

The Word of God

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[0 : 00] Shall we turn now for a few moments to the Old Testament Scriptures to the book of Psalms in chapter 119. The book of Psalms in chapter 119 and reading at verse 25.

My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word. I have declared my ways and thou heardest me.

Teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. So shall I talk of thy wondrous works. My soul melteth for heaviness.

Strengthen thou me according to thy word. Remove from me the way of lying and grant me thy law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth.

Thy judgments have I laid before me. I have stacked unto thy testimonies. O Lord, put me not to shame. I will run the way of thy commandments. When thou shalt enlarge my heart.

[1 : 10] Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes. And I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law. Ye, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me go in the path of thy commandments.

For therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. And quicken thou me in thy way.

Establish thy word unto thy servant. Who is devoted to thy fear. Turn away my reproach which I fear. For thy judgments are good.

Behold, I have longed after thy precepts. Quicken me in thy righteousness. We might think especially of verse 38.

Establish thy word unto thy servant. As all of us are aware, this psalm, the longest psalm in the entire Psalter, is dedicated to the word of God.

[2 : 16] It is a description of the ministry of God's word. We learn in this psalm what God's word does.

In this psalm we have a detailed job description of the task that God has given to his word. And right throughout this psalm there is the underlying assumption that the psalmist himself must long for the word to do this work in him and through him.

There is a recognition of responsibility. The responsibility of the believer. As he or she approaches the word of God. That in order that it might fulfill its ministry in the life.

And in the witness to which they are called. And so this psalm not only presents to us a picture of what the word of God can do.

And what the word of God promises to do. But it also presents to us a picture of our responsibility. Regarding the word of God.

[3 : 36] God works through his word. Not in an irrational way. Or in a mechanical way.

God works through his word sovereignly of course. But he works through his word spiritually. And he works through his word again and again in response to the faith.

And to the obedience of his people. And right throughout this psalm we have the deep desire of the psalmist that God's word might be alive.

That God's that he might be quickened. That he himself might be brought to life through this life-giving word. And that this word, his encounter with this word, might be an encounter with life and with power.

You remember the words of our Lord when he quoted the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy to the tempter in the wilderness.

[4 : 37] Man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And although that word given by God through Moses was already centuries old.

Our Lord speaks of it as a word which still then was proceeding from the mouth of God. And the miracle of God's word is that although it was given many centuries ago. God still speaks through it today. It is a living word. It is a word which in the power of the Holy Spirit comes alive and we hear God speak. And God communicates his message. God reveals his son. God communicates his will to us through his word. And so the psalmist here prays that he may be quickened according to the word of God. That God's word might be established to him by God. Now this as we have said is the work of the Holy Spirit. This mysterious work of bringing the word of God to life. [5 : 49] In the experience of men and women and of the church. Is the work of the Holy Spirit of God. It is not something that we can command. Nor is it something that we can manipulate. It is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit of God.

And yet it is clear from the psalm that we have a responsibility as we read the word of God. To expect the word of God to come to life. To ask God to pray that it may come to life. We have a responsibility to read it. To read it earnestly. To read it believingly. To read it systematically. To read it diligently. Although the ministry of the word is ultimately that which becomes efficacious through the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet we have a responsibility to seek God in his word. And to pray that he may speak to us through it. And so our responsibility must be carried out in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. [6 : 55] And I would like us for a few moments this evening to consider together. Some aspects of our responsibility as readers and hearers of the word of God. Some lessons which we might learn from the scriptures themselves.

As to how we are to read. How we are to approach the word of God. First of all. We are to read the word of God regularly. Our Lord said to the tempter in the wilderness. He said. That the word of God is food. Man shall not live by bread only. But by every word. That proceeds. From the mouth of God. God has given us his word to us. As spiritual food. Peter reminds us that the word of God is like milk. And like newborn babies we should always be thirsty. For the pure spiritual milk. Of the word of God. So that we might grow spiritually. Through drinking it. And just as we are required to eat regularly. [8 : 05] Day by day. In order that our bodies might be sustained physically. So also we are obliged. To read the word of God daily. Because it is our spiritual food.

