

Cleansing Our Way

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How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Psalm 119:9). This scripture beckons us to think of prospects and possibilities beyond imagination. Youth is filled with promise. Energy and talent are ready to emerge. When youth has faded, there is an assurance of something more. Cleansing the way is key for the young and a threshold for the old.

There is a wayward tendency in us all. Solomon wrote, *“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).* This illustrates the weakness of mankind -- foolishness. Growing up begins by recognizing that our way of life should be honorable and upright. Cleansing is a matter of preparing our life so our potential will be as God intends. No degradation of behavior, no ugliness of temperament, or spirit of selfishness can be acceptable. Recognition and removal of such must be paramount. What is the wisdom that enables us to evaluate and desire transformation? By *“taking heed according to Your word.”* The word of God is outside of our thought processes and capabilities. It is a revelation beyond human invention. As the scripture says, *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).* Cleansing begins by attention to the wisdom of God.

God must be first in our lives. Jesus cited this great commandment,

The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment (Mark 12:29-30).

The love for God causes us to seek His will. Subsequently, we obtain a clearer discernment between right and wrong. His priorities for our lives come into focus. Jesus continued, *“And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31).* If it were all about "God and me," then we would not need the second commandment. Love for God directs us to love our neighbor.

A lawyer, willing to justify himself, asked Jesus, *“And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29).* A related question would be, "Who is the first neighbor in my life?" Our parents are our first neighbors. Here is an important step in cleansing our way.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Obedience *“in the Lord”* points to the child having grown sufficiently to be responsible for obedience, and to recognize the value of their parent's care. The importance of this commandment is underscored by a promise of a good life – *“that it may be well with you.”* Obedience to our parents or those raising us shows our willingness to submit to authority. That teaspoon of submission nurtures strength of character. If we reject our parents' authority, we will have a hard time governing ourselves. It can have consequences dogging us into old age. Jesus honored his mother by supplying wine for the wedding feast even though He reasoned, *“My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4).* We sometimes think we know better than our parents. Jesus did indeed know better, but the great command to honor father and mother was more important.

Sometimes we see the weakness and sins of our parents. What is to be done? Ham talked about the drunken condition of Noah, his father. Shem and Japheth covered the nakedness of their father. They didn't even look at him but backed into the tent (see **Genesis 9:20-23**). Showing respect and decency to our

parents, even though we see sin and do not approve, demonstrates love and speaks of a tacit understanding. We may grow and have children see us in our weaknesses. Do we want them to scorn us or to be merciful? Do we want them to degrade our name or honor us? For most of us, being raised by our parents is God's plan. Honoring them prepares a clean way for the future.

“The glory of young men is their strength, And the splendor of old men is their gray head” (Proverbs 20:29). The energy of youth and wisdom of age are contributing assets to society. The strength of youth is very potent and requires self-control to harness. We are bumped and carved by our inadequacies. However, we can be remade by the grace of God. This provides a kind of wisdom that cannot otherwise be attained.

On the other hand, excess and abuse can lead to an unhappy outcome – the sly foolishness of youth degraded from stupidity into bitterness. Self-control is the answer. We were never designed to be moved by our passions and desires. Self-control involves recognizing what is right and holding to it, even though we feel like letting go. Our cleansing is detailed by such resolution.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life (Galatians 6:7-8).

Upon this path, repentance is our constant companion since *“we all stumble in many things” (James 3:2).*

Cleansing of the way comes from modeling ourselves after the Lord.

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Again, it is accomplished *“by taking heed according to Your word.”* Thus, He becomes clearer, and we become cleaner.