

The Delight of God's Saints

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Preacher: Jonathan Smith

[0 : 01] Alright everybody, how are we doing? Good. How very Anglican of you. I want to talk to you about Psalm 119 today. When I heard that Andrew was going to be away and that I was preaching on this chapter, this psalm, I thought he was stitching me up because as you know kids, Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible, it's the longest chapter in the Bible, it's longer than a lot of books in the Bible, but luckily he only gave me 16 verses to talk about and really what I want to do is pair that right down to one or two verses. The first verse I want to talk about is verse 9. Do you guys know verse 9? Honesty, thank you.

No, alright, I'll read it for you. It says, how can young people keep their way pure by guarding it according to your word? Parents, how many of you, this is your number one verse, your number one question right now, how can my young people keep their way pure?

I'll rephrase it. Fathers of young girls, how many of you, this is your life verse right now. How can my young girls keep their way pure? We're expecting our first child in January.

If it's a girl, I'm going to get this on a placard. I'm going to put it on the wall right above my gun rack, alright. That's how it's going to go in the Smith household. Serious.

Some of you boys are young, alright. I've got my eye on you. How can young people keep their way pure? It's a really important question and really if we're honest with ourselves, it's not just a question for young people like you guys. It's a question for all of us here today as Christians. How are we going to keep our way pure? If we read through the preponderance of the Bible, we'll see that our goal in life as Christians is to follow Jesus, walk closely with Jesus, be disciples of Jesus and that means keeping our way pure, keeping ourselves from worldliness and sin and so this is a very important question for us this morning and I've got one answer for you. There are many answers that you can find in this psalm and indeed in the whole Bible but I want to talk to you this morning about Bible memorization. I reckon this is a key to keeping our way pure. Guys, if you want to walk with Jesus, if you want to stay away from sin and from Satan and from darkness, then Bible memorization is the key. I know you guys are doing it but I'm not sure the adults are. See, in Sunday school we get people to memorize the Bible all the time, they have memory verses and so on, they sing songs to help them remember the Bible but I wonder if we're doing it as adults. Two reasons why I think we should do it from this psalm. We've got to peel away the layers to get there but I'll look at verse 11 and verse 15 to get the point. Verse 11 says,

[3 : 01] I treasure your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you. Now, I wonder if we understand what it means to treasure the word in our heart.

It doesn't just mean that we love God's word. See, I might say to you, I treasure Renee in my heart and I'd be conveying to you the sense that I love Renee, right? And it's important that we love God's word.

You see that particularly in the first half of this psalm. But it means more than that. It actually means to hide the word of God in our hearts. That's the better translation. I will hide the word of God in my hearts. Kids, who's got a dog? Here. Okay. Your dog, when it finds something like a bone or your dad's slippers or something, something valuable, what does it do with it? Buries it. Exactly right. If I had a prize, I'd give it to you. Maybe it's it. That's right. But if it's a good dog, it'll just hide it. And this is what happened in the ancient world before banks, before financial institutions, investment organizations. You would bury something valuable in the ground. Remember, Jesus said the guy found a pearl of great value and he buried it so that it would be safe. And so this is what the verse 11 means in this psalm. I treasure your word in my heart means I bury it in my heart. He's talking about

Bible memorization. He's talking about taking God's promises and burying them in your heart. All right. So that's one instance. The other instance is verse 15. It says, I will meditate on your

precepts. When we think of meditation, we often think these days of new age cults and mantras and spiritual reflection. But actually, the word meditation means to mutter to yourself. Just to mutter to yourself. So to meditate on God's word just means to mutter it to yourself. You guys know how to mutter? I know you do. Mutter for me. Wow. Tough crowd. I'll give you a hint. To mutter is to repeat something over and over to yourself. Right? To walk around just muttering is to repeat something over and over in your mind. And when it comes to muttering scripture, we do that. We repeat it to ourselves in our minds or out loud over and over on the way to school or on the way to work so that we can memorize God's word. This is the best way for us to memorize God's word is just to mutter it to ourselves over and over again. That's how we pick it up. There's a very famous pastor of a church called Holy Trinity in Oxford. I can't remember his name. I think his first name is Charles. You guys will know. And he actually memorized all of psalm 100% 119, like all how many hundred verses of it, just by walking from church to Oxford every day and muttering this psalm to himself, just repeating it to himself until he knew it off by heart.

