

The Word, The Word, The 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: 30 December 2008

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the book of Psalms, Psalm 119 and verse 105. Psalm 119, verse 105.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Now apart from its length, its obvious length, this is quite a remarkable psalm because it is what is called an acrostic psalm.

There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and there are 22 sections in this particular psalm. And each section begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet and works through that section with the letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

It's very clever, very cleverly done. And this psalm, of course, many different people have given different titles to it. Some have said it's like, for instance, an alphabet of divine love.

Other people have said it's a Christian's ABC. It really is quite remarkable and very, very clever. But the main emphasis of this psalm really is upon God's word.

[1 : 16] And when you read, if you were to read through the psalm, and sometimes people hold back from reading through the psalm, they'll read part of it, but sometimes they hold back from reading right through the psalm just because it's so big, so long.

And sometimes when you actually read it quickly, you may think it's very, very repetitive. But it's not as repetitive as it actually seems. Some people have preached right through this, verse by verse. But it's not as repetitive as you realize. But I think the theme above all other themes within it is the importance, the centrality of God's word for our life.

Because the psalmist, although he's having problems and difficulties, and although there are persecutions, and all sorts of things, he takes comfort in the word.

Because there's no doubt, but there are, amongst many of the things, there are people who are ridiculing him for his beliefs. Nothing new in that. It's as age old as the world itself, a sin itself, where people are ridiculed for their belief.

[2 : 29] And what does the psalmist do? He hides in the word. He takes comfort from the word. And really that's what we should do as well.

And I don't believe that there is anything that proves ultimately to be of a greater comfort to us than God's own word. And I'm sure all of us in here at different times, different occasions, under different circumstances, have been so thankful for God's word.

There are maybe times when God's word is, well, it's like, it's kind of ordinary. And what I mean, what I say by that is that you read it day by day, but it's not really bringing anything great into your experience.

You say to yourself, well, that's good. That's good, and you read it, and that is right. And we should be in the habit of reading God's word, reading some, at least, of God's word every single day.

But there are other times when there is no book in all the wide world that is more precious, that is more meaningful, that is more powerful than this word.

[3 : 44] When you have it, you say to yourself, this is it, and I thank the Lord that I have this book. I thank the Lord sincerely and absolutely that this word is my word, that I have this word.

And it's a wonderful thing. I think I said this before, but it's one of the things that I've noticed. I think I said this recently when looking at another version, this psalm, that I have seen old Christians put away most of their other books and focus more and more and more on this book, the Bible.

There are many wonderful books written about the Bible, many wonderful books written about people's lives who have served God. There are extraordinary books which give us wonderful insight into the Scripture.

And I'm sure anybody who seriously studies the Scripture is thankful for these books that shed so much light upon the truth. And yet, what I have tended to see with old Christians as they're reaching

the end of their days, that all these other books that may have been so important, so precious in their lives, are being pushed aside for this one book, the Bible.

That this book is a book above all books. This is where their focus, where their life, where their thinking is.

[5 : 25] And I think that's one of the things that this psalmist is highlighting. It's just how important, how essential, how central to our lives the Word of God, really is.

And so we find that the psalmist here is saying to us that really the Word is the rule, it is the direction for its life. Not only the present here, but also the future.

And so the psalmist makes this wonderful statement, Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Now, of course, every single person is on a journey. We're all walking down a road. Every person is on a journey, the journey of life. It begins when human life is formed.

And that life will continue through this world until death. But the Word of God makes it very clear to us that death is not the end. This is, we are on a journey to a particular destination.

[6 : 29] Not the destination of death, but there is a destination after death. A destination after the grave. The grave is only temporary, although it appears very final at the time of a burial.

It is only temporary. There are only two destinies, the Word of God tells us, and that is either heaven or hell. And so every person is on a journey through this world to that particular destination.

The Bible makes that absolutely clear. It's not one of these little obscure points that sometimes where theologians might differ and they might not be too sure just what exactly is being said.

