

Season 5, Episode 2: The Way of Blessing (1-16)

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Sarah: This podcast is sponsored by 10ofthose.com. 10ofthose.com hand pick the best Christian books that point to Jesus and sell them at discounted prices. Last week Felicity flagged up Jen Oshman's New book Cultural Counterfeits. This week, it's an older book. It's A devotional by Dale Ralph Davies, the way of blessing in the muck of life. And it's a devotional on psalms one to twelve. It does exactly what the title suggests. It carefully, and clearly delightfully walk you through the first twelve psalms, showing us what it looks like for those trusting in Christ to keep going, keep journeying with him in the muck of life. If you're looking to spend some time in a psalm for your own Bible time, I'd highly recommend grabbing copy of this from 10ofthose.com

Felicity: Welcome to two sisters in a cup of tea. My name is Felicity and I live in America and this is my sister Sarah and she's in the UK. We are so excited for this second episode in season five and we're going to be jumping into the first 16 verses of Psalm 119. But first, before we do that, Sarah, what is in your cup? Hello.

Sarah: Well, in my cup today is a standard Yorkshire brew. Very unexciting, but classic. Good way to open up the season, I think. And then paired today with some Easter chocolate.

Felicity: I remember now, Sarah as a child, had Easter chocolates long beyond everyone else in the family.

Sarah: I do have one child like that and I think they'll probably be eating.

Felicity: Their Easter chocolate smugly with everyone else watching longingly.

Sarah: What have you got?

Felicity: I've also gone for a Yorkshire tea, actually. But really the gem of this is the cup, which is a cup which both my husband and I very much enjoy. It's the sort of cup where you offer to make a cup of tea for the other person so that you get to be the one that picks which cup you have. He's actually away at the moment, so I'm just making the most of it. Yeah, no one can buy why would.

Sarah: You not buy two cups?

Felicity: I have considered it many times and I don't know why I haven't done that, but maybe I will.

Sarah: Okay, well, before we get into the text itself today, we just want to say thank you so much for everyone who's piled in with a question about 719 in the run out for this season. It's really great. It's really helpful to hear these questions, many of which we have, and we'll be aiming to answer for ourselves as we go through this season. Blessed. You do want to just share with us the first question that we're going to have a little think free before we get second. Yeah.

Felicity: So this was a question, actually, that we have from a few different people, and it was about the whole heartedness of the psalmist. And the question is really, can we possibly be as wholehearted as the guy writing the psalm seems to be is he setting an unrealistic standard or what's going on with that? What do we do with that because it can make us feel guilty or just that we're going to fail every step of the way.

Sarah: Yeah, such a good question, isn't it? So helpful. And I think that probably just gets the heart of all of our hearts as we start reading this psalm, doesn't it? I mean, the short answer is no, we cannot be wholehearted like what we're eating. But the psalmist isn't wholehearted either, as we'll start to see in this first opening two kind of chunks. So I think hold on and wait for what we can have dug into. But also the other answer is yes, because Jesus is the only one who can ever be wholehearted in praying this psalm. He's the one who fulfills that. He's the one who can ultimately pray it with complete wholeheartedness. And because as believers, we are in Christ, as we were saying last time, it's like he's the choir leader, and we can join in as his choir, as Mr. Rash put it, we can kind of sing and

learn to pray and learn to live this, because he has gone ahead of us and obeyed wholeheartedly for us. Does that make sense?

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's absolutely right. So you can have that in Christ. We can. But then there's also the tension that now and the not yet the wear of spirit and flesh. So we're kind of frustrated in that. And I think that tension of, like, kind of want to be there, but I just can't.

Sarah: Yeah. And that is a healthy tension that we're going to get into right now.

Felicity: Right now?

Sarah: Right now. Okay. So I'm going to read verse one to 16 of Psalm 119. Are you ready?

Felicity: Yes.

Sarah: Okay. Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Bless to those who keep his statutes and seek Him with all their hearts. They do no wrong, but follow his ways. You have laid down precepts that have to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying Your decrees, that 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 person stay on the path of purity? By living according to Your word. I seek you with all my heart. Do not let me stray from Your commands. I have hidden Your word in my heart, but I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, Lord. Teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from Your mouth. I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on Your precepts and consider Your ways. I delight in your decrees. I will not neglect your word.

Felicity: Thank you, Sarah. Wow. I mean, the start let's just jump into those first three verses to begin with and just notice they are statements like they're kind of objective. We were saying last week, the U and the I is so big in this psalm, but actually, these first three verses, they're kind of just descriptive, aren't they? They're just like, this is what it is to be blessed.

Sarah: Well, this is the only place that we don't have the U's and the I's. So out of all the 176 persons in the whole song, this is the only place where we don't get that. This is like the kind of well, I think it feels like he's presenting the ideal. This is what the best life looks like. This is what the blessed life is, isn't it?

