

Fil-Am Community Church

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Key Verse: Psalm 119:97-104

## **”Dwelling in His Word”**

In this message we are looking at Psalm 119: 97-104 in the NASB version it says,

*<sup>97</sup> O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

*<sup>98</sup> Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine.*

*<sup>99</sup> I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.*

*<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, because I have observed your precepts.*

*<sup>101</sup> I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep your word.*

*<sup>102</sup> I have not turned aside from your ordinances, for you yourself have taught me.*

*<sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

*<sup>104</sup> From Your precepts I understand; therefore I hate every false way.*

Now for contrast sake I would like to look at the same 8 verses from the Amplified Bible

*<sup>97</sup> Oh, how love I your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

*<sup>98</sup> You, through your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies, for [Your words] are ever before me.*

*<sup>99</sup> I have better understanding and deeper insight than all my teachers, because your testimonies are my meditation.*

*<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, because I keep your precepts [hearing, receiving, loving, and obeying them].*

*<sup>101</sup> I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep your word [hearing, receiving, loving, and obeying it].*

*<sup>102</sup> I have not turned aside from your ordinances, for you yourself have taught me.*

*<sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

*<sup>104</sup> Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

These eight verses are filled with joy and with love for God's law. The psalmist gives us his theme in verse 97 (NASB): "**Oh how I love your law!** It is my meditation all the day."

This is a familiar theme in Psalm 119. Consider some other things the psalmist says about God's Word:

- It is his delight, v. 16.
- He finds wonderful things in it, v. 18.
- It is like music to him, v. 54.
- It is better than silver or gold, v. 72.
- It is like finding great treasure, v. 162.

Does that sound a little strange to you? I confess that on one level, it sounds a bit strange to me, but that's because most of us don't think of the Word of God in these poetic terms.

We are not accustomed to thinking that the Bible is **more valuable** to us than silver or gold. So the idea of "loving" God's Word may seem a bit strange.

## Do you love God's Word?

How would you answer that question? In his Treasury of David, Charles Spurgeon lists eight marks of true love for God's Word. Before we plunge into the text, perhaps it would be good for all of us ponder these eight marks to see how we measure up.

- 1) Reverence for the authority of God's Word.
- 2) Admiration for its holiness.
- 3) Jealousy for its honor.
- 4) Respect for all that it says.
- 5) Diligence in the study of it.

- 6) Eager desire to obey it.
- 7) Readiness to praise it.
- 8) Great desire to share it with others.

“Oh, how I love your law!” said the psalmist. Then he gives us four reasons why he loves God’s law and why we should love it too. That is what we are going to concentrate on this morning.

By meditating on the Word of God it gives us....

## I. Superior Wisdom

(Psalm 119:98-100 NASB)

<sup>98</sup> *Your commandments make me **wiser** than my enemies, for they are ever mine.*

<sup>99</sup> *I have more **insight** than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.*

<sup>100</sup> *I **understand** more than the aged, because I have observed your precepts.*

In these verses one reason is mentioned three times: God’s Word gives us **wisdom!**

Note the phrases he uses: “**Wiser**” “More **insight**,” and “More **understanding**.” But is this the boasting of a man who thinks too highly of himself?

Is he some sort of smart aleck who thinks he is better than everyone else? Where does his great confidence come from?

Answer: God’s wisdom is superior to human wisdom. If you learn what God says, you will know things the people of the world have never discovered.

By meditating on the Word of God it gives us....

### A. Superior to the wisdom of my enemies

All of us have enemies at one time or another.

- They try to intimidate us by clever talk, crafty schemes and evil threats.
- They may attempt to frighten us into thinking that they are smart and we are stupid.
- They may be boastful “know it alls” who put down anyone who disagrees with them. Do not be misled by their vain boasting.
- They may have street knowledge and even a certain degree of intellectual ability.
- They are no doubt shrewd in worldly wisdom and gifted at twisting our words and manipulating the facts to make us look bad. But be not dismayed.
- They do not have true wisdom. That is reserved for those who know the truth of God.