These are absolutely clear fundamental teachings of the Word of God. And it's really quite a remarkable thing when you think of all the enemies and forces and powers in this world that any soul will actually reach the eternal destiny of glory.

It's quite a remarkable thing. Because when you think of all the enemies within our own heart, all the natural opposition that we have to God within our own heart.

[7 : 49] And maybe you're saying, oh, hold on. I don't have all that natural opposition to God in my heart. Oh, yes, you do. So do I. Because what belongs to us by nature is still there.

And the natural heart is opposed to God and the things of God. That is why people naturally run away from God. That is why people are quite happy to push God out of the picture.

That is a picture that is shown us right at the very beginning when man fell. That Adam ran away from God. He didn't want to face up to the light of God.

He was on the run. And let us thank the Lord that God went after Adam. And God called Adam. Adam, where are you? God called Adam back to himself to face up to, to appear before him.

And let us thank the Lord for his mercy and for his grace there. But when you think about all the forces that are within us and when you think of all the forces that are around us, when you think of satanic forces, the kingdom of darkness, when you think that there is an enemy who is every single day trying to trip you up.

[9 : 05] If you are here today as a Christian, every day Satan tries to trip you up. Now you think about that in the natural world. If there was somebody that every day wherever you went, supposing you are in school or in work or whatever, that every day was always going to click your heels, was always going to come up behind you when you were either running or walking and trip you.

Sometimes it would be just a little click, sometimes it would be a full swipe and you didn't know when and you didn't know where but every single day this person was doing that to you. It would get, there would be times you would say, I can't take any more of this.

Well that's what Satan is out to do every single day. Every day he's trying spiritually to trip us up, to spoil us, to hinder our walk in some way or another.

He's the master at it. And then when you think of the world that we're living in, a world that is opposed to God. The spirit of this world is opposed to God.

So it's actually quite a remarkable thing that any soul can make it through this world to the eternal destiny of glory.

[10 : 22] When you think that all around and about and even within there are enemies that are seeking to destroy. But the wonderful thing is that nothing will ever destroy God's work.

And so the great miracle is that souls have been taken to the glory of Emmanuel's land. And it just shows the awesome power of grace. As John Newton in his wonderful hymn called it Amazing Grace.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. But he doesn't just stop there. He highlights that amazing grace that not only saved but kept and an amazing grace that would take him to the glory that is hereafter.

Amazing. Every step is taken with this amazing grace. So the psalmist here is highlighting this word which is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path.

Now some people have, and I think that's pushing the point too far, are saying that the lamp is for the night time and the light is for the day.

[11 : 40] Now I don't think that we can separate and start looking at it in that way but there is a point in that in that I believe that really what the word is saying is that God's word is truly a lamp and a light and that God's care and God's concern over us and God's illuminating our life and our path is during the day and night.

In other words it's 24-7. God doesn't abandon us when we go to bed at night and say that's him or that's her off to sleep. When they awaken I'll sort of come in again and begin to deal with them.

No. And I think we're aware that there are spiritual struggles going on in the night as well as in the day. Sometimes there are spiritual victories.

The psalm talks about songs and the bible talks about songs in the night. And I think we're conscious that there have been times where we have wakened A.

to be aware of God's presence and B. times we're awakened finding ourselves in the middle of some darkness. Because you see there is a spiritual battlefield being enacted all round and we are at the center of a spiritual struggle.

[13 : 00] So it doesn't stop when we go to sleep. And I'm sure there have been times where you've gone to bed as a Christian full of the Lord and with a great sense of peace and a great sense of thankfulness and you feel so close to the Lord and you're waking up in the morning and your heart is as hard as flint and you feel as dead and you feel as empty and you're saying to yourself what's happened?

What's happened in these hours? Well what's happened is very simply that the evil one I believe has been at work and our own evil heart our own heart of unbelief has then taken over.

You see things are happening in the night but this psalm is telling us that the Lord is there. He's working with us. Just like Israel. Remember when Israel journeyed in the wilderness. What did God do?

