

How to Get "Unstuck"

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Psalm 119

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Psalm, chapter 119, right there in the middle of your Bible. And if you're a guest or visitor with us or maybe haven't had the opportunity to worship with us in some while, I want to welcome you to a journey through the longest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 119 has 176 verses divided into 22, shall we say, subsections, so to speak but it has as its intent, it has as its focus what the Word of God can and should be in our life. If you're new to us, you may not be aware that we as a church body of family faith, as individuals, we're challenging ourselves this year, what would it look like in our own lives if we took an entire chapter of God's Word and we placed it within our heart, we memorized it? What would it look like as a church body that if we took the entirety of scripture from Genesis to Revelation and placed it within our hearts? Just a quick public service announcement, we're less than 150 chapters left to have all of the original 1,210 section, chapters taken. There will be a second portal that will open when those fill up. But we've taken it very seriously. The testimonies we're receiving is that they are life-changing, and that's what happens when the Word of God is placed in our lives.

And today, as we turn to verse 25, we're going to deal with a subject matter that is frustrating at times to us, but yet necessary to address, how do you and I, how do you and I get unstuck? You say what do you mean get unstuck? Every one of us at some level in our lives have been in a situation, might be personal, might be professional, it might be dealing with family or relationships, finances, whatever it may be, where we feel as if we're just stuck. We feel that no matter how much energy we exert, there's no progress. It doesn't matter what outside forces are involved, nothing changes. And so today in Psalm 119, beginning verse 25, it's going to help us to understand how do we in life, no matter what the scenario of the situation is, how do we quote unquote get unstuck. Beginning verse 25 it says,

25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word. 26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. 27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. 28 My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. 29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. 30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy

judgments have I laid before me. 31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. 32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Now as we walk through this concept of being, quote, unstuck, verse 25 is so critical for us today because what it does is it shares with us that there is a prerequisite. If we're going to, quote, get unstuck, whatever's got us stuck in life, we cannot get, quote, unstuck until we address what verse 25 says. Notice how it begins. It says, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust," and I know the book of Job says, dust we came from, dust we will return, but when I hear a phrase such as that, I cannot help but think of one of the most famous characters in all of the Bible. We know him simply as the prodigal son. Luke chapter 15 tells us the story. There was a man who had two sons. The youngest of those two came to him, he demanded of his inheritance. The man gave him the financial resources, he went out, and according to the Bible, he participated in riotous living. Now I don't know exactly what riotous living is, but I want you to think about the worst thing you can do and take it up a notch. That's what riotous living is. But there came a point in his life where the money dried up. When the money dried up, the friends went away and he found himself stuck. It wasn't just a time of loneliness, it wasn't just a time of poverty, he was in such a scenario and situation in his life where the only means of income, the only means of existence is that he was literally in a muddy field feeding pigs. Now, I don't know about what you're walking through right now, I don't know what situation you're struggling with, but just based on the optics that I see here, we're all in a little bit better situation than that.

But what happened? Verse 17 of Luke chapter 15, this young man who was, quote, as stuck as you can get stuck, you know what the Bible says? He came to his senses. You say, what do you mean he came to his senses? He came to his senses and here's what he did. He said, I will go to my father's house and I will ask him to, quote, be one of his servants. Why is that passage so important? And I know what I'm about to say goes so against the grain of our culture but whatever you're stuck in, quit blaming everybody else. The young man didn't say, man, I'm in this mess because my friends left me. He didn't say, I'm in this mess because my dad didn't give me enough money. You know what the Bible says? He came to his senses and he realized that yes, there may have been outstanding outside circumstances and scenarios, but his mess was his mess. And he came to his senses.

The prerequisite for us to get unstuck is you've got to come to your senses and realize where you are, how you got there, and the mess that you're actually in. Here's the big issue. You ready for it? I cannot convince you that you're stuck. You say, what do you mean? John chapter 16 makes this statement about the Holy Spirit in verse 8, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The only way that we'll truly grasp our situation, we'll truly understand where we are, is that the Holy Spirit reveals it to us. Why is that important? Because I can take the horse to the water, but I can't make it drink. I can talk your ear off and trust me, I have got the gift of gab, I can keep you here all day, but that will not persuade you to come to your senses. That will not persuade you to look around and see the situation that you're in.