### **But how does the Word give me superior wisdom?**

Verse 98 says, “it is ever with me,” which means that as I internalize the Word of God, it becomes a **part of my life**.

I can never get this wisdom by sitting in my recliner, watching TV all day, drinking Coke and eating popcorn while I watch the Washington Redskins beat up the Philadelphia Eagles.

If I want true wisdom, sooner or later I’ve got to turn off the TV, put down the remote control, and pick up my Bible. Only then will I discover the wisdom that delivers me from my enemies.

Last week Pastor Rolly mentioned fasting in his sermon and suggested the church start a 21 day fast culminating with a one day fast on the 17 of August and the church come together and talk about what breakthroughs each family experienced.

Each of you would have to decide what you are fasting as well as what you fasting for. There are many different ways to fast and draw closer to God as well as meditating on his word.

I was thinking of fasting yard work,

By meditating on the Word of God it gives us...

### **B. Superior to the wisdom of my teachers**

This is a verse beloved by students at Bible colleges everywhere. But we should not think that the psalmist intends to demean the role of teachers. Far from it.

Teaching is a noble profession and teachers deserve our respect and our support. Teachers have knowledge and you need the knowledge they have. So we ought to respect them and learn from them as much as we can.

But there are limits to all human knowledge. And that is true even if you have a B.A., an M.A., a Ph.D. or an M.D. or any other advanced degree. Human wisdom can only take you so far.

Let me illustrate. In virtually every public school science class in America, students are taught that evolution is the only true explanation for human origins. In most places, it is taught as a dogma, not as a theory.

Evolution in the ultimate sense is more than a scientific theory; it is also an all-encompassing worldview that attempts to account for everything in the universe apart from God.

However, the Christian teacher, who attempts to show the weakness of evolution and the possibility of divine creation, usually puts his or her job at risk by challenging the status quo. It is at this point, that a working knowledge of the Bible is absolutely essential.

If you know Genesis 1-11, you truly have “more understanding” than your teachers. If you know about the days of creation and how God created Adam from the dust of the earth and how he took the first woman from Adam’s side, and if you know about Noah’s flood, the Tower of Babel and the

dispersal of the nations, you have a depth of knowledge and a wealth of understanding that goes far beyond your teachers.

I should add that I am not among those who believe that our children's faith will necessarily be destroyed by attending a public school.

Far from it. But I do believe that if our children are not grounded in the Bible, if they do not know what they believe and why they believe it, and if they do not know how to study the Bible on their own, they are likely to be in big trouble when their faith comes under attack.

Note again the reason why the Word gives us this sort of wisdom: "Your testimonies are my meditation." God is able to teach you **directly** from his Word, but it takes time and effort and determination. It doesn't happen by chance.

By meditating on the Word of God it gives us....

### **C. Superior to the wisdom of the aged**

You cannot read the Bible without being impressed with the high value placed on the elderly.

- They are to be loved,
- revered,
- respected,
- cared for
- And listened to.

Your elders have experience and you need the benefit of their experience. There is always much to learn from those who are older than you.

However, old age by itself does not equal wisdom. There is such a thing as an "**old fool.**" In fact, the world is full of "old fools" who started out as "young fools" and then simply grew old.

Wisdom comes from years spent obeying God's Word. The "understanding" he mentions in this verse means the ability to penetrate with insight into difficult issues. We know how to tackle hard problems because we have learned what God says in the Bible.

Again, note the reason this is possible: "I keep your precepts." The Bible is not magic. It will not change you by itself. You don't get wisdom by osmosis.

I know I have said it many of times in both **IMPACT** class and home groups but it is like going to the Emergency waiting room and just sitting there. You never check in at the front desk or make an appointment you just show up and sit in the waiting room and do not understand why your problems don't go away.

We can all understand that illustration and yet there are so many people all over the place in church after church that do that same thing Sunday after Sunday, just show and have a seat, but make no connection to the Dr. (Jesus) and wonder why they are living a defeated life.

