

The Simple Made Wise

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- [0 : 00] This is section 129 to 136. When I was here a few weeks ago, I looked at the very first part of this testimony,¹
- about how our soul keeps them, and the wonder of the unfolding of God's Word giving us the Word of God.
- I'd just like to pick up on this from that point and really just to go through the rest of this section and to try and explain parts of it and how it applies to ourselves in our Christian lives as well.
- Psalm 119 is the longest of Psalms, as we know, and it's a wonderful Psalm. It's as if the Psalmist has taken a step back to reflect on all of God's goodness to him.
- And the Psalm celebrates the gift of God's covenant instruction, the Torah, as a perfect guide for life. And this Psalm links in very closely to Psalm 19 as well.
- [1 : 17] And it reflects the view that the Lord, our Lord, who abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness, that he freely and fully forgives his people when they confess their sins.
- He loves his people without limit. And therefore, he also guides the faithful in the way of life that is genuinely good and beautiful.
- So as we pick up here in this section, in the second part of verse 130 here, and what it tells us was that this unfolding of God's Word, it imparts understanding to the simple.
- And we might ask the question, first of all, who are the simple? And if we refer to Psalm 19 for that, then Psalm 19 tells us that the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul, and the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
- And I suppose we can ask ourselves the question, as we read these verses, as we sing these verses, do we really think about the words there and how does that relate to us with this word, this word that makes wise the simple?
- [2 : 49] Well, this making wise the simple basically means that God's Word and His revealed truth, they provide a spiritual insight and understanding to those who are open and to those who are teachable.
- They are open to God's Word, they are teachable. And it transforms them from being ignorant and inexperienced individuals into people of true wisdom.
- And if we are going to look to apply that to ourselves, then do we accept the fact that we were ignorant and inexperienced previously?
- And there is only one answer to that, and of course we were. We might have learnt much of God's Word, but it wasn't applied to us, to our hearts.
- And we were totally ignorant in that respect of the way of faith by salvation in Jesus Christ, by believing in Jesus Christ.
- [3 : 51] So, we were inexperienced in that particular aspect of faith. This term simple in this context, it doesn't imply foolishness as we might understand simple, or people who lack education or intelligence as we might understand the word today.

It doesn't imply that at all. But it implies that just people being open to instruction. Ordinary people. Ordinary people just like you and I, for each one of us here.

and as we know ourselves and we can apply to ourselves, there is no person who is so blind, or who is so ignorant, that their mind and heart cannot be opened by God's No matter where they have been, or what they have done, or anything that is in their lives.

If they are willing to accept God's word, if they're teachable in that respect, then God's Spirit can transform out of that darkness and into the light of his word.

This verse in Psalm 19 and here in Psalm 119, it highlights how God's law transforms and clarifies the nature of his word.

[5 : 17] It emphasizes how the word gives us life, it provides wisdom and it guides believers towards righteous living. And when we reflect on this word law, we can think about it as God's teachings and God's principles that are embedded in the scriptures.

Something that directs us towards righteousness. And that righteousness is indeed wisdom. And as we know from the word elsewhere, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So this sure testimony, as we have it, acts as a guide that imparts divine wisdom to those who are willing or who have been made willing by the Spirit of God to receive it.

So what we have here is, it's a spiritual transformation. A total transformation from the way that we were before into what now, the passion that God has made us.

The process transforms the simple or the ordinary passion, making them wise in the knowledge of God, giving real instruction and leading them to wisdom and godliness.

[6 : 42] And it's very true, isn't it, that when we come to faith, we actually begin to really and truly understand the meaning of life.

And why we're here? We are here primarily to worship God. As the Catholicism tells us, man's strength is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

That's the purpose of our life. That is what we didn't understand properly within our hearts. We knew it in our heads, but not within our hearts, with the Spirit applying it.

But now we know it, because we've been transformed from that place of darkness to where we are now. And that in itself is a miracle.

Every one of us is a miracle. And we are here, we are now part of the family of God. We are a child of God.

[7 : 42] We are miraculous. We are miraculous. We are miraculous. We are miraculous. We are miraculous. We are miraculous. And just as I read out there, what gives us assurance with that as well is I read out in 1 Peter 2 there that we are a chosen race.

We are a royal priesthood. We are a holy nation. We are a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And these words in verse 10 of 1 Peter 2, once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you have not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

And how wonderful that is for each one of us. And we understand from that that we are now seen by the Father, by God, as being righteous in his sight through Jesus Christ.