We are to read it. Regularly. And we cannot expect to prosper. In our Christian lives. If we neglect. If we neglect. This food. Which God has given to us in his word. That is the first. And perhaps very obvious. And very simple. Although sometimes difficult. Lesson. Which we have to learn. We are to read the word of God. Regularly. But secondly. We are to read the word of God. As a whole. Now when I say that. I don't mean that we read it all at once. It is possible. To read so much of the scriptures. [9 : 03] That one can get. A form of indigestion. But we are to read the word of God. As a whole. And not simply the parts of it.

Which appeal to us. There is a story told of. Four men. In. India I think it was. Who. Were out in the dark. One night. And they met an elephant. And none of them were. Sure of what they had encountered. In the darkness. And one of them stretched out his hand. And he felt. The elephant's leg. And he said to the others. It's a tree. Another one. Was able to feel the elephant's trunk. And he said. It's a snake. The third. Bumped into the elephant's body. And he said. It's a wall. And the fourth. [10 : 02] Put out his hand. And felt the point. Of the elephant's tusk. And he said. It's a sword. Now none of them were right. Because.

None of them. Saw. Or touched. The whole. Of the elephant. I think this illustrates to us. The importance of. Reading the word of God. As a whole. We need. To read. The whole of God's word. It is every word. Said Jesus. That proceeds from. From the mouth of God.

That we are to live by. Not just part. Of God's revelation. But. Every part. Of it. And so we require. A balanced diet. From the old testament.

As well as the new. From the gospels. As well as from the epistles. And when we read the scriptures. It is well for us. To have. Some kind of system. Which will.

[11:00] Enable us. To. Cover. God's word. As a whole. Surveys have been done. Of. Reading. Of the books. Of the bible.

Which are read. And many of these. Or. Not many. But the service. Such services. Have been undertaken. Have indicated. That there are large sections. Of the word of God. Not only of the old testament.

But some epistles. In the new testament. Which apparently. Are scarcely read. In the devotional reading. Of. Christian people. We have to be reminded.

Of the fact. That Paul said to Timothy. All scripture. Is inspired. And is useful. God has given us. His word. As a whole.

Now when we read scripture. As a whole. It means not only. That we are to. To read it systematically. So that we. Over a period of time. We cover. The entire.

[11:58] A library of books. But also. That when we read. The scriptures. We are to. Look for the harmony. That God. Has. Implanted. In his creation.

In his word. In his revelation. We are to. Use the principle. Of harmony. To help us. To understand. And the scriptures. Sometimes.

It appears. That in one part. Of the bible. There may be an emphasis. Which seems to contradict. An emphasis. Which we. Notice elsewhere. That we are to. If we come.

Believing that God. Has given us his word. He's given it. Given it to us. Through different people. He's given it to us. Through different human writers. He's given it to us. At different periods.

Of the history of revelation. If we come. Believing that. God's word. Comes to us. Ultimately. From himself. Then. We will look for. A way.

[12:51] That we look for the principle. Of harmony. Which binds God's word together. And it's important. That we do that. That we seek to see. God's revelation. As a totality. In his word.

This means that. We mustn't interpret one passage. As if it contradicts others. But rather to seek to interpret. Scripture by scripture. Not scripture.

Against scripture. And so then. Let us seek to read the word of God. As a whole. Let us beware of the danger. Of concentrating. On our favorite passages.

On the one hand. Or of practicing. A kind of lucky dip. As far as the scriptures. Are concerned. On the other. God has given us. His whole word. God has given us.

These. All of these books. He's given to us. His entire word. And all of scripture. Is useful. And we must seek. Through some system. To cover. The word of God.

[13:48] God in its entirety. Of course. Some parts of the scripture. Such as the gospels. And the epistles. And the prophets. The book of Genesis. Are. And others. Are. More important.

Than some others. And obviously. We are to concentrate. And perhaps read more frequently. Some parts of scripture. Than others. But we must not neglect. Any part. Of God's word.

The third. Lesson. I think. That is important. For us to learn. Is that. When we read the scriptures. We should read them. As a narrative.

