

The Cleansing Power of the Word

Psalm 119:9-16

Introduction

Good morning, Lighthouse! Are you ready for the Word of God this morning? Glad to hear. Today's message can be rendered as part 2 sequel to last month's message, titled "Why the Word is Essential." We concluded the Word is essential for many reasons, it teaches us about God, it teaches us about who we truly are, about our sin nature, right from wrong, and teaches us that the only way for salvation is through Jesus Christ alone. Without the Word of God, no one can be saved. Today's message in the God's Word is focused primarily on how the Word of God functions in our lives as believers to live pure and holy. Before continuing further, we want to establish what we mean by the Word of God. We are referring to the Bible, the 66 books. Today, we will be in the longest chapter in our Bibles. Psalm 119. Of course, we will not be going through the entire chapter this morning, otherwise, y'all will probably not be so fond of me anymore.

Background

Because it is such a long chapter, there is extensive background behind it. The author of this Psalm is unknown. Jewish tradition gives credit to King David as the author as well as older Theologians. It is believed to be a Psalm David compiled throughout most of his life. Other attributions have been given to Jeremiah due to pattern parallels in Lamentations chapter 3 and to Nehemiah and Daniel during post-exilic times, but ultimately, we know God is the author.

In this wonderful Psalm, the theme is clear, the Word of God – an adoration and passion for it. There are 9 different words used to reference God's Word. Out of 176 verses, 171 of them reference the Word.

1. Law (torah, used 25 times in Psalm 119): "Its parent verb means 'teach' or 'direct'; therefore coming from God it means both 'law' and 'revelation.' It can be used of a single command or of a whole body of law." (Kidner)
2. Word (dabar, used 24 times): The idea is of the spoken word, God's revealed word to man. "Proceeding from his mouth and revealed by him to us." (Poole)
3. Judgments (mispatim, used 23 times): "From shaphat, to judge, determine, regulate, order, and discern, because they judge concerning our words and works; show the rules by which they should be regulated; and cause us to discern what is right and wrong, and decide accordingly." (Clarke)
4. Testimonies (edut/edot, used 23 times): This word is related to the word for witness. To obey His testimonies "signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant made between the Lord and Israel." (VanGemeran)
5. Commandments (miswah/miswot, used 22 times): "This word emphasizes the straight authority of what is said ... the right to give orders." (Kidner)
6. Statutes (huqqim, used 21 times): The noun is derived from the root verb "engrave" or "inscribe"; the idea is of the written word of God and the authority of His written word. "Declaring his authority and power of giving us laws." (Poole)
7. Precepts (piqudim, used 21 times): "This is a word drawn from the sphere of an officer or overseer, and man who is responsible to look closely into a situation and take action. The word points to the particular instructions of the Lord, as of one who cares about detail." (Kidner)
8. Word (imrah, used 19 times): Similar in meaning to dabar, yet a different term. "The 'word' may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised." (VanGemeran)
9. Ways (derek, used 2 times in reference to God's ways.) Some disagree this to be a reference, but the usage shows to be in what God commands.

The Psalmist can be described as genius in his poetry and word usage. I am going to seem like an infomercials guy. This is a lot of information, but wait, there's more. The arrangement of this Psalm is an acrostic pattern – meaning alphabetically arranged in sections. You will notice in your Bibles a unique word that appears every 8 verses, Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, etc . . . You may have wondered what those mean before like I once did. Those are letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters – 22 times 8 sections = 176 verses. The reason the letters appear every 8 verses is because each line or verse starts with that Hebrew letter. This is something we cannot see in our English language.

(View image)

If you notice in the image, at the end of each line the same letter repeats until the next section begins. Hebrew reads from right to left as opposed to what we are used to. By the way, do not let my artistic abilities with my circle distract you from the point. Teachers out there like to say after they draw on their boards “I am not an artist.” Well, I say that I am an artist, just a very bad one.

The best way I think to describe this Psalm is that it is an absolute – divine - masterpiece. Basically, God showing off. Now that I think we have covered enough background, let's move on to our text, Psalm 119:9-16. I encourage you to follow along in your Bibles, or the verses will appear on the screen.

Scripture

Psalm 119:9-16

- (9) BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.
- (10) With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
- (11) Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
- (12) Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.
- (13) With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.
- (14) I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.
- (15) I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
- (16) I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Outline

I. The Question and Answer, v. 9.

Psalm 119:9 BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

A. The question asked, v. 9a.

1. Wherewithal or how can a young man cleanse his way?
2. The statement for “cleanse his way” means to keep the way he lives pure.
3. The moment a person puts their trust in Jesus, at the position level, we are holy, our spirit is pure; this is about living it out.
4. This question is directed at the “young.” Now, this does not mean only the young age can apply it, but what better time to address this question than in your youth? How can I live a life a godliness and purity - a life that honors God?

