

FOCUS

The Magazine of Enfield Evangelical Free Church

Aiming to glorify God by calling and equipping people to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ

Wait & Follow

One Saturday morning last month the 3D men's Bible study group were studying the last sections of Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is a wonderful gift from God for every believer in the Lord Jesus. The more we read it the more we discover how it reflects the heart and mind and soul of the man or woman who has, and is, experiencing the grace of God and wants to live according to God's Word. It is the expression of a believer's delight in the word of the Lord he loves. It provides a picture of a believer working out their salvation with fear and trembling. Against this backdrop the group were struck by Psalm 119:166 – *"I wait for your salvation, O LORD, and I follow your commands."* Waiting and following are two words which could be rightly said to sum up the Christian life.

Waiting always has the sense of looking ahead for something that is still to come. It looks to the future. Who waits for what they already have? According to Psalm 119:166, the believer is someone who waits for *salvation*. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians believers he reminded them that they were those who had *"turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead – Jesus, who saves us from the coming wrath."* (1 Thess. 1:9-10). The reference to salvation is to future salvation. As our Saviour, the Lord Jesus died as our substitute on the cross in order to justify us and reconcile us to God. Our position as justified, reconciled sinners through His blood, is the guarantee that, on the last day, we will be saved from God's wrath through Him and be free from sin's presence and power for ever.

It is for that future salvation that the believer waits. Reading Psalm 119 we discover the reality of Christian experience. The tension between a new, Spirit-given desire to obey God and walk in His ways, and our own frailty and proneness to wander like a lost sheep. (It is the Old Testament equivalent of Romans 7:14-25). But the writer looks ahead to the day when the struggle with sin will be over. When the Lord Himself will save him from the presence and power of sin, and from the hostility of a world that hates God's law.

But the Christian life is not only about waiting. As a believer waits they are not inactive. Waiting means **following** - following the LORD's commands. The psalmist understood that the LORD's commands are His standing orders for His people. He has laid down precepts to be fully obeyed. His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. His way is the way of peace.

Far better to be someone who trembles at the LORD's word than be someone who lives in the fear of man.

And the psalmist knows that those who truly love the LORD and His word, are those who follow and **do His word**. The message is not that the blessed man or woman is the person who has God's Word or studies God's Word, or memorises God's Word. The blessed man or woman is the person who hears and obeys. After washing His disciples' feet and explaining that He had done so as an example for them, Jesus said *"Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."* (John 13:17)

A danger for us all whenever we read God's Word is to fail to ask the "what shall I/we do as a result of what I have heard?" The aim of God is to transform and shape us by His Word. If our hearing of God's Word in private, in a small group, or at our public gatherings is not rebuking, correcting and training us to do the good works God has for us to do, then we are not listening properly. As I heard someone say at a conference recently: far better to be known as a Bible-obeying church than a Bible-teaching church. The church where God's word is being truly loved and learned will be a church where it is being followed, with an attitude of constant dependence upon the Lord upon whom our past, present and future salvation depends.

Jonathan Prime

[PS – 3D stands for **Daily Disciplined Devotions**. The men who come, seek to read the same Bible passages through the week and together on Saturday morning at the Emmanuel Centre (8 – 9 a.m.), read and study the passage for that day. All men are welcome. Why not come for a test drive?]