

INTRODUCTION

Our Scripture passage for consideration this morning is a very familiar one.

It's taken from Psalm 119.

Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 119 as we look at verse 11.

In this wonderful psalm, which is an exposition of the Word of God, the psalmist says in verse 11, “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you.”

Here the psalmist proclaims his determination not to sin against Yahweh, that is, not to disobey any of his commands; so he treasures Yahweh's word in his heart.¹

¹ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reybun, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms, Helps for translators* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991). 1000.

The verb “treasured” means “to store up...hide away” and here it may mean to memorize the Law. This meaning seems to be supported by verse 13, which speaks of the recitation of all the laws that Yahweh has given his people (see also verse 15a).²

Scripture Memorization

Internalizing the Word is a believer’s best weapon to defend against encroaching sin.³

G. Campbell Morgan summarizes this verse in this way: ‘The best book, in the best place, for the best purpose.’⁴

² Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reybourn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms, Helps for translators* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991). 1000.

³ John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed.* (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997). Ps 119:9.

⁴ Roger Ellsworth, *Opening Up Psalms* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006). 26.

How are you doing with this spiritual discipline?

It, as the others we have discussed, is foundational to our lives.

Just as the Word of God is foundational to our understanding of who God is and what He requires of us, memorization is the implementation of those truths into our minds.

John Piper said, “Storing texts in our minds about God helps us relate to Him as He really is.”

And as we engage in Bible memorization, it “has the effect of making our gaze on Jesus steadier and clearer.”

This text cannot be any clearer.

Verse 9 asks and answers the question regarding purity.

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.”

And in order to keep it, you must, as verse 10 says, “with all [your] heart...[seek Him] and “not...wander from [His] commandments.”

To do that you must “[treasure it] in [your] heart.

And when you do, you will “not sin against [God].”

There are two purposes in mind here: One is to obey God’s Word and the other is to not sin against Him.

We could add a third according to verse 16....”not to forget [God’s] word.”

Warren Wiersbe said, “We need a heart that seeks God, for if our heart is seeking God, our feet will not stray from God (v. 10; Prov. 4:23). Such a heart will see Him in all of life, learn more about Him, fellowship with Him, and glorify Him in all that is said and done. Again, the Holy Spirit enables us to do this as we yield to Him. But we must also spend time in the Word and treasure it in our hearts (v. 11; Job 23:12; Prov. 2:1; 7:1). It is not our promises to the Lord but His promises to us that will give us victory over sin.”⁵

The Psalmist makes several references to treasuring God’s Word in his heart.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Exultant*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004). 107-08.

In Psalm 1:2, he says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.”⁶

In speaking of the righteous, the psalmist says in Psalm 37:31, “The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip.”⁷

In Psalm 40:8, the psalmist expressed his delight to do God’s will when he said, “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.”⁸

Even Solomon stated the importance of this in Proverbs 2:1 when he said, “My son, if you will

⁶ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Ps 1:2.*

⁷ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Ps 37:31.*

⁸ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Ps 40:8.*

receive my words and treasure my commandments within you.”⁹

In the midst of persecution, Jeremiah comforted himself when he said in Jeremiah 15:16, “Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.”¹⁰

Of course, the classic reference to this is what Paul said to the Colossians in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual

⁹ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Pr 2:1.*

¹⁰ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Je 15:16.*

songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”¹¹

The greatest privilege you and I have is to “treasure” the Word of God in our hearts.

But understand that it doesn’t come without a price.

It takes work to hide God’s Word in your heart.

But understand the reward is greater than the sacrifice.

Chuck Swindoll says in his book, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, “I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture. That’s right. No other

¹¹ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Col 3:16.*

single discipline is more useful and rewarding than this. No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your counseling will be in demand. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified.”

“Scripture memory gives you a firm grasp of the Word---and allows the Word to get a firm grasp of you!”¹²

Before we talk about the sister to Scripture memory, *meditation*, let me give you 8 reasons for memorizing Scripture.

¹² Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1983). 53.

John Piper recently posted these on their website, I would like to share them with you. This is good stuff!

Reason #1:

Memorizing Scripture makes meditation possible at times when you can't be reading the Bible and meditation is the pathway to deeper understanding.

“If you're going to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night, you need to have some of it in your head.” (John Piper).

Reason #2:

Memorizing Scripture strengthens my faith because faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And that happens when I'm hearing the Word in my head.

Reason #3:

Memorizing Scripture shapes the way I view the world by conforming my mind to God's viewpoint on everything.

Reason #4:

Memorizing Scripture makes God's Word more readily accessible in overcoming temptation to sin because God's warnings and promises are the way we conquer the deceitful lies of the devil.

Reason #5:

Memorizing Scripture guards my mind making it easier for me to detect error and the world is filled with error because the god of this world is a liar.

Reason #6:

Memorizing Scripture enables me to hit the devil in the face with a force he cannot resist to protect myself and my family from his assaults.

Reason #7:

Memorizing Scripture provides the strongest and sweetest word for ministering to others in need.

Reason #8:

Memorizing Scripture provides the matrix for fellowship with Jesus because He talks to me here and nowhere else.

In memorizing Scripture, you become tempered in loving it, delighting in it, and fellowshiping with God.

One of the reasons Martin Luther came to his great discovery in the Bible of justification by faith alone was that in his early years in the Augustinian monastery he was influenced to love Scripture by Johann Staupitz.

Luther devoured the Bible in a day when people earned doctorates in theology without even reading the Bible.

