

Gods Word

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 September 2009

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 0 0] we're going to turn to that psalm that we read together psalm 119 and i want us to focus particularly this morning on the section beginning 105 verse 105 i'll just read the section again very quickly your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path i swore i have sworn an oath and confirmed it to keep your righteous rules i am severely afflicted give me life oh lord according to your word accept my free will offerings of praise oh lord and teach me your rules i hold my life in my hand continually but i do not forget your law the wicked have laid a snare for me but i do not stray from your precepts your testimonies are my heritage forever for they are the joy of my heart i incline my heart to perform your statutes forever to the end this morning i thought i would do something very very simple and that is to talk about the bible and its place in our lives and how much the bible means to us and how much the bible should mean to us now you might think well that's a bit basic isn't it well there are times when we have to go back to the basics for no other reason because there are young people here who may not realize how important the bible is they may think it is an important book and they may know that we come here to read the bible and to preach the bible but they may not realize as you do how utterly important it is there are people whose circumstances are changing all the time they're coming to discover the kind of world that we live in the kind of opinions that people have about religion and about christianity and all the rest why is it that we love the bible so much when there are so many other opinions and so many other religions in the world there are students who are going away either returning to university or going there for the first time how important is the bible in maintaining wisdom and maintaining your your closeness to god in these in in a new circumstance all together and in a new chapter in your life there's all these circumstances but even if we're older in the faith even if we're we've been years as a christian surely it does no harm to come back once again and remind ourselves of the place that the bible has in our lives in our thinking in our hearts in our decisions in the way in which we live our lives i want us to take just these few verses in front of us here in psalm 119 and it's clear what the psalmist is trying to say in the illustration that he's given he is imagining a dark night as i'm sure that he's experienced very often and some of you have experienced very often particularly in the night the the dead of winter here where there's no street where sometimes there's no street lights and where supposing for example there was no moon and you were out on the moor for whatever reason and there's absolutely no light whatsoever then you begin to realize that the one thing you need more than anything else to keep you safe is a light you don't know whether you're coming to the edge of a cliff or coming to the to the brink of a river or a loch or someplace where you'll put your foot and break your leg or whatever you absolutely need a light to to keep you safe and to make sure that you get to your destination because you'll never be able to get to the right destination unless it's clear which direction you're going in so the psalmist is absolutely right when he's imagining or when he's when he's thinking about how important a lamp is to his feet to the direction in which he is going and he's he knows that his life is like a journey in which he's going in a direction he wants to make sure as we all do that we're going in the right direction and i want us to think together about how first of all what the psalmist who i assume is david and then i want to then i want after we look at this to look very briefly at how does one how do we use our bibles because to him the lamp that he was looking for and that he needed was the word of god the bible in other words now before we before we go anywhere else let's just go through the different words it's very interesting the different words that david uses in this section and indeed in every other section of psalm 119 to describe exactly the same thing because some people they go wrong in their understanding because they make too much of a distinction between the words that are used for example verse 105 he describes your word verse 106 your righteous rules verse 107 your word once again verse 108 your rules once again 109 your law it's a different word verse 110 your precepts different word again 111 the

