

What Scripture Requires

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We have looked at this Psalm over the past couple of weeks, Psalm 119. It has become my favorite Psalm as each one I preach becomes my favorite when I'm preaching it. My next favorite Psalm will be Psalm 120, of course.

Psalm 119, as we've said, is the longest Psalm in the psalter. It is the longest chapter in the Bible and it is devoted almost exclusively, every verse of it, to a testimony to the wonders and the power and the beauty and the perfection of the word of God. And all of its 176 verses, save one or two, explicitly refer to the word of God in what is written. It is a poetic masterpiece of matchless greatness. It tells us what Scripture is. It tells us what Scripture does. And it also models for us and shows us what Scripture requires from us. Scripture is the word of God. It is true. It is faithful. It is unchanging. It is a righteous word from a righteous God and it reflects the perfections of all of his wonderful attributes.

So Scripture is something high and exalted to which we give our deepest and most profound respect and belief and obedience. Scripture does things. Because it comes from a powerful God, it does powerful things in the hearts of those who believe and we covered this last week. What does Scripture do? Well, we looked at five themes. It comforts us in our affliction, in heartache and in difficulty, Scripture is able to comfort us by the sheer power that it has. It stimulates in us a desire for understanding. You saw that from the providentially, the passage that we read for our Scripture reading just a few moments ago. The heart of the Ethiopian eunuch was burning to understand. He wanted to understand what he was reading from the prophet Isaiah and the Lord sent Philip to explain it to him and open his heart so that he could believe. And reading Scripture and understanding that there's something there that we're missing, something there that we need more of, opens our desires to understand it more. And so it stimulates our desire for understanding. A true, faith-based reading of Scripture also stimulates us to want to obey. If this is the word of God, if this is the living word of God, and if this is the word by which we will one day give an account of ourselves, then it should stimulate in the believing heart a desire to obey it, to honor it, and we'll see more of that in just a few moments. But Scripture creates in us desires for obedience and along with that, when we disobey, it convicts us and it points out to us the need for repentance. And so all of those things are wrapped up in a believing response to Scripture. The believer, the true Christian, turns to Scripture for comfort, turns to Scripture for understanding, turns to

Scripture in order that he might or she might obey, turns to Scripture in times of repentance and looks for that comfort of the promises of the Lord's forgiveness based on the shed blood of Christ.

What you should be seeing is the high and lofty position and the wonderful way that Scripture comes alongside us in life and reveals Christ to us, and in all of those things, all of those past nine points that I've summarized so quickly, all of those bring us to a climax that Scripture brings us joy. There is joy in the word of God. There is joy in reading it. There is joy in studying it. There is joy in understanding it. There is joy in proclaiming it. Scripture is an ever-flowing fountain of joy for the believing heart. And so as we step back from that, there's just a couple of things that I want to say by way of introduction and closing up the introduction. I am not in a hurry to leave Psalm 119.

First of all, it should be evident if Scripture is what it says it is and if Scripture does what it says it does, then there is something incumbent upon us that I'm not sure that we've really thought all of the way through, that the way that we think, the very way that our mind operates and the standards by which we assess what is true and what is false, the standards by which we will act upon when we are confronted with different philosophies, all of that is defined by Scripture and by Scripture alone. What I want you to see is that there's not simply a sentimental emotional attachment that we have to Scripture. If you believe Scripture and if you are a born again Christian, then your mind is taken captive by the word of God. What you give to God, what you give to Christ in response to this great word of his, is you give it all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your strength, and all of your mind, and you actively consciously conform your thinking so that it is in compliance with what God has said in his word. This is not optional. This is not optional. We think of obedience sometimes in just purely external forms but the greater challenge, the greater battle, the greater source of searching out your heart and mind is whether you conform your mind to Scripture or not, whether this drives the way that you think, and whether this defines your heart so that the way that you think and respond to life is defined by the very word of God.

