

Abiding Fruit

Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart

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Keep Steady Steps Psalm 119:133

The reason the Psalmist desires that his steps be kept steady, is so that sin won't get dominion over him. The implication exists in the text that it is entirely possible for sin to get dominion over us. Besetting sin must be guarded against in the life of the believer. The text also presents the solution to gaining victory over sin – it is by keeping a steady walk according to the promise of God. We must acknowledge that since the Psalmist speaks in this way about the dangers of sin, that for him, the possibility existed that he might be overcome by his iniquity, and therefore it was necessary that he speak in this way (as a kind of prayer). The thought also exists that the Psalmist since he speaks of iniquity gaining dominion over him, implies that he knows this iniquity well enough to recognize the slippery slope that it offered to him and the danger that surrounded him. It is also possible since he speaks this way, to suggest that he has succumbed to this iniquity previously. He certainly recognizes sin as having the power to gain dominion over him.

The Christian Church is very reluctant to speak about sin today. The reason for this, of course, is because it offends people, especially unbelievers. The power of the Church resides in just how much it preaches about sin and against sin. Failure to do this means that the Church is tickling the ears of people. They feel good about themselves. You cannot help but feel good, if sin is never held up before you as your major problem in life and before God. As long as the Church refuses to preach about sin, its offer of Christ as a Savior is completely hollow and empty. I doubt that there is one sincere and true Christian who would not complain about their struggle with sin. We know that sin is a great and terrible enemy, and we recognize that the power to overcome sin does not reside in ourselves, but comes from God. We also know that any deliverance is through the Lord Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Cross is always available to the believer as a place to renew our repentance and faith. The Christian Church desperately needs to confront sin. Sin in the Church must always be confronted as well as sin in unbelievers. The great danger we face today in the Church is that the tares are existing alongside the wheat in an increasing measure with no call to them to repent and to come to Christ. This is because there is no serious preaching about sin.

You cannot help but be staggered in Psalm 119 by the many references to the Word of God. It is spoken of as law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, rules, judgments, ordinances and promise. Virtually every verse (all 176 of them) contains some reference to these. The Psalmist understands the wonder, beauty and glory of the Word of God. He understands his need of it in his life. The many references point to the significance of the Word, as the great need of the Psalmist. Verse 133 falls within the 17th section of the Psalm. The Psalm is an acrostic containing 22 sections (22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet) each section made up of 8 verses. The first letter of each verse in the first 8 verses begins with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. And then subsequently every verse in its section begins with the letter that is for that particular section. It is a glorious composition.

The Psalmist relishes the Word of God. It is central to his life. You almost feel that without the Word of God in his life what does he have? – he has nothing! He cannot help but speak of it. In Psalm 19:13, the Psalmist prays that God would keep him back from presumptuous sins and that they should not get dominion over him. The Apostle Paul speaks the same language in Romans 6:12 – 14. Sin possesses

the power to gain dominion. If you give in to sin, it begins to exert its stranglehold upon you. It wants dominion. The nature of sin is to want mastery over us. This is what the Psalmist is concerned about in Psalm 119:133. If his steps are not steady, then sin is going to dominate him. The word for “steady” (כִּוּן *kuwn*) means to be established, to have one’s steps directed. It means to be secure and firm and fixed.

What will keep him in this way? He tells us that his steps will be steady “*according to your promise.*” God has spoken by His word to the Psalmist. God has uttered his promises to the Psalmist. He knows the Word and as long as he obeys and walks in the way of the promises of God he will be steady. The ground will be firm for him to walk on, for the way will be established by the Lord. His steps speak of his walking one step after another. Walking is a process. He desires that throughout the course of the day that his steps will be according to the Word or promise of God. The supply of God’s promise is a faithful one. He will keep us steady if we walk according to His Word.

Entrance into the Christian life is by being on the narrow way, going through the narrow gate (Matt. 7:13, 14). It is therefore a hard way, as Jesus says. It is not, as Joel Beeke says, some “*middle way between extremes, but a narrow way between precipices.*” We live by faith. This means self-denial in a vicious, hostile God-hating world. We are in a holy war. There are no ceasefires, no *détente*, and no negotiations. Sin is a violent enemy intent upon our destruction. The Christian is described as someone who “*overcomes the world*” (1 John 5:4). We overcome because we have been born again. We have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God. In regeneration, God gives to the sinner new life, and makes the governing concern of his soul, holy. Regeneration is not reformation. It is not renewal. It is instead a resurrection from the dead and a new creation (Eph. 2:1 -10). It is God who raises the dead, the dead in trespasses and sins. Christians have new dispositions, new desires, and new longings. We have different views about sin now, about Jesus, and about the Bible. “*We hate what we used to love and we love what we used to hate,*” as Joel Beeke says.

There are greater pleasures to be had by refusing sin than by yielding to it, but sin’s persuasive allure and the devil’s tempting, is such that their whispers come to us, “*have it now, don’t deprive yourself.*” This temptation is the ancient one from the lips of the serpent in the garden. His strategy is still the same. He urges us to yield to sin, as if God were keeping something good from us. So this contest is continual and awful. The Puritan John Trapp (1601 - 1669) said that, “*pleasure, profit and preferment are the world’s trinity.*” This world is “*Vanity Fair,*” as John Bunyan said in *Pilgrim’s Progress*. To yield is to walk in sin’s ways, the world’s ways, and the devil’s ways. That is an unsteady course that leads to destruction.

The Psalmist prays that God will keep his footsteps steady, firm and resolute in the ways of God, and only then shall sin not get dominion. The word “*dominion*” speaks of mastery over, of control over. Iniquity becomes our master when we yield to it. Sin shall not have dominion over us (Rom. 6:14) because we are in Christ. We must not yield or dally with sin. We are not strong enough on our own to win. We must walk in Christ. Sin is not our master, Jesus is. The writer to the Hebrews gives us the means by which we conquer besetting sins. In Hebrews 12:1, 2, we are to consider the saints of God who have trodden the path we are now on (the path the Psalmist walked long ago), but more importantly we are to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He began His work in us and He will complete it in us. He has endured far more than we ever shall – His sufferings were unto death bearing our sins in His own body. He has triumphed and because He lives, we also shall live. So keep steady steps and iniquity will never have dominion over you. Look to Jesus always.

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