

How the Bible Changes Everything

sermonaudio.com

Psalm 119

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

Bible Text: Psalm 119:97-104
Preached On: Sunday, March 24, 2024

Crossroads Ministries
301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

This morning, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Psalm 119 and today, as you turn to Psalm 119, we're going to begin in verse 97. Now, as you're turning to that passage roughly in the middle of your Bible, if you're a guest or visitor with us, or maybe you haven't worshiped with us in some time, I want to welcome you to a very strategic study through what we know as the longest chapter of the Bible. Psalm 119 has 176 respective verses divided into 22 sections, but one of the things that we've discovered is this, that no matter what verse you're in, what section you're in, there is one primary goal, there's one primary important thought that Psalm 119 is trying to get across to each and every one of us, is the importance and the valuability that the Bible needs to have in our life, if you allow me to say the primacy that the Bible needs to have. And each and every week as we're walking through Psalm 119 we discover a different aspect of that and today I'm gonna make a statement that you expect to hear in this context, you expect to hear particularly on this day, it is that the Bible changes everything. Now 2,000 years ago and what we know as Palm Sunday and Jesus came up riding in on the back of a colt, there were those that were worshiping him with the palm leaves declaring that he was the projected prophesied Messiah. There were others who claimed there was no way he could fit the bill, there's no way he met the qualifications. What was the standard that was used then? The standard is what did the scriptures say? It was in Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, that said that the Messiah would come into that Temple Mount just as he did. Whether it's Palm Sunday or tomorrow morning, one of the things that we need to learn and grasp is that the Bible truly does change everything. In a moment as we open up to verse 97, we're going to look at the perspective that we need to have for the Bible to change everything and once we grasp this perspective, you know what's going to happen? The Bible is going to open up the possibilities that it has for our life and not only the possibilities, the products that are sure. Beginning in Psalm 119, verse 97. It says,

97 O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. 98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. 101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. 102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. 103 How sweet are thy words unto my

taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Now as we unpack this passage today, it begins in verse 97 by making a very definitive statement that we are to love the word of God and that we're to meditate on it day and night. What does that mean? What's the perspective here? It begins with a very specific attitude. It says that we are to love the law. Now, as you're walking through Psalm 119, you'll discover a host of descriptions of the Bible or the scriptures, the law, the precepts, the commandments, the statutes, etc. Don't get confined today when it says, I love your law, that that's just the first five books of the Old Testament. We're not just talking about the Pentateuch or Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It is a word describing the totality of scripture and it says that we are to love it. Now, I don't think there's another word in the English language in this culture that has been more twisted, turned, and if you allow me to say, perverted than that word. When we talk about that, we love something, in our culture today, it is always a declaration that an object, a person, a situation, an environment gives me pleasure. It allows me to feel what I want to feel. It allows me an experience that I've desired. It responds to me the way that I desire to be responded to. When we say that we love an individual, we love a team, we love a dessert, whatever it may be, we typically mean in our culture that whatever we're referring to is pleasing and satisfying to me. You might be surprised to find out that's not the biblical construct of love, even though it is there on occasion but the overwhelming majority of the time when the Bible says that we are to love or experience love, it is much the opposite. In fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, we call it the great love chapter. I'm sure that you've read it. For some of you, you actually have it posted in a frame in your home. Oftentimes, we hear it read, spoken at what we might call a wedding ceremony. You know what it talks about, that love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It does not keep a record of wrong. When you begin to dissect all the descriptions of love in that chapter, what do we discover? That the biblical attitude of love is that we care for something more than for our own desires. In fact, if you go back to what we call the old King James Bible, you know 1 Corinthians 13 doesn't even use the word love. It uses the word charity. Basically, that form of love that says that what somebody else needs is more important than what I desire.

You know, it's interesting at times like this when we run into this conflict, what our culture promotes versus what the Bible teaches and preaches, it's oftentimes good to do what we call the law of first mention. So what's the law of first mention? The law of first mention is when we go back in the Bible and find when's the very first time this word was used, when's the very first time this construct was used, when's the first time that this kind of mentioning of an attitude is used? You know the very first time the word love is used in your Bible? Genesis chapter 22. It's the first mention of love. That's right. Genesis chapter 22 we have a man by the name of Abraham. Abraham has a child of promise by the name of Isaac. You remember that famous chapter, that famous story where the Lord tells Abraham, "Take him up on the mountain and sacrifice him." Now, thankfully we know the end of the story, right? The Lord provided a ram. It was a picture for us of what this week is all about, the sacrifice of the innocent one on behalf of us all. Well, there in Genesis 22 verse 2, I want you to hear what God tells Abraham to do. He says, "Take

your only son whom thou lovest." Now you do understand that whom we know as Isaac was probably a teenager at the time. If you've ever raised a teenager, they rarely give you pleasure. I'm just making sure you're awake. When a parent speaks of their child and says they love their child, they don't mean they desire their child. They don't mean that their child gives them feelings. What does it mean? Well you know what it means. It means that they're more concerned with the well-being of that child than they are themselves.