There's a little humorous thing in my past that I stumbled into many many years ago, that I was making this point to a coworker who was also a Christian. I've probably told this story before but it's okay, I'll tell it again. I was standing in his office and I had both of my hands in my pocket which seems like a pretty innocuous thing and how could that have anything to do with what we're talking about here today? And I was making the point in my outspoken somewhat maybe arrogant way in those days, and I said that we ought to have a biblical reason for everything that we are doing at any given moment. We ought to be able to articulate a biblical reason for anything that we're doing at any given moment. That's how much Scripture should saturate our minds, how much we should be submitted to the word of God and conscious of our obligation to God's word. So I'm standing there with my hands in my pocket and he thought he would mock me. He said, "Okay, Don, why do you have your hands in your pocket?" And I said, "Well, isn't it obvious? I don't want my left hand to know what my right hand is doing." That just occurred to me in the spur of the moment there.

I've stayed with that story ever since, but it's a humorous way to impress upon us here this morning how much the word of God should be informing everything that we do. There is no such thing as a Christian who only thinks about the word of God on Sunday and is just dead to it the rest of the week. That's a contradiction in terms. When God saves you, he plants his Holy Spirit within you and the Spirit of God stimulates your mind with a desire for the word of God and is actively shaping you to desire it and to conform your thinking to the word of God. And so there is no place in any part of our lives where we would consciously and intentionally say, "I don't care what the word of God says. I don't care what the Bible says about psychology or about sexual sin. I don't care what the Bible says about this or that other issue." That is utterly foreign to a true Christian mindset, beloved, and it's utterly foreign and it could be no other way because of this: Scripture is the word of God. Scripture does things to us and therefore we are under its wonderful umbrella so that all of life falls under the canopy of the precious word of God. And yeah, that's a challenge and it's a life-long process to bring our thoughts captive to obedience to Christ, but what I want you to see is that this is the way that it is to be, and because of that, because Scripture is what it is, because Scripture is the word of God, what we do individually and what we do corporately and what any man who's worth his salt in the pulpit does is he asserts the word of God, he proclaims the word of God – and listen to me – he defends the word of God. And when the word of God is under attack, the man of God, the woman of God steps up to resist and say, "No, I don't agree with that. I resist that. That is not true of Scripture." It is true, it is accurate in matters that it affirms. Whether it's history or doctrine or whatever it may be, the Bible is to be believed because it is the word of God.

So we have this high view of Scripture that is not simply academic or theoretical to us. It owns our allegiances. It owns the way that we think and the way that we live, and we commit ourselves to that and we give our lives to that individually and as a church. That is the only proper way to respond to the word of God. And so it's what Scripture is and what Scripture does evokes that in us. So that brings us to our final area of consideration of Psalm 119 with all of those things said. Today's message is about what Scripture requires. What Scripture requires.

If it is the living word of God, and it is, if it does these things, these beneficial things in our hearts, then isn't it obvious that Scripture would require something from us? Scripture is not like any other book. It comes to us and it asserts authority over us. Scripture comes and demands a response from us and if Scripture is what it is, and Scripture does what it does, then that requires a response from us. Beloved, it requires a response from you. We cannot evade this or avoid it and the believing heart does not even want to do that. But if this book is the high and lofty thing that it presents itself to be, we can't ignore it. We must come under its rule, under its authority and respond to it in an appropriate way, and just as we've done in the past two messages, I'm going to give you a five part response to it here so that there's a total when this series is all said and done, three main points with 15 subpoints that give us a fairly comprehensive way of the way that we should think and respond to the word of God.

If Scripture is what it says it is and does what it says it does, then what do we do in response? Number 1, we do this: we obey it. We obey it and we see that laid out for us from Psalm 119. Throughout this Psalm, the psalmist is expressing his commitment to keep the word of God.

Look at the first four verses of Psalm 119 with me and this is the opening to the Psalm, this is the entrance way into all of the other riches of the Psalm and the riches of God's word, the entrance way is through a faith-based obedience. And so we see this right from the beginning. Verse 1, "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart. They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. You have ordained Your precepts, That we should keep them diligently." Notice these words for obedience and a lifestyle pattern of responding to the word of God. Verse 1, those whose way is blameless, those who walk in the law of the Lord, you know, these metaphors of expressing a pattern of life. Look at verse 2, they observe his testimonies. Verse 3, they do no unrighteousness, they walk in his ways. You've ordained your precepts so that we should keep them diligently. Right from the very beginning of Psalm 119, the psalmist is expressing a commitment to obey the word of God and is expressing obedience as the fundamental response to the word of God. There's a sense in which everything else flows from that.