B. The question answered, v. 9b.

1. By taking heed thereto according to thy word.
 - a. The word here for taking heed means to “guard.”
 - b. We guard our lives with the Word.
2. As a youth here, we used to do these things called “SOAP” sheets. Soap was our acronym Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. We clean ourselves with soap, likewise we clean our lives with this kind of soap. We start with our Scripture – reading it, and studying it, maybe even memorizing it. Then we move on to observation – we seek out the meaning – break down the context and seek out what the author intended using hermeneutic principles. Then we move on to application once we got our meaning, how we can live this out and apply it to our lives. Lastly, we pray for the strength to do so. Our flesh stinks, so we need this kind of soap.
3. The foundation for a morally pure life is found in God’s word.
 - a. God’s word shows us the standard of purity, so we know what is right and what is wrong.
 - b. God’s word shows us the reasons for purity, so we understand the wisdom and goodness of God's commands – because He loves you – to protect you.
 - c. God’s word shows us the difficulty of purity, and reminds us to be on guard.
 - d. God’s word shows us the blessings of purity, and gives us the motivation to make the necessary sacrifices.

e. God's word shows us how to be born again - so our inner-man may be transformed after the pattern of ultimate purity, Jesus.

f. Jesus said in His prayer for His disciples:

John 17:17: Sanctify them in thy truth: thy word is truth.

II. How to Take Heed to God's Word, vv. 10-12.

A. By dedicating his whole heart to seek God and keep His commandments, v. 10.

(10) With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

1. Here, the Psalmist declares his dedication to God, while at the same time recognizing his weakness to maintain it.
2. It is not just a part of him, it is all of him!
3. This shows us Scripture was no mere textbook to the writer; it was how he sought and met God.
4. It also shows his dependence. Without God's guidance, he would go astray.

B. By hiding God's Word in his heart to keep him from sinning against Him.

(11) Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

1. The psalmist recognizes the value of God's word and hiding it in his heart. It is hidden in the sense that it is on the inside, where it is safe so that none can take it away.
2. How do we do this? What does it look like to hide the word in your heart?
 - a. It starts with receiving it in your mind. Surely, the Psalmist knew the Word, he read it, studied it and thought about it continually until he absorbed it in his heart. It was memorized and lived out.
 - b. God's word is not only to be found in our Bibles only, it ought to be found in our hearts too. Is God's Word in your heart today?

3. Jesus is our perfect example of what this looks like!

- a. He faced all three general temptations found in 1 John 2:16: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.
- b. Observe the narrative his 40 days in the wilderness.

Matthew 4:1-11

(1) Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

(2) And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

4. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, the image is not what you would think it is. It is not some flat land desert; it is full of hills. Here is an image I took in Israel: (Image quality is reduced to fit the slide show.)

(3) And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

(4) But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

(5) Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

(6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

5. Guess who also knows Scripture? Satan.

- a. Here he quotes Psalm 91:10-12. I want to show you the irony of him choosing this one.

Psalm 91:10-12

(10) There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

(11) For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

(12) They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

b. He quotes a Psalm that is about taking refuge in the Lord for protection and uses it against Jesus as basis to jump down the top of the temple.

However, look at this next verse, here is the irony.

(13) Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

c. Satan is described as all three of these. A lion, serpent and a dragon.

Back to Matthew:

(7) Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

(8) Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

(9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

(10) Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

(11) Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

d. Jesus resisted Satan's temptations by quoting from Deuteronomy all three instances, but it is not because he quoted Scripture, it because He was obedient to the Scripture He quoted.

C. By seeking God's instruction, v. 12.

(12) Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

1. The Psalmist continues his thoughts on connection between God's word and a pure life with this expression of praise. Such praise necessary with all these truths!

2. It is been said many times – "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book." Another quote: "A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who is not."

III. Commitment to the Word of God, vv. 13-16.

A. He declares the word by his mouth, v. 13.

(13) With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

1. The Psalmist has no intention to keep the Word to himself.
2. Do you talk about the Word? The Word should not only be on your mind, but also on your lips
3. When we make the Scriptures the subject of our conversation, we glorify God, we edify our neighbors, and we improve ourselves.”

B. He highly values God’s Word, v. 14.

(14) I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

1. The Psalmist understood the true value of God's word. He compares it to all the riches of the world!
2. Do you have a price on the Word of God? How much money would it take for you to forfeit hearing the Word of God ever again? For me, there is not enough riches in the world that can replace Jesus and His Word.

C. He prioritizes the word in his life, vv. 15-16.

(15) I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

(16) I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

1. Mediation of the Word leads to obedience.
2. Delighting in the Word leads to remembrance.

Application

The Bible has been described as a manual to the believer's life. Sometimes I can get hasty when I unpack something that needs to be put together that I fail to look at the manual before trying to put together or starting it up. It doesn't really go so well. Now think of the believer trying to live a life that honors and pleases God without His instruction manual. Even worse, imagine the man who does not know God and still tries to live the Christian life. It cannot be done. The same Word the Psalmist rejoices in is the same Word where we find the Gospel. Where we learn about Jesus and His death, burial and Resurrection for the sins of the world according to Scripture, and whoever will put their trust in Him will have eternal life. If there is never been a moment in your life where you put your trust in Jesus to save you from your sins. There is still the opportunity to do so. You will be born again, and then you are given the privilege to glorify your Heavenly Father and enjoy Him forever.

To get technical, this Psalmist had bits of the Old Testament Scripture to rejoice in. Today, there is a trend among popular preaches that the Old Testament is no longer relevant to the New Testament Christians life. That is so far from the truth. Today, we have it better than the Psalmist had it when it comes to the Word of God, yet, consider many these statements he made. He puts us to many of us to shame. I pray this Psalm will be the meditation and desire of your heart this morning and for now on.

Questions

1. Is the Word of God truly my delight? Or just another textbook?
2. How does my time in the Word reflect my value of it?
3. What Scriptures can I hide in my heart to overcome sin in my life?

*****Prayer*****