

Psalm 119 (9) – Getting Right & Staying Right

David is using “young man” as a picture – it is not really talking about being young in years, but young in experience, in wisdom. When you think of a young man, you think of someone who is self-assured; he is confident that he knows what to do and he can do it if he tries hard enough. He is self-willed; he wants to do things his own way and he is stubborn about it. And he is self-destructive; he deals with great temptations, he is full of passions, he is impulsive, and driven by his appetites and emotions. This “young man” may be old, he may know a lot, and he may even seem to know what to do, but he doesn’t stay with it, and he isn’t spiritually mature. This is a young man in the spiritual sense, and yet he may have called himself a Christian for a long time.

Is this you? Well, everyone starts out this way, but many stay this way. So what’s a “young man” supposed to do about it? You can’t make that happen by sheer willpower, or mere routine, or some magical, motivational encounter. He has to get R-A-D-I-C-A-L. You have to get radical, and not on your own terms, but on God’s terms. Lots of people take drastic measures, but they hold onto a measure of control. They may be desperate, but they don’t really get radical.

If you desire to change, then this word is for you. As we go through this you will see some overlap as it deals with confession and repentance, forgiveness, grace, faith, holiness, and sin.

R – Recognize what your need is – ***pure*** – See the truth for what it is. My need isn’t simply to control my behavior; my need is for what the Lord wants to control me. Pure means no mixture and stable, instead of double minded and unstable (cf. James 1:8). Without this, you’re going nowhere fast. Your real need is not just to do God’s will, but to desire to do God’s will. God says that he will work in you to make you want to do his will, but in light of that, you have work to do (cf. Philippians 2:12-13). So how is that worked out in practice? We start with our next letter.

A – Admit your inability – ***How*** – He knows that his own wisdom and personal will power isn’t enough. He knows he needs purity, but he also knows he doesn’t have his own prescription. He doesn’t simply need a dose of motivation and encouragement to do things his own way again, he needs a whole new way of thinking, and a whole new source of power. It isn’t a matter of already knowing the answers and just not wanting to do it. No, this man admits that he doesn’t really know what to do. He knows what the goal is, but while you may see the goal you do not know how to get there or stay there.

This is about confession. The first step in getting clean is coming clean (cf. 1 John 1:9). You not only admit you have a problem, but admit you don’t yet understand the depth of your problem (cf. Proverbs 3:5-6). The problem with your fruit goes all the way to the root. Confessing your need for purity must also include confessing your inability. And it leads to our next letter.

D – Determine to do what it takes – ***How can a young man...keep his way*** ...some versions say ***cleanse his way*** – The person who wants to become mature must know that it isn’t just about getting clean but staying clean. And this is not opposed to your admission of your inability. This is a determination to not oppose God; working it out means not working against God. This man wants real repentance, a change of mind that brings a change of heart which results in a change of life. His desire is not just to get out of trouble, but to stay out of trouble. And not only that, he

wants to stay on the right road altogether, not just in one area. This isn't just about one particular sin pattern he is dealing with. In other words, he knows he has to go "all in". It is not enough to just get rid of one problem. This man wants to keep himself from all of those things that lead to or contribute to his sinful life. This is where many "miss it". Vs.10 – it isn't a case of "get me out of this pit then give me back the shovel", this is really changing, not just the outward fruit, but the inner root. You have to be willing for God to change everything in your life, and be willing to do whatever it takes to allow God room to move in your life.

People don't understand the nature of their problem. It is not a matter of just stopping the behavior but avoiding anything that leads to or feeds it (cf. Mark 9:47). If you have been caught up in a thing, and you never seem to be done with it, you have to take up something else that opposes it and never be done with it. In other words, in the same way that the sin encompasses your whole life, occupies your idle thoughts, drives your actions and plans, you have to replace it with the same fervor for something else. Illustration: Dog, bone, steak – the power of a new affection. So how can that happen? This brings us to our next letter.