So what does it mean to keep the word? Well, let me just give a little summary for you. To keep the word has the idea of giving your careful attention to it. You're giving careful attention to it and as you learn your obligations from God's word, you do them carefully. You are learning not simply for mental exercise, the point of learning God's word is so that it could be responded to in faith and that it could be responded to in obedience, to do what the Bible says to do. Now listen, I understand that in our current environment and the way that things have been conditioned over the past few decades, is that as soon as someone hears this, there is inevitably an objection, "Well, that sounds like legalism to me," as if obedience was somehow a bad thing. Well, listen, if you think obedience is a bad thing, there is something bad going on but it's not the concept of obedience. What's bad is your theology. What's bad is to think that an emphasis on obedience to Scripture is somehow inconsistent with a call to faith in Christ. We cannot save ourselves by our obedience but, friends, God saves you in his grace, God puts his Spirit in you so that you would be enabled to obey and to respond to the precepts of Scripture and you should never divorce the two in their minds as if there is faith and then there is obedience and never the twain shall meet. No, that's not biblical thinking at all. What we're talking about here in obedience is the faith-based response to the living Scriptures that conforms our lives to what it says. And listen, to the true believer, the true believer who has felt the weight of sin and has been saved and delivered from that and has new life coursing through his veins, the call to obedience is not an irksome thing. The call to obedience is not something to be resisted. The true believer says, "Well, yes, of course! I came to Christ to be delivered from sin because I want my life now to be pleasing to God. And so tell me how I can be pleasing to Him. Tell me what He wants so that I can do it."

That's the heart of a true believer and a true believer is not interested in a kind of teaching and a kind of theology that says you can live whatever way you want to now that you've become a Christian because it's all covered by grace. The true Christian responds to that and says, "Listen, grace saved me in order to enable me to obey. Grace saved me, yes, to deliver me from the penalty of my sin. Grace saved me in order to take me to heaven. But it did more than that. Grace comes to enable me to live a life that is to the glory of God while I am left here on earth." And the true Christian embraces that.

So grace does not exempt you from obedience, it is given to help you obey. And you can see that expressed in Psalm 119 in multiple verses. In addition to what we've already looked at, look at verse 55. Psalm 119:55. And I'll try to slow down so you're able to stay with me as we look at these different texts. Psalm 119:55, "O LORD, I remember Your name in the night, And keep Your law." Verse 88, "Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth." Verse 101, "I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word." That I may give careful attention to it and do what it tells me to do. And then the Psalm almost completely climaxes on this theme in verse 166. Psalm 119:166, "I hope for Your salvation, O LORD, And do Your commandments. My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, For all my ways are before You."

I ask you, my friends, I ask you whether that fundamental principle is the governing way that you think about God's word, that you view God's word as something that has authority over you, something that is to be obeyed, obeyed when it commands your affections, obeyed when it commands your tongue, obeyed when it commands your actions. We're not talking about whether you're perfect or not. We understand that none of us are. We understand that we all fall short of the glory of God. We are talking about something else. We're talking about whether there is this living abiding principle in your heart that loves and respects the word of God so much that you view it as an object of your obedience, you view it as something that has personal authority over you as God's word revealed to man. You're a man, you're created, you're a Christian, you're redeemed by the blood of Christ, then his word has authority over you. I'm asking you whether you obey it like that, whether you obey it from the heart, whether there is sincerity in your response to the word of God, or whether you're just living a hypocritical life of show for the appearance of men without a living abiding reality that is defining your affections. Do you obey Scripture because Scripture requires you to do so? Do you see Scripture as a word to be obeyed? We could pick up the Bible and say, "Speak. Your servant listens. I'm paying attention. I pay attention in order to respond and obey." That's the starting point of a heart response to the word of God. It's what the word of God requires. If it's the word of our Maker, it could be no other way.

