

When We Need Revival: Longing for Righteousness

by Ronald Glass

Revival is a longing for righteousness that comes from a volitional commitment to obeying God and a biblical commitment to obeying God's Word.

Duration: 48:03

Scripture: Psalm 119:33-34, Psalm 119:37-38, Psalm 119:40, Psalm 119:88, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Psalm 119 and the theme of biblical revival. The main message is the importance of being committed to keeping God's Word for life and with all our heart and mind. The speaker emphasizes the need for perseverance and determination in following God's commands, even in difficult times. The sermon also highlights the need for revival and the role of God's righteousness and loving kindness in reviving our spirits.

Transcript

Thank you, Kevin, for that beautiful offertory, it was gorgeous, really blessed with a good voice, isn't he? Psalm 119, once again, Psalm 119 as we return to our series of studies in biblical revival. Psalm 119, and our text today is verse 40, I'm also going to be referring to verse 88. Verse 40 reads this way, Behold, I long for your precepts, revive me through your righteousness.

And then verse 88, which reads, Revive me according to your loving kindness, so that I may keep the testimony of your mouth. Well, this week our kids went back to school. Now, imagine this, first day of school, kids all come into the classroom and one bright little guy comes up to the desk and says, Hey, Miss Smith, I am so motivated to learn this year, I want you to teach me everything you know.

And I'm going to work until I learn it. Well, Miss Smith would probably have a heart attack, she would probably think she died and go on to teach her heaven, right? Since when do students do that kind of thing? So eager to learn that they want the teacher to impart everything that he or she knows. Why is it that parents spend large sums of money for, well, for example, their sons to send them to a baseball clinic? What's wrong with just a kid picking up a bat and ball and going out in the backyard and throwing and hitting the ball? Or playing with his friends somewhere? Or even playing on a little league team? Why do you got to go to a clinic and pay a lot of money to hear somebody teach you how to do it? Well, the

point is just that, that they want to learn everything they can from the professional.

That guy's been there, he's done it, he's an accomplished and skillful practitioner of the sport. And therefore, they want to know everything they can, learn everything they can, so that they can be a good ball player. Well, it's something of this dynamic that we see in the author of the 119th Psalm.

We don't know if it was David. Many think it was. I think that's a good guess, but we don't know for sure.

The author of Psalm 119 seems to have had this preoccupation and this desire when it came to the subject of living righteously. Now, that term, as you probably realize, is a word that is not found in our modern culture's vocabulary. You don't hear very many people talk about righteousness, about living righteously.

But that is what we are going to be seeing today. Now, so far in our series on biblical revival, we have learned what revival is. We have seen that revival is God supernaturally intervening into the affairs of man, and especially into the affairs of His church.

It is Christ, once again, sending His Spirit to breathe a fresh dispensation of power upon the church. It is God awakening His sleeping people. It is God bringing His abnormal people into a normal Christian walk once again.

We have studied examples of revival in Israel's history as we see it in the Old Testament. And throughout these studies, we have referenced anecdotes and insights from some of the great revivals in the history of the church. Well, then we've asked the question, how does revival come? We have three answers to that question.

Looking at the great awakening in the city of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah, we saw that revival comes by the sovereignty of God. Looking at the story of Jacob as he wrestled there at the brook with the angel of the Lord, with God Himself, we saw that the second answer of how revival comes is in response to the desperation of the saints. When God's people get very urgent to the point that they will say, we will not let you go until you bless us.

Thirdly, by the power of the Spirit, by the same kind of power that anointed the church in its birth there on the day of Pentecost. So now we are asking the question, when do we need revival? How do we know that we need revival? Now there are multiple answers, but this is a question that the writer of Psalm 119 answers. As I pointed out to you last time, it is true that the 119th Psalm is distinguished as the great passage in Scripture on the Scriptures.

Its theme in virtually every verse is the Word of God. However, throughout the 119th Psalm there is a sub-theme, a secondary theme, and that theme is revival. It appears over and over again, and we are looking at a few of those passages in our study.

