**BEETHOVEN’S 119th**

***How Shall The Young Secure Their Hearts***

How shall the young secure their hearts, and guard their lives from sin?

Thy word the choicest rules imparts, to keep the conscience clean.

Tis like the sun, a heavenly light, that guides us all the day;

And through the dangers of the night, a lamp to lead our way.

Thy word is everlasting truth; how pure is every page!

That holy book shall guide our youth, and well support our age.

Issac Watts wrote the words, Ludwig von Beethoven wrote the music. No wonder the song has endured for centuries!

But the reason for the timeless endurance is not just the genius of these musical masters, but the inspired brilliance of the text from which the song was taken. Watts was reading Psalm 119 when he penned this hymn. He was no doubt thinking about the youth of his day and the challenges they faced. It was but a small leap for a man of his insight to connect the scriptures of Psalm 119:9-11 with the temptations of sin that daily faced his children. He would have read from the old King James version:

9 How can a young man cleanse his way?
 By taking heed according to Your word.
10 With my whole heart I have sought You;
 Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
11 Your word I have hidden in my heart,
 That I might not sin against You.

He would know that when he could not be there to guide and protect them from Satan that the Word of God, treasured or hidden in their hearts, could surely shield them from temptation and sin.

Beethoven, likewise a religious man, felt the impact of Mr. Watts lyrics, and beautifully matched the rhythm to the words. It is uplifting. It stirs the soul. It moves the heart. It makes you want to read the Bible to your children if you are a parent, or to yourself if you are a young person facing life’s struggles. I love this song like few others in our hymnal. I am quite sure it has saved me from sin more than once in my life, thus perhaps also saving my soul. I truly hope and pray it has done the same for my children.

A few weeks ago I spent a week with my daughter Meredith and her family. It thrilled my soul to see my three-year old granddaughter Corinne being taught Bible stories and able to already sing the words to hymns like my own personal favorite: “*O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing*.” It is only natural that parents (and grandparents too) worry deeply about the trend in our country away from God and the Bible. We want so desperately to be an influence on their young minds to protect them from the evil world we live in.

But I am comforted beyond words when I see my children studying and teaching God’s Word to their young ones, knowing when we cannot be there, God’s word can be.

It is obviously a generational struggle throughout all of history for godly people to worry about our youth. The world has always been evil, and Satan has always been stalking the most vulnerable to ruin their lives.

Three-thousand years ago Solomon felt this way when he wrote Ecclesiastes 12:1 “*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them*.’

Two-thousand years ago Paul felt the same for his “son in the faith” when he wrote, *“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity*.” (I Tim. 4:12).

Three-hundred years ago Isaac Watts felt this concern for his three children when he wrote this hymn based on Psalm 119 which emphasized God’s word in all but four of the 176 verses.

Now here we are three centuries later dealing with the exact same question: “How shall the young secure their hearts and guard their lives from sin?” The Holy Spirit gives the answer:

1. By obeying the Word (Psa. 119:9)
 “*By taking heed according to Your word*.”
2. By being totally committed to the Lord (Psa. 119:10)
 “*With my whole heart I have sought You*”
3. By treasuring God’s Word in your heart (Psa. 119:11)
 “*Your word I have hidden in my heart”*

As I look at the youth here at Northwest church, and as I think of my grandchildren, ages 8 months to 8 years, I’m comforted to know there is a God in heaven who has given them His Word to treasure in their hearts that they might not sin against Him.

**That** is how the young shall secure their hearts.

**That** holy book shall guide our youth.

**That** everlasting truth shall well support our age.

**That** gives me peace.

Yes, Ludwig van Beethoven was famous for his nine symphonies. If you haven’t listened to any of them do yourself a favor and download Beethoven’s 5th or 9th and you’ll know why he is listed as perhaps the greatest musical genius in history. (FYI - he even wrote them after he had become totally deaf!). But as far as I’m concerned I love Beethoven’s 119th the best. Its quick rhythm matches the lyrics perfectly to inspire all who sing it to live righteously before God from youth to old age.

I love you Claire, Walker, Corinne, Cora and Madeleine. - Papa Rick