Now secondly, in addition to obedience there is this issue of what does the word of God require? It requires you to trust it. It requires you to trust it. This obedience that we are speaking of, this obedience which the Christian gives in response to the word of God, it's not something that is cold and detached, it's not something that is resented. No, we come to this word of God knowing that it is true and it is righteous and it is unchanging and it is

a source of joy. We come to the word of God and we have something in response to that. We have a settled confidence in the word. That's the idea of trust. There's a settled confidence in the authority and the truth of the word of God and so we trust it. And what trust does and what trust expresses is this, when you trust the word of God, you are saying and you say, "I trust the word of God," you're saying, "I have a sense of security in the accuracy and the truth and the power of the word of God. I'm confident in that. I believe that. I'm settled in my trust of that, and while there may be things that I don't understand, there may be questions that I don't have immediate answers to, I am confident that the word of God is true and accurate and if there's a lack of understanding it's on my part, the weakness is on my part, not in the word of God."

So we have this sense of well being because our hope and our perspective on life is grounded in the certainties of God's word and that comes from placing your confidence in Scripture. Let me show you a small handful of passages to this point. In Psalm 119:42 and I suppose I should say as you're turning there if you're just joining us, that we're approaching this Psalm thematically rather than verse by verse. We're seeing themes rather than going through the 176 verses sequentially. And in this matter of trust, look at verse 42. We'll start in verse 41. He says, "May Your lovingkindnesses also come to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your word; So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word." I trust in your word. Verse 66, "Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments." Psalm 119:116. I'll give you just a moment to turn there. Psalm 119:116, "Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope." Verse 117, "Uphold me that I may be safe, That I may have regard for Your statutes continually." There is this overarching, there is this abiding sense of safety that the believer has when he is taking his refuge in the word of God, in the promises of God, in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, who is revealed in the word of God. When we are consciously putting our faith and our confidence and our hope in the Scriptures and in the Christ that the Scriptures reveal, there is this sense of well being and certainty that comes over us that is fueled by the Spirit of God as he honors our faith in the word of God. We trust his word. Then finally in verse 165, Psalm 119:165, it says, "Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble." If Scripture is what it says it is, if Scripture does what it says it does, then you should have, you can have, many of you do have a confident expectation that God will honor your trust in it.

So as we face new things and new philosophies and new fads rise up in the church, we're continually brought back to this fundamental point, are we going to trust the revealed word of God as being sufficient for the people of God. Listen, we don't need new man-centered, man-founded philosophies to help us understand what's to be done in the church today. We just need to go back to the word of God and honor it. This is our philosophy of ministry at Truth Community Church. It's very very simple to understand and remember it. We preach the word of God and then we deal with the consequences. That's it. We preach the word of God, we teach it, we speak it to one another in private conversations, we center things around the word of God and then we let the Spirit of God lead and direct us through it all. That was what we said from the very first day that we met almost 10 years ago, and nothing has changed since then. And the reason that we can make it that

simple is because we have, as a church we have that level of confidence and certainty in the power of the word of God to accomplish his purposes and we don't have to add a lot of bells and whistles, we don't have to add a lot of programs to make that work. It's enough to honor the word of God and let him do what he will, and we can do that because we trust his word.

Turn over to 2 Timothy 3 with me to just give a New Testament accent to this. 2 Timothy, just before the book of Hebrews. 2 Timothy 3. Oh, there's so much to say about this. You see Paul expressing this to his young disciple Timothy as Paul is about to depart this earth and enter into his eternal reward. His parting instruction to Timothy is this beginning in verse 14. "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them." Timothy, you've learned these things and you've come to convictions about them. Don't abandon the convictions. Trust the word of God and stay in it. And he says in verse 15, "from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The word of God is sufficient to lead a lost sinner to saving faith in Christ. The word of God, the four corners of the 66 books of the Bible is the word that we preach and Scripture says that faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, Romans 10.