So today we arrive at the third of these. In the first one we saw that the answer to the question, when do we need revival, was we need it when we are experiencing barrenness of soul, when our spiritual lives go into decline. And the request of the psalmist was, revive me according to your word.

We saw in the second place that when we find ourselves addicted to sin, we know we need revival, and the prayer was, revive me in your ways. Now this third time the psalmist pleads, revive me. He does so out of a resolute desire to live a life of integrity that pleases God, a life of righteousness.

Now there is a New Testament verse that I think we all ought to keep in mind in our day-to-day lives, a good verse to memorize. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14 which says this, Pursue peace with all men and the sanctification or the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Now this tells us that righteousness or holiness, sanctification, is an indispensable part of the Christian life.

If you are not living a righteous life, if you are not striving to live a righteous life, then you can ask the question, am I ever really going to see the Lord? Because if I'm not pursuing that, then there's something wrong with my Christianity. But today I would suggest to you that the majority of Christians are lukewarm when it comes to the matter of righteousness. Why is that? Well, it's because we have been profoundly influenced by the lies of moral and ethical relativism.

That's what absolutely saturates our society today. Our convictions about right and wrong have been softened as our culture tells us that you can't say anything is right or wrong. That it might be right for you, but it might be wrong for me.

And so that whole concept of truth and error and right and wrong has been lost. And so today even many Christians tolerate what God hates. Too often we are like those Israelites in the days of the judges.

We are doing what is right in our own eyes. Everyone is entitled to his or her opinions. No one has the right to impose their preconceived morality on anyone else.

God's word, however, tells us something very different. You say, well, what about this whole matter of righteousness? I was interested, as I was reading in our insert today, what in the world insert that first one? The presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church called the evangelical notion that individuals can be right with God a great Western heresy. Bishop Catherine Jeffords Scorey told leaders of the Episcopal Church that there is a great Western heresy.

That we can be saved as individuals and that any of us alone can be in right relationship with God. She said, this is a heretical and individualistic understanding which has led people to neglect the environment and contributed to the global recession. Well, I have news for her.

I still believe in the word of God which says that there is a way that pleases God. There is a way that displeases Him. There is such a thing as being in a right relationship with God.

And we call it righteousness. Now that's what the word of God tells us. And here is the anchor to all of this.

Verse 89 of this psalm which says, Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven. That's why I don't even blink when I read something like this garbage that I just read to you. Because God's word is settled.

It will not change. Not ever. Not from the day the first word was penned by Moses to the day in which it was completed.

It still stands in heaven. Forever, O Lord, your word is established. And therefore, we can use it as our authority as we study it together.

Now the truth is that you and I know how we're supposed to live. We know that we are to live righteously according to God's word. We want to do so.

The problem is that we so often fail. And that's why we should feel a continual need for personal revival or a longing for righteousness which is the way in which the psalmist here in the 119th Psalm puts it. Let me

ask you three questions to bring this subject into focus.

And I hope that this will resonate with you and that you will go out of here today with this prayer of the psalmist on your heart. Behold, he said, I long for your precepts. Revive me through your righteousness.

Let me ask you the first question. Do you have a passion for revival? And I'm looking now at the first part of this verse. And if you do, if you have a passion for the life of God to flow in a fresh and more powerful way through your life, you will recognize it in two ways.

And this is very interesting. Look at the first part of this verse. Behold, I long for your precepts.

Two ways that you will recognize this passion. One, you will be driven by what I am calling a volitional commitment to obeying God. A volitional.

When we speak of volitional, we are talking about the will. We are talking about the desire of a person to act in order to obey God. Now, the writer begins with the word behold.

He doesn't use that much in this psalm, but in this verse, he begins with behold. Behold is a word which says, look here. He's looking into the face of God and saying, God, pay attention to me.

Listen to what I have to say. I long for your precepts. Now, I want to look at those two words, long for, for just a moment.

They translate a rarely used word in the original text. Now, words mean something in Scripture. The Spirit of God did not inspire the holy writers arbitrarily.