But notice the second statement of verse 25, "quicken thou me," make me alive, "according to thy word." Now, I want you to understand something, as we read through the scriptures, not just Psalm 119, but the totality of scripture, one of the things that we discover is this, that the way that you and I, this is the prerequisite, the way that you and I enter into a relationship with the Lord, the way that you and I are forgiven, we're saved, we're born again, whatever Bible word or phrase you want to use, is that we quote, believe that Jesus is the answer to our sin problem when we call out for him to save us. Now, let me explore that for a moment. You may not realize that because you might have been young of age, you might have been a teenager, a young adult, you could have even been a seasoned quote senior adult when you realized your sin condition and you asked Jesus to save you but I want you to understand something, what did you actually do, or for those of you that are not saved, what do you actually need to do to be saved? Well, the Bible says for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Can I translate it in light of today's message? You need to all realize you stuck in the mud. The wages of our sin is death. You're not going to get out on your own. But if we believe and we confess that God raised Jesus from the dead, we will be saved and whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. What does that mean? That means you don't get saved because you start doing the right things or stop doing the wrong things. You don't get saved because all of a sudden you become generous and not greedy. You don't get saved just because you, quote, become a member of a church. You get saved when you confess your sin problem and you ask Jesus to forgive and save you.

Now, I know for some of you thinking, okay, that was years ago. I got that. Why is that so critical? Because the day that you cried out for Jesus to save you, you have never been more stuck than that day. You know where you were? You were stuck in hell. You say, what do you mean I was stuck in hell? John chapter 3 verse 36, you know what Jesus says? Those who do not believe are condemned already. In other words, before you got saved, before you asked Jesus to save you, you were stuck in hell, but now you've got a seat in the heavenlies. You say, well, how did that happen? You confessed you've got a sin problem, you asked Jesus to save you. You say, Pastor, why is this so important to Psalm 119? Because the greatest, quote, stuckness in existence is hell and if calling out to the Lord that you believe what he said gets you out of hell, why can't it get you out of the mess you're in right now? Have you ever thought about that? So many times when we say, man, I don't know if God can get me out of this. He got you out of hell. Man, I don't know if God can work this out. He got you out of hell. Man, I just don't know if God has the answer for this. He got you out of hell. Do I need to keep going? In other words, one of the understandings we need to grasp, a prerequisite for our study today is to realize that our sin condition got us eternally stuck and the word of God told us to get out of it, and we believed it to get out of hell, why can't we believe it in these other situations?

And so you walk through Psalm 119 verses 26 and 27, and it talks about declaring the ways, declaring the statutes, that understanding this, we grasp that it's what God did in our lives, not what we can quote do for ourselves. Then you get to verse 28 and there's this interesting posture that's given. It says, "My soul melts for heaviness." Now I don't know if you've ever been in that posture, but I have. Unfortunately, I've been there more

than once. You say, what do you mean a posture? When it says your soul melts for heaviness, have you ever been so bothered, so grieved, so disturbed that you can't even move? I mean, you fall on your face. You hit your knees. You realize that there is nothing that you can do to solve this. It is beyond your authority. It is beyond your power. It is beyond your control. Now, you may say, Pastor, I've never been there yet. You will be. There come times in our lives where situations and circumstances and whatever it may be lead to us realizing that we're in a situation that we are, quote, stuck in and we don't see any way out. We don't see any hope. The only light as we like to joke in our culture, at the end of the tunnel is the train that's coming and speeding up.

