

Quicken Thou Me

3 Word Sermon

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Bible Text: Psalm 119:25
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Good evening, everyone, I invite you to turn in the word of God to Psalm 119. Psalm 119 this evening. It's good to see you all. For those of you that need a key, are looking for one, make sure to see Scott Foster before you leave tonight; hopefully that's not the only reason you're here, that would be an awful soul motivation.

We have our day of prayer coming up this coming Lord's Day and very mindful of it as I came to this evening, and this morning just musing on what to bring, what message would be helpful, and I was thinking much about how to rightly come to a day of prayer so my remarks this evening from the word of God, I trust, will be helpful and that the Lord will use it for his glory.

I draw your attention to verse 25 of this Psalm, Psalm 119, and we'll just read this verse. Psalm 119:25,

25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we're thankful for those here tonight that have a testimony who can understand the language of what we've been singing, those that now live who once were dead. We were dead, dead in trespasses and in sins and, God, the only reason there is any life in us tonight is because of thy sovereign grace. We pray for help to recognize that all our life is Christ, in him was life. The life we need is found in him and we enjoy that when first we believed, and we continue to need it as we continue to believe. As we assemble in this place tonight, it is with the desire that we might meet with God. At times, our soul cleaves to the dust and we feel the deadness. God, you know my own desire is that long before we assembled this Lord's Day to pray, that we might be quickened, we will come as a people enlivened, a people made ready by the working of thy Spirit. We confess our sins for they form a very effective barrier between us and God, they hide the face of God from us so that he will not hear. We pray that they might all of them go under the blood and that we would enjoy the life-giving power of the cross and of our

risen Lord Jesus. Wash us and make us clean and be with us now, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

I recognize my message tonight, beloved, will have different degrees of relevance depending on the frame with which you enter into the house of God this evening. My desire and purpose is to help us prepare for the Lord's Day ahead. And the worst way, or at least one of the inadequate ways in which we might prepare for the Lord's Day is to come assuming a readiness, assuming that I'm ready to meet with God in this way when, in reality, there is a deadness in the soul. This deadness is always a threat. By nature man is spiritually dead, his heart is made of stone, and spiritual fruit is impossible to bear. Despite this terrible state, it is impossible or rather it is possible for man to worsen his case, worsening it by willful sin, by doing what we are told in 1 Timothy 4:2, having our conscience seared with a hot iron, in so doing that men that are already corpses endeavor to try and bury their own corpses out of the reach of man and God. This is what man does without even the grace of God in what we might call a common way.

But regeneration is a miracle, it's a miracle of God's grace, giving to the spiritually dead a new principle of life, a heart of flesh that is now tender to the voice of God. And oh, those sweet moments when first we saw the light, when there was a sensitivity to everything the Lord said, and a sweet sense of his nearness. But it is possible for those regenerated, those saved by God's grace to negatively recondition their enlivened heart to enter spiritual deadness, and when this is the case, we will feel little of true gratitude, we will mourn little over the absence of spiritual blessings, and things that once we craved no longer we crave, not to the same degree.

The greatest of saints that have made wonderful advancements in their knowledge of God often backslide into a deadened condition. Read their journals, it's one of the helpful things we draw from reading the diaries, journal entries of those who knew God, is that they are lamenting their condition. They're entering into a season of prayer, entering into their closets with a deep awareness of a deadened condition of their heart and their first objective, their longing desire is to rid their hearts of that deadness before any other petition is brought or obtained from God.

This entire revolution of experience can occur in a single season of prayer. We begin in a frame of spiritual insensitivity and inner deadness but through communion with Christ and his gracious sending of the Holy Spirit, we are brought to an experience of quickening of our souls. The psalmist clearly understood this when he prayed, "quicken thou me according to thy word." It perhaps had been a common experience for him to feel a deadness in his soul and to pray this very prayer. But what I am concerned about tonight is when deadness becomes the norm, when we can enter into a condition like the psalmist here needing to be quickened and yet not offering the prayer that the psalmist prays, not feeling the deadening effects or the deadening spirit and frame into which the heart has entered and continued for a time. As I say, some of you may be on the mountaintop living in the most fresh sense of enjoyment with God that you have known in a long time, there will be something for you tonight, no doubt, but my thought, my concern is that for those of you that have long been in a condition of deadness might

awaken out of it. If you're there, I'm here by the grace of God to help you and this is the purpose of the message tonight.