He superintended every word that was written in the text. And here, it is a rather rare word in the Hebrew language. It derives from a verb which carries the nuance, the meaning of being willing or consenting to do something under obligation.

To be willing to do something at the request of another person. It means wanting to act against natural inclination. Let me go back to the student in school analogy.

What about that young man or young woman that has enough foresight for their life to say, I'm going to take my studies seriously. And so, they set goals. They say, I want to be on the principal's list.

I want to be valedictorian. I want to go to a good college. I therefore want high scores on my college boards.

And I am going to do everything I can to achieve it. And so, day after day throughout his or her academic career, he or she applies themselves to the work that is assigned them. They sit down every night and they pore over the books.

And they study hard. They go beyond maybe just the simple assignments. They do extra reading.

They take advanced placement courses. Working hard in order to achieve. Now, here's the question I would ask.

Is that natural? No, that's not natural. Most young people in that situation would rather be sitting and watching television. Or would rather be out with their friends, socializing somewhere.

Or involved in some kind of sport or other extracurricular activity. Rather than doing any of those things that are pleasant, those things that are pleasing to them or that are gratifying to the flesh, they have defied what is comfortable and defied what is pleasant and applied themselves to doing their assignments. Now, that's the picture that we have here in this word long for.

It is wanting to act against natural inclination. It is saying, I will do what somebody else has told me to do. I will do my assignments even though it may not feel particularly good.

Even though I may really rather be doing something else. The psalmist therefore recognizes that his desire is not natural. And neither is yours or mine.

You see, we have a natural inclination to follow the dictates of our flesh. We have a natural inclination in our souls to disobey God. To live for self.

It's just the way we're made. We're sinners. And so our natural inclination is to reject God's word.

Then God comes along and says, here's what I want you to do. We read it in this book. Here's how you are to obey me.

We say that chafes against the flesh. I don't really like that very much. But if you are a righteous believer, if you are living the power of the spirit of God, you will say, Lord, I don't want to do it, but I will because you tell me.

I don't want to get up in the morning and read the word of God, but I'll do it, Lord, because that's what you've told me to do. I don't want to pray, but I'll do it because that's what you told me. I don't want to witness to that person at work or that other person at school or my neighbor.

But, Lord, you want me to do that, and so I will do it. Now, because we don't naturally want to do these things and because the flesh is warring against us, that's why we appeal to the Lord for personal revival. That's why he is praying.

Behold, I long for your precepts. Lord, pay attention to me here. I want to do what is normally repulsive to me.

I want to obey you even though it's not the natural inclination of my heart. So, you will be driven by this volitional commitment. If you are a Christian today wanting to live a righteous life in the power of the spirit of God, you have to be willing to do some things you don't naturally want to do.

Christianity is not always comfortable. You have to realize that. That's just a given.

Accept it and live on it. But now, there's another part of this, and that is the word precepts. You will be driven by a volitional commitment to obeying God, but you will also be driven by a biblical commitment to obeying God.

I long for your precepts. That which controls a psalmist's desires is God's precepts. Now, this too, and this is interesting to me as I study this, this word is also a fairly rare word in the Old Testament.

The writer has used two rather uncommon words. The root meaning of the word precepts is that which is appointed or entrusted. It means orders or directions or assignments.

It's not just your word, but it is what you have assigned to me, what you have directed me, the directions that you have put in front of me. Alright, let me paraphrase this first line then, and it would go something like this. Lord, pay attention to me, I want to do your assignments, because even though it's not always much fun, it pleases you.

That's what he's saying. The precepts, the commandments, the assignments of God were his passion. Verse 45, I will walk at liberty, I will seek your precepts.

Come over to verses 93 and 94 for a moment. I will never forget your precepts, your assignments, your directions to me, for by them you have revived me. I am your save me, for I have sought your precepts, your assignments, your directions.

You know how in school we used to take out that little assignment book and write our assignments down? Maybe we need to do that when it comes to living the Christian life. Lord, what are your assignments? That's why many people journal as they read God's Word. They write them down.

