

The Unfolding Light-giving Word

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Father, that you have taken us out of darkness and into the marvelous light of your gospel! And that you have given us that foundation. We thank you that you have lifted us out of that mighty clay, that sinking sand! And yet placed our feet on that rock that is Jesus Christ, the living and true word.

Be with us, we pray, for the moments we're together. And as we share your word here, Lord, we just pray that your name would indeed be glorified. So we ask forgiveness for our sins. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

Turn back with me then to Psalm 119, to that section we read. Psalm 119 and verse 129. I want to focus particularly on the words of 129 and 130. As we move into just looking at these words just a little bit more.

Your testimonies are wonderful, and therefore my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light. It imparts understanding to the simple.

I just like to think about this evening and especially where we find ourselves tonight, which is in a place that I'm sure for most of us, we never thought we'd ever find ourselves in.

[1 : 41] And here we are so glad to be in the house of God with God's people. And what wonderful and marvelous words we have here. Your testimonies are wonderful. Therefore my soul keeps them. The unfolding or the entrance of your words gives light.

And it gives understanding to the simple or imparts understanding to the simple. And these are words that echo the experience of every Christian. And not just when we came to faith first, but these words are also applicable to us right throughout our Christian lives.

And this is a theme which has been mentioned before in this psalm in Psalm 119. And it's repeated again here.

Because God's words brought light to the psalmist. And that's what the psalmist delighted in. The word of God makes things clearer, not cloudier. And light and clarity also come in when the word comes into our lives.

What I'd like to do is just to consider briefly, first of all, our relationship with the word before we came to faith.

[3 : 15] And then secondly, how it now impacts our lives as Christians. Most of us here, if not all of us, we've grown up having access to the Bible from a very young age.

And that, whether it be at home or whether it be in church, whether it be in Sunday school or whether it may have been in school, access to the Bible, access to the Bible was there for most of us.

We're all different, I know, and it could well be that you don't come into this category. But I think the majority of us had that access to both hearing and reading about God and about Jesus in our days before we came to faith.

And we generally knew about God's law at that time as well, because it would have been taught to us more than likely through the Ten Commandments.

But in those dark days before light came into our lives, there was no light to guide us and no light to help us make proper sense of God's word.

[4 : 35] Martin Luther made this statement about people who haven't come to faith and their attitudes towards the Bible.

This is what he said. He said, Nobody who has not the Spirit of God sees a jot of what is in Scripture. All men have their hearts darkened so that even when they can discuss and quote all that is in Scripture, they do not understand or really know any of it.

There are very strong words there. But when we think about it, that really is the truth. We never really had a proper understanding of Scripture. We never really knew it.

No matter how well we might have memorized or gone over passages, it really was just that we could have discussions about it and quote all that's in it.

But yet, never having a full understanding. The word itself reiterates that darkness that man was in, particularly, I think, in Ephesians chapter 2, where it tells us, You were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world and following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

[6 : 24] And that is re-emphasized once again in the same chapter in Ephesians chapter 2, just a little bit further down, where Paul says, Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

So there we are, scripture reinforces all of that. Now we often hear of the need for a revelation and we understand, I think most of us, that there are two types of revelation given by God.

There is what's called a general revelation. And what we understand from that is what we see in God's world, this points us towards him.

And we can marvel at everything we see round about us in the creation. But according to Romans 1, that revelation is only enough to condemn us because by nature we all suppress the truth that we see.

[7 : 57] So in our dark days before Christ came into our lives, that's the way that we were, preferring to worship ourselves and our idols, preferring that to worshiping the creator of all things.

And the second type of revelation is what's called a special revelation. And this is what's needed to enlighten our understanding of God's word.

Because we could never, never hope to understand God or his word on our own terms. You cannot know God by investigation, no matter how deep you investigate.

And what I mean by that is, it's only by revelation or as we have it here, this, this marvellous unfolding of God's word that we get light.

God reveals himself by self-disclosure, by his very own words. God reveals himself by self-disclosure, by his very own words.

[9 : 05] And also in the way that we came to faith. We all arrive at the same point, but we all can go through different experiences and become to the Lord.

He draws us in different ways, in ways that are appropriate for us individually. But after reading that section of Ephesians 2, we have these two marvelous words, but God.

But God in his mercy. But God in his mercy has brought us to faith. He has lifted us out of that darkness.