testimonies your testimonies are my heritage 112 your statues now he's using a variety of words and we mustn't get too distracted by the fact that they're all different words they all mean this there is a slight difference but he's pointing to the exactly the same thing how important and how precious and how vital god's word was god's message god's book was in his life is it was absolutely indispensable if he is going to know the direction in which his life is going and if he's going to be helped in all the different scenarios that he talks about the circumstances that he talks about the good ones and the bad ones and we'll see these in a few moments he the the bible is absolutely vital and important to him now for david of course when he talks about the word it was the old testament in fact it wasn't even the whole old testament it was part of the old testament it was genesis to deuteronomy that's all he had but when he speaks when we sing those words and when we when we look at them in our bibles we are in the we live in a time when we the word of god is complete old testament and new testament and so if david was thankful that he had god's word in his hand in his possession how much more should we be thankful that we have the completed word of god in our possession and how much more vital is it that the completed word of god find a central place not just when we come to church not just when we go to sunday school or youth fellowship or whatever we do but every day in our everyday lives the biggest mistake that you can make as a christian is to start separating your spiritual life from your ordinary life your spiritual life means but by that means when you go to church or when you go to the prayer meeting or when you go to sunday school or youth fellowship or whatever you do that's your spiritual life and your ordinary life i've even heard people saying it my secular life can i tell you something if you're a christian you don't have a secular life you don't have a secular life your whole life is your life lived with god you don't leave god behind when you come away from the prayer meeting or your bible study or whatever you don't leave it behind and you go into your work you take god with you in your work and god is just as present in your place of work as he has been in church and there's a connection between because the good and the benefit you derive from church can be taken into your place of work or your family or your neighborhood or whatever else you're doing and it changes your life your whole life is different your attitudes are different your way of speaking ought to be different your patience ought to be different your conversation ought to be different everything is affected by god's word and that's exactly what david is speaking he's he what he what he's doing is he's listing a whole bunch a whole list of different experiences and he is he's reminding himself or he's praying he's thanking god of the place the vital place that god's word has in every every experience now what's the first of these well god's word is a light first of all in moral darkness god's word is a light in moral darkness now what do i mean by that well i mean very simply how do you know when some whether something is right or whether it's wrong that's what i mean by something moral or a moral decision or a moral dilemma or whatever we want to call it how do we know well he says i have uh i have sworn an oath and confirmed to keep your righteous rules what's he telling us there he's telling us very simply that he knows the difference between what's wrong and right by studying his bible he knows that something is wrong or right not whether it's not whether if you take a poll if you take a vote how many people will vote for one thing and how many people will vote for another and the majority are always right no no he's saying he knows what's wrong and right because he reads his bible and because he listens to god speaking to him and that's the way he knows between what's wrong and right now i don't need to tell you how important this is in a world where where there's so much confusion about what is what's a right decision and a wrong decision and how do we know many people in the world telling you well nothing is wrong and nothing is right as long as it doesn't harm anybody as long as nobody's harmed then whatever you choose to do it doesn't matter because nothing is wrong and especially if you go down the road of the new atheism then you don't know what's wrong and what's right because we've all just evolved we're all just a bunch of molecules and chemicals having evolved through millions of years there is nothing wrong what's wrong is anything that's going to destroy the human race according to them but that's not the case according to god god has given us his word and we today we come here because we know that we did not evolve out of nothing we were created by a loving and a sovereign and an almighty god who has given us dignity and who has given each of us a personality and an individuality and who cares for us atheism is the most uncaring system it means that we're nothing we are nothing we're not worth any more than a tree or a bit of rock or whatever that's it in the world but god has said to us that's not it i've made you in my image and i've made you with a capacity not just to live and to breathe and to eat and drink but to know that i am and to know that there are some things in life there is a right way to live and there is a wrong way to live and if you've discovered god you will

want to live in his way but how do you know that's where the bible comes in you live by the bible the bible that tells us his will the bible

