

The Value of Biblical Delight

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Psalm 119:9-16

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

10 With my whole heart I seek you;

let me not wander from your commandments!

11 I have stored up your word in my heart,

that I might not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O Lord;

teach me your statutes!

13 With my lips I declare

all the rules of your mouth.

14 In the way of your testimonies I delight

as much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on your precepts

and fix my eyes on your ways.

16 I will delight in your statutes;

I will not forget your word.

- Psalm 119 is the largest chapter in the Bible
- Psalm 119 is broken down into 22 sections - one section for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- Each section contains 8 verses with each of the 8 verses also beginning with that Hebrew letter.
- Many think this Psalm was structured this way because the Psalm was to be memorized and the structure aids in memorization.
- Almost every verse (with the exception of 4) contains one of eight key words which are synonyms for the teachings of the Lord. Look at those in our passage this evening with me: word, commandments, statutes, testimonies, precepts, and rules.
- The frequency of these eight key words clearly identifies the theme of the Psalm as that of God's revelation.
- Psalm 119 is an incredibly detailed and beautiful piece of poetry.

Because the Word of God is held up throughout the Psalm as the source for blessing and right conduct, we are not left hopeless and helpless and perplexed in our lives. The Word of God, and this Psalm in particular, gives help and hope and guidance.

I made this offer in ABE last January but nobody took me up on it.

This evening I have \$1440 dollars in my wallet. That's not unique; seldom do I have less than \$1000 in my wallet. And I want to give someone here this \$1440. In fact, I would like to give you \$1440 each and every day for the rest of your life. And I can do it, because I've got lots of money.

What's the catch? You have to buy me something worth \$20 every day.

Once you get past the thought that this is some sort of scam, I can hear your minds working right now. Sure I'll do that. I'll buy you a cheap shirt or something everyday. Some days I might even feel generous and spend \$25 or \$30. Or maybe you might even buy me \$400 worth of stuff just to say thanks. With that kind of money \$20 would be no big deal right?

Do you believe that every minute of your life is a gift from God? I mean, he doesn't have to let you live another minute. It is something he gives to you freely. Something you can't do on your own. Do you believe that?

Do you realize that every single day God gives you 1440 minutes of life? Is it too much to ask for you to spend 20 of that with God? Is it too much to ask to give him 20 minutes just to say thanks, to listen to what he has to say to you, to have a relationship with him?

"But I can't do that. I've already scheduled my day. I need down time you know. I need my sleep you know. I work two jobs and go to college full time you know. I don't have time for that" That's like telling me you spent all my money and don't have any to give me back. We would hear that and say, "That sounds pretty ridiculous."

You know, if there was one thing I wish everybody in this church did, and I could only choose one, it would be spend 20 minutes a day reading God's Word.

My intent here is not to guilt you into some behavior. My intent with this illustration is to show how silly, how ridiculous our excuses are.

Let's look through this Psalm together.

The Psalmist writes, (119:9) "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word."

It is all about the Word of God. How do I keep myself on the pure path and not stray? It's like that old saying, "Either this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book." There is no power in the world that has the purifying power of this Word when used by the Holy Spirit. God's Word lays bare our soul before us. It is like a perfect mirror in that sense. God's Word reveals sin in your life and it removes sin from your life. There is nothing like it!

This section of the Psalm is directed to young men. That does not mean, however, that young women, older folk, and parents can ignore what it says. The application is universal for the believer.

So how can one remain pure? That is the important question. That is the necessary question. That is not the question the world is asking today. The world says, "Live it up while you are young." The world says, "Sow your wild oats while you are young." Indeed some churches even teach such a thing – and then they pray for crop failure.

The world doesn't care about purity – it cares about popularity. And so, only one who desires to please God would even ask such a question. I hope tonight that you are asking such a question, "How may I keep my way pure?" If you are a believer, you should have this desire in your heart.

So what is the proper answer? Guard your life according to God's Word. Worldly counsel cannot answer the question. There is only one way to walk in personal holiness. And that is the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

In the remaining 7 verses there are 5 keys that help us answer the question from verse 9.

Devotion (v10)

There must be devotion within your whole heart to seek him. Scripture points us to God. There must be a personal seeking of God himself. And this is accomplished through study of Scripture. Not academically, but with the whole heart. It is not mindless retention.