Or as. A story. You see. God has given us. His revelation. In the form of a story. Rather than. In the form of a book.

Of ideas. There are ideas. Of course. In. The scriptures. There are concepts. Which are there. Obviously. But they arise. Out of the story. They are given.

[14:45] In the context. Of God's action. Through his people. Through his son. Through his church. And that action. Is recorded. In the word of God. And when we come.

To the scriptures. We must come. Recognizing. That in this book. We have a record. Of the story. Of God's acts. Of God's. Revealing himself.

And God. Sending his son. God's. Purpose of salvation. Being. Being accomplished. In the life. Death. And resurrection. Of his son. And it is.

I think. Better for us. To come to God's word. Recognizing that it is. A historical story. In its entirety. Than to think of it. As a book of ideas. As a kind of collection.

Of. Of. Of. Philosophical ideas. Which. Have. Have. Come to us. From the mind of God. God. There are ideas. There are concepts. There are. There are.

[15:40] Doctrines. But they arise. Out. Of what God has done. They arise out of his acts. And the word of God. Is. Primarily. A story.

And it's a story. Which. Has. An overall. Framework. And the framework. Begins. With creation. Then after creation. One has the fall.

Then we have. The redemption. Which is foretold. And accomplished. In Jesus Christ. And the. Fourth. And the final point. In this framework.

Is the consummation. And the end. Of this creation. And the beginning. Of the new. And that. For. These four points. Are the pivotal points. Of the story.

Which we have. In the word of God. And it is helpful. For us. When we study. Any passage of scripture. To study it. Against the background. Of. Of these four points. And to see these four points. As forming the back cloth.

[16:37] Forming the perspective. Forming the. The historical context. Of. Every passage of scripture. God's word. Is a story.

God's word. Has a great deal. Of historical narrative in it. There are historical books. In the old testament. There are the gospels. In the new. And it is important.

For us of course. To study. These. And to recognize. To know. Our. Our. The. The events. Of the old testament. The events of the life. And of the ministry. Of our lord.

And we must seek. Particularly. To be aware. Of the events. Of the life. Of our lord. In the gospels. Because. It was he. Who in his life. And in particular.

In his death. And resurrection. Accomplished our salvation. And in him. We have the. In his. In his coming. And in his death. And in his resurrection. And in his ascension. We have the climax.

[17:40] Of the. Of. The work. Of redemption. And so. Let us. Read the word of god. As a narrative. Or as a story. And as we do so.

Don't let us worry. If we can't understand. Some parts immediately. Let us recognize. That. Men and women. Have spent their entire lives.

Studying the word of god. Without fully understanding it. There is much. To understand. To understand. And no doubt. Something which we don't understand now. Perhaps god will reveal to us later. Let us read the word of god.

As a story. As a story of what god has done. To accomplish. Our redemption. As a story of god. As a story of god. As a story of god. As a story of god. Fourthly.

As we read the word of god. It may be helpful for us to read it imaginatively. Some people say that.

[18:39] Learning is such that. It is important for us. To take in what the text says. Before asking. What it means. Especially when we read the historical passages.

Of the word of god. Such as. The accounts of the ministry of our lord. In the gospel. Perhaps. It would repay. Time.

Spent in. Imagining. What it might have. Must have been like. What it might have been like. To have been present. To try to. Put oneself. In. The situation.

To think of what it would have been like. For Zacchaeus. Up in the tree. To think of what it would have been like. For Matthew. Sitting. At the receipt of custom. Perhaps.

We should read the word of god. More imaginatively. In order that we might have a sense of involvement. In the action. I sometimes suspect. That when we.

[19:37] Read. A book. Or sometimes. When we see a program on television. We may have a greater sense of involvement. In what we see. In what we read. Than when we read the word of god.

God. And it may be. That we need to read the scriptures. More imaginatively. And if we were to read them. More imaginatively. In the best sense of the term. Then perhaps.

We would be. A better able to. Ask what. The scriptures mean. So then. As we read the scriptures. We might try to visualize. The original situation.