Felicity: Yes. And so what we have there is this picture of someone walking according to the door and seeking with the whole heart. So at the very start, we've got this kind of not just hearing the Word, but also doing the Word, but also heartfelt seeking out of the Lord through his word. So it's kind of holistic. The whole person is set up in this picture.

Sarah: Yeah. So this is the ideal in terms of what life, the best life looks like, isn't it? And it's beautiful. It's a beautiful picture of walking according to the Lord's ways, isn't it? Those who do know wrong but follow his ways. Yeah, it's wonderful, isn't it? And I think what comes out of it is just like God's character in it because it's following his ways immediately the ways of the Lord are connected with God himself.

Felicity: Yes. And you see that, don't you? Then in verse four, you have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed, and we're into the psalmist speaking with the Lord. And then I just love verse five. Oh, that my ways were steadfast and obeying. It's like the laments of, like, Ah, that's the ideal, and I'm not ideal.

Sarah: This is the reality, isn't it? This is the real life. If I really consider where I am, I'm not steadfast and I'd be put to shame as I consider all your commands. And I think that's just so helpful, isn't it? Because you're just like, that's my heart. That's where I am. Of course I would be put to shame when I consider all your commands, like, oh, that I would have steadfast ways like this. Yeah. What we've just seen in verses one to four, I don't I know.

Felicity: And then it's interesting what he does with that kind of lament. And I feel like it is so heartfelt with the oh, and the kind of, like, so annoyed that I'm not like that. And he doesn't just stop there, failed, done. But actually, then I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. And I think at the heart of that is as he sees God through his words, so he longs to praise Him and to be obedient, I think. And what we're going to see again and again through this psalm is that God's word and God are never far from each other. Like they are so integrated that as you hear the word, so you know God as you seek

out obedience to his command, so you're seeking out the Lord and you're kind of coming nearer to God as you do that.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. It's really striking, isn't it? But in his lament, the first thing that he does is to turn to the Lord in praise and praise. And the only reason he can praise with an upright heart is because of this covenant promise that we can have said last time. That's the kind of wallpaper of this Arm, the promises that his hope is built on, and that's the reason that he can praise with an upright heart. But as he learns righteous laws, as he learns the Lord's righteous ways, there's kind of like suggestion there that then he will praise Him with more and more of an upright heart as he grows in Godliness. Do you reckon?

Felicity: Yes, I think that's right. And I think we'll see that as we go on through the psalm. There's actually a phrase later on the song, this kind of enlarged heart, and it feels like that's what goes on, that as he hears the words, then this heart kind of grows in the ability to desire Him and to long for him. And it almost seems to feed each other.

Sarah: There is tension, though, isn't it? And we get that tension at the end of the sense that I'll obey your decrees like I want to obey. And yet he's also saying, don't ask me forsake me, I know my heart, I know where I stand without you. I need your salvation in order to even have the desire to obey. I think it's just helpful seeing that tension all the way through at the start, isn't it?

Felicity: Yeah. And the forsaken there, if he was to be forsaken, that's not possible because he's in the covenant promise, isn't it? He's relying and calling on the God who he knows and the promise that God has made, therefore, do not utterly forsake me because I'm striving and running, but I'm covenantally covered, as I said.

Sarah: Yeah, nice. covenantally covered. He's absolutely dependent on God's faithfulness to keeping his promise, isn't he?

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: But then there is like the second stanza, the second chunk from verse nine does start to answer the question, though, doesn't it? What does it look like to kind of aim for that blessed life at the top there, doesn't it? And he can ask this question, what does it look like to stay on this path of purity? Well, it's by living according to your word. So it's like God's given this means of grace in his word, to enable us to grow and to strive for this wholeheartedness even though we know in our hearts we will never be able to fully obey.

Felicity: And I think, sir, I think that's absolutely right. Then we have this living according to Your Word. So I think there's two kind of nuances to that. You've got the word literally hearing what God says, but also in word, we also have God's promises. So we are living according to God's grace in the promise that he has given. And so that whole thing of the promise that God has promised to be our God and his promise that we will be his people. And I feel like you're kind of encompassed within that as we then seek to live according to His Word. And this whole idea of do not let me stray from Your commands. And then in verse eleven, I've hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. And the reality in that is that we have a sinner speaking here, don't we? Because he knows that he does stray and that he does sin in his heart. I think rather than reading that as like, wow, this guy, is he really not going to sin? Is he really not going to stray? Well, no, he does stray and that's why he's speaking to God like this. And I just think that is something do we speak to God like that about the reality of the fact that we do stray and we do sin? I think I'm more likely when I know I'm sinning or when I'm aware of my sin, to kind of try and move on and just, oh, just pretend that didn't happen with God. But actually to say to God, I do stray, please help me so that.

