

Relationship With God's Word

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to Psalm 119 and turn again to verse 89. Psalm 119, verse 89.

Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations. You have established the earth, and it stands fast. By your appointment they stand to this day, for all things are your servants. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

As we know, this is quite an amazing psalm that really highlights over and over again, but in different ways, how important God's word is to every area and every aspect of life, both individually, personally, but also with regard to communities and with regard to the world and indeed to the very universe.

That we are part of. And one of the great things about this psalmist is that he had a passionate desire for God's word. A desire to come to a greater knowledge and understanding of the word, and also to he himself to come to a greater sense of, or not just a sense of, but a greater and a deeper relationship with the Lord, a greater holiness before God.

And I'm sure all of us, as we come to the end of the year, it's one of the things as we reflect back over the year and over the years, and as we look forward, however long our futures will be in this world, it's one of the things that we always want, is that we'll come to know the Lord.

[2 : 00] That we will come to a greater knowledge of his word, because sometimes we go to the word, and there are times that the word has a depth to it that really affects us, while there are other times we just go through the word, and it doesn't seem to have the same impact.

It doesn't seem to create the same impression upon us. And so the word of God is something, as a believer, that we want to know more and more and more of, and come to a greater understanding of.

Now, as we see, this man here absolutely loved God's word, and he was totally devoted to the study of it.

It was something he studied it, as we see here in the morning. He not only read it, but he studied it, and he meditated upon it. And in other words, what was happening is that the word of God, you can see, was swirling around in him as the day went on.

And that, again, is something that's so important to us and for us, because that affects us. It impacts our life. When God's word is there, as it were, just moving around, because that's what happens.

[3 : 19] If we take time to God's word, supposing it's in the morning, or even if it's at night, and as we read it and reflect upon it and meditate upon it, it's got a way of just moving around within us.

And that word will begin to impact upon our life as we face all the different situations. The word will be a light to our path. That's one of the great things.

It will, indeed, it will give us comfort. It will protect us. It will give us a sense of just how and where we should be. Now, the psalmist here, at the beginning of this, highlights very clearly that there's a great link.

Now, we know that the Bible teaches that, between God's word and God's world. Because that's really what it is saying. Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

Your faithfulness endures to all generations. You have established the earth, and it stands fast. By your appointment, they stand this day.

[4 : 23] For all things are your servants. So, as we know, God's word is what brought this world into being. But God's word is that which also upholds this world in its being.

So that you cannot separate God's word from God's world. And that's something I think it's very important for us to lay hold upon. Particularly as we live in a day where people seem to think that God's word has absolutely no relevance to where we are at this time.

Here we are in the 21st century. We are advanced. So advanced in technology and in science and in all these things. And the world is moving at an incredible rate.

And people say the word of God has no relevance to the day that we're living in. To the world that we are part of. But we come back to the Psalms. And the Psalm tells us you cannot separate God's word from God's world.

Because God, through his word, made this world and brought this world and everything about it into being. And by his word, upholds this world and keeps it functioning.

[5 : 34] He set all the different laws into being. So everything is established. It is steadfast. And it is by his word. And indeed we see that nature is termed the servant of God.

Verse 91. By your appointment they stand this day for all things are your servants. And that's part of, again, we see that from God's word of how God uses the forces of nature.

He unleashed in an incredible way at the time of the flood. So that the waters of the deep broke and the waters from above. And we had the whole world was flooded.

We find how God not only uses the great oceans and the great, all the great waters of this world, which are his servants.

He's able even to take the tiny fly and make them his servants as well. Because when you go, for instance, to the plagues in Egypt, that was one of the things.

[6 : 36] Remember how that was one of the plague, the plague of flies, which just nearly drove the Egyptians crazy. They were just buzzing about everywhere, everywhere. You and I know when a hot, or one of these clammy summer days, when flies, and I remember we used to have some sheep, and you'd always, when you'd be, say, for instance, shearing sheep.

But always flies around, or midges and things like that. So annoying. But that was nothing compared to what the Egyptians had. So that even the tiny fly was there as a servant, or God was using, they were there at his disposal.

Same as the ravens. The ravens, which normally, just if they see any meat, they're there to devour it. The ravens carry the meat, brought that to Elijah.

So you see how God is in control of absolutely everything. The fire, the wind, the hail, the snow.

God uses all these things, and he uses them sometimes to remind us that we're not in control.

Was it last year, beginning of last year, or when, in New York? It was kind of broad. There's that city that, they say, never sleeps. With all the movers and shakers and everything that's going on in this world, it seems to be the hub of everything.

