision: he states: "Lord is my possession, my God".
- & that's what true faith is all about, isn't it?
 - it is to personally receive Jesus into our hearts & lives, & possess Him as our only God & Savior.
 - it is to give ourselves & lives truly & totally to Him so that we become His possession.
- &, when we do that, then we will continue to examine our ways to see if we are still doing that.

But then take note of what's involved when Lord is ours by faith & we are His—another reason the **Psalmist**, & we too, must consider our ways.

- he says in vs.57 God is his so that he has promised to obey His Word.
- you see, to sincerely believe in God we want His Word & will more than anything else in all the world.
 - it will be our delight & desire & determination to trust & obey Him only in all of life.

In other words, to believe in God as our only Savior, also means to recognize Him as our only Lord & Master.

- for, as I said, then God will possess us as His own so that His Word & will must only rule & control our whole being & all our behavior.
 - & we must only obey His law & commands & go His way.
 - Jesus says: “If you love me, you will obey my Word.”

That's was the **Psalmist's** confession: “God is my all in all & I am His now & forever.

- “He is mine, & I love Him with my all, & I promise to obey Him only.”
- & because of that he continued to considered his ways so he would remain in faith & obedience to Lord.
- he realized that's only way to possess & experience true happiness, & have a real, rich life with God.

Well, question is then: “Can we too confess that God is all mine & I am His eternally?

- “Do I really love Him & promise to do His will only?
 - “Am I obeying His Word day in & day out in my living to show I am His & He is mine?”
- we must keep asking that & examining ourselves to see if that's true.

Another reason for **Psalmist** to think on his ways to see if he is really believing & obey God is found in **vs.58**.

- he says he sought the Lord with all his heart to receive His grace as Lord promised.
- & we will do that when we possess & practice God & His Word by faith in our lives.
 - we will be in constant communication with Him in prayer.

That's because we want Him give us His presence & power, His love & mercy, His wisdom & guidance, as He has promised to give us as His own.

- only in that way will we be able to obey His Word & will as we have promised Him.
- you see, true faith & obedience always need prayer & daily fellowship with Lord so that we will be alive & active in loving & living for Him.

Now it is because this **OT.Christian** believed & loved God, promised to obey His will, wanted greater divine might & mercy, --

- because of that he says in vs.59&60 he took careful note of his ways to see that he stayed on the right track of trusting Lord & being in touch with Him.
- that means he didn't just say he believed & possessed God as Lord & Savior.
 - he didn't just promise to live the Christian faith & life, & then just sit back & take it easy.

No, but because the Lord was his & he promised to trust & obey Him & desired more of Him, now he wanted to make absolutely sure he was doing what he said.

- so he says he keeps on examining his life to see if his ways matched his words.
- to see if what he said, that Lord was really his, was being shown to be true by the life he lived in obedience to Lord's will only.

Th'fore, **Christians**, we too must do what the **Psalmist** did.

- for, if God or Jesus is ours & we have promised to love & serve Him with our all, want more of His power & grace in our lives to experience abundant, joyful, eternal life with Him,--
 - then we will want to know if we are really & constantly believing & obeying Him, won't we?
 - &, if we aren't, we must correct ourselves & our lives.
- so then we must constantly & carefully test our being & behavior to see if we are really Lord's.

And, when we are constantly considering our ways & realize we are sinner saved only because of God's grace by repentance & faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior,--

- & see we are striving to live a new life for Him as Lord,--
- then, & then only, will we possess & enjoy the wonderful assurance we are His.
 - & know for sure salvation & forgiveness & eternal life with Him are ours now & forever.
 - & too, He will receive us at His table to be blessed & strengthen to live in that assurance.

II. THE DETAILED NATURE

But now our **passage** says to stop, look, & listen involves a task that is quite **DETAILED IN ITS NATURE**.

- for note: the meaning of the word "consider" is from the idea of "embroidering".
- &, as you know, to embroider on a cloth involves detailed, careful work.
 - of putting the needle in the right place & turning the cloth to see if each stitch is okay.

And so the idea of the word "considering" in **vs.59** is "to give serious thought".