So taking the three words, "quicken thou me," there is an understanding here in this language of deadness, a need for enlivening or reviving, and even revive, Lord, that's what the psalmist is saying, "I need revival. I need life. I need strength." Later on he goes to ask for that and he prays just a few verse down, "Strengthen thou me according to thy word. I need more of your help, your sustaining grace, your enlivening power." So we're dealing with this subject of spiritual deadness and I want us to note, first of all, the reality of deadness. The reality of deadness. As I've already indicated, it's right here. The reality of spiritual deadness is found here in Psalm 119:25. The psalmist feels it. He feels the deadness of his heart, "quicken thou me according to thy word."

That believers come into such a condition is evident; they come into this condition sometimes from their own folly. Believers. Believers. It would seem to be, and not to draw too much from the parable of the 10 virgins, but it would appear, at least an argument could be made our Lord is saying there that while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept, that there's a sense in which at the arrival of our Lord, and there are other passages that back this up, there is a question mark over the condition of the church when he comes back. They all slumbered and slept. There was a certain deadness in those that were truly regenerate as well as a false professor. It is implied also by the exhortation of Hebrews 3:8 when he calls upon the Hebrews, "Harden not your hearts as in the provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Don't harden your heart, implying that this can happen to the congregation of the Lord, hardening their hearts, deadening their hearts from their own folly.

Also by a lack of hearing and doing the word. In Mark 8 we have the occasion where our Lord rebukes his disciples in verse 17, specifically warning them, "Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?" Of course, this really ties into the whole idea of unbelief and there have been a hardening. He is pointing out a sense of hardening in their hearts because they wouldn't just take the word and believe it. Their lack of exercising faith was an expression of spiritual deadness, a hardness of soul.

Also by divine providences. God comes to us at times, brings us to points and seasons when we experience what we term a hard providence, and the psalmist says in Psalm 102:4, "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread." There's a sense in which the providence of God had brought upon him a season not just smiting his heart but his heart felt withered like grass. Hard providences can result not because it intended to but they can result in a sense of spiritual deadness.

Or even by divine appointment. The reality of this deadness can be seen in Isaiah 63:17, the statement is found there, "O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance." Of course, you read that language and you may draw from that a sense of impinging God with guilt for hardening their hearts, blaming God for their spiritual

deadness, but this is not the meaning. God gives man up to a reprobate mind, we know that from scripture. It is not by the cause of God but by the absence of God's preserving mercy known at other times. God steps away, giving to a man the very thing that he desires and permits Satan, then, to act as a divine servant to further blind and harden men in their ways. He gives men what they want.

John Calvin says those who say that God leads us into error by privation, that is, by depriving us of the Spirit, do not perceive the actual design for God himself has said to harden and to blind when he gives up man to be blinded by Satan who is the minister and executioner of his wrath. God steps away, he steps away and calls Satan in, opens the door for Satan's activity to harden men.

This can happen and, God forbid, it should occur in the lives of those that profess to be believers. Yes, believers can, they can experience spiritual deadness. It is a reality but, secondly, not only do we see the reality of deadness but we ought to consider the reasons for deadness. The reasons for deadness. Why is this a problem? Why is it a problem? First of all, the influence of sin in the mortal body. The influence of sin in the mortal body. People often blame the old man, "It's the old man." Well, I know what you're getting at but if I picked up Dr. Cairn's rightly on one occasion in which he was somewhat controversial and he would never be controversial, but he was somewhat controversial in a sermon he brought in Ballymoney many years ago, I think his text was Romans 6 although he was all over different Pauline passages, and he was making the case that we talk about the power and influence of the old man, he says the biblical text tells us that the old man is dead. He is dead and he established it, he went through all the texts, or at least to some degree, showed he is dead, stop blaming something that's dead. But he did permit, then, and he was careful in the language that there still is a principle, there still is a problem and that is the flesh or the mortal body. So the exhortation in Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Whatever the case without getting into all of that, the flesh likes to assert itself in opposition to the Spirit, Galatians 5.

