

PSALM 19 pt.3
An Honest Self-Assessment

THE KEEPER OF THE STREAM:

A Parable of the Keeper of the Stream by John Ortberg's Soul Keeping
PROLOGUE THE KEEPER OF THE STREAM

"There once was a town high in the Alps that straddled the banks of a beautiful stream. The stream was fed by springs that were old as the earth and deep as the sea. The water was clear like crystal. Children laughed and played beside it. You could see the rocks and the sand and the rainbow trout that swarmed at the bottom of the stream.

High in the hills, far beyond anyone's sight, lived an old man who served as Keeper of the Springs. He had been hired so long ago that now no one could remember a time when he wasn't there. He would travel from one spring to another in the hills, removing branches or fallen leaves or debris that might pollute the water. But his work was unseen.

One year the town council decided they had better things to do with their money. No one supervised the old man anyway. They had roads to repair and taxes to collect and services to offer and giving money to an unseen stream-cleaner had become a luxury they could no longer afford. So, the old man left his post.

High in the mountains, the springs went untended; twigs and branches muddied the liquid flow. Mud and silt compacted the creek bed; farm wastes turned parts of the stream into stagnant bogs. For a time, no one in the village noticed. But after a while, the water was not the same. It began to look brackish. The trout swam away to live elsewhere. The water no longer had a crisp scent that drew children to play by it. Some people in the town began to grow ill. All noticed the loss of sparkling beauty that used to flow between the banks of the streams that fed the town.

The life of the village depended on the stream, and the life of the stream depended on the keeper. The city council reconvened, the money was found, the old man was rehired.

After some time, the springs were cleaned, the stream was pure, children played again on its banks, illness was replaced by health, the trout came home, and the village came back to life. The life of a village depended on the health of the stream.

The stream is your soul. And you are the keeper."

Ortberg, John (2014-04-22). Soul Keeping: Caring For the Most Important Part of You

PSALM 19:

12 Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.

13 Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins;

Let them not rule over me;

Then I will be blameless,

And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

In order to guard against the danger of self-righteousness, the Psalmist moves to a prayer at the end of Ps 19.

v. 11-13 call for honest contemplation of one's own heart condition – this is no easy thing.

It were an easy thing to be a Christian, if religion stood only in a few outward works and duties, But to take the soul to task, and to deal roundly with our own hearts, and to let conscience have its full work, and to bring the soul into spiritual subjection unto God, this is not so easy a matter, because the soul out of self-love is loath to enter into itself, lest it should have other thoughts of itself than it would like to have. —Richard Sibbes *The Soul's conflict with Itself*

Note how the Psalmist is concerned about the condition of his soul. He gives attention to the issue of sin and not just the obvious sins that draw attention, rebuke, and need correction.

He is concerned about the hidden sins that no one else sees and that may even be hidden to him.

EX: a Billy Graham interview years ago – he indicated that his daily prayer was, “Keep me from presumptuous sins.” To my knowledge there was never a hint of scandal regarding his life or ministry. He was suspicious of his own heart and did not want to presume upon his status to protect him.

PRESUMPTUOUS sin = ‘proud’ or arrogant sins. You have presumed upon God’s grace and used it as a cover or excuse for sin.

EX: we could give a long list of ministry leaders who fell into public sin because they started by presuming upon God’s grace or the misguided protection of their handlers

David recognizes that he doesn’t know what he doesn’t know. We don’t really know how sinful we are. I say this a lot but does it really sink in...”We are bigger sinners than we dare admit.”

The David of Psalm 19 is the same David of Psalm 51 who is coming to God after the exposure of his sins of adultery and murder. He was finally confronted with the reality of the depth of his own sin.

v. 12-13 show a progression or digression of sin – Hidden faults....presumptuous (arrogant) sins....great transgressions.

Most people don’t start at the great transgression level of sin. Self-deception and presumption over time pave the way to “bigger sin”.

And we never reach a NO SIN ZONE. We are always capable of the sins of each category.

“I would never do THAT” are the famous last words of many a sinner/saint.

EX: pastor just a few weeks before his own infidelity was exposed said in a sermon, “No matter how mature you are spiritually, it may be that your biggest sins are ahead of you.”

EX: you know how scary it is when the lady hears the police say, “We’ve traced the call and it is coming from inside the house” (When a Stranger Calls)

We should have a similar sense of dread about our own hidden and presumptuous sins.

Do We? Usually not.

But the sinful leanings and impulses ARE coming from within our own hearts.

Sliding into presumptuous sin may happen when we start living off the residue of a Christian family or personal history of being engaged with God at some point in the past. (kids and adults PAY HEED)

In your mind it’s like having a spiritual bank account with God and you’ve built up some reserve and are drawing down but not investing in your spiritual life.... And then you find that you are spiritually bankrupt. Trials and temptations expose the shallow spiritual life that you’ve been leading.

You’ve been able to go through the motions in public, but your private spiritual life is shallow or non-existent. You use your ‘accumulated bible knowledge’ to cover for a stagnant relationship with God.

"I know that God loves me; there is no condemnation in Christ. I'm avoiding any public sin. I can handle my struggles on my own." THOSE ARE WORDS OF PRESUMPTION.