[7 : 55] Remember the blizzard came down? I can't remember, is it last winter? It's not long ago. And New York was brought to a halt. People were told not to go out. The snow had become so bad.

This city that's always going. All of a sudden, people realize, there's not much, I'm not as mighty and as powerful. Just the blizzard of snow stops everything.

And so God is reminding us and God is showing us that he is all-powerful. And that he is in control of everything.

And that his word remains the same just as he remains the same. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so is his word. Some people think that it's as if God has rewritten his word.

Because there are, even within what we would term, and it's widest sense, a Christian church, there are aspects of it that would live as if God had rewritten parts of scripture.

[9 : 03] Because they will take in things that, if you study the word, that God declares very clearly that it is not so.

He is against. And yet people will say, no, it's all right. It's part of. But you see, this is why it is so important that we realize that just as God never changes, his word never changes.

And as we said earlier, people think that God's word has passed its cell by date. And people say, even people who might have an element of sympathy towards the Christian faith, they'll say, oh, you've got to move on.

I mean, that book, that book that you seem to put so much emphasis upon, that book was written, we're not talking just about hundreds of years ago, we're going into thousands of years ago.

How on earth can that be relevant and up to date for today? But you and I know it is. Because the unchanging God, as he is unchanging in his being and his nature, so is his word.

[10 : 08] And that's what makes the Bible so incredibly up to date. Because the same word that enabled David to rejoice is the same word that can make you rejoice.

The same word that rebuked Solomon is able to rebuke you and me. Although the word that David and Solomon had way back was limited compared because they had only a certain part of God's word.

And of course, David himself and Solomon were used by God to give us a fuller picture of God's revelation. We have, of course, the complete word here.

And there is nothing in all the world that suits us better than God's word. And God, of course, is the God of every aspect of our lives.

He's the God of our present, just as he has been the God of our past. And he will be the God of our future. And how thankful we are for that. We live in a world that's always changing.

[11 : 19] Always changing. I read a quote, and there's a lot of truth in it. The younger people, to younger people, change is often a treat.

While to older people, change is often a threat. And I think there's a lot of truth in that. That doesn't mean that every change, that all young people embrace it.

And it doesn't mean that all change, that older people reject it. But very often, it's part of the nature when you're young, that you're always liking things to move on and maybe change this or change that.

And as we get older, we often prefer what we're familiar with and just happy with things like that. But the important thing to remember is this.

That despite whatever is happening, and despite all the changes that take place, God's word will always be there. This book has been attacked year in, year out, generation in, generation out.

[12 : 26] And people of great abilities, they've tried their utmost to destroy this book.

They've come, they've gone. Generation after generation, this book remains. Governments, powers that be, dictators in parts of this world, have done everything that they can to destroy this book and keep it out of circulation.

And still it remains. Its influence is as powerful, probably even more powerful. It is more powerful today than ever it has been at a global level.

It doesn't matter what people do. It doesn't matter what agencies, governments, powers do.

Generation after generation, attacking God's word.

They've come, they've gone, they've disappeared. This word remains. And will remain. Because it's God's word. It's unchanging.

[13 : 31] And that is part of what gives us so much encouragement and so much inspiration. And God's word, just as we said, God is faithful to his word and he's faithful to his promises.

All the promises, we've been looking at the life of Abraham. All the promises God gave to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to David, to Daniel. All these promises. God fulfilled the promises and he will do so in your experience and mine as well.

It's not just that we go to the Bible and say, well, that's how God worked then. He's the same God today. And I'm sure you're able to look into your life and look back and say, and you see things where God has been faithful to his word.

Sometimes we don't understand exactly what's happening and sometimes we look at his word and the providence. Sometimes it doesn't seem to be together the way we expect and the way we want. But you know, at the end of the day, we will be able to look back and say, yes, God has done exactly what he said. Because sometimes as we measure things halfway through, we don't have the full picture.

[14 : 47] And maybe even in this world, we won't have the full picture. But rest assured, the full picture will one day become evident and God will be faithful to every single promise.

And the psalmist also shows us in verse 92 of how important God's word was when difficulties came. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

See, God's word is so important to us. At all times, but so often in the dark times, in the difficult times. God's word is not a sort of, that's what some people think, that it's kind of a crutch that people use who can't cope in life.

That it's a form of escapism. Some people will look on God's word and they'll say, ah, you just use God's word in the same way as sometimes people will, or going through a difficult time and they'll try and escape and they'll drink to try and forget their worries.

That's what you do. Not at all. One of the things about God's word is it enables you to face a situation, to face up to the realities.

[16:04] But through that word, God enables you to see possibly more clearly than you could without. And through his word enables you to lay hold upon him and discover his strength being made perfect in your weakness.