I'm reminded of 1 Timothy chapter 4, it says that in the latter days by the way, those are the days you're living in, it says that humanity will fall for the doctrines of demons and devils. They will forbid to marry. They'll say you should abstain from meats, all these things. And then it talks about this issue about meat and it says that if you pray over it, what was considered dirty can be made clean, that which was considered vile can be made holy. And in verse 5 of 1 Timothy chapter 4, it says that it is sanctified by the Word. Now, I want you to think about that for just a moment. The scene that we have there is not necessarily common in our respective culture today, but it is worldwide, that you've got a situation that has been dedicated to idolatry. It has been commissioned to the pagan. Now, we typically think of meats that are hanging in outdoor markets, can we just go ahead and call it what it is? It's called our culture. Our entire culture has been dedicated to the enemy. Our culture has been sacrificed to the evil one. If you don't believe me, you don't watch or read the news. But nonetheless, what does it say? Sanctified by the Word. In other words, it is the Word of God and the Word of God alone that can make something unclean clean. It's the Word of God alone that can make something that is vile holy. In other words, those situations that get us, quote, stuck, it is the Word of God alone that can, quote, unquote, get us out.

Let me give you a series of examples. This isn't exhaustive. It's just the ones that I come across all the time as a pastor. I meet people each and every day that their families, they're loved ones, it's just not a pretty picture. You know what the Bible says in Psalms 27, verse 10? "If my mother and my father forsake me, the Lord will lift me up." What does that mean? That means when those that should care the most for you abandon you, God is there for you. Now here's the problem, you don't see that and feel that in the flesh, do you, but the Word of God sanctifies it. In other words, the Word of God says that which humanity abandons, God can fulfill. How many stories do we have in scripture where they've looked as if there was no hope, there was no promise, there was no future, and when God shows up, things happen.

I'll give you a real practical example. A little over a decade ago, I was residing in the greater Atlanta metro area and we were experiencing a drought. I mean, it was a drought of what the experts called epic proportions. They told us, and those of you know me well, you know the gift of sarcasm's about to come out, they told us that the lakes would take 40 to 50 years to fill. It was so bad that even elected officials dared to ask people to pray. Now you know it's bad when they're asking us to pray. One year, series of weather patterns blew through, and those lakes that the experts told us would take 40 to 50 years

filled up in 14 months. Isn't it funny how that works out? In other words, what humanity sees no hope in, what humanity sees as a perpetual stuckness, God simply sees it as an opportunity to show you who he is and how he operates.

But notice the next phrase in verse 28, "strengthen thou me according to thy word." When the Bible talks about being strengthened or being increased, you cannot help but that imagery that we naturally go to about some type of weight-lifting or sports endeavor, it requires strength. And I think we all understand this concept that if we're going to be strengthened, whatever that is, there has to be a series of progressive increments that our bodies not only become acclimated to but stronger than. If you've ever had any type of surgical procedure or thing where you've had to go through physical therapy or occupational therapy, they always begin with basic, simple body weight movements and eventually you start building up to resistance so that you are strengthened.

Let me put it in very practical and simplistic terms. Let's just say hypothetically you were to have shoulder surgery. Your first day at PT, they're not gonna put 225 pounds on the bar and say bench press it 10 times. It's not gonna happen. In fact, you won't even be on the bench press. You'll be fortunate if you can just lift your arm by its own strength. But progressively it strengthens. Why is this important? Because when we get in a posture of my soul melts with heaviness and we realize that the only way out of whatever it is is what God said then we understand Psalm 119:105 that's a few pages over in your Bible. You know, it's one of those verses and I say this all the time. I don't think people believe me, you know, there are verses in the Bible. I don't like You say, what do you mean? You say, because there are verses in the Bible that God wrote a way that he wrote them that I wish he'd written them differently and this is one of those. Now, Psalm 119:105 is one of the salient verses of the Bible. It says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and it's a light unto my path." You say, well, pastor, why don't you like that? Because you know what I wish it said? I wish it said, "Thy word was a 10 million candle light that can light it up from here to the moon."