- to thoroughly scrutinize & to painstakingly examine every part & every detail.
- to leave no stone unturned as we take every aspect & area of our life.
 - turn them upside down & every which way to see it from all & every angle.

Now **Ps.119** says that's what must be done to our **WAYS**.

- one version says the Psalm commands we examine God's way.
- but most versions say we must examine our own ways.

But really there's no problem when we think about it, for both are involved.

- for when we examine our ways, we must do according to Lord's way.
 - & to consider His way will naturally lead to comparing our ways to His.
- th'fore, we can correctly say we must consider our ways in the light of God's way.

And **our ways** mean the whole way of our being & living.

- so God's Word is saying we must carefully examine our being, or who we are: our character & attitudes.
- & we must also thoroughly consider our behavior, or what we do: our conduct & actions.
- that means we must put everything—our thinking & talking, our feelings & emotions, our will & wanting, our walking —under a detailed scrutinizing.

Then notice too: the **Psalmist** examining of himself was a very **personal** one.

- & that's hard, for it is a lot easier to look at the other fella & find fault his or her faults.
 - to see their sins & talk about them so that they look bad & we look good.
- yet we are told in our passage that each must examine his or her own ways.
 - Jesus commands we must not be concerned about other's faults, but 1st see & correct our own.

And too, **Ps.119** says the **OT.Christian** considered his character & conduct in the light of God's Word & will.

- for we may never use our own standards because they are not absolute & they change constantly.
- nor may we ever just take those parts of **Bible** that pleases us so that we come out looking pretty good.

But we must take the **whole** Scriptures.

- we must compare ourselves & lives to all Bible says about sin & salvation & the way to live.
- we must put our entire being & behavior under the penetrating search light of God's Word & will to clearly & certainly see if we are what He wants us to be & do.

Now, of course, that's going to hurt, for the truth always does.

- you see, Heb.4 says Bible is "alive & active. It cuts more sharply than a 2-edged sword. It cuts down deep into the innermost thoughts & desires of our hearts, & reveals us for what we really are. Th'fore nothing is hid from God."
- & so **Bible** cuts & makes us uncomfortable, for it tells us just the way it is.
 - it reveals the plain truth about ourselves: that we are sinners whose only way out is to really live is to believe in the Savior, who is God Himself on a cross.

- & it is humbling & hurting to see how bad & small we are when we often think we are pretty good & great.
- no wonder then people try to dull the edge of the Sword of the Scriptures.
 - they twist its truths & compromise its commandments so it won't hurt so much.

But to really examine ourselves to know the truth, we must do it with God's Word.

- let it lay us wide open to get a correct & true picture, even if it hurts.
- for, "if Bible doesn't hurt us, it can't help us. If it doesn't show us sin, it can't tell us how to be saved."

And so we must constantly & carefully consider our ways by comparing them to God's Word.

- we must stop & take a good look at ourselves; watch our step each day concerning the way we walk.
 - & listen to the way we talk.
- all to see if we are really obeying Lord's will & going by His rules.

We've got to then examine ourselves to see if we really realize we are sinners so that we can't save ourselves.

- we must be continually asking ourselves if we really understand we are destined to eternal death unless we repent of our sins, believe in Jesus Christ, & serve Him only.
- & to see if we have really confessed our sins, turned from them, & are striving to keep ourselves holy & pure in Lord's way.

Then too, we must carefully keep on considering if we are truly & totally trusting Jesus as our only Savior to get us out of sin's mess & misery & to bring us true life.

- or are we thinking we will be accepted by God as long as we faithfully go to Church, read our Bibles, pray now & then, do a few good works for other.
- & we must carefully examine our conduct to see if our faith is alive & active in our lives so that it shows our faith is real by loving Lord & others in all our words & works.

Th'fore, we must stop, look & listen to ourselves & our lives.

- consider what's in our hearts & minds; what's coming from our mouths.
 - see how we are living when it comes to our farming & schooling, our buying & selling, our housework & socializing, our recreation & the like.
- we will be doing that so we will be the kind of Christian God desires & demands to receive His favor.
 - & also so we will be ready to come to His table next week.