in which jesus tells us if you love me you will keep my commandments but i can i can tell you and i don't need to tell you that that's not easy it involves having to stand out in the crowd because many people in this world don't want to live it's much easier for them to do what comes naturally to them and to obey their own instincts rather than put god first the reason that they don't want to put god first is not because they don't believe it because bible tells us that deep down everyone knows that there's a god but they don't want to know that there's a god they want to live life as they want to live it so god gets pushed out of their minds and out of their lives and they don't take kindly when somebody's prepared to stand alone and say well actually i'm a christian you ever felt how awkward that is why shouldn't it be awkward well it is it is really awkward moment you say that they're kind of an awkward silence and people don't know how to how to react to that and that's one of the reasons why i say to young people you absolutely have to experience that for yourself you absolutely have to that's where your faith is tested it's one thing to be in within a whole bunch of christians here in stornoway it's another thing to go away to glasgow or away to edinburgh or way to aberdeen and to go into a secular world a world where people haven't even heard the gospel but it's painful it's awkward and it's much easier to be silent on these things and to sort of live your life in your own we huddle just talking to people by people who agree with you and happen to do by all means you have fellowship with other christians of course that's absolutely vital but you also need to get out into the world and you have to experience the pain that's what daniel did when he was prepared to stand up in a hostile world a young man and everything was going fine until they told him until they said to him he has to eat food that he knew that by so eating would be wrong for him to do he'd be sinning against god he said actually i can't do this now it's not just what you can't do it's what you can do you know we're too we're too inclined to think well what can you not do as a christian and there are things that you can't do as a christian but there are also things that you can do as a christian and i hope you're just as enthusiastic to get involved to be the salt of the earth and to work hard for within this world because that's the way that's where god has placed you in this world wherever you are today is where god has placed you god has a purpose for you being there so who knows what that purpose is we have to be faithful to him we have to be obedient to him and we have to put god first and that's how we know and if you don't have your bible close to your heart if you're not immersed in the bible then you're going to get yourself into situations where you're going to be confused about what is wrong and what is right now there are things that are obviously wrong there are blacks in the in the bible there are things that are real obviously wrong but there are there are obviously things that are right as well but there are gray areas as well you know there are times when we have to take different circumstances into account that's where the bible has to come in and where we have to live close with the bible so that the lord's spirit will be working within us showing us showing us how what kind of decisions to take and how to take those decisions and what what what uh what circumstances and what should motivate us for example the bible tells us that anything that's not of faith is sin anything that's going to destroy our witness is sin all of these things we'll never know them until we live by the bible and you'll never do that unless the bible is close

to your heart and in your in your heart so there's light in moral darkness but then i want you to notice also that the psalmist talk david talks about light in suffering he goes on to talk about light in suffering verse 107 i am severely afflicted i am severely afflicted and then he asks give me life oh lord so he's suffering we don't know what his suffering was precisely at that time but we know what his prayer was give me life oh lord but look at what he says then according to your word so the word had a central place in whatever he was suffering whatever hardship he was going through at that time now you can think of many hardships that david suffered for example you can think of how he spent years of his young life having run from saul so all who hated him you can think of how he was betrayed by his best friend you can think of how his son his own son absalom ousted him from his kingdom you can think of the disappointment and the frustration and the fear and the danger that that david was in if you read through his life you think of how he must have wondered sometimes what is god doing in my life what why is god allowing me to go all through this darkness in my life and so here's a man who's not just talking in theory about suffering you see it's one thing to be able to pontificate about this thing oh it's all it's all very easy to to theorize about a world which is full of suffering it's another thing to actually go through it yourself and the person who actually has gone through it is far more qualified to share his experience with others and to understand the sufferings

of others now what happened as the psalmist suffered he prayed to god to give me life oh lord now i find that fascinating because my natural instincts tells me if i'm if i am suffering if i'm something something suffering something horrendous then i want an explanation but that's not what he asks for and the truth is the bible never gives us an explanation as to why we go through what we go through never does that belongs to god alone that's not what this he asks give me life oh lord what does that mean it means that his suffering had the effect of withering him to the point where he had almost expired in his soul and in his spirit he'd become so discouraged and so weak and so so spent that's the problem with with suffering that's the effect that it has but look at what god can do he can bring us to life once again not by giving us an explanation but by breathing new life into a troubled person a troubled heart a troubled soul god can do in us and for us more than we can ask or even think that's what he promises us more than we can ask or even think i remember once coming back from holiday this was years and years ago and we'd been away for quite a long time and it'd been quite a hot summer and somebody had forgotten to leave enough water in the plants and we came home and there was this plant near the window and it had completely withered and to look at it you would think that's it it's finished just throw it out well my wife said to me well let's try you you put some water on it