Perhaps assuming. Not merely. That you were one of the characters. In the scene. But perhaps a reporter. Seek to put yourself. Into the mind. The emotions.

Of the writer. Of Luke. Or of Mark. Or perhaps. Of one of the characters. Which he. Which they portray. Or. Again. Of the first readers.

[20:34] Of these gospels. These gospels. Were written. For converts. In the. Early years. Of the church's ministry.

They were written. For those. Who themselves. Had not seen Jesus. And they were written. In order to. Help them to understand. The message. Which they had believed. And indeed. They were written. As John's gospel. Tells us. To help people. To believe. To help them to come. To a knowledge. Of Jesus Christ. So there is a place. For imagination. Not that we should allow. Our imaginations. To run riot. But there is a place. For imagination. The use of imagination. In the reading. Of the scriptures. That we might. Seek to feel our way.

Into the narratives. And. Seek to live. In the world. Of the Bible. And. Thus. Ask ourselves. [21 : 33] What the text means. Fifthly. Let us. Read the Bible. Prayerfully. As we read the scriptures.

We need to recognize. That. God. Speaks through them. And that we need to tune in. As it were. To what God is saying. When we read the scriptures.

We may read them. Apparently without. Without learning anything. That we didn't know before. Without receiving. Any light. Or any help. Or any strength.

From them. Now this does not mean that. God has abandoned his word. Rather it more likely means that. We have failed to tune in.

To. A. God's communication to us. At this very moment. There are many radio signals. Passing through the atmosphere. In this church. That we do not have.

[22 : 32] A receiving apparatus. So we are not tuned in. And even if we did have a radio with us. If it wasn't tuned. We wouldn't hear. What was. A.

Being. What was being communicated. The writer to the Hebrews. Reminds us that. Hearing God's voice. Is not automatic.

He says. If you hear God's voice. The psalmist here. In Psalm 119. Is concerned. That he might hear.

What God is saying to him. That God's word. Would come to life. He asks the Lord. To open his eyes. That he might see. Wonderful things. Out of his law.

You remember. How our Lord spoke. Of the importance. Of having ears. To hear. So many people heard. The teaching of Jesus. And yet. Did not hear it. And is it not the case.

[23 : 30] That many of us. Like the psalmist. Again and again. Have got to come. To God. And ask the Lord. To open our ears. That we might hear. What he is saying to us.

And of course. Prayer. Is. Crucial. A. Instrument. In. In. Asking God. To open our ear.

To give us spiritual hearing. To help us to tune in. To what he is saying to us. And so. As we read the word of God. We must read it. Prayerfully. Recognizing that God.

Does not communicate. With us mechanically. Or automatically. But sovereignly. And therefore. We must pray. To the Lord. Asking him to speak to us. Through his word.

And sixthly. As we read the word of God. We ought to read it. Submissively. We must come to the word of God. Willing to obey it.

[24 : 28] We must come to the word of God. Not in his. Not looking for speculative truth. But looking. For a word.

For a command to obey. God has given us his word. As a practical word. For living. The word of God. Is a guide for living.

A handbook for living. That's what Paul virtually tells Timothy. In the passage which we read. From 2nd Timothy. We must. Recognize that God has given us his word.

Primarily. Not as a source book. Of theology. Although it is that. But God has given us his word. Not to theologians. But he has given us his word. To his people. The word of God.

Is in the words of Calvin. For the unlearned. God has given us his word. To the unlearned. To ordinary people.

[25 : 24] Yes. God's word. Is a textbook of theology. God's word. Is. The bedrock. Of his. Revelation. But God has given us his word.

In a form which can be understood. By ordinary people. And God's word is not. A specialist book. It is a book for ordinary people.

It is. A book which is useful. For living. For righteous living. That's what Paul says to Timothy. And therefore we must read it submissively.

We must recognize it. Again to quote Calvin. As the scepter of Christ. The scepter. With which. Or through which. Christ.

Affirms his lordship. Over the life of his church. And over the life of his people. And so we must be willing. To do the word. We must be willing.

[26 : 20] To obey the word. When we come to the scriptures. We come to them. Not merely to discover. Some idea about God. Or about his salvation. We must come to the scriptures.