Hidden sins are hidden because we deceive ourselves – (Surfing for God)

Gerald May asserts that self-deception is one of the chief characteristics of addiction. (Addiction and Grace)

David agrees and adds presumption to that mix.

We are prone to self-deception. We do evil while thinking we are doing good –

EX: Saul of Tarsus persecuting Christians.

Most of the world's great evil doers were convinced that they were doing the right thing for their people, country, or cause.

Arrogance and presumptuous sins will bring a dullness to our spiritual lives. Verse 14 is a simple prayer for God to be at work.

Here is another simple prayer from Valley of Vision...

VOV – Morning

O ever watchful shepherd, lead, guide, tend me this day;

Without thy restraining rod I err and stray;

Hedge up my path lest I wander into unwholesome pleasure,

And drink its poisonous streams;

Direct my feet that I be not entangled in Satan's secret snares,

Nor fall into his hidden traps.

My adversaries are part and parcel of my nature;

They cling to me as my very skin;

I cannot escape their contact..

My enemy is within the citadel;

Come with almighty power and cast him out,

Pierce him to death,

And abolish in me every particle of carnal life this day.

Here are some Signs of spiritual dullness that leads to presumptuous sin:

- No real hunger for the Word – perfunctory reading or engagement with God
- No savoring the goodness of God – Taste and see that the Lord is good; If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord -1 Pet 2:3
- No consistent meaningful private prayer – the only thing that is not for show
- The inner life is easily neglected because it isn't readily visible, and it wins no applause.
- Maintaining the outward trappings of faith even when the internal flame has been doused by secret sin
- A drift toward spiritual isolation from spouse, friends, worship, small group, etc
- A drifting from ministry of service and generosity OR there may be an uptick as a way of covering the lack of personal engagement.
- A general discontentment in life and relationships.

The cumulative effect of a dull inner life and giving in to presumptuous sins will eventually be revealed.

EX: termites slowly eat the deck and one day there is a collapse. So too neglect of the inner life will usually lead to some sort of collapse.

v. 13 and I shall be clear of great transgression (rebellion).

Satan has a field day with presumptuous sins because he can put you on the sideline that way without drawing much attention to himself. He has a field day with guilt and shame because he uses those to put you on the sideline as well.

David leans into what he knows of Yahweh – that with Him there is forgiveness and cleansing. HE IS ‘cleared’ or acquitted or innocent of great transgression. That’s what all those sacrificial rituals pointed to. HOW MUCH MORE SHOULD WE LEAN INTO THE GRACE THAT IS OURS IN Christ.

When the waters of sanctification are troubled and muddy, we must run to God and see the Lamb who was slain for us. While our secret sins tell us to run from God, His Spirit bids us “Come”.

As we bring our hearts before God we can rejoice in the provisions he has made to add grace upon grace to our hearts and lives. Christ is our prophet who teaches us; our priest who intercedes for us and our king of righteousness who holds us fast.

The covenant of grace exalts His mercy above our own sin and unworthiness.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

There WILL BE words in our mouths and meditations in our hearts. It’s simply a matter of what they will be!!

This verse could be a whole series in itself.

Our minds ALWAYS have something in view, even when we say that we’re not thinking of anything. Unless we are dead, asleep, or improperly medicated, our minds are engaged with some realm of thought.

This verse speaks to having a God Awareness 24/7, especially when our mouths or minds are working.

This also requires a degree of self-awareness and the willingness to let the Spirit work to bring clarity to our thinking. This means that we will need to get quiet and let our souls rest before God.

IT IS EASY TO hear every sermon and think that the action point is READ THE BIBLE AND PRAY MORE. Those are pretty standard applications, but they are not given to create a guilt trip. They are reminders of the normal means of grace that God uses to bring growth and change in our lives.

EX: let’s be honest. WORDS I’VE NEVER HEARD, “Pastor, I’ve just read the bible and prayed too much this week. I’ve just got too much of the Word hidden in my heart.” To my knowledge there are no Recovery Groups for Bible reading addicts – Bible readers anonymous-

These words of v. 14 represent HOPE for all who would pray them. Even if your faith seems weak, a sincere prayer of v.14 will NOT be ignored by Yahweh. The very words of v.14 reflect a heart of faith, even if you are struggling. Our hope is in the OBJECT of our prayer, Yahweh, our rock and Redeemer.

This verse, and the rest of scripture, reminds us that who we are becoming is more important than what we do.

We are on an eternal journey and when our days on earth are over those who know us best will remember more about who we were than what we did. Who we are is shaped by the meditations of our hearts.

Knowing that Jesus has perfectly fulfilled all God’ Law in my place frees me to invite God to look into my soul, to convict me of sin, because I know who I am and who he is. He is my Rock and my Redeemer. How can the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in his sight? Because he is my rock, redeemer, and righteousness. Elyse Fitzpatrick in Price, Daniel Emery. The Sinner/Saint Devotional: 60 Days in the Psalms (p. 131). 1517 Publishing. Kindle Edition.

COME TO THE TABLE where the perfect work of Christ is displayed

Let us come to Christ knowing that our words and the meditations of our hearts are made acceptable to God through the sacrifice of Christ and let that lead us to being honest with God about our sin and our need for Him.

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