So that's a really good way for us to be able to memorize scripture. I know you guys do this in Sunday school, don't you? You repeat something over and over so that you come to know it off by heart. Am I right? Yeah. The reason that Bible memorization is so, so important for us, well, particularly back then was because they didn't have a lot of literacy and Bibles in every pew. But for us today, if we find ourselves in situations where we don't have a Bible, when we're unable to read. In researching this psalm, I heard about Christians in foreign countries locked up in jail for their faith or Christians hospitalized in foreign lands or just Christians who are so sick that they couldn't read. Christians in jail. Christians in the darkness of despair where they can barely get out of bed. If you can memorize scripture and lock it away in your heart, hide it, bury it in your heart, then you can draw on the promises of God in those situations. That's why memorization is so, so important. There's a really good illustration of this and I'm going to finish with this. How many of you have read The Pilgrim's Progress?

[7 : 29] It's got to be more than eight. I think it's the best-selling novel of all time. Just an incredible, incredible book. If you haven't read it, whether you're a believer or not, Pilgrim's Progress, great book. Great book to read to your kids. You can get kids' versions of it.

And in that book, there's a guy named Christian. All right, kids, listen to this. There's this guy, his name's Christian. And he's got a buddy named Hopeful. And they find themselves locked in this dungeon. Locked in a dungeon called Doubting Castle. All right, so in Doubting Castle, locked in the dungeon, they're really depressed, really despairing. Everything's dark and they don't think they're ever going to be able to escape out of this dungeon. And so they're stuck in this situation. And then suddenly Christian comes up with an idea. And he says to Hopeful, hang on a second, Hopeful. I think I might have the key to this dungeon. I might have the key to get out of Doubting Castle. And what's more, I've had it all along. We've been lying here in filth and stench and we've got bad BO and there's dirt everywhere and there's, you know, no food. We've been stuck in Doubting Castle. And this whole time I've had the key to get out of Doubting Castle. And Hopeful says, well, come on, my good brother, take out the key. Where is that key? And he says, I do believe the key is hidden in my chest pocket. And so he takes the key out of his chest pocket and tries the lock to Doubting Castle. And the lock slips free. And they walk out of jail, out of the dungeon, out of Doubting Castle. And you know what John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress is getting at. The key is the promises of God. The promises of God are the key to help us escape from Doubting Castle, to help us escape from the slough of despair. When we're in those dark times, in those dark nights of the soul, when we've got depression, when we can't trust in God or it seems that way, the key, the promise of God, if we are to memorize scripture, if we diligently meditate on scripture and hide it in our heart, that key will be in our chest pocket, in our heart, ready to unlock the gates of Doubting Castle.

[10 : 01] Guys, I don't want to talk to you anymore because I know that you guys memorize scripture. But for us adults, are we doing it? I know we use the excuses like, I'm getting old and my memory is not so good.

But you know what? People over the centuries have passed down stories verbatim from generation to generation, from elders down to young people. Older people have the capacity to remember. And we can use tools. I know for myself, I buy, what are those little cue cards, speech cards, and get them up at Officeworks. And just as you read through the Bible day by day, or as you come to church and hear God's word read, when you hear those promises of God that are all throughout

scripture, write them down. Just write, quote it out. And then carry them around with you, in your handbag, in your pocket, in your suit jacket. Pin them up at work, put them on the fridge, and mutter them to yourself. And in so doing, you will be hiding the way in your chest pocket, in your heart. You kids, I want to encourage you to keep doing what you're doing in Sunday school.

Keep memorizing scripture. Sing those Columby Canon songs. Use songs to help you remember those great verses of the Bible. Romans 8 and 1 John and Psalm 23 and all these beautiful passages in the Bible.

Remember them. So that when the day comes, and maybe you find yourself locked up in jail, or maybe you just find yourself in the pretend jail that exists in your own mind, that jail of Doubting Castle, you'll be able to open the lock with the promises of scripture and find comfort there.

[11 : 38] All right? It's my challenge to you too, guys. Let's do it. Let's be a people that memorizes scripture. Amen? All right, I'm going to pray for us. Let's bow our heads. Close our eyes.

Father, thank you for Psalm 119. Thank you that it reminds us of the beauty and the power of scripture. Thank you that as we meditate on this psalm, and indeed on the entire Bible, and commit it to memory, and hide it away in our heart, in our chest pocket, that we will have keys to open the gates of Doubting Castle, the gates of darkness, the gates of despair and depression, and distance from you.

So challenge us today, Lord, to be the kind of people who memorize scripture, who are able to call on scripture. I pray it in your beautiful name.