So we preach the word because we understand that God uses his word to open hearts to believe in Christ. That's why we emphasize it. The salvation of souls is central to the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples." Well, the way that you make disciples is by teaching them the word of God, not entertaining them with all kinds of silly things from the platform. Not as one church has done recently, multiple churches actually, by turning your auditorium into a rodeo and bringing in wild horses and trying to make some kind of weird statement of illustration by what you have going on in the platform. Listen, churches do that, pastors do that because they do not actually trust the word of God in the end, and they think that they have to put on a show in order to get people to respond to the word of God. That's not true. That's not true and it's an exposing of a false philosophy of ministry if not a false teacher himself. Scripture is enough and I can't imagine being in ministry with any other motive or reason to exist.

So it goes on, verse 15 says it's enough to lead the unsaved to Christ, verses 16 and 17, it's enough to guide the Christian in his daily life. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." There is nothing in your life that a proper understanding and application of Scripture does not make you sufficient to respond to otherwise those statements from the inspired writings of the Apostle Paul would not be true.

So what do we do? What do we do in response to that? We trust it and as we're going to see at the end of today's message, we preach it. Chapter 4, verse 1, 2 Timothy, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom." Listen, because Scripture is sufficient to lead people to faith in Christ, because Scripture is sufficient to lead

Christians to maturity, because of that, the charge, the biblical charge to us is found in verse 2, simply stated, "preach the word." Preach the word. Because Scripture is what it is, because Scripture does what it does, preach the word, and part of the way that you manifest your trust in Scripture is that you proclaim it and you put your wholehearted confidence in the fact that you believe God will honor his word in your heart and in your life.

Well, thirdly, Psalm 119 teaches us to obey the word of God, teaches us to trust the word of God, it requires that response from us. You start to see that it's laying a claim on the whole man, it's laying a claim on everything that you are, everything that you love, everything that you think. It's laying a claim on every motion of your heart. It's incredible. Number 3, what do we do in response to it? We love it. We love it. As we understand what Scripture is and what Scripture does, we come to love it. We have an inner affection for it. Our heart yearns after it. Our heart appreciates it. Our heart views it as our bosom friend, the word of God is.

So we have this inner affection for it and we love it and Psalm 119 is filled with these kinds of responses to the word of God. Look at verse 11 with me. Actually let's just go to verse 9. I want you to see this wholehearted response in love to the word of God. Verse 9, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You." There's this deep-rooted response to the word of God that he can only say, "I love it. I give my life to it. I govern my life by it."

Verse 14, "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches." Verse 47, "I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes." Do you think he's done? No. In this lengthy Psalm, the longest chapter in the Bible, this theme of how much he loves the word of God comes up repeatedly. This reminds me of the prophet who was commanded to strike the water and he struck it but he was rebuked for not striking it repeatedly, "You should have stricken it six or seven times out of an expression of the zeal that you have for the word of God and obedience to it and in seeing God accomplish His purposes. There ought to be a zeal that requires you to respond repeatedly, animatedly." And that's what you see here in Psalm 119. You see the psalmist repeatedly coming back to these expressions of loving devotion to the word of God. Look at verse 97. Psalm 119:97, "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." I love it so much I can't stop thinking about it. Verse 119, "You have removed all the wicked of the earth like dross; Therefore I love Your testimonies." Verse 159, "Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness." And then in verse 163, "I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Your law. Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous ordinances. Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble. I hope for Your salvation, O LORD, And do Your commandments. My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly."

If Scripture is what it says it is, then we respond to it with gratitude and trusting devotion. Let me say that again and just to kind of delineate what to love it means, is that we are grateful to the word of God. We're grateful to God for having revealed himself in such an exquisite book, the perfection that exceeds that of the most flawless diamond. We love it. We're grateful to have it. You know, honestly, I don't know what my life would be like but for the word of God. I don't know what would have happened to me in those early days after my conversion if there wasn't a word of God. I can't imagine. I can't imagine the course of world history but for the word of God. I can't imagine what would happen to lost souls everywhere if there weren't a word of God by which we could proclaim Christ to them in the salvation of their souls, and to proclaim the shed blood of Christ as the perfect sacrifice. What would we do? What would we do? We would be in such darkness. We would be like a blind man in a black dark room with no doors to get out but for the word of God. Where would you turn in times of sorrow and temptation if there were no word of God? We would be miserably lost. We would be a ship cast on an ocean, a blinding storm of life opposition, tossed to and fro and the waves casting us everywhere without any place to turn, without any anchor to lay down to give us root and protection.