God went before them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. So that God was lighting up their path during the day and he was also lighting up their path during the night.

And remember when the pillar of cloud stopped they stopped. When the pillar of cloud moved they moved. And that's what the Lord is showing us. That this word is just like that.

[14 : 19] This is the light to lighten up our path. The light to guide us. And when God's word tells us to stop we're to stop. When God's word tells us to move we are to move.

And so here is this light to lighten up our path. Now of course as we are by nature we're in darkness. Spiritual darkness.

And we don't want the light. That's why Jesus said men love darkness rather than light. light. And if you're here today and you have no real drawing to the Lord and you will you can identify to a certain extent with that.

I think we all can understand something. Particularly when you become a believer you know exactly what is being said. God's light shines into our heart through the word.

One of the things it does is it exposes who we are. It shows us something of our own sin. It shows us the kind of passion we really are.

[15 : 38] And we don't like that. We recoil from that. God's love. And that's one of the reasons that people don't want the word because it's a rebuke to their conscience. They don't want God's law because it is a rebuke to the way they live.

People say no just leave me alone. I don't want to be disturbed. I'm just I'm quite happy with life as it is. Don't ruffle my life. And that's what God's word does.

It does. God's word can make us feel really uncomfortable. And I don't believe there's a Christian in here who has not opened God's word and found it distinctly uncomfortable.

And because you've been rebuked by it. It's hit home right into your heart and it's a rebuke to you. It's convicting you. It's convincing you of your sin. And it's not just the unbeliever that that happens to.

It's to the believer as well. Sometimes a mature believer like David. David's conviction of sin I believe was far greater as an older Christian than as a young person.

[16 : 51] Psalm 51 was written at a time when David was a seasoned mature Christian. And you cannot read that psalm but realize that here is somebody who is in the very depths of conviction of sin.

And yet at the same time is discovering and realizing the liberty that is found in Jesus Christ. So if you're here today my friend and you do not know this light in your own heart that you are still in darkness and this I'm not don't get me wrong this has not been critical this is not a criticism because that is how people are by nature.

We've all been like that. And it is only by the light by God coming in Christ Jesus who made that declaration Jesus came into the world saying I am the light of the world because we were in darkness and we couldn't find the door we couldn't find the road to walk on by ourselves that's why Jesus came and Jesus said I'm the light of the world I'm the light to open up the path I am the door and the gate and I will shine to show you the way and that's what we do when we present the gospel when we preach the gospel it is to lift up Christ to exalt Christ to show people the way of salvation because Jesus is the light of the world but you know Jesus doesn't stop there just by being the light of the world but in a wonderful way when he comes into a person's heart and life that person also becomes a light in the world

Jesus said let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works why so that they'll think you're a good person no it's not about you or me being thought of as being good but in order that my father might be glorified in heaven that's why ultimately it's not about us we are there and whatever we do that is worthwhile that is of good that is done for the Lord and to the Lord the Lord acknowledges and there is something reflected of the Lord in it and that is why people who may do an awful lot in this world and it may appear to be good but the Lord is looking on it and he says you know they're not doing it to me if we ever do anything out of a self-centered motive if we do something in order to think in order that others will think better of us than somebody else we've got it wrong

God will not reward that God does not look upon that favorably and God knows your motive the motive of everything you do and you see we can get it horribly wrong all our lives we can be driven by the wrong spirit the wrong attitude and God knows God is seeing our heart he's seeing our motives he's seeing why are you doing what you're doing is it so that people will think well of you or is it that God will think well of you are you doing it by faith to God this is what we've always got to be asking ourselves and that's part of what this very verse is saying God will light up our path he will shine his light in us and through us so that we will know that what we're doing is to him and for him and for his glory because ultimately that's what it's all about and so God sets this light into our lives and if you've never discovered that light then I ask you today go to him the one who is the light and say