In John 14:15 Jesus said if you love him you will keep his commandments. It is the result of love – not a demand to keep the rules. Keeping the rules does not purify. Our obedience is a result of our love and devotion.

People often see Psalm 119 as a list of DO's that we should keep. While there is truth in that, the message is not one of rules, but of Biblical Delight. I heard Dr. Sinclair Ferguson once say, "Before you do the Word of God, the Word of God has to do you."

Christians always want to be told what to do. The Christian book store is full of "What to do" and "How to do" books. Our greatest need is to understand that God himself, through his Word, does it. He brought creation into being by his Word. He transforms our messed up lives by his Word. We need the Word to work upon us and in us and through us. And only then can we begin to do the Word of God.

You cannot separate your love for God from obedience to his word.

Deposit (v11)

The Psalmist is storing up the word like gold. The treasure of the Word will be stored up and guarded so that none of it is lost. It is not just notes taken during a sermon on a note page, but depositing it and treasuring it in our hearts.

If you do not treasure the Word like this, I am convinced you will not keep it.

You memorize it. It is in you. Why? It keeps you from sin. How? The heart to the Hebrew was the decision making center of the soul. I have flooded my heart with Scripture so that decisions will be made properly.

Listen. I realize memorization is difficult for many of us. It is for me. I have a friend who wrote 100 verses - one each on 3x5 cards. He carries those cards with him wherever he goes. When he is waiting at the doctor's office, he reads his cards. When he is in line at the bank, he reads his cards. You get the idea. That seems a bit radical doesn't it – even weird. But my friend is committed to knowing Scripture. At least 100 verses of it.

Maybe for you a good thing to do would simply be to read a book of the Bible over-and-over again. Read James every day for 30 days. You may not know chapter and verse, but you will know James.

Deference (v12)

I believe this blessing to God results from a true valuation of his Word. Yet it is the second phrase of the passage that is the crux. To keep the Word of God we must know the Word of God. But this is where the deference, the submission comes in. To be self-taught is one thing. To be man-taught is another thing. But to be God taught by the Spirit of God... Look at verse 18. This is a dominant prayer from his heart.

You must approach this book like no other book.

- You don't need to humble yourself before a novel

- You don't need to submit to a newspaper
- You don't need to get on your knees in front of a math textbook

But when you come to this book you must surrender your life to its teachings.

There is one major interpretive key that unlocks every passage of Scripture in this book. There is one overriding hermeneutic that governs the interpretation of everything we study in this book. And if we don't use that key we will never understand what this book says. And that is the hermeneutic of the Glory of God. If you study the Bible and you don't come away in awe of the supremacy and sovereignty of God, you have missed the point of the Bible. And if that is the case, you are holding this book upside down. No wonder it doesn't make any sense to you.

Declaration (v13)

When you declare the Word of God, your own conscience is being bound to keep it. God's Word is best kept in a life where it is being shown, sung, and shared freely. And that fact that I am standing here publically proclaiming it to you double binds me to keep it.

You are being called to be a conduit for the Word of God and the more you let that water flow, the more you will keep it.

Delight (v14-16)

Keeping pure through God's Word must be in the context of delight and celebration.

If you delight in the Word of God and glory in the Word of God, then surely your heart will be in keeping the Word of God. But if the Word is boring and stale and drudgery – if there is dust on the Bible – if you are distant from it, you are more than likely, not going to keep it. It is this delight in the heart that keeps the heart engaged in keeping the Word.

- There is no book like this book. This is God's book!
- This book tells me who I am and where I come from and where I am going, and whose I am.
- This book tells me what waits for me on the other side of the grave.
- It is this book that is full of life.
- I have read other books. This book reads me!
- It exposes the inner most secrets of my heart that I may be what God desires me to be.
- It is this book that reveals the sovereign majesty and glory of the one who suffered and bled and dies for me, Jesus Christ my Lord.
- I could not know Jesus apart from this book. Because it is this book that mediates the grace of God to my life. It is a means of grace to me.
- Cut me off from this book and I am cut off from the flow of grace into my life.

How we rejoice when we open this book!

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

11 I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.

Your life will be kept pure when you have taken the Word of God into your life so that it becomes this precious to you.

When you indeed delight in God's Word.