So yes, without apology, without shame we say we love the word of God. We love the word of God. We realize its value. We're grateful for it. We're devoted to it. We trust it. All of these things being an expression of a heart attitude of love for it and that has practical implications, beloved. The one who genuinely loves the word of God, who genuinely has the Holy Spirit within him, within her, well, something's going to happen. It's going to manifest itself. If you've got that love within you, do you know what you're going to do with the word of God at the very least? You're going to read it. You're going to think about it. It's going to have a defining part of your life. You're going to proclaim it. You're going to want to talk about it with others. You're going to want to defend it. You're going to be personally offended when lies undermine the authority of the word of God. You take it personally because it's a matter of heart devotion to you. So, so much so that Martin Luther could say this, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever." I can lose my goods, I can lose my family, I can lose my life, but God's truth abideth still and that is the source of my courage, confidence and conviction as I go forward in life. Sold out, abandoned to what Scripture is and what Scripture does.

This is the testimony of Christians throughout the ages. In the very earliest days of the churches before the canon had been finalized and there were persecutions against the church and there were few manuscripts of the books of the Bible that were available, and authorities would come and knock on the doors and say, "Do you have the word of God here?" Because they wanted to take it and burn it in an effort to destroy and stamp out the word of God and the movement that it had engendered as people were proclaiming the faithful gospel of Jesus Christ. Well, people had to make decisions and one of the ways that we know we got the right Bible these days is the fact that when people were challenged, they would hand over writings that were not inspired by God, they would hand over writings by some of the early church fathers perhaps, they would give those over and the authorities could take those away and burn them, but they would not hand over the actual word of God. They would not hand over the books of the Bible itself and

they would not betray God by caving to that demand of the authorities and they put their lives on the line out of devotion, out of love for the word of God. This is what it does, this is what it inspires in us, this is how we respond to it, we give our life to this word. We give our loyalties, we give our abilities, we give our resources all in an effort to proclaim, assert, defend and hold up this marvelous word from God.

And as the pastor of this church, I'm grateful to have so many of you who embrace the word of God like that, that stand alongside what our church stands for, give of your time, give of your resources, give of your love to the people who are around us. I'm grateful for that. That's the mark of true believers and, my friend, if this kind of affection for the word of God is utterly foreign to your thinking, whatever you've thought about whether you're a Christian in the past or not, you need to go to God and ask him to sort out the disturbing lack of affection for his word that you find in your heart, the stunning indifference that you have to his heart. I ask you, I ask you, you're all in here, I ask you how could you be indifferent to a word like this? How could that which Christians through the ages have loved and defended and given their blood for, how could it be a matter of no consequence to you and you still be a Christian? That doesn't compute. That's not possible. It's not possible for somebody to be a Christian and not have a developing love for the word of God. That's not possible.

So you may say, "Jesus, Lord, Lord," with your lips but if you know in your heart of hearts of what we're talking about here is foreign to your experience, you need to humble yourself before Christ and say, "Do something in my miserable soul. How is it that I am cold and indifferent and even disdainful of the word of God?" It doesn't matter that you've grown up in a Christian home. It doesn't matter that you've been home-schooled. It doesn't matter that you show up. If you're just going through the motions externally, none of that matters because the word of God, what Scripture requires is a love for it.

Point number 4. You'll obey Scripture, you'll trust Scripture, you'll love Scripture, fourthly, you meditate on it. This is what Scripture requires, you meditate on it. Part of the psalmist's response to Scripture stated repeatedly is this idea of meditation, and let me just kind of explain the concept and then we'll look at the passages that emphasize this briefly. The basic idea of meditation is that you rehearse it in your mind. You go over it repeatedly. You think about it again and again and your thoughts just have a center of gravity where you're coming back to Scripture in different ways. You think about Scripture. You mentally repeat its words to you. You rehearse its meaning to you. You listen to decent Bible teaching repeatedly. You go back to it again and again, and it's always revolving in your mind. Like an ever-spinning globe, the word of God is moving in your heart, moving in your mind, becoming the force of gravity that draws you back to it again and again and again.