So the very first time the word loves even mentioned in the Bible, guess what we have a picture of? This attitude that if we love biblically, it means whatever we love is more important than ourselves. So think about this first statement, "O how I love thy law." Let's unpack that for a moment. That means that if you truly believe the Bible changes everything, are you ready for this, that means that what the Bible says is more important than your feelings. It hurts, doesn't it? It's more important than your agenda. It is more important than your tradition. And it is more important than your, "We've always done it that way before." Why? Because you should desire that the word of God be in a greater position and place than even your feelings, your thoughts, your agenda, your perceptions, your tradition, etc. See, from the very first verse, the Bible changes everything.

Now, if we have that attitude, if we have that perspective, notice the actions, "it is my meditation all the day." Not for an hour one day a week, not when things get really tough, but quote all the day. And the Lord knew we needed instruction in this, because you go all the way back to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 6. Now Deuteronomy 6 may not be a passage you're all too familiar with, but there's a verse there that I'm sure you are. It says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD your God is one God." In fact, it's the only verse in your Old Testament that has capital letters in it. In fact, many people call it the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. It was kind of that hook which they hung everything on. What's interesting is the backstory of that passage. The Israelites, like you and I, having difficulty living out the Bible, having difficulty putting it in the place it need to be. Why? Because our feelings, our agendas, our perceptions, they so easily get in the way. So what did the Lord tell them to do? He said, "When you wake up, you need to think on the words of God. As you're eating lunch in the middle of the afternoon, think of the words of God. As you're going to sleep at night." Then the Lord goes a little bit further. He says, "Make sure that you write it on the doorpost of your home. Make sure you put it the frontlets between your eyes. Make sure you wrap your arms with it." In other words, hear what God was saying, "Make sure that no matter where you are, what you're doing, or what time of day it is, that you always have the word of God in visibility and as a part of your life." Now you realize something very different about Deuteronomy 6 than today? They did not have what you have in your hands. They didn't have a mass printed copy of the Bible. They didn't have access to get to a phone or a device and push a button and all of a sudden electronically it would show up. In fact, they had to go to the synagogue where behind big open and closed doors were these huge scrolls. that they would roll out to read to the community.

So what does it mean to, quote, meditate? Does that mean that you need to take the chapter you're memorizing and put it in your forehead? No. Does that mean you need to wrap? No. What it means is this, that from the moment we wake up to every situation and

circumstance and scenario to the moment that we go to bed, make sure that the Bible has the right position in our lives. Whether we're dealing with a difficult relationship, whether we're dealing with an economic struggle, whether we're fighting the own thoughts between our ears, the action that takes place is we make sure that in every aspect of life, it's "Thus saith the Lord" rather than, "Well, this is how I feel or what I think."

Now, some of you have heard this before, forgive me. I'm gonna go ahead and go here. It's a little illustration I like to give every now and then. By the way, do not take it literally, because it's never going to happen, because there's a young lady named Tracy who's gonna make sure it never does, that if I were to run for public office, I don't want to run for public office, I have no desire to run for public office, and here's why I would never get elected. Y'all know what my political slogan is, right? If your name's not God, I don't care what you think. Now y'all laugh about that, but you know what that means? That means unless we can quote chapter and verse, opinion, feelings, agenda, and tradition should not supersede what scripture says. Now ladies and gentlemen, that perspective about the Bible will change everything.

So what are the possibilities? I love these next three verses, beginning verse 98. It says I can be wiser than my enemies, more understanding than my teachers, more understanding than the ancients. I want to kind of unpack those three things because this is amazing because these are some areas that we struggle in oftentimes in life. Literally it says that we can have protection. God will protect us by making us wiser than our enemies. There's a statement that my wife has embedded in our children growing up, it is always think smarter not harder. Right? Wiser than our enemies. You go back to 1 Samuel chapter 17, probably the most iconic story when it comes to an enemy in the Bible, David and Goliath. It's a story that we teach and preach growing up in church. It's a story we apply to sports, business, culture, etc. Why? Because, I mean, after all, this is that time where there's more basketball than there is hours and I've had so many of you already confess you're always rooting for the underdog. Right? We always want David to win the fight. We know the end of the fight is what makes it iconic.