So the influence of sin in the mortal body, that's one of the reasons for deadness, the deadness of your soul. It's a sin that still is in your flesh. The influence of small sins permitted in the life is another reason for deadness. The influence of small sins permitted in the life when we make allowance, open the door to small allowances of sin, where we say, "This isn't a big deal or this isn't damaging." But it is the little foxes that spoil the vines, Song of Solomon 2:15. It is dead flies that cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor, Ecclesiastes 10:1. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, Galatians 5:9. Willfully committing the same sin without sorrow and not repenting of known sin is to abuse the conscience so that it no longer functions as God intended. You allow those small sins, if you open the door to them, they have a deadening effect and it's death by a thousand cuts. You just open the door and say it's not a big deal but it is affecting the conscience, it's changing the frame of your heart, it's bringing a deadening influence into your life.

The influence of persistent unbelief, continuing on in unbelief, and by unbelief I mean the neglect of exercising ongoing faith in the Lord Jesus, the neglect of exercising ongoing faith in the Lord Jesus. Well, you're all believers, of course you exercise faith in Christ but is there an ongoing faith? Remember John 6:35, "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger." You have to keep coming. "And he that believeth on me shall never thirst." You have to keep believing. You have to keep coming, keep believing in order to maintain this satisfaction of soul. John 7:38, "He that believeth," that is, keeps on believing, "on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." Persistent unbelief, not coming actively, living in a continued ongoing faith in Christ, cultivating it, exercising it, drawing close to him, engaging in prayer and through his word, real fellowship with the Lord.

So as our Lord says in John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Abide, keep believing. Keep believing. Keep on keeping on. The one thing you did when you first believed, you continue to do. You keep looking to Christ, resting in Christ, rejoicing in Christ, receiving from Christ, pursuing Christ. Just keep exercising that true evangelical Holy Spirit birthed faith in Christ. When you don't, deadness is sure to come. So long as we neglect to draw our life from Christ in simple child-like faith, there will be the onset of spiritual deadness. Deadness.

The influence of sin in the mortal body, the influence of small sins permitted in the life, the influence of persistent unbelief, the influence of absenteeism from the means of grace. The man that neglects the word of God, neglects prayer, neglects the corporate gathering of saints and suffers from spiritual deadness, which he will, such a man is, it's like a diabetic not taking his insulin and then wondering why he's going into, the hyperglycemia sets in or whatever it is. You have to be giving yourself, not be absent from the means of grace. Whether it's sickness, tiredness, busyness, indolence, overindulgence of other activities, being absent from God's means to enliven the soul is to welcome the problem. To neglect spiritual disciplines is to invite spiritual deadness. So you wonder why there's a deadness in the soul. These are reasons.

The final, the fifth and final reason: the influence of a divine withholding of the Spirit's operations. The influence of a divine withholding of the Spirit's operations. If you're starving sin of its appetite, repenting of sins committed, trusting in Christ daily, engaging readily in all means of grace and still a deadness sets in, it could be that God has withdrawn the special influences of his Spirit. And he does do that sometimes. In such instances, God's active preservation of his people is more secretive, and the felt loss of his blessings are designed to prompt an earnest seeking after him. I mean, was that not Job? "O that I knew where I might find him! O that I knew where I might find him!" So he withdraws. In his secret workings he is sustaining but his felt blessings will be withdrawn that we might go after him and look for him to come upon us as a fresh dew upon the mown grass.

These are reasons, if there's a deadness in your soul, you need to look at these reasons: sin, allowing small sins in the life; persistent unbelief; absenteeism from the means of grace either public or private; or maybe a divine withholding. Whatever the case, we are driven back to him. We are driven to seek him. Thirdly, the results of deadness. The results of deadness. Spiritual deadness does not necessarily remove spiritual knowledge. It didn't for the psalmist. I mean, he's recording this Psalm and there's a clear spiritual knowledge that this man possesses, and yet he feels a deadness in the soul. So deadness does not necessarily remove spiritual knowledge. Deadness does not necessarily remove spiritual activity. Again, again, the psalmist is the example of this. Deadness does not necessarily remove spiritual desire. Again, you see it here in the psalmist. But if the knowledge is not paired with humility and leads to a sense of superiority, that's a sign that spiritual deadness has already set in. And if the activity is not paired with gratitude and leads to a perfunctory performance of duties, that is a sign that spiritual deadness has already set in. And if the desire is not paired with love and leads to a cold and heartless engagement with God, that is a sign that spiritual deadness has already set in. It's on. It's suffocating life out of your soul.