Sarah: I can use this means of grace Your Word, and hide that in my heart to enable me to grow. And I love just as we can go on in that just the emphasis on his mouth. So he's with his lips, he's recounting all the laws, all the judgments. And as it talks about the words, laws, teachings, precepts. Like this is just specific command of the Bible, think the whole Bible, the whole stories, the whole promises, as you're saying earlier, just like all of it. Recounting the kind of who we are in Christ, for example, recounting that using our mouths. I guess we do that when we sing songs together at church, don't we? We do that when we can speak truth to one another and recounting that with our lips. And then with his head as well, he's meditating on your precepts and considering your way. So actually, really thinking

through what does this mean for me? What does this look like for me to follow this? And then with the heart, I delight in your decrees, I'm not neglect your words. I think for me, that's just been really, really helpful drawing out. Okay, there's something to do with my lips and the way that I speak here. There's something to do with my head and the way that I think here and there's something to do with the outpouring of my heart in response with the mouth and the head.

Felicity: I love that, Sarah. I hadn't noticed that when I was reading it and I think that is so helpful. Are you then saying that that then helps us to get to where this guy is?

Sarah: Yeah, I think there is something in the kind of as you create habits in doing those things, you then hunger more and more for what the Lord wants, don't you? So as you hide the word in your heart or as you intentionally think about it, you're then more likely to pray in light of it, aren't you? Or as I for example, as I've been kind of trying to memorize some of this, I'm more likely to be thinking about it on a given day and therefore I'm more likely to pray it. And I think just we're never going to be, as we kind of keep saying, like Jesus is the one who can wholeheartedly pray this, but that doesn't mean this isn't here for us to try and head in that direction because we want to be becoming more like him, don't we?

Felicity: Yeah, absolutely. Because and we have the Holy Spirit in dwelling in us, so we are able to we're able to run in that direction, aren't we? Because we are in Christ, we're not able to reach the perfect fulfillment of it. But we long and we strive and our hearts grow in desire for that. I love this. Yeah, I love what you're saying there, that as we then do speak it and think on it and then rejoice and I think that's right because it is quite hard and challenging to think how do I actually hide the word in my heart? Like, how do I really let the word sink into my heart and change me? Change like the way that I am striving for the law?

Sarah: Yes. And not just doing that because I feel like I ought to. Not just doing that because we know know you. This is a well known verse, isn't it? Oh, I hide the word of my heart. But like not just doing that because that's something I ought to do, but actually he's doing it here as an essential way to guard himself from sin. And the context here is he is a sinner in need of grace and he's just recounting the different ways that he can actually grow in understanding God's love, basically, and what it looks like to live in light of that. And I think just having that context in terms of this is a song of the heart, as we were saying last time, just reminding ourselves this is a song, this is a heartfelt kind of wrestle in prayer that this guy is having with the laws and that's where we need to land, isn't it? We want to understand these words so that we can feel it and so that we can then pray in what we're feeling and reading.

Felicity: And I think that's when actually verse 16 is really helpful. I delight in your decrees, I will not neglect your wedding. If you just had that verse, how do I actually delight? You can't jump straight into delight, can you? But as we think on God and what he's done and who he is and what he said. And as we rejoice in that and we meditate on that, and so we delight in your decrees and we get this. Theme all the way through the psalm and the rejoicing and the delighting in the kind of the joy seems to be the means by which this person is able to run God's way more. I don't know whether we make that connection very often. Like joy in the Lord being a means of walking. Yeah, keeping going, fighting sin, striving.

Sarah: As we'll see later in the summer. Like there's so much being thrown at this guy and it's like so far he's in survival mode here and this is just beginnings. This has become the introduction to what it looks like to keep going in the Lord, doesn't it? I think what challenge on our own hearts, like, time is already gone, isn't it? But it's so good for our hearts to just be here going, wow, do I have this desire? Yes.

Felicity: Really challenging. So why don't you pray for us as we close you, father, we just.

Sarah: Thank you so much that this psalm is here for our up building, for our encouragement to show us much of Christ and our Lord. We pray to you that he is able to pray this wholeheartedly and with Him as those in Christ, we are able to long for this way. We are able to long for living this out. Lord, we need your help. We fall so short and yet we have this desire in us, Lord, and we just pray. Would you help us? Would you help us to gaze at you and to dwell on your words so that we may also grow to be more like the Lord Jesus.

Felicity: Amen. Thank you, Sarah. Thank you so much everyone for tuning in for this as we've kicked off Psych 119. So excited to be getting into over the next few weeks. We would love it if you could leave us a review. We're so encouraged by every review that we read. We really do read them all and we particularly Ruth, thank you for this one. She wrote this podcast is 20 minutes of joy. Come for the tea and biscuit chat. Stay for the brilliant Bible study which honestly feels like you could join in any time and I frequently do in my head end up feeling like one of the family. Ruth just thrilled our hearts to be reading that. So thank you very much. And please, everyone, do read a review wherever you listen to your podcast. We would so appreciate it so that more people can join our family Bible study by Rude. And we will see you all next time.

Sarah: See you next time.

Felicity: Bye bye. Bye.

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