Verse 45 and 46 of 1 Samuel chapter 17. David is there. Goliath curses him out. "How dare you come and treat me like a dog?" David says, "Oh, you can cuss at me, you can defile the name of the one true God, but that's whose name I come in," and then victory is won. It's a great story that we know oftentimes too well. Can I share with you a little back story? In fact, there are three quick understandings there in 1 Samuel 17 that talk about what it means to be wiser than your enemy. Number one, you want to be wiser than your enemy, just be willing to fight. We say being willing to fight. Most people bluff really well. Okay? Did you know that the Israelites were all blaming each other who wouldn't want to go out. David shows up. I love this verse in the Bible. He brings his brother cheeses. That's what the Bible says. Now, I wasn't an English major, but that means more than one choice of cheese. I'm just curious, pepper Jack, Provolone, I don't know what they wanted, but nonetheless it says he brings them cheeses and he says, "Is there not a cause?" You wanna be wiser than your enemies, no matter how big they are, how strong they are? Just be willing to stand up to them. Secondly, Saul comes to him and says, "Whoa now, it's not gonna turn out well for you. Here is my armor, wear my armor." You

know what? God designed you to fight the battles he designed you to fight, not somebody else's. Now some of you need to hear that this morning. God did not create you to fight somebody else's battle but yours. Saul says, "Hey, wear this." Remember David put it on, remember Saul was described as head and shoulders above everybody else? It didn't fit. It was too heavy. He said, "I can't do this." And last but not least, you know what God used in David's life? He used that which he'd been training for his entire life. Had no idea that in the little things of life, in the minutiae of life, God was preparing him for Goliath. Did he go with Goliath with a 70 pound sword and a bunch of armor? No. He did what he knew to do. Like a shepherd boy on the backside of Bethlehem, he shows up with a slingshot and five smooth stones.

He was wiser than his enemy because he came not only in the word of the Lord, but he came as the Lord created him and Goliath, what'd he do? He laughed. He mocked. He didn't even wear his helmet to the battle and David took that slingshot and you know the rest of the story. See, when we put the Bible in the place it should be and we discover who we are in him and that he has not flawed nor messed up but designed us and made us as he desires us, then we realize it's not somebody else's battle, it's the one he's made us for. It makes us, quote, wiser. Secondly, more understanding than our teachers. Now anybody in education will advocate for this. It is the goal of an educator to aspire their students to actually know and grow more than them. That's the purpose. My mom sitting right here, joke, she spent 26 years in third grade, never made it to fourth grade. She said, "I want you to go to fourth grade." Sorry mom. But in all seriousness, you want to make an educator happy, a former student who takes what they taught them and goes further with it than they could have ever dreamed. Isn't that the goal and should we not as believers, should we not desire the next generation to go further than us? And yet 2 Timothy 4:5, it says what will they do in the last days? They're gonna seek out teachers who itch their ears. Last time I checked the teachers who itched my year ears growing up never really taught me anything. I got in the real world and didn't know what to do. It was the teachers who challenged me. It was the teachers who said, "Hey, we're going to take it to the next level." You might actually have to study. You might actually have to burn the, quote, midnight oil.

It says, "I will become of greater understanding." The word of God can take you further than most of us ever give it credit for, and I love this last one, more understanding than the ancients. Now, for those of you that are lifelong Baptists, this one may hurt a little bit, but just kind of get a firm grip of your seat. It's going to be okay. You do realize we have this struggle at times where we say, yeah, we just need to go back to the early days. We need to go back in time because whatever they did back then surely must be better than we're doing now. Now, you know you say that in the back halls. You know you do. But I want to give you some historical advice. You go back and say, you know, we just need to do it like the first century church did. Okay. Forget the indoor plumbing and the electricity. Have at it. We don't want that part, do we? But we forget that in those first years of the church, there was all kinds of heresies and false teachings that they were struggling with and they battled. You know, the first thing we battled was Jesus was he actually flesh? Second thing we battled was, was he truly eternal with the Father? I got news for you, do you know that as a church, collectively, it took us 300 years to put in