This is what God wants for me today. This is what God would have me to do. These precepts, these commandments, these assignments or directions are of no value if they're not studied, if they're not understood.

And that's the psalmist's desire. If you look at this entire section of eight verses, beginning in verse 33, concluding with verse 40, you will see that that is the burden of this section. You are committed to keeping God's Word for all your life.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, verse 33, and I shall observe it to the end. Give me understanding that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart. By the way, that's why I'm interested in teaching the principles of biblical interpretation so that any of those who study this with us here this year will not just know, not just have understanding, but also that they will keep it with all their heart.

That's the passion. It's a determination to persevere to the end and through good times and bad. Notice, I shall observe it to the end.

Unreserved obedience to the end. Even when times get tough, even when I'm tempted to say I don't want this anymore, what has Christianity ever done for me? There will be times when you will be tempted to question God, when you will be tempted to question His providence, how He has worked in your life. And when you are, remember this passage, teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end.

Committed to keeping God's word for all your life. And then in addition, you're committed to keeping God's word with all your mind. Verse 34, give me understanding that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart.

I've often remarked to you that that word heart tends to focus on what we call the mind. In the Hebrew thinking, heart was the place where thoughts happened, where thinking took place. And so what he is saying here is that there are no reservations.

Because we're so easily distracted, this might be the most difficult part of obedience. It is not being distracted. It is being focused, just like the student who's so focused on doing the schoolwork.

You discover that in this process of learning the statutes, of gaining understanding, of keeping it with your heart, certain things happen. There is a joy in obedience. Verse 35, make me walk in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

You become satisfied. There's a joy in obeying God. Not only that, you refuse dishonesty.

Sin is something that you turn away from. Incline my heart to your testimonies and not to dishonest gain. I'm not going to cheat.

I'm not going to steal. I am not in any way going to be dishonest. We looked at verse 37 last time.

You would reject immorality. Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity and revive me in your ways. You're committed to honoring the Lord, which becomes apparent in your reverence for Him.

And verse 38, establish your word to your servant as that which produces reverence for you. This reverence, by the way, is an accurate barometer of the true condition of our souls. You find those who profess to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but who are irreverent in their attitudes.

You have a real reason to question that. Now the conclusion of all of this is that you cannot say that you long for the Lord's precepts that you are willing to obey the Lord's assignments if you neglect the means for understanding them. That's why it's so important to stay in the word of God, to study it and understand it, and to hear it taught and hear it preached.

That's why you should be in Sunday school every Lord's Day, 945. And here in church on a regular basis, hearing the word of God during the week, listening to Christian radio and studying your Bible. So the first question is, do you have a passion for revival? Now the second is this, do you know the process of revival? The latter part of verse 40, revive me through your righteousness.

Through, actually, is the same word that we had in verse 37, in, in your ways. But I think the word through here captures the essence of what he's saying. Last year I went, underwent heart surgery.

Now I had to, I was at the point of having, risking a heart attack, but I gained, in a sense, new life. How did I do it? Only by going through the surgery. I had to have my arteries repaired.

I had to go through the surgery. Or to think of it in another way. If you are going from Long Island to Pennsylvania, generally you have to go through New Jersey.

You don't get there without going through New Jersey. Or let me put it this way, going back to our school analogy. In order to graduate, you have to go through several years of coursework.

In other words, in all of these examples, there is something that has to happen in the intermediate phase in order to get to the end result. Now that's what David is saying. Revive me through your righteousness.

And this righteousness is a very rich concept in scripture. And I want to share it with you this morning. First of all, you need to grasp God's revealed righteousness.

What is God's revealed righteousness? This is revelation. And it is contained in the word of God. When we talk about righteousness, we have no other source to look to than the word of God.

Let me remind you of what David said concerning scripture in Psalm 19. Psalm 19 verses 8 and 9. He says, The precepts, here's that word again, of the Lord are right. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true.

They are righteous altogether. When we come to the New Testament, you remember those words that we quoted so often in our series on Romans. Romans chapter 1 verses 16 and 17.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek or the Gentile. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed.