Discovering his light shining into your darkness. Discovering his grace enabling you to go on when you feel you can't go on anymore.

That's what God's word does. And that's why the psalmist said that on one occasion that he said, it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn your law.

If it hadn't been for these things, I wouldn't have understood, I wouldn't have gone to your word. I wouldn't have understood your word. I wouldn't have understood you were it not for the afflictions that came into my life.

And you and I know that's true. Because sometimes when we're sort of drifting along when everything's going all right, sometimes we take the foot off the spiritual pedal and we just drift along.

[17:17] And it's not that we've stopped. But there isn't the urgency. There isn't the involvement in our daily devotions or in our public devotions.

But you know, when anything happens, when anything comes into our life, it's all of a sudden it's like the brakes put on. And we stop. And for the Christian, it's one of the first things you do.

You turn back to the Lord. Back to, and I'm not saying that you've gone away from the Lord, but there's a new urgency, a new hunger, a new drive. And you're into the word. And you're seeking the word in order that you might come to know the Lord.

And you do come to know the Lord more through it. And that's why the psalmist said, it is good for me that I've been afflicted. Not that there was actual good in the affliction. It wasn't that he was taking delight in his affliction.

But he was able to take delight in the law of God, in the word of God, through the afflictions that he had gone through. And so the psalmist is here saying, I would have perished in my affliction had it not been for your law.

[18:30] And then he says, I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. And he adds, I am yours, save me.

And it's lovely that, you know, because I'm sure there are times we've said the same thing. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.

I am yours, save me. Save me are the first words we really cried at the very beginning of our journey of faith, isn't it? Lord, save me.

Maybe you can't quite remember. Whether they were these words or not, that's what you meant.

You asked the Lord to have mercy upon you. You asked the Lord to come into your life.

In whatever words you actually used, these, that was the heart of it. Lord, save me. Save me. And you know, we've never stopped asking the Lord that.

[19:32] We're still saying, save me. Save me from my trouble. Save me from my affliction. Save me from myself. Save me from mine enemies. Save me from the evil one.

Lord, save me from this world. Save me from all the oppression. Save me from all the things that are troubling me. Save me, save me, save me. It is almost a daily cry to the Lord.

But you know what's great? Do you know what we add? Save me. I'm yours. And we're reminding the Lord of his covenant love. Lord, you saved me.

You have already saved me. And you have promised that you will save me. Because I belong to you. I'm yours. And you know, it's a wonderful lever that we have here.

It's not that the Lord needs reminding. But he loves when we come reminding him. Because that's faith. It might be very simple at one level.

[20:32] But it's often the simple faith that's the best. And that's what we find this psalmist here. He has such an assurance that despite all the troubles that were round and about.

And when you go through this psalm, he had plenty of them. But there's always this sense of belonging to the Lord. And we believe that that sense of belonging to the Lord comes about through his understanding of God's word.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we ask that you will bless us. And we pray that you will grant us your grace. That we might know you. And that you will enrich our lives in the knowledge of your truth.

We pray that you will uphold us and keep us. That you will shine your face upon us. And that you will bless us with every blessing in heaven and in earth. We pray to bless our homes and our families.

Surround us with your grace and with your love. And that you will be our shield and our shelter. Take us to our home safely, we pray. And watch over us while the conditions underfoot are so slippery.

[21 : 42] And keep our feet from falling and our eyes from tears. Forgive us our every sin, we pray. All we ask is in and through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen. We'll conclude singing in Psalm 119 from Sing Psalms. And from verse 9 to verse 16. Psalm 119, verse 9.

This is from Sing Psalms. Verse 9.

How can the young keep their life pure? By doing what your word demands. I seek you with my heart and soul. Let me not stray from your commands.

Your word I've hidden in my heart to keep me from offending you. Praise be to you. O Lord, my God. Teach me your statutes firm and true. Each law proceeding from your mouth I gladly with my lips have told.

[22 : 45] I love to follow your commands. I love to follow your commands as others love to count their gold. And so on. Psalm 119, this whole section. 9 to 16.

How can the young keep their life pure? How can the young keep their life pure?

By doing what your word demands? I seek you with my heart and soul.

Let me not stray from your commands. Your word I've hidden in my heart to keep me from offending you.

Praise be to you. O Lord, my God. Teach me your statutes firm and true.

[24 : 01] Each law proceeding from your mouth I gladly with my lips have told.

I love to follow your commands As others love to count their gold.

I meditate upon your wings And on your precepts I reflect I take delight in your decrees Your word I never will find glad Amen.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.

■BM Hello, yma, yma, yma, yma, yma, yma.