firm who Jesus was. And then guess what happened after that? We went into the Dark Ages. We went in all kinds of of nastiness culturally and then about 500 years ago we peeked our head out with what we call the Reformation. The Reformation going back to by grace alone, through faith alone, according to scripture alone, I mean it was revolutionary. It was a reformation. You say, well pastor, where are you getting at? Because you go back to those quote early days, you go back to those reformation days, those are the ancients of the faith, are they not? Now you may struggle with this, but let me unpack it for a moment. All those great reformers, you know them by the names of Luther and Calvin and Hubmeyer and Zwingli, a brief understanding of history, those are the guys who kind of established what you and I celebrate today. Now don't panic but did you know that none of them could be a member of this church? You say, what do you mean they couldn't be a member of this church? They messed up what we know as baptism. Most of them believed that a baby had to be baptized to go to heaven. They messed up the Lord's Supper. Most of them thought that Jesus was more present when he took the Supper than when he didn't. Is that what we celebrate today? We got six baptisms on our campus today. What are we gonna say? We're gonna say that baptism is a picture of, not a necessity of. Tonight, during the Palm Sunday celebration, we're gonna take the Lord's Supper and what are we gonna say? These elements are a picture of, in fact, God's no more present or less present than he was during the song we sang before it. You know what that means? Did you know that most of the children in our Sunday school here at this church have a greater theological understanding than even the Reformers did? But give them a break. They were one step out of a vile religious messed up system. They took the first step. Aren't you grateful we've gotten to take some subsequent steps following? When we can be wiser than the ancients, can you imagine how many men throughout time and women wished they could just have a copy of the Bible in their home, and yet the average American has three.

Look at the possibilities, wiser than our enemies, more understanding than our teachers, we can actually be progressive where we have more understanding than our ancients. So if we allow this to happen, what are the products that will happen? Begin in verse 101, "I've refrained my feet from every evil way that I might keep thy word. I've not departed from thy judgments." There are two what we might call products that come out of this. In other words, if we put the word of God in the proper perspective, we elevate it above any opinion, idea, agenda, etc., we allow it to be our guide, dealing with our enemies, dealing with that which we received of him, and going to the next stage, we understand history in light of where it should be contextually, the first product is this, it's an action. Notice it's the reverse. It's the reverse of the perspective. Remember, the perspective was an attitude that led to an action. The products are actually an action that leads to an attitude.

What's the first action? I depart from evil. I don't want to have a thing to do with it. Now, I understand that for most of us in the room, there is a bittersweet appeal when it comes to sports right now in time. I understand. But you understand that when it comes to sports and our love for sports, we can't even stand being in the presence of the other team. Can't do it. Oh. I've seen people with rivaled apparel on cross the street so as not to even walk within a vicinity of them. I've heard people tell me they will not even go to another respective city in this town because they don't want them to have any of their tax dollars.

You know why you're laughing? Because either you or somebody you know does the exact same thing. Right? Can you imagine if we treated evil that way? Can you imagine if we actually lived a life where we said I don't even want to glance at it. I don't even want to give it the opportunity to enter my ear. I definitely don't want to be physically in the presence therein.

See, one of the things that you'll discover is this, when we allow the Bible to be in the place that it should be, and we go according to what it says, and we see our enemies fall, and we see us become more knowing than our teachers and even the ancients, then we don't want to mess around with the evilness of this world. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says desire no appearance of evil. If it even remotely looks or smells like it, just stay away. One of the litmus tests that we can use if the Bible has the right position in our life is our propensity to desire to see, to hear, or to be in the presence of anything that is contrary to the Lord. And finally, there's this attitude. It says, "How sweet are your words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." What's the attitude? Simply that the word of God is sweeter than honey, that the word of God is that which we desire. You know, we joke in our culture, you know eat dessert first we're not guaranteed the next moment, right, that we should desire it before anything else. Let me remind you, Revelation chapter 10 verse 9, by the way, the book of Revelation if you're not familiar with it, there are several chapters that we call parenthetically. You say, well, what does that mean? It means they're outside the scope of the chronology. You know, there's these famous judgments and seals and things that are happening, one chapter, 7, 10, 12 and 14, we're kind of pulled out of that and given some insight, some color commentary, some quote backstory. And there in chapter 10 whom we know is the Apostle John who was on Patmos when he got the vision, he is told by the Lord to take these words and and to consume them, to eat them. He says they will be sweeter than honey in your life. Anybody remember the rest of that chapter, verse 9? It says oh, but over time, they became bitter. You say, what do you mean by a final attitude? The more that you engage with scripture, the more it becomes a part of your life, it is going to become sweet but you know what's gonna become bitter? How you see this world, how you hear this world, how you navigate and how you live through this world.