Reverend Bannister once said, I'm not sure I'm quoting him exactly here, I was at a conference and he was actually saying it in the form of a question he was asking, but something to the effect that he had found that the greatest distance in all the world at times is the distance between the head and the heart. Have we not found it to be so? I mean, everything I've said you agree with and yet there still might be this deadness in the heart, that you're hearing it and there's a sense in which you're saying, "I'm there," and yet you're actually presently in this moment in a struggle just to be livened by the influence. It's coming and you're hearing the words and you're recognizing the problem but is there a will to do?

You see, the deadness even now is suffocating your heart. If you previously wept over your sin and the sins of others but can't remember when you last did so, you may have the malady of spiritual deadness. If you previously wept over unconverted souls but can't remember when you last did so, you may have the malady of spiritual deadness. If you previously wept over suffering saints but can't remember when you last did so, you may have the malady of spiritual deadness. Where's the heart that once sighed? Has it not been silenced in a vacuum of spiritual deadness? Where are the tears that once flowed? Have they not evaporated from a desert of spiritual deadness? This is real, beloved. It's real. To such, heaven has lost its appeal, hell has lost its terror. God's promises have lost their comfort, his commands have lost their power, and his grace no longer engenders amazement. There's little hunger and thirst for righteousness, little taking up of the cross, little death to self. This is spiritual deadness. Spiritual deadness.

This brings me, finally, to the reviving of deadness. The psalmist hoped for it, didn't he? "Quicken thou me according to thy word." He possessed the hope that he could be revived. So I want to look at this in two ways. First, what not to do. What not to do. If you feel this deadness in your soul, first, do not despair of it. Do not despair of it. The devil would love you to be in despair. He would love it because a despairing soul is a soul that has lost hope. The psalmist had not lost hope, that's why he's praying, "quicken

thou me according to they word." His prayer expresses a sense of hope. The despairing soul will not even pray. The despairing soul has come to terms with his condition and is leaving it there. I hope that's not any of us. This is an experience common to believers. Your Christian life is a constant battle. It is. It's constant. The battle never gives up. There's not a day you wake up and it's vacation time. There's always a battle and there may be many things the battling soldier does not know but he knows one thing, he knows he's alive. Keep battling. Keep battling. Stay in the battle. Do not despair. Do not despair.

Second, not only do you not despair of it, do not ignore it. Do not ignore it. If there is a need to acknowledge a measure of deadness, respond with the prayer of the psalmist and that God has graciously given you prayers like this for you to pray when you're feeling the same condition and experience. And here's the problem, there are all sorts of spiritual battles but the issue with spiritual deadness is that it is in the nature of deadness to be sluggish and lethargic so it wants to ignore it. It wants to ignore its own existence. Spiritual deadness doesn't want to be exposed, found out. It wants to be left alone. But if you ignore it, things are unlikely to change for the better. If you ignore it, you're basically saying, "I'm prepared to live the rest of my life is in this condition. I'm content right here. I'm content right here." The thing is, though, if you're content right where you are and you don't go engage in the process of improving upon your condition, you're going to get worse.

So don't despair of it, do not ignore it, third, do not excuse it. Do not excuse it, for example, like blaming God or blaming circumstances or blaming age or blaming whatever, the mediocre preaching, the state of the church in our current day. "Oh, they're all dead." So the answer, what, is to join in. Do you want it to be said of you, Christ comes back, the bridegroom comes and they all slumbered and slept and you're okay being there among the slumbering? No, do not excuse it. Repent much. Repentance is often what removes the dam we've built against the grace of God. It is, you know. It is. Repentance is often what removes the dam we've built against the grace of God. God resists the proud, he gives grace to the humble. The man that must learn to walk again can either lament his weakness and do nothing, he wakes up from his surgery or his coma or whatever, and he sees his weakness and he just lies there, or he can exercise himself in whatever way he is able until his strength improves.

You want to recover from spiritual deadness? Here's what to do. This isn't comprehensive. It's not comprehensive, it's what I could think of today. First, know that Christ came to give life. He came to give life, not to impart deadness, to impart life. "I came to give life. I am the bread of life. I'm the living water. I'm the resurrection and the life." He is the answer for spiritual deadness. The cross is the death of death to the believer. If the cross is the death of death to the believer, where must you go to deal with your spiritual deadness? Where must you go? You get yourself to the cross and you stay there until its quickening influences pour into your soul.

