

Psalm 119:9

Funeral 14: Funeral Address for Mr. James Dennis Gunderson

“How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word.”

The way of a young man has been cut short by death, by a terrible casualty. Bewildered thoughts and aching hearts have these days again and again sighed: *“Why did this calamity befall him?”* But, hush! – There, in His Word, comes the voice of God and says: **“Be still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10** **“I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.” Isaiah 45:5-7**

It is the Lord who rules or overrules all things and has even evil in His hand and it must do His bidding. It is He who suffered things to occur as they did and permitted the accident to happen which cut short the earthly way of its victim. It was the Lord who thereby led the deceased so suddenly into the valley of death.

Over against all harrowing thoughts and perplexing questions let us therefore place the words of Scripture: **“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”**
Psalm 62:1-2

But let us move away from the scene of death, and let me show you the group of young Christians who in the year 1964 appeared before the Lord’s altar to make the vow of confirmation. Our deceased brother was numbered with them. One of the passages which this class had committed to memory was: **“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.”** Psalm 119:9 Let these words be our guide and light also in this hour of confusion and darkness. On the basis of this text let us consider:

The Way of Life

I – What is the way of life? II – Where can life to be found?

I

How can a young man cleanse his way? What is the writer of this Psalm speaking of? The way of life - the way that leads to

heaven. This way must of necessity be immaculately clean, for its destination is the Holy City. Scripture says: **“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Rev. 21:27** - and of the way it says: **“And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.” Isaiah 35:8** Again we read in Scripture: **“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.” Ephesians 5:5-7**

Accordingly the only way that will lead a person to heaven is the way of perfect holiness and righteousness. The Apostle therefore says: **“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14** And again God says: **Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.” Leviticus 19:2** Jesus declares: **“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48** Finally, when the Psalmist says: **“You are not a God who takes**

pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong. You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the Lord abhors.” Psalm 5:4-6 God is thereby solemnly declaring that each and everyone who does not measure up to His standard of perfect holiness, who is not and has not at all times been perfectly holy, without blemish and without spot, in desires, thoughts, words and deeds, shall not be able to stand in the sight of God.

If that is the case, how then can any man expect to get to heaven? Is there a man on earth who has led a perfectly holy life? Can any man in the hour of death look back upon a perfectly clean way, every inch of it, and upon a perfectly spotless life, every thought of it? There is none. The Apostle says: **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” I John 1:8** And again Scripture says: **“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:22-24** **“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.” Ecclesiastes 7:20**

Even the way of the best among men is far from perfect. It falls under the verdict of the Prophet: **“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”** Isaiah 64:6 And this deplorable condition is not confined to the later years of life, it is with us at birth. Scripture says: **“...every inclination of his (*man’s*) heart is evil from childhood.”** Genesis 8:21 Along with David, every human being born into this world must confess: **“Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”** Psalm 51:5

To sum up, then: The way of every man is unclean. All have sinned and are as an unclean thing in the sight of God and will not be able to stand in His sight, because no evil can dwell with Him. The Lord will regard only the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly will perish.

What hope, then, have we sinners of entering heaven? None whatsoever if left to our own resources. We are absolutely lost and condemned unless God, in His infinite love and mercy prepares a new way, a way of cleansing for sinners. Is that what the Psalmist has in mind when he speaks of a young man cleansing his way? Exactly – God, and praise be His name forever, has provided for us a means by which our sinful way can

be cleansed. He has prepared it in giving His only begotten Son to be our Savior and Redeemer. He laid on Him the sins of all people. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." **II Corinthians 5:21** *"Righteousness of God"* is a perfect righteousness that can stand before God. Because of Christ's righteousness - sinners can stand before God for He fulfilled God's holy law for us. Christ carried the curse of the law for us. Therefore: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin." **I John 1:7** Christ's blood and righteousness then is the only way that leads to heaven. Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." **John 14:6** No man will ever be able to cleanse his way from unrighteousness except through the atoning blood of Jesus. Neither is there salvation in any other: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." **Acts 4:12** That being the case, how anxious we should be to find this one way, to make sure that we have found Jesus and His salvation.

II

How and where may this way be found? Jesus is the sinner's only way to heaven. "How can a young man keep his way pure?"

Psalm 119:9 The Bible gives the answer: **“By living according to your word.”** **Psalm 119:9** The answer is simple and to the point, God’s word must be our guide if we are to find the only way to heaven.

It is a fatal error when anyone expects to be saved without the atoning blood of Christ. It is just as fatal an error when anyone expects to find Jesus and to become a partaker of salvation without the Word of God. God’s word gives Christ and salvation to us. It explains what Jesus has done for us in order to save us and urges us to repent of sin and to accept by faith the salvation which Jesus has earned for us. God’s word creates this faith in the heart, even as the Apostle writes: **“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”** **Romans 10:17** And in the same way we are kept in the faith and through faith unto salvation. Therefore Jesus says: **“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”** **Luke 11:28**

What a blessing, therefore, beloved mourners, that your departed loved one was given the Word of God in instruction classes and also when he was in the service (*sermons mailed to him*). Surely this Word found in the Bible ought to be all the more precious to you now. In this hour of darkness and confusion let

the Word of God be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path. Let your soul will find true comfort and be ready to say:

Whatever God ordains is good

Holy His will remains

I'll be still whatever He does

And follow where He guides me

He is my God, though dark my road

He knows how to shield me

Therefore to Him I'll yield me