

God's Wonderful Word
Psalm 119:129-136
August 30, 2015

Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments. Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts. Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes. My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.

In today's reading from the book of Psalms, the psalmist praises God's Word. He does so because today, just like the day this psalm was composed, the Bible is the most relevant piece of literature ever written.

The Bible is a book without an equal. There are seven things about Scripture that set it apart from all other books. These are called, The Seven Wonders of the Word. The Bible is a:

- § Wonder of its formation – the way in which it grew over time is one of the all-time mysteries.
- § Wonder of its unification – a library of 66 books, yet one book.
- § Wonder of its age – most ancient of all books.
- § Wonder of its sale – best-seller of all time and of any other book.
- § Wonder of its interest – only book in the world read by all classes of people.
- § Wonder of its language – written largely by uneducated men, yet the best book ever from a literary standpoint.
- § Wonder of its preservation – the most hated and persecuted of all books, yet it continues to exist.

Today, we will consider God's Word through the eyes of the psalmist.

Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple (Ps 119:129-130 ESV).

God's Word is wonderful in three important ways.

God's Word is wonderful in its sufficiency. Everything we need to know for this life and the life to come is written on the pages of the Bible. We don't need any other book. We don't need The Book of Mormon. We don't need the Koran. We don't need the writings of Confucius.

God put everything that every human needs to know in his Word. Each verse of every chapter reveals to us the wisdom of God. Through Scripture, God has given us a handbook for living. The acronym for the word Bible – Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth – and that says it all. All life problems can be handled if we just read and obey God's instruction manual for life.

Beyond that, the Bible is complete. There is nothing we can add to the Bible to improve it. Most certainly, there is nothing in the Bible that needs to be taken out in order for it to better fit our day and this society.

God's Word is wonderful in its simplicity. The Bible isn't hard to understand. Why would God give us his Word and then make it impossible to understand. Furthermore, there is no secret code, as some of today's authors and charlatans would have you believe. There is no special knowledge one must be privy to in order to earn God's love.

Today's laws are so complex it takes a special branch of government and a legion of lawyers to interpret them, and even then they don't always get it right. But the Bible is so simple even a child can understand it. In Scripture God tells us what he has done for us and what he expects from us. He lays out the reward for loving him and the punishment for hating him. His Commandments show us our sin and his Savior shows us his grace, mercy, and love.

God's Word is wonderful in its supply. I said earlier that Scripture tells us everything we need for life, but in verse 130 the psalmist says that God's Word brings light and understanding – not to the “wise,” but to the simple.

We live in the darkness of sin until we are exposed to the light of God's Word. At that point, we have the choice to live in light or darkness. The choice between God's wisdom or the ignorance of the world. The psalmist makes that choice when he says: *Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them* (Ps 119:129 ESV).

I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments. Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts. Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes (Ps 119:131-135 ESV).

These verses speak to us about walking in God's Word. Saint John tells us: *If we claim to have fellowship with [Jesus] yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light ... the blood of Jesus ... purifies us from all sin* (1 Jn 1:6-7 NIV). The Greek word we translate as walk is ἄμῃ ἄ-έ. It means not just walk, but also behave, live, conduct one's life. To walk in God's Word means to have a God-pleasing lifestyle. That requires three things.

First, we must have a desire for God's Word. The words of the psalmist give us the impression of someone dying of thirst in the desert – someone fixated on only one thing – getting water to quench his thirst and save his life. He uses that picture to show us his desire for God's Word. He thirsts for it. He can't live without it.

Is that how you feel about the Bible? Do you see God's Word as something that refreshes you – as something you can't live without? Listen, once again, to Saint Peter:

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation (1 Pet 2:2 NIV).

Have you ever cared for a newborn baby? How did that baby act when it was hungry? It screamed and howled and fussed until it was fed. That is the perfect picture of how we are supposed to crave God's Word. You know, that if that baby could have gotten his own milk, nothing in the world would have stopped him. Is there anything in your life stopping you from getting into the Bible?

You will never walk in God's Word until you have a true desire for God's Word. The Bible must never become just another book you read. It must always be the guide by which you live.

To live in God's word, the second thing we must have is a desire to be used by God. In verses 132 and 133, the psalmist is asking God to treat him as God has treated the faithful people of the past. You know who some of those people were: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, and Moses. The list could be almost endless.

God did amazing things in the lives of these ordinary people. Were those amazing things just accidents? Was it just a matter of these people being in the right place at the right time? Not hardly.

God worked wonders through these people because they had a sincere love for God and a willingness to be in his service. God is always wanting and using people who are willing to be led by him. And God is faithful to use the willing. Scripture says *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way* (Ps 37:23 NKJV).

Living in God's Word also requires that we have a true desire to avoid sin and evil people. To the subject of sin, the psalmist asks: *let no iniquity get dominion over me.* (Ps 119 133). When the psalmist says "no iniquity" he means all sin. Too often we pray, "Lord, take all the sins from my life except this one. I really like this one." It's important to remember that all sin is sin and God hates all sin – even our favorite sin.

When the psalmist asks God to *redeem me from man's oppression*, he was probably literally speaking about people who meant him physical harm, and that is important. However, our times are a bit different from those times. Allow me to put a different spin on people who would oppress us.

Oppression can come in many forms. Today, in America, I see oppression coming in the form of attacks on our thoughts, on our morals, or on our beliefs. There are forces in our land that are trying to convince us that homosexuality is just a harmless alternative lifestyle, that abortion is the proper way to handle an unplanned pregnancy, and that it's the governments job to supply our every need and regulate our thoughts and actions.

Oppression in America today is not physical oppression. It's spiritual oppression. It's happening because the people of our land are turning away from God. It's happening

because we have taken religion and prayer out of our schools. And this oppression, while it is spiritual, will eventually rob us of our freedom. Horace Greeley once said, "It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible-reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom." Simply put, no Bible, no freedom.

My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law (Ps 119:136 ESV).

Loving God's Word and living in God's Word requires that we have a true compassion for the lost. The psalmist had this compassion. He speaks in terms of crying rivers of tears over the fact that there are people who are destined for hell. There is no sadder fact than this: Everyone will live forever, but not everyone will live with Jesus in heaven.

Let that thought sink deep into your heart, mind, and soul. Can you live with that thought? Does the possibility of anyone going to hell for all eternity bother you? It should. It bothered the psalmist. It bothered Jesus. It's not hard to see the tears in Jesus' eyes as he stood looking at Jerusalem saying: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!* (Lk 13:34 NIV).

One of the great hymn writers, Fanny Crosby, speaks of this compassion for the lost in her hymn "Rescue the Perishing"

Rescue				the				perishing,
Care			for		the			dying,
Snatch	them	in	pity	from	sin	and	the	grave;
Weep		o'er		the		erring		one,
Lift		up			the			fallen,
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.								

Friends, God's Word is a gift so wonderful that not one of us deserves it. It is the revelation of the Father's plan for our salvation through the work of Jesus Christ. It is the vehicle through which the Holy Spirit brings faith to the unbelieving heart.

Out of gratitude for this most precious gift, there are three things we need to do with regard to God's Word. We need to **appreciate it**, **live by it**, and **proclaim it**.