So know that Christ came to give life, not death. Second, sing praises. Singing can often be easier than other spiritual disciplines. So when there's spiritual deadness, there's a weakness right there, there's an infirmity in the soul and the weak need to do what they

can, and what's easiest? Often singing is it, beloved, singing is it. Sing yourself into a frame of humility, gratitude and love for Christ, and keep on singing until you've gotten there and you've been moved in your heart. Which brings us, thirdly, then make appeal to the mercy of God. Make appeal to the mercy of God. Once your singing draws out prayer, then pray. Then pray. The singing will draw out prayer. No Christian, no Christian can keep singing, keep singing praises to God without prayer being drawn out of the soul. It can't happen. It cannot happen. You're not saved if you've never been drawn into prayer. If you can sing and never be drawn into a condition of prayer, you're not saved. You can't be. Singing praises draws from us prayer. It has to.

So as you're drawn, then, then you make appeal to God's mercy to be revived, his mercy endureth forever. And persist in appealing to his mercy. He is merciful. He is merciful. He sent the Son to deal with death. He came to destroy the works of the devil. So appeal to the mercy of God and the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fourth, write down all the things you're grateful for. Pray about each of them with thanksgiving. Write them down. Put them down, all the things even in the past as well as the present, and look at it and pray in gratitude and thanksgiving. It will have a reviving influence on the heart. Now you see, part of your problem is you're not taking time to see the reasons to be grateful. The dead soul, that's one of the things they do, they just can meander and they don't contemplate how merciful the Lord...they can have a meal in front of them and not sense he's given again my daily bread. Again.

Fifthly, starve the black dog and feed the white dog. Now this is backdrop. When I lived in Calgary, there was a lady there, you can listen to her testimony actually and she makes mention of this in her testimony. Her name is Kim Nesbitt, you can look it up in SermonAudio, and when you listen to her testimony, parts of it will make your jaw drop and yet it's not half of it. It's not even a quarter of what that woman has come through. There are some things you just can't share publicly. But I remember, I remember she came out of alcohol addiction and this couple ministered to her, she was brought, her and her husband were brought to faith in Christ, and the pastor's wife said to her, "Now Kim, here's what you need to do. There are two dogs in your life, one's a black dog and the other one's a white dog. You need to starve the black dog and feed the white one. You need to give up everything you have been doing that destroys the soul. Starve it. Starve everything, all the things that are against God's word. Stop it. Stop feeding it. Give it no life. Don't encourage it. Feed the white dog. Feed the word of God. Sing. Tend the means of grace. Pray. Feed the white dog." And she in her simple way said, "Okay, I get that." As a new believer just simplifying even the kind of the means that lead to sanctification with a simple illustration. Well, you need to do the same. Believers need to...there's an ongoing when we see the problem when we're alive is that black dog doesn't die. It can be weakened but never dies. It's still there and you toss it something and it just gets revived. That's what believers do.

Sixthly, witness to sinners about Jesus. There is a remarkably reviving influence about your declaration of Jesus Christ to others who don't know him. It revives. It does. It does. If you don't know that, then you're not engaging in it. You need to know the reviving influence of witnessing. Start opening your mouth, testifying of Christ. Now those who

go to the martyrs' death, there's no spiritual deadness in them, I'll tell you that. They have witnessed even to the shedding of their own blood.

Seventh, and this is the last one, seize upon every means to revive the soul. Every means. Be in a constant frame of seeking more life. Come on the Lord's day, come on a Wednesday night because you need life. You need life. And so there's no Sunday school this Lord's day, that's not an invitation to sleep in, that's an invitation to prepare yourself, isn't it? Oh, you husbands and wives, you parents and families, you know what you do, you know what you do with that extra time? You gather everyone around you, gather your spouse around and you spend time in the word in prayer, you pray for the word and you pray for the day of prayer, you prepare yourself into a right state. Oh, we need the Lord to come. We need him to break our stony hearts and flood upon us in a way we have not yet known.

So we have a day of prayer. Is it just to showcase to the world something for a pat on the back? God help us. It is a testimony that there is too much deadness in our souls. There is. Every one of us, take a look at yourself. Have a good look at your heart. Stop pretending or acting like there isn't a measure of deadness that threatens to strangle the sweet fellowship with God out of your soul. So may the Lord come in a reviving way today and on Sunday.

Let's sing.