In whichever way and in whichever time scale you were brought, here and now, we are here under the word of God.

And with that special bond between each other, but also between ourselves and God and God to us.

[10 : 16] Somewhere along the line, this change occurred in whatever way, in the lives of each one of us. We now have, as I mentioned, this love to be in the company of God's people.

And this love for God that we never had before. The word tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I like to interpret that personally as the love of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

That's just the way I like to think of it myself. Because unless the Lord had come into my life, I would never have that love for him because he first loved me.

And he's imparted his wisdom to me in whatever measure I may have it. And he's done the same for each one of us in whatever measure that we each have it.

So here we are now in the company of God's people, having this love for God that we never had before. Ultimately, at that point in our lives, we needed new eyes and a new heart to see Scripture's beauty.

[11 : 34] And to understand its authority, just as we sang there in the psalm, that we could gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

When God gifts his faith, we see this world entirely differently. And the reason for that is because we become a new creation in Christ Jesus.

And this is where these two verses that we look at tonight, this is where they become meaningful. The testimonies of God being so wonderful.

The psalmist longing and wanting for his soul to keep them. The unfolding of the word giving them light.

And giving them understanding to all people, to the simple. So there we have these verses that we have.

[12 : 42] God's word now makes perfect sense to us in a new and in a personal way. Because we are now living out the word, as it were.

We have heard this phrase so often. And we do not now, for example, just know the words of Psalm 23. But now, thankfully, in God's mercy, we also now know the shepherd of Psalm 23.

And we know him personally. Because now, having come to faith, we see Jesus. And now we know Jesus. And instead of, as perhaps before, and most likely before, we were just acknowledging the cross as being part of Scripture.

And looking upon it as something barbaric. And trying to understand what exactly was the reasoning for Jesus giving his life on that cross. Well, now, having come to faith, now we truly give thanks to God for all that Jesus did for us at Calvary.

Because this word is now speaking to us. The testimonies of God are now speaking to us. And the word of God is now so precious to us in our lives.

[14 : 08] It's applicable to us. And it's uplifting for us. It's exhilarating. And it's encouraging for us.

And as the psalmist puts it, it's just so wonderful. Just so wonderful. And this is something that we never experienced before.

Getting guidance and real understanding from this word of God. Because it's now Spirit-led reading. And Spirit-led hearing. Because God's Spirit has now been gifted to us. And dwells within each one of us. And it's now natural.

It's completely natural for each one of us now. To actually follow God's Word. And to want to follow God's Word. And His teaching. And His guidance.

[15 : 08] Because His Word is no longer a series of abstract statements for us. It's now meaningful. And it now leads us in our lives.

And they are now experienced by us as words flowing from the heart of a personal God. who deals with each one of us intimately and lovingly.

As one of His own adopted children. So that's just marvelous. And it's now been taken from the heart of a personal God.

And it's now been brought into this marvelous light. Being brought into this family of God. And it's now been adopted as His child.

And it's now been brought into this family of God. And it's now been brought into this family of God.

And it's now been brought up in the presence of God.

[16 : 14] father. That's the difference between being in darkness and being in the light of life. Here in verse 129 when God speaks to us he's revealing more of who he is. God has authored and he's preserved this book, his book, so that we might know him.

And this written record is the voice of God, is from the mouth of God, and it's written through those who were given the privilege of writing these books of the Bible. And if it's from the mouth of God, and the written record is the voice of God, then where else can any of us go to to substantiate that truth? Because there is no higher authority.

This word of truth, it doesn't depend on the popularity of some public opinion. It's not worldly wisdom which sways and changes continually according to circumstances. This word of God, the testimonies which the psalmist says are so wonderful. This is the word of the living God.

This is the word of the maker of heaven and earth. And it's firm and it's sure. And it assures us that God is righteous and that his word is true. And the psalmist here, he's just expressing marvel and wonder at these testimonies. And he's saying, I want to keep them secure. I want my soul to keep them and to really look after them and to hold fast to everything that God is telling me and that God reveals to me.

And at this point in the psalm, he's most likely reflecting on some of the marvels that God has done beforehand.

[18 : 48] For example, he's marveling at the creation. He's probably marveling at the Exodus and all the promises that were given to the children of Israel as they moved into the land of Canaan.

And now, in addition to that, what we have here in 2025 is we have Jesus as well.

