

The everlasting Way – Sunday 17th May, 2015

***“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.”
Psalm 139:23-24***

Beloved in The Lord,

The Bible clearly teaches us that there are only two possible paths that we can take in life – one is the everlasting way and the other is the wicked way. The everlasting way leads to a bright and beautiful future with Jesus, in The Father’s House; and the wicked way leads to Hell – to a dark, hopeless eternal existence without God.

Every single person is on one or other of these two paths. There is no third path, or middle path. We all begin life on the wrong path, because we are all born with a wicked, sinful nature. We are all descendants of one man Adam, and we have inherited his sin nature. When Adam fell, he condemned all future people to be born with a rebellious nature, that naturally disobeys God. Adam has placed us on the path of the wicked.

God is love and it is His desire that we live with Him, both in this life and also eternally. In order for this to be possible, our old nature has to be dealt with, and we need a new nature. This is possible only through Jesus Christ. We read in John’s Gospel:

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

We need to read these words together with Jesus statement to Nicodemus:

***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
(John 3:3)***

In order to change paths from the way of the wicked to the everlasting way, we must be born again. This happens when we admit that we are sinners, and then repent of our sins, placing our full trust in Jesus, believing that His blood cleanses us from all sin. We trust that His blood, shed on Calvary cleanses us and makes us “Righteous” before God.

When we are born again we change paths, we change direction. This is a one off event in our life, but we do need to remain sober and vigilant. We need to stay close to Jesus, so that we do not stray from the path. This is where today’s text comes into focus. David rightly prayed that God would search out his heart, that God would check the path that he is walking, and that God would lead Him along the everlasting way.

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It is a blessed thing indeed, to pray this prayer every day. A navigator on a ship that is travelling the seas, regularly checks his instruments; checks his bearings to make sure that the ship is on the right course. If it is straying off course, he immediately lets the Captain know, so that he can correct the ship's course. If the navigator does not regularly check the ship's bearings then when he eventually does, he may find the ship has drifted far off its intended route. This applies to our daily life. If we do not do a regular check up, we can drift off the path very quickly and find ourselves a long way outside of God's will for us. When this happens our life is no longer blessed and we cease to bear fruit for God's Kingdom. God is not glorified in us.

It is important that we understand, that if we are in Christ, if we are born again, then we cannot lose our salvation. Our place in Heaven is secure, but we can become useless to God, and we can lose out on blessing here and rewards in Heaven.

God knows how hard it is for us to stay on track and that is why He comes to our aid by providing us with assistance. He gives us a guide, a navigator, a helper – The Holy Spirit. Today we mark Jesus Ascension into Heaven. Last Thursday was Ascension Day. Forty days after His resurrection on Easter Sunday, Jesus left this world and returned to His Father in Heaven. Before He left, He said to His disciples:

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:15-18)

The Holy Spirit came ten days after Ascension Day, on the Day of Pentecost. He is here to stay. God The Holy Spirit resides in the heart of every true Christian. When we are born again The Holy Spirit takes up residence in our heart and He dwells there permanently. One of His main roles is to help us to walk along the everlasting way.

It is important that we trust Him, that we learn to rely upon Him in all things. We need to get to know Him. He is given to us for our benefit. We need to trust Him. We need to listen to and obey His promptings. He will never force us to do anything but He will prompt. We do have a free will, and so we need to submit that to Him.

When we obey God The Holy Spirit, when we follow Him, then we are walking along the everlasting path and we are living life as God has intended our life to be lived. This brings blessing not only to ourselves, but to all around us. When we disobey The Holy Spirit, and do our own thing, then this always leads to negative consequences and we hurt not only ourselves, but very often many others as well.

When we walk in the Holy Spirit, then our light shines brightly and our salt is salty. Our witness is good and our life honours God. When we walk in the flesh, follow our will and sinful desires, then our light becomes dim, our salt loses its flavour and our witness is marred and God does not get glorified. This is why Paul urges us over and over again: ***"walk by the Spirit". (Galatians 5:16).***

If we are Christians then our life should reflect the Lord Jesus Christ. Our life's mission is to bring the Good News of Jesus to all people. Before Jesus left on Ascension Day, He gave this command to His followers (that includes us): ***"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*** (Mt.28:18-20).

Our mission in life is to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ. We are His witnesses. We have been given life not in order to live for self, but to serve Him. Out of His tremendous love and grace He has snatched us off the path of sin and death, and He has placed us in His Kingdom of light and love and life. Our response to Jesus love should be to willingly surrender all to Him. That is living life at it's very best. When we surrender all to Jesus we are free. A person who walks the path of the wicked is not free, but a slave to sin and sins master – Satan. Satan pays bad wages for the wages of sin is death. The person who walks the path of life receives the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

To walk in the Spirit is the best, most rewarding, most fulfilling, most blessed life imaginable. When God The Holy Spirit is leading you along the everlasting path, you have peace, you have security, you have joy, you have confidence, you are free. You can live without fear, without anxiety, without stress. The path before you is illuminated by His love and you have clear direction.

You have no desire, nor need to cling to this life because you know that here there is no abiding place, you seek the Kingdom that is coming. Paul writes:

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21).

This passage is so beautiful. When we are on the everlasting way, then we know that our place, our true citizenship is not of this world, but in Heaven. We realise that we are only passing through, and therefore we do not need to be too in love with this World and all its things. When we really know this, then we really can appreciate the beauty of God's Ways and this World which He has created, but we are not enslaved by anything or anyone. We walk along the everlasting way, knowing that one day our Saviour will appear in the same way He left, in the clouds. At that moment we will be raised from the dead, or transformed in an instant, and receive our new Resurrected body, and be taken to the Father's Home to be with Jesus.

May we keep this blessed hope and truth before our eyes at all times and may that help us to stay on the everlasting way.

Let us pray with David:

***"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
²⁴ And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."***

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.