It is in scripture that we have the full range of God's righteous nature and his righteous works. We learn who God is. We learn what God does.

We learn who we are. We learn what God expects from us. Scripture reveals to us the way in which we can access the righteousness of God and live righteously in the world.

It is therefore our standard of righteousness. Now let me just say to you that you will never be revived in God's righteousness without saturating yourself with the Bible. It is the instruction book.

Go back to our school analogy. The student walks into chemistry class and says, Teacher, I really have to tell you, I am not the least interested in atomic theory. I don't care about balancing equations.

And frankly, the periodic table is irrelevant. Get me to the lab. I love pouring stuff and doing things in the lab.

The teacher is going to say, You've got to be crazy. You're going to injure yourself. You could blow the place up if you don't know what you're doing.

You've got to study the book first. How would you like it? Would you like to go to a doctor's office and have that doctor walk in to the exam room to look at you when you come to find out that the doctor never studied anatomy, physiology, microbiology, doesn't know anything? Well, I think he would say he ought to go to school first, right? Or the young man or young woman who says, I have a passion to be a lawyer. I just love to argue cases.

I want to get into court and argue. Well, you've got to go to law school first. You've got to hit the books.

You've got to study case law. You've got to put all this stuff in your head first. No, no, I'm not interested in that.

I just want to go into court and argue. Well, you see the ridiculousness of all of this. The fact is, if you're going to do something right, you have to do the study.

You have to put the time in. It's the same thing with the righteousness of God, that he has put it in a book. And this is here for our study.

This is how you access the righteousness of God. You cannot master a skill without studying the fundamentals, but a lot of us Christians try to do that. We say we want to be good Christians.

We want to live a godly life. Yes, but we're not really applying ourselves to the word of God. So the first step, therefore, with regard to the righteousness of God, is understand it.

Understand it, and it comes through the revealed righteousness of God. Secondly, gain Christ's imputed righteousness. This is the righteousness of God, which is credited to your account through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we went through this in great detail in our study in Romans, and I don't have time to go into all of it here, but let me remind you that we all begin with a horrible deficit in our account. We are debtors, and we will never be able to pay our debt to God because of our sin. However, God has made a way for us to balance the account, and that way is the imputed righteousness of Christ.

That is righteousness that is posted to our account in our ledger book. The righteousness of God is put there in order to eliminate the debt that we owe and that we cannot pay. Now, for this, we go back again to the third chapter of Romans.

We read it earlier in our service, but let me take you back there for a moment again to verses 21 to 26. Now, every human being is lost, hopelessly lost, apart from God's saving grace. Verse 21.

Now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. Apart from God's saving grace, we are hopelessly lost. Chapter 3, verse 10 of Romans.

There is none righteous, not even one. Do you understand that? None righteous. Not you.

You may think you're pretty good. You're not. You are lost.

You are hopelessly unrighteous in the eyes of God. How bad? Well, Romans chapter 1, verse 18 talks about it. It says that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and, notice the word, unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

The problem with sinful human beings is we hear the truth, we even know the truth, and yet we suppress it. We say, no, I don't want that. No truth like that for me.

I don't want to live that way. And so we are all rebels against God. That's our debt.

Now, all of the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the Lamb of God. That's what Romans 3:21 tells us. Apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

Under the Old Testament way of doing things, those innocent animal sacrifices pointed ahead to the innocent sacrifice that we call today the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. God demonstrated His righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ. Two thousand years ago, He came to this world.

He, the Son of God, died on the cross in order that we might be able to access the righteousness of God to our own personal lives. And we access that righteousness through faith. Notice that's what it says in verse 22 of Romans 3. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.

Now, the result of faith, of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, of accepting His gift of grace is what is called justification. What is justification? It is a judicial act in which God declares us acquitted of sin and righteous in His sight. How does that happen? Verses 24 to 26.

We are justified, declared righteous as a gift, not that we've earned it or that we deserve it, but as a gift by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation, that is, as an intervention in His blood through faith. He stepped in between the wrath of God and our sin. This was to demonstrate His righteousness.

