

Sunday September 4th 2011 – With my whole heart.

Psalm 119:33-37

**³³ Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.**

**³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
And keep it with all *my* heart.**

**³⁵ Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.**

**³⁶ Incline my heart to Your testimonies
And not to *dishonest* gain.**

**³⁷ Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,
And revive me in Your ways. (NASB)**

Beloved in Christ,

Last week I read about an elderly Christian lady who was riddled with arthritis. Her legs were so badly affected that she was only able to walk on crutches. Getting to Church was an arduous process. Every step she would take, would involve a great deal of effort and pain, yet she never missed a Sunday service. A member of the congregation who had observed her and noted that she was always there asked her how she did it. How did she manage to be at every single service? She smiled and said: “My heart gets there first and then my old legs follow.”

My good friend and colleague Pastor Gunis Balodis often says, it is not a matter of being able too, but wanting too. If we really want to do something, we can usually overcome the obstacles. Of course there are exceptions.

All too often people hide behind excuses. If only ... then I would...! It would be better if people were honest with themselves. More often than not it is not the being able too, but wanting too.

Last Sunday, we considered David’s prayer in Psalm 86: ***“Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. “***

Today’s text is a very similar prayer: **“ Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall observe it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law And keep it with all *my* heart. “**

The phrase “with all my heart” or as some other translations put it “with my whole heart” is a very important one to consider. A half hearted-lukewarm approach does not cut it. Last Sunday we considered the fact that we cannot live with a divided heart. We cannot serve two masters. We cannot not live with one foot in each world. We saw that when our

heart is properly in tune with God and His Word, when we seek first His Kingdom, His ways, then He will provide everything else for us.

Jesus taught: ***“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*** (Matthew 6:33)

The word translated seek means to go on seeking or to strive after. If we are striving, then we are not merely taking a walk in the park. When we strive we are being active and focused.

Paul in describing his life wrote in his letter to the Philippians: ***“If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.***

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:4-14)

Paul writes that he is pressing on toward the goal. His eyes are firmly fixed on the goal. He is not looking around, not looking back, but is pressing or striving toward the mark. He is running, not with a divided heart, but with a united heart. He is not half hearted or lukewarm in his faith, but is burning hot. He is not indifferent. He is going at it with all his heart. Paul is not relying upon the wisdom of men, but on the Word of God. He is not relying on his own strength, but on God’s power and strength.

Further in the same letter he writes: ***“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”(Philippians 4:13).*** Another way of putting it is “I can do all things through Him (Jesus) who empowers me from within. You see Paul strength came from Jesus who lived in his heart. Pauls heart was in tune with God, and he served Him in love and was faithful. Paul also found that the one whom he served was always faithful. Ending his letter Paul wrote:

***“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:19)***

Paul had found, that if you serve God with an undivided heart, with your whole heart, if you press on toward the goal, then God supplies all your needs, through Christ Jesus the Lord.

Please note that Paul said that God will supply all our needs, and not necessarily all our desires. As a good and loving Father, God supplies our needs. He knows what is best for us.

We now turn our attention to the finish line. Let us consider how Paul finished in this race of life. It is not the start that matters, or the journey so much, as to how we finish. If we start well but do not end well, then all is lost. Writing to his son in the faith, Timothy Paul wrote:

“⁵ But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. “ (2 Timothy 4:5-8)

Paul finished the race in faith. In order that this testimony be also our testimony, we need to cling to God and His Word. We need to pray:

***“³³ Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.***

***³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
And keep it with all my heart.***

***³⁵ Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.***

***³⁶ Incline my heart to Your testimonies
And not to dishonest gain.***

***³⁷ Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,
And revive me in Your ways. “ (Psalm 119:33-37)***

As I taught you last Sunday, so I remind you today, we need to pray these prayers regularly and often. When we pray using God’s Word, then we are praying with a very strong foundation.

This prayer contains a supplication as well as a commitment. Teach me O Lord, your statutes is a supplication. The commitment is: I shall observe it to the end.

Give me understanding is a supplication, and then the commitment follows: I will observe and keep Your law with all my heart.

This type of supplication and commitment should be made every day. If we don't we can quickly stray from the right path. If our heart is not totally committed to Him then we can easily be diverted into lies and errors and sin. We quickly revert to vain things.

To ensure that we finish the race in faith we need to be walking with God with all our heart.

God has loved us completely. He sacrificed His only begotten Son, Jesus for our salvation. How could we not love Him whole heartedly in response?

Amen.

Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.