Willing to obey them. Willing to do them. You remember how one man. Came to Jesus. And asked him a speculative question. How many would be saved?

Jesus refused to answer. That man's question. And he said to him. Strive to enter in. At the straight gate. Our responsibility. Is to obey the gospel. Is to obey the word.

Which God. Has given to us. It is the scepter of Christ. And as we. Who name the name of Christ. Seek to affirm his lordship.

In our lives. We must affirm it. Under his word. There is no dichotomy. Between the authority. Of the word of God. And the authority. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through this word.

[27 : 20] That he. Exercises his lordship. Over his people. And over his church. And we are to affirm that lordship. Not merely by saying.

Lord, Lord. But by doing what he says. As we have. His word. Before us. So we must do the truth. We must obey. The word of God. We must be doers. As well as hearers of it. And as we.

Finally. As we read the word of God. We should read it. We should share it. With others. God has given us his word. Given his word to us.

Not only as individuals. But also. As a body. The fact that. We live in a literary society. We live in a society.

[28 : 18] Which the book. Has become. Very much a feature. Of our way of life. Means that we can have. Personal access. To the word of God. And that's a great blessing. But for many centuries.

For the greater part. Of the church's history. Such. Such immediate. Personal access. To God's word. Was simply not possible. First of all. Because there were. Very few copies of it.

And secondly. Because. Very often. Only a minority. Of the people of God. Could read. And perhaps. We've lost something. Of the collective experience. Of the word of God.

Through. The discovery. Of the book. Or important. And crucial. As that has been. In the spread. Of the good news. Of Christ. We are.

Urged in scriptures. To share. The word of God. With one another. We read in the book. Of Malachi. That when the people. Who fear the Lord. Spoke to one another. The Lord listened.

[29 : 15] And heard. What was said. And he ordained. That a book. Be written. And that in that book. There be a record. Of those who feared the Lord.

And respected him. And so. There is a place. For sharing together. Where two or three. Are gathered together. In my name.

Says Jesus. I am there. In the midst of them. And so. There should be. A place in our lives. For the sharing.

Together. Of the word of God. We read in the New Testament. Of the fellowship. Of the people of God. As they. Came together.

There was an element. Of sharing. An element of. Experiencing together. The impact. Of the word of God.

[30 : 10] But we are to share. The word of God. Not only with one another. In the church. But we are also. To share the word of God. With those who are outside it. We are ourselves. To become.

Vehicles of the word of God. To others. We are to follow. In the footsteps. Of Philip. Who took God's word. To the Ethiopian. At least he. He already had it.

But Philip. Explained it to him. And shared it with him. And he explained to him. That the servant. Of Isaiah chapter 53. Was in fact. The Lord Jesus Christ.

And he. He told him about Jesus. He shared. Isaiah chapter 53. With that. African official. And in that continent.

Of Africa today. One thing that characterizes. Many of the churches there. Is that. Christian people share. God's word with others. And when they're going to the market.

[31 : 08] Or when they're working in the fields. They will share with their. Non-Christian. Friends. What God has said to them. Through his word. They will share God's word. As a word.

Which is a. Which means. Is relevant to them today. It's a word. Which is helpful. A word which sustains them. A word which upholds them. Day by day. And hour by hour.

And God's word can help us. In many ways. We can find strength. Which will help us. In situations. Which God's word. Does not expressly. Envisage. And yet.

God by his Holy Spirit. Uses his word. I remember hearing a lady. On one. On one occasion. Say how she found strength. In God's word. To stand up.

To a neighbor. Who was using her telephone. And refusing to. And not wanting to pay for it. And she found strength. In God's word. To stand up. And to tell that lady.

[32 : 06] That she couldn't do it. And God's word. Was a source of strength. To her. In a practical problem. Now God's word. Does not envisage.

Telephones. But God. Uses his word. As a rod. And a staff. And as we read God's word. We will find strength. And comfort.

And hope. And help. And God's word. Is a word. Which he has given us. To share. And in this sense.

Each one of us. Are to become. As I said. Vehicles. Of the word of God. We are to share God's word. With others. And we share God's word.