We have Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit, and we have insight from God's word into the conclusion of all things and how this world is going to end and what God is going to do with us, with the love he has for us to take, is to be with himself. We have insight into all these things. And because of that, our souls, our inner beings, should also be like the psalmist here. Our souls and inner beings should be like a safe where we lock God's word in.

And we take these amazing jewels and we make sure that they can never depart from us, that we want to hold on to them because God's word now is so precious to us.

We need to treasure them and guard them and keep them. And do you know what the marvel is for us with God's word here? As we do that and as we treasure them, his words more and more keep unfolding and it keeps giving us more and it keeps giving us these nuggets that are just so precious.

[20 : 37] And so often it's at exactly the right time in our lives. And verse 130 here, the Hebrew word that's used for this unfolding or this entrance, the unfolding, the opening, it can be translated as unfolding or it can be translated as entrance.

So we understand this as a revelation or an opening, like a door opening or like a curtain opening and the light comes in. That's what we experience as God gives us more and more of his word.

This door or this curtain or whatever it may be, it's just opening more and more and giving us more light, more of his word and more to hold on to.

God speaking to us really is that unfolding of the word. And we understand the light that's spoken of here, that the psalm speaks of here.

It says your words give us light. We understand that light to be, to be the shining face of God. If you look at Psalm 135, the psalmist explains it perfectly in a sentence there.

[22 : 04] In verse 135, the psalmist says, Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes. Because you can never learn God's statutes properly without God's face shining upon him and giving him that real understanding.

And so like many other parts of the Psalms, this links back also to the classic blessing that is promised and that was promised in Numbers chapter 6, verses 22 to 26.

Let me just read them out. Numbers 6, and I'm sure you all know this very well. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Speak to Aaron and his son saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel, and you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And is that not what we look for from the Lord? Exactly that.

Remember, just as Moses and Aaron had it there, it's for God's people of Israel. It's for all God's covenant people.

[23 : 35] And how we look for that preciousness of God's face shining upon us and shining upon his word as we learn it and as we experience more and more of the peace of God that passes all understanding.

And so as we go on in our spiritual lives, this unfolding of the word becomes deeper and it opens up our understanding more and more, gaining more knowledge of God.

And in so doing, we understand more of his ways. We understand more of God's will, more of his purposes, and surely we experience more of his mercy.

That mercy that we had no conception we needed beforehand, until the moment he opened our understanding and gave us light. And immediately we realized, just as we heard in prayer there, how unworthy we were, and how much we needed God's mercy in our lives.

And yet, he gives us that each and every day. And how many times have we come to God's word, and to a reading of God's word, and we have just found it to be so precious, and so appropriate for our situation at that very time, or on that very day?

[25 : 08] How many times have we done that? And it just leaves us in awe of God, because of what his word gives us, what he gives us in his word.

And there are other times, aren't there, where we may read a passage, maybe 10 times, 20 times, 30 times, 40, or even 50 times, or however many times.

And then we go to read that passage again, and God sheds new light on that passage for us. And God gives us more understanding of that passage for us.

And that's a key aspect as well, of this unfolding of the word, giving us more light, and enlightening our understanding.

And it's that in itself, just as the saying goes, as that phrase goes, is it not just marvelous in our eyes, all that God is giving us and doing for us.

[26 : 20] It's so important for us to follow the wisdom of God's word closely, and to treasure it in our hearts, and to let God's spirit guide us to be effectual in the way that we live.

This psalm we have here, psalm 119. It's perhaps a psalm that is so long that we don't go near it. We don't read right through it, and perhaps we don't go near it too often. Perhaps we don't read it enough. But it's a psalm.

It's a psalm that makes statements time and time again, that emphasize and communicate over and over again how precious God's word is.

God's promises in his word produce in us a longing for more of him, and our longing to be more in prayer with him as well, to hear his voice speaking to us, and to speak back to him, believing that he's also hearing us and what we say to him.

[27 : 34] Therefore, for us to grow in Christ, we need to be in study in his word, in his bible, more and more because that in itself makes us long more for God, and it does prompt us to more prayer.

We mustn't neglect our bible, and we need to ask God each and every time we come to it, to work in us and to keep working in us, to revive our soul every time that we open up his word, so that we may truly be able to see, may your word, your unfolding word, be a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

May God bless these thoughts to us. Well, let's close now. We'll sing to God's praise in Psalm 36. Yes.