If you want this superior wisdom, you must do what the psalmist did. Look at the key phrases in verses 98-100:

With me—Read it

Meditate—Study it

Keep your precepts—Obey it

Read ... Study ... Obey. Follow that formula and you too will have superior wisdom.

By meditating on the Word of God it gives us...

## **II. Spiritual Discernment**

“I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me” (Psalm 119:101-102 ESV).

The second blessing of loving the law of God is spiritual discernment. The psalmist declares that the Bible keeps him off the wrong road and keeps him on the right road. Every day we are faced a thousand times over with the choice of going one direction or the other.

One road is the path of obedience that leads to joy, peace, fulfillment, and a deeper knowledge of God. The other road is the path of temptation, sin, compromise, bitterness, anger, violence, lust, pride, greed, gluttony and sloth. And each day we choose again and again which road we will follow.

If we know and love God’s Word, the truth itself will pull us in the right direction. We will know which way to go and the Word will help us choose the right path. Consider the famous words of Psalm 119:9 (ESV), “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.”

One function of God’s Word is keeping us on the path of moral purity. It puts a “guard” around the mind to keep us on the right track.

Notice the two parts of this spiritual discernment. First, there is self-restraint: “I hold back my feet.” It is an intentional act, meaning, “I could do that but I won’t.” Or as I have taught you before, Christians should say, “Others may, I cannot.” We have a higher calling in life. We are called to keep God’s Word as the foundation for all that we do.

Second, there is personal submission: “I do not turn aside.” As I was studying this text, it occurred to me that this is one of the reasons why we all need rules.

Husbands need rules, wives need rules, parents need rules, and so do children. We all have various rules that govern us either at school or on the job. You can hardly go anywhere without various rules governing your conduct.

At the Liberty University where I attended, there were so many rules that they had to publish them in a small book. Some of those rules seemed rather trivial at the time, and some of the students made a career of rebelling against them.

One reason for rules is to help us develop personal convictions so that when the rules are not in force, we will still choose to do the right thing. Christian men need some rules about what they will read and watch. Those rules will help them late at night when they are in a hotel room alone or surfing the Internet after everyone else has gone to bed.

A famous evangelist says that when he was young, his parents gave him a Bible with these words inscribed inside the front cover: **“Sin will keep you from this book or this book will keep you from sin.”**

How true this is. In every situation of life, the Word of God will show you what to do. It is the only reliable source of absolute moral truth. Follow what it says and your life will be pure and clean. Robert Murray McCheyne was famous for praying this simple prayer: “Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can ever be.” That’s a wonderful prayer that is answered day by day as we learn to love God’s Word.

Verse 102 answers a crucial question: How does God speak to us today? Many people look for dreams, visions and other unusual manifestations. Note what the psalmist says about his experience with the Bible.

As he read it, he discovered that “you yourself have taught me.” He heard the voice of God in the pages of the Bible! What a tremendous truth this is. We are personally taught by God as we read his Word.

Would you like God to speak to you? He does! He will! When we come to the Bible reverently, humbly, with open hearts, God speaks directly to us.

By meditating on the Word of God it gives us....

### **III. Lasting Joy**

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103 ESV).

In those days honey was the universal sweetener. Back then people used honey the way we use sugar and artificial sweeteners. The writer is telling us that he has a “sweet tooth” for God’s Word.

To most of us, that is an unusual and perhaps even a strange thought. To us sweetness speaks of chocolate cake and Krispy Kreme donuts. We don’t normally think of sweetness when we read the Bible. After all, this is a big book filled with history and doctrine and prophecy and lots of words that are hard to pronounce. Plus the Bible is printed in a big book that is often quite bulky. It’s hard to associate the thought of sweetness with the Bible as a whole.