And I wonder how much do we really take that in? Because there is no greater privilege than what we have as being the children of God. We are righteous in his sight and it is the greatest of blessings that we can have.

[9 : 06] It's just wonderful. And out of that change, out of that change that has come into our lives, there is now this.

And we look here in verse 131 and verse 132. In 131, first of all, I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments.

And as I work with you and I are tonight, are we panting, are we longing for more of God's word and to learn more often.

Wanting to be taught and guided and corrected and encouraged by the Lord himself. Surely that is what we are looking for.

Yes, when we came to faith first, for each one of us, there was a real longing and we couldn't get enough of it. But as life goes on, we have highs and lows, highs and lows.

[10 : 11] But the steady thing ought to be for wanting more and more of God's word in our lives and God's presence in our lives as well. As we've been led on in that way, just as the psalmist has here, I open my mouth.

It's like he's doing this physically, he's doing it spiritually, wanting, wanting and panting. Because I long for your commandments, for your word. And when we think of Psalm 42 that we've sung there, there again the psalmist says, My soul longs for more of the living God in my experience.

And in Psalm 139 we have words there that tells us that God knows us so intimately. He knows everything about us, but his thoughts and he thinks about us.

And we're told in that psalm and his thoughts are so precious to us. How precious are your thoughts towards me, the psalmist says. And when we think of that, does that in itself not make our soul long for more of God and his word?

The year in verse 132, it just starts to go a little deeper. And the psalmist becomes a personal prayer for the psalmist.

[11 : 40] Turn to me, he says, and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. Turn to me, O Lord, and be gracious to me.

Turn your face towards me. Or sometimes we have to plead with the Lord, O Lord, please turn your face back towards me. How I need you now in my experience.

Perhaps we've wandered off somewhere. Perhaps we're not in the place we ought to be and we have to cry out, Turn your face back towards me, O Lord, I pray. And that's the reality of our experience.

And it's reflected again in verse 135 here as well, where it tells, where the psalmist says, He wants the Lord to shine, to shine upon his face.

And make your face shine upon your servant. And he's saying, look upon me and help me to pray. And help me to focus on you.

[12 : 41] That's what I need to do, to focus on you and on your word. And this is a genuine, holy desire to experience God's close presence.

Be gracious to me and be merciful to me. As we read there in 1 Peter chapter 1, and that's exactly what we need, isn't it? We need his grace and we need mercy.

And that's what he's gifted us. So we have the emphasis here in the second line of verse 132.

He says, ask us your way with those who love your name. Turn to me and be gracious to me. Because the psalmist is reaching back and he knows that God's face was turned towards his own people in days gone by.

As he led them on the exodus. As he took them through the wilderness. As he took them into the promised land and so on. Up to that point, he knows that that is a history of God.

[13 : 52] And he's saying, look upon me and help me to pray and help me to focus on you. This is a genuine desire. And this is what you do, Lord.

Because you help your people and I know that from the past. And that's what we can say as well. We know that from the past because that's what God does. He turns his face towards us when we call out to him.

He does that for everyone who loves his name. And that's what we have. Those of us who love his name, each one of us because he has first loved us.

And we do the same, pleading for grace, pleading for mercy, pleading for forgiveness. And we do the same, pleading for forgiveness, with that hunger in our hearts for God's close presence. And here's the thing.

We didn't do that before. Before God came into our lives. But we do it now. We didn't realise we needed to do that before.

[14 : 59] But we realise we have to do it now all the time. And it's all of God's grace unfolding through his word in our experience.

And that in itself should be an encouragement for us. That now we do it when before we didn't do it. And we had no concern of doing it.

But we do now. Because God is working in our lives. And that in itself leads us to want to be more pleasing to God in our own walk.

And to obey him and to praise him. And to give him the honour and the glory that belongs to him alone. To walk the walk.

And to fight the good fight. That's what we have to do constantly in our Christian walk. And as in verse 133 here.

[16 : 00] The psalmist moves on. Asking the Lord in that respect. To keep his feet steady. Keep my feet steady. Keep me in your word.

Just the same. As a psalmist. We look for guidance. Knowing God is with us. His word tells us that he's with us.

And his word promises that he will never leave us. And he will never ever forsake us. Even as we have in John chapter 10.

Where Christ the shepherd says, My sheep hear my voice. And I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life. And they will never perish.

And no one will snatch them out of my hand. Forever safe and secure. In Jesus Christ. And so the psalmist is asking God.

[17 : 00] To keep his feet steady. Because at this point. In his prayer. He is acknowledging. His sinful nature. This is his personal prayer.