I – Investigate the word – How can... according to your word – you have to believe that the Bible is God's very word, and take it as such. It is not take it or leave it. What does the Word say about your problem, and what does it say to do about your problem? Example: Ephesians 4:28 – put on, put off. Vs.12 – this isn't going to happen overnight, and it isn't a one-time solution. Your problem is more than your problem. You will need a "whole soul" solution. You will need to know Jesus, not just as your savior, but also as your Lord. This requires first, self-examination, and then, gospel application. You can't just see your sin, admit to your guilt, and then you magically get over it. You've got to repent and to stay repentant. And there is enough grace to meet your need. This is not your will power, but God's power, the Spirit and the Word working in your life. The imperatives of faith are grounded in the indicatives of grace (cf. Romans 12:1-2). In other words, since God has done this thing, I should do that thing, I can do that thing, and I will find God's pleasure in that thing. This is applying your faith to God's grace. It's not just about reading your Bible; it is about getting it down into your heart and out through your life. This brings us to our next letter.

C – Concentrate on the word – keep – The path of purity must be pondered – vs.14-15, cf. vs.27, 48, and 148. The world is such a distraction. But there is a simple way to slow down, listen to what God says, and grow. Meditation is the process by which God's word gets down into your spirit where its power can be released. This is the simple exercise of getting alone, closing the doors of distraction be they computers, television, sports, or hobbies, in order to read and dwell upon the truth of God and the wisdom stored up in his word. If you are a believer, and you choose to practice godly meditation, God's word is going to explode with a richness of wisdom and spiritual fire within your soul. Luke 6:46 example: venom on your lips, poison in your heart.

Meditating on the word of God is how you go about getting his life-giving truth into the core of your souls – down into the place where the vital decisions of your life are made every day. If you don't keep mediating on God's word you will often lose the motivation to keep going his way. As you meditate on his word, as the truth of God penetrates your mind, it attacks and begins to demolish the sin it confronts (cf. John 17:17). And then you keep that word like a treasure. And that brings us to our next letter.

A – Apply it to everything – ***By guarding it*** – The path of purity must be protected – vs.11, 13. Spiritual laziness is the seedbed for disaster. You have to set apart your whole life; don't divide your life into the secular and the sacred. Your way can be corrupted and you must apply yourself to guarding it against those corrupting influences. You've got to guard your life, guard your way, and guard your heart (cf. Proverbs 4:23). Not all entertainment is necessarily bad, but it is when it becomes the dominant essence of your world. Many are just living for fun, pleasure, and self-indulgence. Instead of your heart being a pleasure dome, you need to make it a fortress of the word. That is what it takes, a mindset that says leaving a space open for rebellion is not an option (cf. Romans 13:14 / Matthew 6:24). When you reserve the right to rebel, you leave open a crack for sin, and sin is like water, it finds the space, fills it up, and puts pressure on the rest. Each step you take is in one direction or the other. By God's grace you find the way, and you can guard your way. And that leads us to our final letter.

L – Live the lifestyle – ***his way...your word*** – not just to get right but to stay right, a new way of living – vs.16 – not just getting radical but staying radical, not just getting over your issue then hitting cruise control. Jesus' work is not just to save your soul, but to redeem your life, to change every part of it. The Christian life is not about suiting your tastes; it is about changing your tastes. Find the things that stir your affections for Christ and saturate your life in them. Find the things that rob you of that affection and walk away from them (Matt Chandler).

So, what is the R-A-D-I-C-A-L approach to getting right & staying right? Realize that you have a need for purity, admit you can't meet that need on your own, stir up your desire, be willing to change everything, find the answer, think about it, keep other things away, and make it the focus of your whole life. You need to get radical, and stay radical. You don't graduate to a new path, you don't try and find some new way to obey, you learn to stay on the old path, and grow. You see, following the radical path is really just the normal path of the growing, maturing believer. When your will is God's will, you will have your will (C.H. Spurgeon). How do you keep your way? You follow God's way, and you do it radically.

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A – Admit your inability

D – Determine to do what it takes

I – Investigate the word

C – Concentrate on the word

A – Apply it to everything

L – Live the lifestyle