[20 : 19] and so i thought it was a complete waste of time and put the water on the plant and just came back an hour later and i couldn't believe it not long afterwards you could see that the plant actually hadn't died at all although it was withered to the point of unrecognizable as a living thing when you put water on it it started to show signs of life and within a few hours you could see that it had come to life once again that's what david is praying for here i am severely afflicted give me life oh lord according to your word and that's where the word that there is no time when god's word is so important it's important all the time all the time don't get me wrong but you absolutely need to be in god's word when you're going through things which you don't understand and which which are awful things and things which which are perplexing and in these words also i can't help but but noticing how how appropriate they are for as pointing to jesus christ who knew more than anyone else what suffering was he could say i am severely afflicted he was afflicted as our lamb as our sacrifice as the payment for our sins and he was um he was the one who truly understood understood truly understood our difficulties but the tamas david also talks about light in worship verse 108 accept my free will offerings of praise oh lord and teach me your rules and perhaps we might say well this is the way in which we absorb god's word into our lives in worship and that's why coming to church is so important because it's a place where we first of all hear god's word don't anybody say that we do nothing in worship don't don't think that worship is passive none of you at the moment if you're listening to what i'm saying and studying the bible and asking god to teach you through your word you're not being passive in that at all you're absorbing into your life the breath of into your heart the breath of god and it will have a profound effect on the way in which you live and that's why worship is so important whether it's private worship or whether it is it is corporate worship as we're doing just now he talks here about two things praising and listening and praising comes as a result of our listening and praising too has that tremendously strengthening effect of of putting into words what god and his word mean to us and we don't forget these words they as we put them into words they're implanted in our hearts and they change and transform by the power of the holy spirit our lives now how do we read our bibles how do we read our bibles first thing i would want to say is this that nobody should just read the bible in the passing as i know that there are times in our lives when we're so busy that all we can do is just read a couple of verses in the passing it's the same with prayer there are times when our lives are full of crisis and when things are so chock-a-block that we just can't do anything apart from these are i hope exceptional times i hope that in the main we're able somehow to give time to

reading the bible on a regular basis and once again i know that this is basic i know that many of you say i don't need to hear this because i do it good that's good make sure that your life is not cluttered up to the point where where your bible reading gets pushed to one side but it's a discipline and a discipline sometimes is hard and difficult it doesn't come easy you know we live in a world where we satisfy our expectations where we where we used to having things handed to us on a plate at the moment we're used to fast food we're used to things instantly and very often people if they don't get instant light or instant pleasure out of reading their bible they just close it again say well i don't feel like this i don't feel that god is saying anything to me so i'll put the bible away that's the biggest mistake you can make the bible has nothing to do with it's great when we do feel and there are