I want you to think about that verse. We love that verse, but I don't know if we understand that verse. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." I want you to imagine that you're in the depths of the darkness of the woods and by the way, that may be a literal example, but some of you metaphorically, you're in the woods right now. You're stuck. Your life is dark. The situation has gotten dark and all you've got is a lamp. You say, why is that significant? Because if you're in the dark woods with a lamp, do you know how far you can see? One step. That's it. You don't see the whole path. You don't see the exit. You don't see down the road whatever that may look like. And it says the only way to be strengthened, this is where we struggle so much, is here's what God says, he says, "If you'll trust me with my Word, it's one step at a time." You know why I don't like that? Because I want to get to the finish line immediately. That finish line may be a mile away, it may be 13.1 miles away, a half marathon, I don't know what it is, but I want to get there like yesterday.

It says, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light unto my path." Oh, you might get a glimpse of the next few steps, but you don't see the whole picture. One of the reasons that

so many of us, even as believers, stay stuck in whatever we're stuck in is because we're not willing to take it a step at a time with God and just trust him of what his Word said. You know, the research has been out that if you will consume the Word of God at least four times a week, did you know that loneliness gets cut by 30%? Oftentimes, temptations are reduced to about 50%. See, the problem is we wake up one day and we read the Bible and we don't see a whole lot of change and we say, well, that didn't work. Well, thy word's a lamp unto my feet, you can't just do it one day and expect to get to the end of the trail. You've got to take another step. And a third step. You know what I've discovered about Psalm 119:105 is you don't realize the blessing and the power of God until you're already at the exit and you can look back and go, I had no idea that's where he was taking me.

You know there's some incredible precedence here. I want you to fast forward to verse 30. It says, "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have been laid before me." One of the beautiful things about God's Word among many is this, we have the story of past successes, the story of past failures, those who have walked close with the Lord, those that have strayed from the Lord, and here's what we discover is that those that are willing to choose the path of truth, in some way, some form, in some capacity, God always does what God said he was going to do, he just rarely does it in the time frame that we hoped he would.

Let me give you one of my favorite examples, the book of Hosea, chapter 1. Hosea is one of those books of the Bible, so many life lessons that are there, because Hosea is what we call a lifestyle prophet. You say, what's a lifestyle prophet? It wasn't just a thus saith the Lord, it was his life that exemplified what God was trying to teach the people. God asked him to marry a woman by the name of Gomer. Now I know Valentine's Day is right around the corner, and so for those of you men in the room who are not happily married or married, some of y'all will notice the humor there, those of you that are single, let me give you some biblical advice. If you're doing the online dating scene or whatever it is, if her name is Jezebel, you need to run. If her name is Gomer, you need to run because in the book of Hosea, God said you need to go marry Gomer. Chapter 2 of Hosea, you know what we discover? Gomer liked a whole lot of people more than she liked her own husband. That's a story for another day. That being said, there's a child that's born. When that child is born, you know what God tells Hosea to name the child? "Not my people anymore." How would you like to go through life with that name? I mean, not everybody likes to name their parents again. It's not like we get a choice with it. But can you imagine? "Not my people anymore?" "Present." I mean in school. I mean, think about that for a moment. That's a rough name. But then the next verse, verse 10 of Hosea says this, "In the place that I said you were not my people, that is the place that I will call you unto myself, that is the place that I will redeem you unto myself." And what does it say there right there? It says, "and I have stuck to thy testimonies." You know what verse 30 is saying? It's saying, in other words, I held faithful to the word of God when everybody told me not to believe the word of God. I claimed that the Bible was true even when the culture told me I had lost my mind. I'm going to stick to it because I'm not promised that the answer's coming in one day, two days, three days. In Hosea, it was 40 years. In Jeremiah, 70 years. Did you know at the end of your Old Testament, God told him, "I'm

not gonna speak again for 430 years." Let me give you a relevant example. The Israelites, 400 plus years, they've been in Egypt. They finally get out of Egypt. They go across the Red Sea. They've seen 10 plagues. They've seen the water split. You would think, that they could get to the point where they trusted God. Within 11 days, they started complaining they had it better off in Egypt. See, that's what happens when you're not choosing the way of truth and stuck to the testimonies. The precedence is, it is rarely on our time frame, but God always has the solution. He always has the answer, and he's promised us if we'll just stick to his testimonies, it will work out the way he claims.

