

Storing Up God's Word

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[0 : 00] Psalm 119 verse 11 where we read these words I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119 is scripture on scripture in other words it is the Bible talking about itself God is telling us what his word is and what his word is for the whole psalm has 176 verses but perhaps out of them all Psalm 119 is the most famous I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119 verses 9 onwards says to us if you want to keep your way pure then guard it according to the word of God if you do not want to stray from God's commandments then make sure that you seek God with all your heart and if you do not want to sin store up God's word in your heart.

I like to think we we get the idea the pursuit of the holiness of Christ must be conducted in the way of God's word or or as Jesus puts it in his high priestly prayer sanctify them make them holy in your truth your word is truth and so I say again the pursuit of the holiness of Christ must be conducted in the way of God's word. So this evening as we analyze verse 11 together we want to understand two things. First the purpose of storing up God's word that I might not sin against you and secondly the practice of storing up God's word I have stored up your word in my heart.

Our hope surely is that as we walk in the way of the gospel of Christ and treasure up Christ's word in our hearts we will become more and more like him. First of all then the purpose of storing up God's word the purpose of storing up God's word. Its purpose is not so that we may win a game of Bible trivia and be walking Bible encyclopedias. The purpose of storing up God's word is not that we're able to impress others by plucking texts out of the air. The purpose of storing up God's word in our hearts is not so that we may win any merit or favor before God. No the purpose of storing up God's word in our heart according to this verse is that we might not sin against God. In other words the purpose is wholly relational. It's encapsulated within these words that I might not sin against you.

We so often don't we wrongly jump to the conclusion that somehow Psalm 119 is primarily speaking about a Christian's devotion to the word of God. That his or her devotions to the truth.

But Psalm 119 is not primarily speaking of a Christian's devotion to the word of God but rather to the God of the word. The reason she wants to store up the word of God in her heart is because she does not want to sin against the God whose word it is.

[3 : 44] The Puritan Thomas Manton whose work I'm heavily relying on for this series of sermons he writes these words. Every delight in truth is not necessarily a delight in God. Remember that we love God not because we love the Bible. We love the Bible rather because we love God. We dare not make an idol out of our Bibles and preach the Bible. Not Christ. Preach truth and not gospel.

And yet here there's there's still more. For we store up the word of God in our hearts that we might not sin against him. The Anglican 19th century Anglican commentator Charles Bridges writes quite beautifully.

He says what an aggregate of guilt and misery is comprehended in the short word sin. The greatest curse that ever entered the universe of God and the parent of every other curse.

Its grief is its guilt is aggravated beyond the conception of thought. injury to a superior father. A sovereign.

Its power is misery whatever it extends in the family, in the world. The aggravation of sin is its injury to God as our father and as our king.

[5 : 20] The God who loves us, who gave his son upon the cross for us. Our father in heaven. Surely we would do anything as Christians to avoid offending and grieving the father who loves us and whom we love also.

Surely then storing up God's word in our hearts, it's just not too big an ask. Let's go back to Thomas Manton for a second, the Puritan.

He asks the question, what is the reason evil is so ready and present with us? What is the reason that evil is so ready and present with us? He answers, because our stock of knowledge is so small. He then proceeds to offer an illustration from his day, which I'll bring up to date for today, which I think is a fascinating illustration. He writes, When tempted, if our minds are so full of the thoughts of this world, rather than the truth of scripture, we will be unable to resist.

We will not know how to stand firm against that particular temptation. Or when asked about the Christian faith by a friend, if our minds are fuller of the thoughts of this world, then the truth of scripture will be unable to answer.

[7 : 01] We won't know how to respond with the word of God. And so using Manton's illustration, we need to store up God's word in our hearts so that our pockets are fuller of pounds than of pennies.

Not because we want to win a Bible trivia quiz, but because we do not want to sin against the Father who loves us, the Son who gave himself for us, and the Spirit who dwells in us.

The ultimate reason why we are to be walking Bibles, as Manton says, is that we might not sin against God.

Because after all, our devotion to the Bible is only as much as it is the word of our God. The purpose of storing up God's word.

But secondly, the practice of storing up God's word. If the purpose of storing up God's word in our hearts is that we may not sin against God, then the practice itself involves actively, intentionally, and consciously storing up the word in our hearts.

[8 : 14] Traditionally, we've understood this word store in terms of hiding, as in the metrical Psalms that we all know so well, thy word I in my heart have hid.

We've got to be very careful with that translation, because it emphasizes the concealment or the hiddenness of the word of God. And that, I believe, is not what the psalmist intended us to understand by this.