Luther said that his fellow professor, Andreas Karlstadt, did not even own a Bible when he earned his doctor of theology degree, nor did he until many years later (Richard Bucher, "[Martin Luther's Love for the Bible](#)").

Luther knew so much of the Bible from memory that when the Lord opened his eyes to see the truth of justification in [Romans 1:17](#), he said, "Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from

memory,” in order to confirm what he had found.¹³

If you’re saying you can’t do this, then simply ask yourself how did you learn many other important things you know now, like your address, Social Security number, phone number, etc.

Referring back to Chuck Swindoll’s book *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, he gives 7 steps he has found helpful in memorizing Scripture.

Step #1:

Choose a time when your mind is free from outside distractions...perhaps soon after getting up in the morning.

¹³ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/why-memorize-scripture>

Step #2:

Learn the reference by repeating it every time you say the verse(s). Numbers are more difficult to remember than words.

Step #3:

Read each verse through several times---both in a whisper and aloud. Hearing yourself say the words helps cement them into your mind.

Step #4:

Break the passage into its natural phrases. Learn the reference and then the first phrase. Then repeat the reference and first phrase as you go to the second phrase. Continue adding phrases one by one.

Step #5:

Learn a little bit *perfectly* rather than a great deal *poorly*. Do not go on to the next verse until you can say the previous one(s) perfectly, without a glance at your Bible.

Step #6:

Review the verse(s) immediately after you have gone through this process. Twenty to thirty minutes later, repeat what you've memorized. Before the day has ended, firmly fix the verse(s) in your mind by going over it fifteen to twenty minutes. (You can do this as you drive or do your job).

Step #7:

Use the verse(s) orally as soon as possible. After all, the purpose of Scripture memory is a practical one, not academic. Use the verses in conversation, in correspondence, in teaching, in

counseling, in everyday opportunities. Relate what you've learned to your daily situation. You'll be thrilled with the results.¹⁴

I agree with Dr. Howard Hendricks of Dallas Seminary who once made the statement (and I paraphrase) that if it were his decision, every student graduating from Dallas Theological Seminary would be required to learn one thousand verses word perfect before they graduated.¹⁵

We need this kind of commitment to!

This bring us back to our verse in Psalm 119:11.

This is “Your Word” -- God’s Word.

¹⁴ Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1983). 54.

¹⁵ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/why-memorize-scripture>

It is a treasure to be hidden in our hearts that it might come across our lips in our daily conversation.

May we see the importance of this truth.

Now the sister to Scripture memory is meditation.

Scripture Meditation

Psalm 1:2 says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

The word “Meditate” (Heb.hagah) means “to discuss or ponder” (KJV Commentary), “chatter” (Augustine) or “to chew the cud” (Thomas Watson). It “is the soul’s chewing” WILLIAM GRIMSHAW (1708–1763).

Meditation “is disciplined thought, focused on a single object or Scripture for a period of time.”¹⁶

Notice the psalmist says this activity is “day and night.”

This is what God told Joshua in Joshua 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

William Bridge, said, “There are two things that make meditation hard. The one is because men are not used there unto. . . . and another is, because they do not love God enough. Everything is hard at the first: writing is hard at the first, painting hard at the first. . . . meditation

¹⁶ Charles Swindoll, *Draper's Quotations*.

will be hard at the first. There is nothing not hard to those that are unwilling. There is nothing hard to those that love, love makes all things easy. Is it a hard thing for a lover to think or meditate on the person loved?”¹⁷

“Simply memorizing or quoting Scripture is not enough; meditation involves mature reflection on the Word of God, and it is the basis for spiritual growth.”¹⁸

This is the activity of the preacher (1 Tim.4:15).

He is to give constant “attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (v.13). He is to “meditate on these things; give [himself] entirely to them, that [his] progress may be evident to all.”

¹⁷ *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations, Logos Bible Software.*

¹⁸ *KJV Bible Commentary: Joshua 1:8.*

The word “Mediate” (meletao) translated “take pains with” in the NASB “carries the idea of thinking through beforehand, planning, strategizing, or premeditating. When not involved in ministry, the excellent minister is preparing, praying, or planning for it” (John MacArthur, 1 Timothy, p.180). In other words, he is “consumed by his work” (Ibid.).

This is the activity of the church (Phil.4:8)

The phrase “meditate” or “dwell on these things” introduces an important truth: “Spiritual stability is a result of how a person thinks” (John MacArthur, Philippians, p.285).

“Meditate” is the word logizomai, here used in the imperative mood. It means “more than just entertaining thoughts; it means to ‘evaluate,’ ‘to consider,’ or ‘to calculate’” (MacArthur).

“Believers are to consider the qualities Paul lists in this verse and mediate on their implications. The verb form calls for habitual discipline of the mind to set all thoughts on these spiritual virtues” (Ibid.).

“Whatever things are *true*” - refers to reading, analyzing, and meditating on the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

We are to memorize and meditate on Scripture according to Psalm 119:11 that we might know God and not sin against Him.

But Joshua 1:8 adds another purpose--- “so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.”

In other words, “Obedience.”

Can you see the benefits of this basic discipline?

We are to submit to the authority of Scripture in our lives as the final authority in all matters of living.

We are to pray without ceasing and call unbelievers to “deny [themselves], take up [their] cross, and follow [Jesus].

And we are to hide the Word of God in our hearts so that we can know God, cease from sin, and obey His Word.

I can't think of any better reason to apply the discipline of Scripture memory and meditation to my life than this one.

(Share the Gospel).

Let's pray.