And he is effectively asking God. For God's spirit to accompany his word. And for it to be. Engrafted within him. So that he will be guided. And ruled by it.

And not be led astray. By his own desires. Or his own wants. Or whatever may lead him astray. He is acknowledging. That there are evil inclinations.

Within him. And he doesn't want them to go over. Any part of his life. He is human. And he is aware of the constant spiritual battle.

That is going on inside him. Just as it is with each one of us. That constant spiritual battle. That is going on inside of us.

[18 : 03] And just as we heard of last Wednesday evening. From Colum's excellent address. This battle of faith. And the spirit. Warring against the flesh.

And don't we have it so often. For I do not do the good that I want. But the evil I do not want. That is what I keep on doing. But now.

If I do what I do not want. It is no longer I who do it. But this sin. That dwells within me. And we can ask ourselves that question.

Why? Why? Why is sin constantly. Trying to get the better of us? And why does that happen. All too often?

Well. First of all. This again is a sure sign. That God is surely working. In our hearts. Because we have this awareness.

[19 : 03] Of sin. We have this awareness. Of the constant battle. But yet we also have a desire. To know God better. A desire to overcome this sin.

And a desire to please God. And we are also given to us. With the same words as Paul. Aren't we? When we do what we do not want to do.

O wretched man that I am. Or O wretched woman that I am. Whatever it may be. For we didn't have that. Before God came into our lives.

But we have it now. We have it now. And we need to take heart from that. Hard as it is. Sometimes in our circumstances.

With this sin that is continually around us. We must take encouragement. Because we never had this battle before. But we do now. And it gives.

[20 : 01] It gives. Every confidence and assurance. That we are indeed a child of God. Because it is a Lord that we look to now. And it is a Lord that we cry out to.

And I ask a question. For each one of us. Are you more aware. Of sin today. Than you were say 5 or 10 or 15 years ago.

However many years. Are you more aware of sin. In your life today. Than you were when you began. Your Christian walk. I think the answer to that is.

We are. We see more of sin. As we continue. In our Christian walk. And we might ask a question. Then why do we see more of sin.

As we go on. When it. It is liable to just pull us down. And it is just liable to. To. To. Bring us to. To. To discouragement.

[21 : 02] And to. To take us down. From where we were. The reason is. Because we are becoming more holy. At the same time. It may not seem like that.

But God's spirit. Is constantly. Applying. His word to us. Leading us to more awareness. Of sin around us. And at the same time.

Giving us more understanding. Of his word. And his ways. And his requirements. We are being sanctified.

That progressively. That is. Made more like him. More like Jesus. Progressively. In our lives. And that's what the.

Psalmist was praying here. About. He didn't want this sin. To take him over at all. He's praying to God. Keep my footsteps straight. And that's what we need to do.

[21 : 58] Keep our footsteps straight. As we see more of sin. Then. We. We. Should be seen more. Into God's word. And in God's word. And understanding God's word.

More. I mentioned this was a personal prayer. Of the psalmist. But. It's also a prayer. As we can see.

To. It's also a prayer. To keep him safe. From all the external. Influences. Round about him as well. Whatever they may have been.

At that time. He says in verse 134. Redeem me. From man's oppression. That I may keep. Your precepts. He would have had.

His own distractions. In his day. Some very strong distractions. Some perhaps not so strong. Just as we have. In our day. Different distractions.