With others. Not merely by passing on. A copy of God's word. Whether. The whole book. Or part of the book. That is important. But we do not fulfill. Our responsibility.

[33 : 02] In sharing God's word. When we do that. That we must also. As occasion. A arises. Be willing. To testify. To what God's word.

Means to us. Perhaps. Even in a. Humdrum. Everyday. Situation. Like the lady. With the telephone. Because in this way.

Men and women. Around us. Who don't acknowledge. The name of Christ. Will come to see. The relevance. Of God's word. That God's word. Is a word. Which sustains. Men and women.

Today. Perhaps. This task. Which. God has given. To his people. To. Share the word. Of God. With others. Can be illustrated.

From. The. Task of. A conductor. And an orchestra. In a musical concert. The music is there.

[33 : 56] Written. On the score. The task. Of the conductor. The task. Of each. Instrumentalist. In the orchestra. Is to. Let the music loose.

Is to. Translate. The music. From the page. Into. The sound. Into sound. And there is a sense. In which. We have to.

Take the word of God. Which is written here. In this book. And share it with others. Let it loose. If you like. In the world. In which we live. God has called us.

To rejoice. In his word. To enjoy his word. To be sustained. By his word. But he has also called us. To communicate. That word. As his witnesses. To be witnesses. To the power.

Of this word. In the 20th century. God's word. Abides. Forever. Therefore. God's word.

[34 : 53] Is never out of date. God's word. Is never irrelevant. God's word. Is always contemporary. And in a quite wonderful way. The word of God.

Comes alive. In the life. And the experience. Of men and women. And they may be facing. Some of the most. Technical problems. Of the 20th century. Much more complicated.

Than telephones. And they may find. They will find strength. And encouragement. In the word of God. God has given us.

His word. Let us. Let us. Therefore. Seek to use it. Let us. Confess. Our. Neglect of it. And let us. Ask God. To use. Much more. Fully. This. Book of. Unspeakable. Riches. Which he has given. To us. And as we.

[35 : 50] Use it. And as we. Prove it. In our own lives. That he would use. Our experience. Of it. To testify. To its power.

To others. That we. Might become. Advertisements. For the power. Of the word of God. Let us pray. Our gracious Lord and God. We come before thee. At this time. To thank thee again. For this word. Which thou hast given us. A word. Which was inspired. By the Holy Spirit. And a word. Which the Holy Spirit.

Can bring to life. Today. In the experience. Of thy people. And we pray. That thou wilt help us. As we read this word. Day by day. To know it. Confirming us.

Establishing us. Upholding us. Strengthening us. Guiding us. Correcting us. And rebuking us.

Grant. Oh Lord. That we might live. Under this word.

[36 : 51] As the scepter of Christ. And that at the close. Of the service. Each one of us. And all of us together. Might seek to affirm. His lordship.

By doing. This word. Grant. Oh Lord. That thou wilt give us. The strength. To keep the vows. Which we have made. That we may indeed. Seek to do.

As well as hear. The word of God. We ask these things. With the forgiveness. Of our sins. For Christ's sake. Amen. Our closing psalm.

Is number 19. From verse 7. Psalm 19. At verse 7. The tune is creditin. God's law. Is perfect. And converts. The soul. In sin. That lies.

God's testimony. Is most sure. And makes. The simple. Wise. We shall speak. We shall sing. From verse 7. To the end of verse. Mark 11. Psalm 19.

[37 : 58] To the tune creditin. God's law. Is perfect. God's law. God's law.

God's law. God's law. Is perfect. God's law. Spirit. God's law.

God. God. God. The Savior of the Lord are right and truly joins the heart.

The Lord commanded you and God lied to the eyes of Christ.

As one day the fear of good and of good forever, the God's flesh of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

[39 : 23] The Lord and God gave much time hope to be Israel.

The Savior of the Lord are right and truly a great reward provided is for them that keep the sin.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and evermore.

Amen. Amen. ■ announce Slap Talam Talam Talam Talam Talam Talam Talam Talam Talam Han Talam Talam Talam