Now listen, this may be foreign to some of you, this may be foreign to thinking about in churches where the word of God is not at the center of what they do, but let me give you a couple of illustrations that make it plain that it could be no other way. A Christian who is devoted to the word of God to obey it, to trust it, to love it, could have no other response but to meditate on it in this repetitive way. And think about it this way, for far

lesser rewards, for far lesser goals, what do athletes do? Athletes, the skilled athletes repeatedly practice the same movements again and again and again so that they are conditioned and there is muscle memory so that they react in exactly the right way, at exactly the right moment of competition. And they give years to the repetition of training so that when the day of competition comes, they are prepared for it. They are bodily, so to speak, meditating on what they do so that when the time comes they are prepared for it.

Think about concert musicians. Think about concert pianists or violinists or whatever else you want to, whatever instrument strikes your fancy. How have they gotten to the stage where they can perform with such exquisite perfection, such exquisite precision when they are in a concert hall before skilled ears and the slightest mistake would be noticeable to all? It's because they have given themselves constantly to the repetition of practice in order to be able to perform at that high level. This is for earthly things that are going to pass away.

Beloved, do you see that if the word of God is what it says it is and it does what it says it does, how much higher of an elevated claim on the affections and motions it has on our minds and on our hearts? The casual approach that can take it or leave it, the casual approach that comes to Sunday morning and says, "Honey, where's my Bible?" Or, you know, you find it and you go, [blowing sound], blowing the dust off of it, I don't understand that in the heart of a true Christian. A true Christian has the word of God as the center of his life and he wants to repeatedly go back to it. Beloved, it is the natural result of having an authoritative word from God that you obey, you trust, and you love is that you would meditate on it. It couldn't be any other way. Captivated. A prisoner to the wonders of God's word so that we're drawn to it again and again over the course of time in life.

Look at verse 15 with me, Psalm 119:15. So this idea of meditation is to rehearse it in your mind, go over it again and again, and this is the thing, the same kinds of truths again and again and again. You don't hear one message, grasp it, and never think about it again. You don't read one verse, grasp it, and never think about it again any more than a major league batter takes one swing in batting practice in minor leagues and he's set for the rest of his career. No, no, no, no, no. Life does not work that way. We understand all of that intuitively. What I'm trying to help you see is that that principle applies and operates in a far greater way in the spiritual realm when it comes to the precious word of God.

Verse 15, "I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways." Verse 23, "Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes." Verse 27, "Make me understand the way of Your precepts, So I will meditate on Your wonders." Verse 48, "I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes." Verse 78, "May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; But I shall meditate on Your precepts." Verse 97, "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." Verse 99, "I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation." Verse 148, "My eyes anticipate the

night watches, That I may meditate on Your word." The silent times where there are no distractions and being able to do so.

Now look, I understand. I'm especially sympathetic to young moms as we talk about it like this. I understand that there's very little time for you to sit down and have an extended reading of God's word, certainly on a daily basis. But there are other ways to compensate with what you put on the walls of your house, what's playing over your speakers, as you're in God's word, that as you're caring for your little ones, you can sing hymns to them and communicate to them from their infancy the treasure that is in God's word. There's a lot of ways to do this and I realize that the nature of life for most of you is such is that you're dealing with a constant bombardment of distractions. The Lord is merciful, the Lord is gracious, the Lord understands that, and I just commend this meditation of the word of God to you, the priority of it and encourage you to prayerfully ask the Lord to give you wisdom to know how to make this real in the circumstances that you find yourselves here today. Those of us that have a little bit more time, a little less or fewer immediate demanding demands on our time, I leave it to you as well.