III. THE DRASTIC RESULT

But now notice **THE DRASTIC RESULT** of the Psalmist's self-examination: it revolutionary & reforming.

- for it says when he took careful look at his life, he found it was wrong.

- there was sin; he wasn't in line with God's Word & will as he promised.
 - he saw his life wasn't showing God was his Lord whom he lived for by obeying His law.

And so vs.59&60 says this **OT.Christian** went into action immediately.

- he didn't just see his sin, forget about, & continue in it as if it wasn't true or so serious.
- nor did he delay or hesitate to do something about his sin.
- he didn't want have a good time 1st before he got serious about the Church & turn his life over to Lord.

No, but he did something about his sin right away.

- our passage says: "He turned his steps to God's statutes, & he hastened to obey His commands."
- he repented & changed his way of life to conform to Lord's law.
 - he desired & was determined to live in loving trust & obedience to God.

You see, that's what will surely happen when we really consider our way in the light of God's Word.

- we will see sin in our hearts & that our lives are not completely lived for Lord.
- &, when we really see that, there will be a radical revolution to be what we should be.
 - we won't delay, but immediately turn to Christ in faith & repentance.
 - we will strive to change our lives from living in sin & for ourselves to obeying His will only.

But that's not easy, as we see it wasn't for the **Psalmist**.

- for he says in vs.61: "The cords or ropes of the wicked bind me."
- that's how difficult it is to live for Lord & why we must always examine ourselves.
 - it is because there are temptations, unbelieving friends, enticing sinful pleasures that are constantly tugging at us, trying to pull us away from God.
 - they are always saying: "Come on. It won't hurt to sin a little. Besides no one will know it. You've got to have some fun in life."

And yet, despite the tug of temptations & the pull of sin, we can still live for Lord, as the **Psalmist** said he did.

- & the reasons he could, & we can too, are found in vs.62-64.
- 1st, we can remain faithful to God's Word when we, like the Psalmist, love Bible.
 - He loved it so much that he says he got up in the middle of the night to thank Lord for it.

Indeed, when, like him, we love **Scriptures**, study it faithfully, make it 1st & foremost in our hearts & lives,--

- then we too can defeat temptation & stand against sin.
 - Eph.6 says God's Word is a powerful weapon against Satan.

- we see that with Jesus in the desert where He defeated the devil with Scriptures.
- th'fore, if we want to be strong against sin, keep our lives going God's way, then we must believe & obey & stand on His Word.
 - Ps.119:9,11 says we must put it in our hearts & lives so we will not sin but be kept pure.

The 2nd thing we must do to not forget to obey Lord while sins presses on us, is, like Psalmist says, we must only associate with those who also believe obey God's Word & will.

- he not only changed his life, but changed his companions too, & not run around with that same old, sinful gang anymore.
 - or go to those sinful places where temptations to sin are the greatest.
- instead he had friends that feared the Lord & followed His precepts.

We too must get away from those who are dragging us down into sin.

- & associate with God's people, join His Church with Christians in worship, be in Church School, Bible study groups, Young Peoples, & date only those who love Lord.
- only when we use these means, will we get closer to Savior, overcome sin, & stay in the way of His will.

Finally, the 3rd reason the Psalmist couldn't forget & forsake God's command even with temptations tugging at him, was because he recognized God was Lord of all.

- & so he could pray to Him to teach him His way & give him strength to live it.
- you see, he realized the only source of strengthen against sin is prayer.
 - for that ties us to Almighty God who knows & rules & controls everything.
- & to let Him teach us how to live, let Him rule our lives, means we've got to receive His mercy & might to live victoriously in the middle of evil & error gotten only by prayer.

CONCLUSION

Well, do you want to be truly blessed by God?

- be forgiven by Him to live with Him eternally?
- & too to be accepted at His Supper this coming Sunday?

Then we must stop, look, listen to consider our ways to see if God is ours & we are continually in His will.

- &, when we feel the pull of sin & see the wrong in our lives, then we must be in Lord, in His Word, & pray He will teach us His ways.
- that's only way we can receive strength for our Christian faith & life.
 - for He is Lord of all & we are His so He can & will keep & lead us in His will.

AMEN