You know the book of 1 Peter chapter 5 says as we get closer to the return of Jesus Christ, there's going to be scoffers. They're going to say, oh, it's been so long, I don't think he's going to come. Well, technically speaking, it's been about 2,000 years. Years. I got news for you, did you know that every verse that talks about Jesus' first coming, there are eight about his second coming. Guess what? I'm going to stick to his testimonies and believe there's coming a day, just like we heard, the sky's going to split and he's coming back. It may not be in my lifetime, it may not be in yours, but that doesn't change the fact he says, "I'm going to do it." But again, it goes back to verse 30, "I have chosen the way of truth." Story after story, personality after personality, gives us evidence that when we do it God's way, we may not get unstuck tomorrow, we may not get unstuck next week, we may not get unstuck next month, we may not even get unstuck next year, but if we will stick to it, we'll finally get out.

I'm going to close with a chapter that I'm memorizing. Ezra chapter 2, 70 verses of names and numbers. But you know what it says in verse 1? It says, "These are the children of the providence of the captivity of those that have been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar carried unto Babylon and they returned to Jerusalem and Judea, every man into his own city." You know what that's saying? For 70 years, those that stuck to his testimonies came back. Those that didn't, they stayed stuck. I don't know about you, but I'd rather choose the way of truth even if it doesn't look the way that I wish it did.

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Today as we come to this time of service. where we've heard the Word of God, we have the opportunity to respond to the Word of God, the question is this, have you chosen the way of truth? The world will give you a million options and a million paths that you can go down, but Jesus said, "I'm the way, I'm the truth, I'm the life. Nobody comes to the Father but by me." Maybe today's that day, maybe you're here in person, maybe you're online, maybe you're listening by way of radio, it doesn't matter, maybe today's that day where you realize that you've fallen for the lies, you've never embraced the one who is truth, Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, it says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That's what the Bible says and there are testimony after testimony that it has and will always be true. Today, you're maybe that person who needs to call out, let me remind you, it's not about a certain set of deeds or membership here or activities or actions, it's about recognizing you've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix and maybe today that's where you are and that is who you are. Let me implore you just to do what the Bible says, just to call out to him. You don't have to read a script. You don't have to say the words. I would say. This is your heart's cry, not the reading of a pamphlet. Maybe your heart's cry would go

something like this. "God, today I realize that according to your Word, I've sinned. God, I've been places I shouldn't have been, done things I should have never been a part of. I've allowed words and thoughts to leave and stay within me that are so contrary to your will and your word. And I understand what your Bible says, your Bible says the result or the wages of my sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God today, I'm just here to confess I've got a sin problem and I believe that according to your Word only Jesus can solve it. So the best way I know how, God, I'm calling out, I believe. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf. He lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that when he allowed himself to be nailed to the cross, he was bearing the pain, the punishment of my sin. God today I believe that three days later just as the Bible said that when he rose from the grave he made it possible, he made it feasible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God today, I do not have the answers to all the issues and the struggles and the problems of this world but there's one thing I know, I've got a sin problem only Jesus can fix. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, maybe today's that day where you cried out for Jesus to save you. In a moment, I'm going to pray for us. We're going to stand and sing together. I want to invite you wherever you are just to step out and step forward. I'll be here. We'll have others as well. We would love to celebrate with you, pray with you, and pray for you. Or maybe today you say, "Pastor, I already got that covered but I've got some areas of stuckness in my life. and one of those is I'm struggling with this whole thing about baptism. I need to talk to somebody about that." Or maybe say, "Well pastor, it's about becoming a part of the church and I don't know what all that involves and I'd like to talk to somebody about that." Or maybe today, your stuckness doesn't involve baptism or church membership, maybe it's something that nobody even has a clue about. Maybe today you say, "You know, I really need somebody to pray with me. I need somebody to pray over me. I need help trusting what the Word of God says about this." We'd love to be a part of that.

Lord Jesus, thank you, thank you that today, no matter how grave or how what we might consider disastrous our situation is, that Lord, your word addresses it all. Help us to trust. Help us to have faith. Help us to believe that you said what you meant and you meant what you said. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.