times when we experience the power of god speaking to us through a certain passage of the there are times like that but what happens when you don't experience that do you just put the bible away and just forget about it of course not you persevere and you read the same passage again and you ask that the lord and nobody should read their bible without asking the lord to so shine his light upon his word and to speak to you personally through your word don't ever forget that every every time you open the bible this is god's personal message to you it is god speaking to you he has something to say to you now some people have a very mystical view on that and their view is that well i wonder what god is going to say to me today so they take their bible and they open it like that at random and they look at the first verse and they say well this is what god has to say to me because i've opened it at random that's a really irresponsible way of using god's word god's word is not magic we must never treat god's word like we must never treat the bible like that the bible is given in a particular order with particular chapters starting from one to whatever and he's given us genesis and he's given us revelation it's not some kind of lucky promise box where you just open the bible at random that's not going to that's you're not going to get anything out of that at all and sometimes a verse is going to say something to you which is which is horrific or something that's that is that's going to give you all the wrong messages don't ever treat god's word like that but the discipline of reading god's word is to sit down every day and to go through it perhaps not from genesis to revelation in fact i would discourage anyone from starting a genesis and working their way all through revelation you might want to read through genesis and then go to the new testament and read matthew then you might read exodus and then go through and read romans use the variety of god's word to expose yourself and to become familiar with everything that god has to say to you then we have to also ask ourselves when i'm reading a particular part of the bible what kind of book is it there are some books that are that are narrative for example genesis tells the story of the creation all the way through to uh the death of uh the the the the death of of joseph that's a narrative that's a historical book in which god reveals himself through the events that took place from from abraham isaac jacob all the way through to moses and exodus is the same but leviticus is very different leviticus describes all the sacrifices that were made to god during the the israelites time in the wilderness so you have to stop if you're reading through leviticus and you have to change gear you have to change your your mindset to try and understand not just the way in which all these sacrifices were made but why these sacrifices were made sometimes there's not a clear answer to the little details that you have but that doesn't matter that's okay you can still derive a huge benefit from that and so you go through the old testament you get the book of psalms for example that's written by several different people asaph and david and moses and and so on then you get solomon the books of solomon like the song of solomon again you have to you have to ask yourself what kind of book is this and it's by so doing and reading it in the context in which it was given that you're able to derive what was god saying to these particular individuals people like myself who had faults and failures and since they needed to hear the voice of god what was god saying to them now what is he saying to me through jesus christ that's how vital and how living god's word and when you approach it like that you approach it in a in a different sense altogether and i would i would ask you to take seriously your bible reading it's not just something optional but it's something vital your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path you can follow a reading pattern there are many of them given they used to be given in the young people's magazine free i don't know if they're if they're still given but that you can follow a reading pattern a pattern where there are notes get yourself a good explanatory guide i've recommended before the esv study bible absolutely marvelous i was reading uh this week i'm going through myself the book of of of um ezeziel now that's a difficult one that's a difficult book to go through because there are many things in that book that need to be interpreted and i was on the chapter gog and magog chapter 38 39 gog and magog and god's prophecy towards gog and magog so i had to stop don't ever think that a minister knows all about the bible he doesn't i had to stop i had to get my esv study bible out and find out what who was gog and what is magog it turns out that nobody actually knows there are questions that we answer with clear answers but there are also questions that nobody actually knows the answer in actual fact when it comes to prophecies many of the questions many of the unknowns were fulfilled as the prophecy itself was fulfilled and so the adventure continues the bible is not just easy answers to everything sometimes the bible throws up more questions than answers but these are questions that god wants us to ask i'm glad that the bible is not full of simplistic answers to the world the world's uh questions because then we wouldn't study it then we wouldn't become absorbed in it and that's what god wants us to become

absorbed in knowing his word and by so doing his word fills us and affects us and transforms us and changes us i can tell you now there is nothing more important than the bible in your life there is nothing more living there is no greater influence than god in his word we believe that it is inerrant that means it has no errors we believe it is infallible that it is perfect that doesn't mean that every translation is perfect but his word is perfect we can trust it we can go to it and we can know that this is the truth for me this is the

way god wants me to live this is what god wants for me he wants me to know his son jesus christ as my savior and he wants me to discover what he can do for me in him that he can forgive my sins his grace his kindness his forgiveness and that he wants me to have the everlasting life after all why does god speak speak to us at all in a world that's so badly gone wrong why has god spoken to us it's because he wants to save that world as many as will come to him in faith and in trust to know him to lay hold upon him to follow jesus christ as our savior and so i hope that today like david you will this rediscover or discover for the first time how day by day his word vitally works through us don't leave it on the shelf don't leave it in the suitcase don't ignore it read it maybe you haven't come to jesus yet maybe you're not a christian you say well none of this is for me yes it is why because his word is for you and you if you've never read the bible with seriousness maybe it's just a few times you've been in sunday school you've learned your memory verses and it's never had any place in your life up until since then well you change that surely if this is a matter of life and death if this is the most important issue in all the world if this is the greatest message in all surely you'll want to open it even for the first time and start reading it with a seriousness that you've never had before if i ever met somebody who wasn't a christian and they didn't have a bible that's the first thing i'd want them to have and even if i wasn't able to say anything else if i was able to give them a bible then you're placing god's word in their hearts do you know somebody today who hasn't got a bible and who would take one thing you give it to them we heard that on wednesday with the young people in the kibira camp how fiona left them with bibles who knows what what what these bibles will do it's amazing just to see that photograph of all of these children with a bible who knows how god will speak to those children as they grow up through his word there's nothing as powerful and as influential as god's word let's pray