The Hebrew word translated here as stored, is that from which we get the proper name Zephaniah. It is used in Exodus chapter 2 and verse 2 to describe how Moses' mother hid her baby son for three months to save him from being killed.

But the word is also used in other places. For example, it's used in Psalm 27 verse 5, and in Psalm 31 verse 20, more in the context of God guarding and protecting his people.

And then in Psalm 31 verse 19, and Psalm 83 in verse 3, it's used in the context, it's a wonderful context, that of God treasuring his people.

[9 : 30] As a rich man treasures his wealth, so God treasures us. The verbal form, as used here in Psalm 119 verse 11, it's very similar to the use of it in Job 23 in verse 12, and it's translated as treasured.

I treasured the words of his mouth. And so when we're thinking about this word storing, we're not so much in the realm of concealing or hiding God's word, as we are of guarding and treasuring the word of God.

Guarding and treasuring the word of God. Manton compares how we are to store up the word of God in our hearts to the way in which the two stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments were stored in the Ark of the Covenant, not in order to hide them, but in order to keep them safe.

He goes on to say, what we value most precious, we guard most carefully. What we value most precious, we guard most carefully.

Storing up God's word means guarding it. It means valuing it in such a way that we may use it.

What we value most precious, we guard most carefully.

[11 : 03] I have many photographs of precious people and times in my life, and I save them most carefully. I guard them most carefully. If I didn't guard them, I would delete them from my computer and from my camera.

But because I value them so precious, I guard them most carefully. So before we get into the nuts and bolts, as we conclude of memorization and meditation, let me remind you all of this principle.

We will not store up God's word in our hearts and guard it carefully, unless first and foremost, we value it as the word of the God who loves us and in which we find Christ in his gospel.

So having said that, in closing, let me suggest the two steps I believe in storing up God's word in our hearts, guarding it, treasuring it. First of all, let's make every effort to memorize the word of God, to memorize the word of God.

During his temptations in the wilderness, Jesus quoted three verses from scripture. Now, the education of every Jewish child involved some memorization of the Torah. It can be very hard to remember things when we get older, all the more reason that when we are young and have minds like sponges, we memorize as much of scripture as we possibly can, especially the most useful parts.

[12 : 37] In my experience, it's amazing how many people in the last few days of their lives, even though perhaps they can't even remember their own name, can remember verses of scripture they learned as little children.

To go back to an earlier point, memorizing God's word is like putting pounds in your pocket. The Navigators have some very helpful Bible memorization aids you can find online.

If you want to store up God's word in your heart so that you don't sin against him, remember it has to be in there in the first place. And that requires memorization.

Secondly, let's make every effort to meditate on God's word. Memorize and meditate. Memorization does not ensure comprehension.

Just because you can recite large parts of the word of God doesn't mean that you understand any of it. The passages of scripture Jesus quoted were perfectly targeted toward the particular temptations he was facing.

[13 : 46] Why is that? It's because it was an example not merely of his mental retention of the content of scripture, but also of his comprehensive understanding of scripture and how it can be used in particular situations.

Thomas Manton lived in very different days from ours. Days of living far closer to the land, nature perhaps. And he compares meditating on the word of God to a mother hen incubating her eggs. He writes, it is constant incubation which hatches young. It is constant incubation which hatches young. The hen sits on her eggs to keep them warm until eventually the chicks hatch.

That's meditation. We are sitting on the great truths of scripture. We are keeping them warm. We are incubating the great truths of scripture. And so in our meditation on scripture, having memorized a specific Bible text, we might perhaps ask ourselves, how can I use this text in times of temptation?

How will this particular Bible text that I have, that I've memorized help me to resist temptation and to stay faithful to Jesus? Or we might ask ourselves, well, how can I use it as an evangelistic tool?

[15 : 12] How can I use this Bible text to help me explain the gospel to another person? Or we might think of how we can, how we can use that in difficult times for us.

So how will this specific Bible text help me to find encouragement in the gospel when I'm finding the days difficult and dark? That's what it means to store up God's word in our hearts.

First of all, to value it as the word of God and love it because it's our father's love expressed verbally to us. And then both to memorize it and meditate upon it.

As the stock of Bible grows in our hearts and minds, the ratio of pounds to pennies grows larger.

And when we're facing times of temptation, questions, or difficulties, it is more likely that we'll pull a pound from our pocket than a penny.

In other words, storing up God's word in our hearts will keep us from sitting against the father. I'm not really so surprised that this verse is so popular, so well known.

[16 : 26] Surely we can all memorize it, think about it in the coming week. Our hope and prayer surely is that as we store up God's word in our hearts, the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we ourselves would become more and more like Jesus Christ.

to whom be the glory of our sanctified and holy lives now and always. Amen.