What does he mean? I think the key is in the phrase “your words.” Note the plural, in this verse he does not say, “How sweet is your word to my taste.” That would have been true and proper, but he didn’t say it that way. Instead, he used the plural “your words.” That’s a key insight. As we ponder the words of the Bible one by one, phrase by phrase, verse by verse, they become sweet to us.

Think of a piece of hard candy. How do you eat it? You put it in your mouth and let it dissolve slowly. As it dissolves, the sweetness fills your mouth. If you try to put 20 pieces of candy in your mouth, they won't fit and you'll end up spitting them out. The sweetness you seek comes slowly, one piece at a time.

Martin Luther said the way to study the Bible is to pick a verse and then shake it like you shake a fruit tree. If you keep shaking a verse, sooner or later the fruit will fall in your lap. Luther also said if the fruit doesn't fall, go to another verse. Eventually you will find a verse where the fruit falls in abundance. There you can stop and feast on God's Word.

Consider the familiar words of Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want."

- Roll that around in your mind for a moment.
- It is the Lord himself who shepherds me.
- And he is my shepherd at all times, in every situation, no matter where I am or what I am doing. Even when I stray from him, he never leaves my side.
- And even though he is the shepherd for others, he is a personal shepherd—"my shepherd," known by me and I am known to him.
- Therefore, I do not want,
- I will not want,
- I cannot lack for any good thing.
- I have never been in want,
- I am not in want now (no matter my circumstances),
- And I will not be in want tomorrow.

Such a shepherd is my Lord to me.

Now that's very simple, isn't it? You see the fruit falling all around us.

This is how the Word of God becomes sweet to us.

- Word by word,
- phrase by phrase,
- Verse by verse.

If we will savor it, its sweetness will fill our hearts.

How desperately we need this. We live in a loud, mean, harsh, strident, ugly and abusive age. We need to turn aside from the sounds of the world and fill our minds with something beautiful. Once the Word of God becomes sweet to you, you will become a sweeter person. The old chorus says it very well:

- Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before,
- Every day with Jesus, I love him more and more.
- Jesus saves and keeps me, and he's the one I'm waiting for.
- Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.

And that sweetness comes to us as we spend time with our Lord in his Word.

By meditating on the Word of God it gives us....

#### **IV. Holy Hatred**

“Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way”  
(Psalm 119:104 ESV).

This final “blessing” sounds odd to us. But the Christian life is more than sweetness. There is also a hard edge to our faith.

Whether we like it or not, we live in an ugly world where evil people do terrible things. And even apparently nice people can sometimes be incredibly cruel.

If we are going to grow spiritually, we must learn to hate evil. Take a moment to contrast the end of the stanza with the beginning.

Verse 97 says, “Oh, how I love your law” and verse 104 concludes with “therefore I hate every false way.”

So if you ignore the Bible, sin will not seem very bad to you. Apart from the Bible, sin will seem “sort of bad” and “not very good” but it will not seem “exceedingly sinful.”

The world will seem like your home and sinners more attractive than saints as long as you neglect God’s Word.

Let’s wrap things up by considering again the theme of the verses we covered today: “Oh, how I love your law.”

Saints please do not make the mistake of reading the word “**love**” as some sort of emotional, sentimental attraction. The Hebrew word used here is **much stronger** than that. It means to make a lasting **commitment** to someone or something.

To love God’s Word means to **commit yourself** to making it the **foundation of your life.**

This sort of love cannot happen by accident. It is a combination of desire plus diligence.

You don’t wake up one day loving the Bible. That is a cultivated habit that is developed over time.

Let me make this very personal for everyone who reads these words. Please consider these four questions:

Do I love the Word of God?

Do I love to hear it preached?

Do I love the Word when it rebukes me and convicts me?

Do I love to share it with others?

If you want this sort of love for God's Word, here are five steps you must take on a regular basis:

Read it.

Ponder it.

Memorize it.

Talk about it.

Pray over it.

The particular details do not matter so long as you are doing these five things. Sooner or later, the Bible will become very precious to you and reading it will go from a dreary duty to sure daily delight.