

Prayer – Psalm 119 1-9

Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.

Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.

They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways.

You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word.

Thought to carry into the week ahead:-

You often hear the expression that “nothing changes” and “we don’t seem to learn anything”. It is about 2000 years from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ up to present time. Is it a surprise that God allowed about 1300 years to pass between the giving of the Ten Commandments and the birth of Jesus Christ?

God’s one big plan

Ten Commandments and Covenant renewed — unit 4

Have you noticed how your view of rules has changed over time? Rules that seemed harsh or pointless as a child or in your youth have mysteriously become sensible! Do you have examples from your childhood which proves this correct? (You find yourself applying those same rules to your children!) And examples that prove it incorrect?

We left the last study (unit 3) with the Egyptian army destroyed and the nation Israel freed from slavery. Moses now leads the people into the desert. The first part of the journey is to reach Mount Sinai (where Moses first met God in the burning bush) takes between two and three months; more of this journey in unit 5. We take up the story with the Israelites arrived at Sinai (Mt Horeb).

Read Exodus 19: 1-9

- ◆ What is God undertaking to do?
- ◆ Is his offer conditional?

Read Exodus 20: 1-21 The Ten Commandments.

- ◆ To Christians and Jews the commandments are very familiar and accepted. Do these commandments apply equally to those outside these two faiths?

Some of these commandments have formed the basis of our civil laws, and some not. Our non-religious society in general separates compliance accordingly.

- ◆ What pressure is there for Christians and the church to take the same view?

Rather than examine the moral content of the Commandments, we are looking to follow God's (one big) plan. What is the overview of the commandments? Why were they necessary? What was / what is their purpose?

- ◆ Knowing that the key word in God's plan is relationship, try to divide the Commandments into 2 groups, group 1 = those about relationship with God, group 2 = those about relationship with each other.

Now Read Matthew 22: 36-40.

- ◆ Can you see how Jesus' answer fits with the groups you have just (hopefully) collated?
- ◆ "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments". Do you agree?

Straightforwardly the Commandments were given by God as the moral code to which he expected compliance from his chosen people. Yet God would know that they (and us) could not ever fully comply. So it would seem that we were expected to learn from our failure to comply.

- ◆ If we really want to achieve something but find we cannot do so on our own, we normally seek help. Where should the Israelites (and you and I) go to seek help?
- ◆ How relevant to our salvation and God's plan is it that we understand that we fall short of what/who God intended us to be?
- ◆ Thinking about the constant help they (and us) are going to need to comply (and therefore fully relate to God), can you see a hint of a future outworking of God's plan that would provide a constant source of help and guidance?

There is another hint of the future outworking of God's plan to be drawn from the sacrificial system permitted by God, mediated by the Levitical priesthood, as the Israelites made reparations for failures to comply with the Commandments, detailed in the Book of Leviticus. Animal sacrifice, in payment for sin and guilt, continued endlessly, as did the sins. Some sort of special, one-off sacrifice, once and for all sacrifice was going to be needed!

In our own limited capacity, we know that the best way to learn is through experience, through living, and (no surprise) God knows this much better than we do. So the way is prepared, a journey is to be undertaken, along which his chosen people will be invited to learn by experience how to relate to God. And this journey (under the loving scrutiny of God), and what is to be learnt along the way, is to be an example to all peoples.

Read Exodus 23: 20 to 24: 8

Notice the covenant is the same as that given to individuals and their family, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but now renewed to all the people of the nation Israel.

- ◆ How many times did the people confirm the covenant?
- ◆ Were they under pressure to commit or was it undertaken of their own free will?
- ◆ Would that be important to God?

Next study (unit 5) is – what we can learn from Israel's wanderings in the desert and crossing into the Promised Land.