- [22 : 55] Some very strong for us. Some not so strong. All different for us. As we heard last week. That whatever. Whatever. I may be attracted to.
- That gives me a great desire to sin. May not bother the next. The Christian beside me. One iota. And vice versa. But that's the way we are made. Because.
- God knows each one of us personally. And he helps us through. All of that. So we. We too. Need to be aware of this external influence. Around us. Constantly.
- Divine for our attention. And wanting to lead us. Away. From God. For example. I'm just moving towards the end.
- For example. When we look on. Maybe on our televisions. And what we see. And hear. On our televisions. What we hear on the radio. What we.
- [23 : 49] What we see. Maybe our work colleagues doing. Or perhaps. What we see. What we see. Or perhaps. Or perhaps. What we see. In the behavior. And conversations.
- Or friends. Or other people. And of course. What we see in ourselves. What we see in our own lives. That perhaps.
- Prior to this. We don't really think too much about. But when we see. This particular thing. Whatever it may be in our own lives. Now. That is sin. And that is something.
- That really. I need to keep on check of. Because we become more aware of these things. As we go on. And why do you think that is? Well. I believe. It's because.
- We are growing in grace. Now. This is something that. There are many debates about. How do we know that we are growing in grace? Well.
- [24 : 45] I think this is one of the ways. Because we begin to see more of sin. And more of sin. In our own lives as well. We may not see our growth in grace.
- We may not. We may not. Have an awareness of it. But it's happening. That's my belief. And personally. And I have no other explanation.
- For seeing sin more now. Than I used to see it. In my younger Christian days. I have no other explanation. For seeing it. For what it is.
- Other than. God is revealing that to me. That's my understanding of it at least. Perhaps. Others have a different understanding.
- But I believe that God is doing this. Because he is. Making us more like Jesus. As we go on. As we go on. In our Christian lives. And it's only.
- [25 : 42] Because. Of the grace of God. Working in our lives. That we have this desire. To live more. By his word. In verse 135 here.
- As we just move on towards the end. And. This is why. Just like the psalmist. We also keep. Asking God.
- To draw near to us. To make his face shine upon us. And to teach us more and more. Of his word and statutes. Deciding more of his close presence. And that's why we.
- Also. Like the psalmist. In the final verse of this section. We shed. Streams of tears. In our hearts. And we do so.
- From our eyes as well. At times. Don't we. For. When we look around us. And we see the state of our society. When we look around us. And we see so many people.
- [26 : 40] Who have no concern. For the word of God. We see it in our families. We see it in our circle. Of friends. We see it in Warf colleagues. We see it all around us. In our town here.
- In our communities. And we see. So many folk. Who have no concern. For their souls. No concern for Jesus Christ. And want nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

Want nothing to do with his word. Want nothing to do with. Anything with the gospel. And certainly don't want to come out here. On a Wednesday night with us. That's the last thing they want to do.

And yet. What they don't realise is. This is the greatest blessing. They could ever have in life. And they're missing out on it. Not to be with us. But to be with God's people.

Whatever it may be. Whatever it may be. And we look at our country. And we look at the UK today as well. And we see. And just evil.

[27 : 41] Against the word of God. Against the scriptures. Against Jesus. Against anything to do with following in the paths of righteousness. A real angst against it.

Don't we? Surely that will bring us to tears in our hearts. And tears in our eyes as well. When we look at that. Crying out for the. We should be crying out for the Lord.

To have mercy on us. And mercy on the decision makers. Who are leading us the wrong way. That God would have mercy on each one. And so the psalmist. He shed tears.

Streams of tears. Because people do not keep your law. Hordes of people.

Having no care for anything. Except what they can get for themselves in this life. Doing the opposite of what God asks and instructs.

[28 : 39] And yet the sure hope that we have in Christ. It should never stop us praying for them. Because we were there once ourselves.

Many if not most of us. Depending on our previous experience. In a very similar position. In the same position actually.

Because without Christ. Every one of us was the same. No matter what we did. Without God. And without Christ. In this world. An enemy of God. So we have this sure hope in Christ.

But all of this should also put us on our guard. That we won't be sucked in by the world. And by the devil's craft. It is this devil who is going about at all times. Looking to see who he might devour.

Who he might lead us through. To be on our guard. May this word keep us in prayer. Just like the psalmist. Longing and panting for more of God. And more of his word.

[29 : 40] And to keep us from falling. And to be kept. Until that day. When we are taken home to be with Jesus.

What a wonderful section of Psalm 119 this is. There's so much teaching. And so much comfort. So much consolation. So much encouragement. And I've really just touched on here.

But each of us. We have. We have. Both a personal. But we also have. A shared. Understanding.

In this experience. In other words. We are in this together. Each and every one of us. And just as we read.

And as we sang. Surely. That should lead us. To love one another more as well. And especially to pray for one another. And to look out for one another.

[30 : 40] All. As we are all within this same family of God. And to truly give thanks and praise to God. For all his goodness to us. Just as the hymn writer wrote.

Then sings my soul. My saviour God to thee. How great thou art. Let's close with prayer. Father we just.

Bless you and thank you for. For all of your goodness to us. For all of your leading. All of your guiding. For your word that helps us.

So much in our lives. Where we can. Relate to the experience of. Your people and your word. And. That your word helps us in every single situation.

And any situation we could find ourselves in. In our lives. Just bless us and keep us. We pray. Bless each one of us here this evening. And.

[31 : 45] Lord. Be close to us. Individually and collectively. We just pray that you would. Lead guide and encourage. Each and every one of us.

As we step out of this building this evening. We just pray that you would be with us. And that your word would indeed be. A lamp to your feet. And a light to our path.

For Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. Well can we. Can we close.