There's that word again. Because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time so that He would be just or righteous and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Now, there's so much that needs to be said there that I can't say at this point, but what I do want to point out to you is that God has given us the gift of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, His blood shed in our behalf, turning away the wrath of God.

If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God then, at His heavenly bar of justice, declares us to be acquitted. We are innocent. We no longer are unrighteous in His sight.

Now, that's summed up in that great verse in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, for He has made Him, the Lord Jesus, to be sin in our behalf, He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. So, the first step is, in this matter of righteousness, is to grasp God's revealed righteousness as we see it in His word. The second is to accept it, that is, to gain Christ's imputed righteousness, which leads then to the third step, which is to grow in your acquired righteousness.

This act of receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is only the beginning. We are saved from sin. We are justified.

But there then begins a process that we call sanctification, in which we become more and more like Jesus Christ, the practical righteousness that we pursue as we grow in grace. Remember, in Romans 1, verse 17, it is in the gospel that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith, that is, the faith in which we receive the saving grace of God, to faith, the faith by which we live, as it is written, but the righteous man shall live by faith. Righteousness is a matter of daily life in the life of a Christian.

It's not something you can just leave for the day in which you receive Christ as Savior. 1 John 2, verse 29, if you know that He is righteous, that Christ is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. What is the mark of a Christian? The mark of a Christian is a person who practices righteousness.

Based on what? Well, again, we come back to the word of God. 2 Timothy, chapter 3, and verse 16 tells us that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. So we come back to the word of God, we read it, we study it, and then we are enabled to do what Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy, chapter 6, and verse 11, he says, Flee from these things, you man of God.

Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, gentleness. See, those are the characteristics that mark out a Christian. Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, gentleness.

Those are the things that mark out a Christian. How should a Christian live? 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 22, Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness. That's what we ought to be doing.

Let me give you an example from the New Testament. James, chapter 1, verse 20, tells us in very simple terms that the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. If we get angry and we sin in our anger, that is not righteous.

That is not doing what God wants us to do. Therefore, all of our lives become patterns of growing in righteousness, becoming more and more holy, more and more pleasing to God. So, the question that I've asked here, Do you know the process of revival? Revive me through your righteousness.

This revival comes through righteousness. This is the pathway to revival. Grasping God's revealed righteousness, understanding this book and what it teaches, to gaining Christ's imputed righteousness, accepting what he has done in Jesus Christ, and being justified by faith.

Thirdly, growing in your acquired righteousness as we live daily, being sanctified by him. Now, let me quickly come to the third question. And for this, I go to the 88th verse here in Psalm 119.

Do you expect the promises of revival? Verse 88, revive me according to your loving kindness, so that I may keep the testimony of your mouth. Now, this is another word that I have mentioned many times before, but that word loving kindness is a word which refers to God's covenant faithfulness. It tells us that God, as a God who demonstrates loving kindness, is a God who is faithful to his promises.

When God makes a promise, he keeps his promise. Now, he made a covenant with his people in the Old Testament, and he was always faithful to that. He's made promises to us as well, and he's faithful to those.

Now, our subject here today is righteousness. There are two promises I want to just point out to you with regard to righteousness. And both of them have to do or appear in the Sermon on the Mount.

So let me just mention, first of all, Matthew 5 and verse 6. Here's what Jesus said. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And now here's the promise.

For they shall be filled. In everything that I've said today, I hope you're seeing that we should be longing, we should be desiring, we should hunger for righteousness. If you do, the promise of God is you will be filled.

You will obtain the righteousness you seek. Why? Well, so that you will keep God's word according to what the psalmist says in our text in verse 88, where he says, so that I may keep the testimony of your mouth. Revive me according to your promises.

Lord, breathe life into me, as you have promised, so that I can keep your word. Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness today? I hope you are. Let me say that there's a second promise, and that is that if you desire God's righteousness, you will be blessed.