You see, our hearts gravitate toward the things that we love and so you memorize Scripture, you go over doctrines and messages often. The idea of one and done is just not your approach because you want to meditate on the word of God. You never get tired of thinking of it because you see what an inexhaustible, infinity worthy treasure it is and you can never plumb the depths of it. And so the psalmist is expressing here in his meditation, he's expressing an intimate part of his emotional life. "This is my supreme priority. This is what I long for. I long to be in the place where I can think about it and treasure it and muse it in my mind." His mind, his devotions, his desire is wrapped around the word of God. It's not unfair for me to ask you whether that is somehow true of you or not because what Scripture is and what Scripture does could require no less.

Well, fifthly and finally. Fifthly and finally: proclaim it. Proclaim it. The Bible says elsewhere that the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart, and the one who loves God's word will, in one way or another, be found communicating about it with others. The primary emphasis of Psalm 119 is on an inner response of the man, but this outward proclamation, this outer spoken response is present there as well. We see it horizontally toward man in a verse like verse 13, Psalm 119:13, "With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth." I have spoken what I understand about the word to others, in other words. Verse 46. I love this verse, "I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings And shall not be ashamed." There is this horizontal dimension in which the one who trusts the word of God, obeys it, loves it, he speaks about it to his circle of influence.

And yet this proclamation is not simply horizontal, it is something that has a vertical aspect to it as well. Look at the end of the Psalm, verse 171, "Let my lips utter praise, For You teach me Your statutes. Let my tongue sing of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness." Verse 175, "Let my soul live that it may praise You, And let Your ordinances help me." What's filling his heart is that which is filling his praise. He's praising God vertically. He's speaking the word of God horizontally to men. And so you see this proclamation accented by the passage that we looked at in 2 Timothy

4:1. Preach the word. Speak about it. Make it known. Beloved, think about the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's gospel, "Go and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The word of God is at the middle of everything in Christian life and in Christian ministry. There is no other place for it.

Well, Psalm 119 has gone by quickly. I'm now wrapping things up here. We've seen that Scripture, what it is. We've seen what Scripture does. We've seen what Scripture requires from us. There's one last emphatic statement that we want to make. Psalm 119 was written, you know, several centuries before the coming of Christ. Here we are 2,500-3,000 years later reading it and benefiting from everything that it has to say, but there was an epic event that took place between then and now in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and his giving himself on the cross for our salvation, and the fullness of divine revelation rounded out in what was revealed in the New Testament. On this side of the cross, my friends, what we see is this, we see a great great great great climax of the written word of God because we see that it points us to the incarnate Word of God. Jesus said in Luke 24, it says about Jesus, I should say, that beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures. Jesus said in John 5, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. It is these that testify about Me." Scripture, in other words, points us to Christ as the great climax of it all.

Look at Hebrews 1. I can't resist making this point here. The final word, the final climax by which we know that revelation has ceased because God has given his final word in Christ. Hebrews 1:1, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." Scriptures are pointing us to Christ. The written word points us to the incarnate Word. And as we understand all that Scripture requires of us, we understand we don't meet its standard. We realize that we've all stumbled in many ways and still do to this day.

But beloved, why is it so important to end on the note of Christ? It's so important for us to end on the note of Christ because everything that Scripture requires Jesus did. Jesus obeyed it perfectly. Jesus loved it, trusted it perfectly. He's the fulfillment of all the prophetic utterances about the coming Messiah. You see, you and I don't meet the standards of God's word but Christ does. Our ways are not completely utterly blameless but the ways of Christ were, are, and always will be. His righteousness fulfills what the word requires. He is the climax of all of the wonderful beauty that we've been talking about over the past three weeks, and if you are in Christ, beloved, his righteousness has been shared with you as a gift. If you are in Christ, beloved, his blood cleanses you from all unrighteousness. If you are in Christ, you are in the one and only one whose way has been utterly blameless. And in the grace and mercy and unfathomable plan and wisdom of God, God accepts you as though you had lived that righteous life of Christ. Christ lived on your behalf. Christ died on your behalf. Christ rose on your behalf. And he shares his perfect righteousness with everyone who believes in him. Do you know how

we know that? It's because the word tells us so. How precious is the word of God, the written word and the incarnate Word.

Let's pray together.

Father, it's hard to leave Psalm 119 behind. We thank You for what Scripture is. We thank You for what it does. We give ourselves over to what it requires. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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