See, one of the things about the scriptures, one of the things about the Bible is this, it's one thing to read the words, it's another thing to live them. See, when you're all alone in your prayer closet with the Lord, woo, these words are sweet. You know when they become bitter? It's when a relationship, a job, a deal or something is on the line and you've got to make a very hard decision, do I really allow scripture to be what scripture needs to be in my life, or do I just succumb to my agenda, my preference, my feelings, etc.? See, not only will a byproduct of scripture being in its right place cause us not to want to hear, see, or be in the presence of evil, it will cause a bitterness in our soul. So much so, I'll make you a promise, you allow the Bible to be what the Bible needs to be in your life and this old world will give a bitter taste to you. You won't love the old world anymore. You won't desire the old world. You won't crave the old world anymore. Why? Because when the words of God are sweet, what does it say? I began to hate every evil way.

See, the Bible changes everything and today as we celebrate what we know as Palm Sunday, let me close with this final illustration. Jesus comes in, according to scripture, tens of thousands of people, many are celebrating, others not so much. Waving the palm branches, oh, this is great, this is sweet. But did you know within just a few days, they would take the same Jesus, nail him to a cross named Mount Calvary in front of God and everybody. You know what the Bible says in John chapter 19? There were five people at that cross. That's it. John of Zebedee and four women. See, it's one thing to grab the palm leaves and say, "That's right, this our King." It's another thing to see him crucified for your sins and say, "That's my king." See, the Bible changes everything. More than a king riding on the back of a cult, we need a lamb on a cross bearing the price and the pain of our sin. Scripture changes everything.

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Today as we come to the close of our service, you might be that individual who for whatever reason saw the Lord and saw scripture in a different light than it was ever intended, and maybe today the Spirit of God took the word of God and just opened your eyes, opened your heart, and you realize that that shedding of blood was for you, that that love was for you. You know, the Bible says in Romans 10:13, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It doesn't say whoever gets religion. It doesn't say whoever becomes a Baptist, whoever gets baptized, whoever starts this, stops that. It just says whoever calls on the name of the Lord. Maybe today's the day where you call on the name of the Lord. It's not about the words you say. It's not about reading a script or making sure you do it in the right order. It's literally about a heart's cry of honesty and transparency to the Lord. Maybe your heart's cry today will go a little something like this, "God, today. I realize, I've got a sin problem. God, I realize, much like we read in Psalm 119, I've been in the darkness. I've been in the evil paths. God, I've been places I shouldn't have been. God, I realize I've done things I shouldn't have been a part of. I've spoken words, I've had thoughts that are so contrary to your word and yet your Bible says the wages, the result of my sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe. I believe I have a sin problem that only Jesus can solve. So God, I want you to know today 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 more than ever that when he allowed himself to be nailed to his cross, those nails provided the punishment of my sin. And God today, I believe that three days later, when Jesus walked out of that empty tomb he made it feasible, he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven. God, today, I do not have the answers to the struggles and the strife of this old world but I do know I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix and the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, maybe today you're that person here in person or online or even by way of radio who cried out to Jesus. If you're here in person, let me encourage you. In a moment, I'm gonna pray for us. We're gonna stand and sing. No matter where you're seated, up top, down below, the sides, the middle, the front, the back, as we stand and sing in just a moment, just make your way to the front. I'll be here, we'll have others as well. We just wanna celebrate with you. We just wanna pray with

you and pray for you. Or maybe today you say, "Pastor, I've already got that covered," but maybe you need to have a conversation about this thing called baptism that we talk a whole lot about around here. Or maybe you're like those that we meet each and every week who say, "You know, this is our church home. What does that really mean to make it our home?" Or maybe today you say, "You know what? I'm just walking through a real difficult situation. It'd be really nice just to have somebody pray over me or pray with me." We just want to be a part of whatever God is doing in your life.

Lord Jesus, today as we come to this time in our service, thank you. God, thank you that your word is so much infinitely wiser than we could ever be. God, thank you that you give us direction, you give us understanding that you've communicated clearly to us who you are and who we are in light of you. And God, my simple yet powerful prayer today is this, that we would allow our lives to respond to your word and not allow us to change it just to make our lives pleasing to ourselves. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.