You know the verse well. 6th chapter of Matthew, verse 33. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Brothers and sisters, if you make righteousness your life's highest priority, the Lord promises that he will meet all of your other needs. Your life is spent most, for most of us, our lives are spent pursuing the things of this life, trying to make a living, maintain a home, feed a family, do the things that we're supposed to do,

and we get worried about these things, and we become preoccupied with these things. The promise is that if we will seek the righteousness of God first, all these other things will be provided.

They'll all be taken care of. We won't need to fret over these things. We understand this, but most of us don't live like it.

Let me encourage you today to claim the promise of God, because as the psalmist puts it, God's loving kindness is our source for revival. Now let me see if I can kind of pull all this together for you. There are many people who cherish the promises of God.

Not so many people cherish the precepts, his instructions, or his assignments. The godly believer loves both, both the promises and the instructions. They go hand in hand.

Without obedience to the precepts or the assignments of God, we would never experience his promises. Without the promises, we would find it difficult to persevere in obeying the precepts. Cherish the promises, yes, by all means, but expect to receive them in the pathway of obedience.

Now that's the challenge of our text, but there's also a comfort here. The psalmist's words, as I've pointed out to you, hint to us that none of this desire is natural. It's a work of grace in the heart of a believer.

See, you're tempted to say, all right, pastor, you're supposed to be a holy man of God, good for you, but when I go home and I go back into the real world, none of this really feels very good to me, very, very right. This is really hard for me. You don't know where I live, you don't know where I work, you don't know how hard it is.

No, I know, because I have a sinful heart just like you do. All of this is a work of grace in the heart of a believer. God gives to undeserving sinners this longing after his righteousness.

He's the one who puts that desire in our heart that says, Lord, I want to obey you. So don't expect it to come naturally. It doesn't.

Don't somehow think you're an inferior Christian if you don't always feel like obeying God. You're not alone. And this is why you pray.

And this is what the psalmist did when he prayed here in Psalm 119. 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.

Make me walk in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. See, he's asking God to enable him to do something that in his own heart he just doesn't want to do. Lord, give me that desire to obey you.

Let me just close with this remark. Let's not be embarrassed by the word righteousness. Let's not be ashamed of it or hesitant to embrace it.

Yes, people may laugh at you. They may ridicule. They may look at you kind of funny if you talk about being righteous.

That's not something the world talks about. There is a right way to believe. There is a right way to live.

Ignore all the nonsense that's coming even from religious people telling us that individuals can't be right with God. Oh, yes, you can. Scripture tells us that.

There is a right way to believe. There is a right way to live. It's the way of God who himself is righteousness.

It's the way of the word of God which is his revealed righteousness. It's his assignment for us. Therefore, I urge you today, long for his precepts.

Live through his righteousness. Some 2,700 years after the psalmist wrote this hymn, another hymn writer appeared who shared that same longing for righteousness. Charles Wesley wrote, Oh, for a heart to praise my God, a heart from sin set free, a heart that always feels thy blood so freely shed for me, a heart in every thought renewed and full of love divine, perfect and right and pure and good, a copy, Lord, revive me through your righteousness.

Let's pray together. Father, we realize that when we speak in this way, we are contradicting the world in which we live. We're going against the grain.

We're swimming upstream in a hostile world. Father, we also, as we bow in quiet prayer, each one of us can acknowledge before you that there are many times where we really don't want to do what you want us to do. We're not good students in your school sometimes.

Sometimes, Father, you give us assignments and we don't do them. But we also realize that this is why we need revival. We don't want to be poor students.

Lord, we don't want you looking at us and shaking your head and saying you have failed to do your assignments. And so, Father, knowing who you are, knowing who your son is and what he has done for us, knowing the salvation that we have in Christ, we say with the psalmist, we long for your assignments. Show us what you want us to do.

And, Lord, because we are so hesitant and because we are so often negligent, we pray, revive us through your righteousness. By your Spirit, give new life that we may be obedient servants. Yes, Lord, enable us by your grace, day by day, to reach higher ground.

And we'll thank you in Jesus' name.

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