[20 : 56] Lord shine into my heart because this is the thing you can't work that light up your shell there isn't a button you can press so that all of us said that's it there's the light on now I see the Lord who is the light is the only one who can bring that light into your life that's why you must go to him and ask him and say Lord shine your light into my life come into my life because that's what the Lord will do and as we say part of what he does with his word is he convicts and convinces us of our sin God also with his word prevents us from doing things because God's word as we say as a light shines to us and shows us a danger if you're walking along a road suppose you were walking along not a main road but just a sort of a man-made path at night you were taking a shortcut and there's no light at all it's more than likely that you would stumble because you know sometimes there are paths that have been made maybe in rural areas if you were taking a shortcut over the back maybe it's going to a particular neighbor's house and it might be a track maybe that sheep have begun to through their going back and forth have worn and as time has gone on it's made into a kind of a track but there's often there's potholes there might be even rabbit holes in it there might be big stones in it all sorts of things and unless you have a light it's more than likely that at some stage you'll go over your ankle or your slip or your foot will go into a hole or something will happen and that's what God's word is doing it's this lamp this light to prevent us from having these accidents from these falls from these stumbles in life you remember when Israel were going to cross the

Jordan God came to Joshua and he said this is the key to your success if you want to make your way prosperous do you know what you've got to do you've got to get my word you can read about it in Joshua chapter 1 verses 7 and 8 read my word study my word meditate upon my word have the law my word in your mouth study it meditate upon it day and night and then the Lord says you will make your way prosperous and you will have good success so the Lord is showing Joshua at the very outside of the campaign the key the key to progress the key to moving forward is the word and it hasn't changed and as we go out of one year and into another may we go out centered and rooted upon this word because it is the key to our future and there is nothing that will prepare us and keep us in life yes there will be stumbles but you know if we have the word there will be recovery because when we stumble we know straight away where to go it is back to the light we've stumbled because of a little bit of darkness we need to get back into the light and again this word encourages as we said that before there is nothing that can encourage a person quite like the word you know in this world everybody has a potential to let you down everybody because we're sinners and I'm sure everybody knows what it is to be let down but there's one who will never let us down and that is the

Lord and that is why it is so important that we fix our attention upon the one who is always the same the one who is always stable the one who is always secure and when your heart is sore and when you've gone through difficult times there's nothing like the word of God because you know when you read the word and I'm sure you can identify with times where maybe you've been so low and you've gone to the word or else you've come to church and it might be through a psalm that's been sung and God applies that to your soul it's like it's like ointment it's like a balm and you're saying wow that's just what I needed there's like a soothing effect has come into your soul and that has brought about by God's spirit bringing God's word to bear upon you and again the lamp is that to guide you the light to shine the way to show you the way to go and how often that is true as well when you're facing crossroads in life my dear friends we're always facing crossroads

I remember when I was young thinking there were only about three or four big decisions that you had to make in life and once that was sorted out then that was all once you found out who to marry and what job to take and where to live that was it the rest was a piece of cake no it's not life is always about decisions every day and that's why God's word is here for us showing us where to go when to go how to go and just and just as the lamp was trimmed and oil poured oil set in it and the lamp trimmed every single day in the tabernacle in the temple the lamp was never allowed to go out it was part of the duty there to keep that lamp trimmed so it is our duty every day to go to this word in order that we will find God's light God's illumination it's not we don't simply go to the word in order that we will become intellectual geniuses with the word it's not here so that we we don't learn and study the word in order that we can try and defeat or beat somebody in an argument it is in order that we will know how to live that's the bottom line that in order that we will know how to live and as we come to study the word we will come to know God more and more and the more that we come to know God the more we will learn how to live the two go together the more we come to know God as we study him through his word the more we will come to know how to live well as we come as we say to the end of one year and move into another you make sure that this word will be part of your life it is a word that converts if you're not converted my dear friend it's this word that converts the Holy Spirit applying the word you may not realize that at the time but that's exactly how it is and it's this word that not only makes a passion live but it's a word that keeps a passion alive and it's a word that will bring a person eventually to glory all the time it's a word the word the word the word let us pray God thank you so thank you too good bye