

The Transforming Power of Scripture

Psalm 19:7-14

September 16, 2018

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If I were to ask you ‘What is the most powerful force on earth?’ what would you say? Well if you do a quick Google search, those of you aren't science prone will find that scientists tell us the most powerful force on earth is called – and maybe you've never heard of this if you're not like a science nerd – the nuclear strong force. The nuclear strong force. The nuclear strong force is one of the four fundamental forces in nature, according to scientists. The other three of them are gravity, electro magnetism, and the weak force - appropriately named. As its name implies, the strong force is the strongest of these. If you wonder what the strong force is, it's simply a name for the force that binds together the fundamental particles of matter to form larger particles.

Now, if you start looking at these forces on a scale you discover that electro magnetism is stronger than gravity. Gravity, while it's strong, is sort of the bottom of these four forces. Electro magnetism relative to gravity is 10^{36} times, that is a trillion trillion trillion times, more powerful than gravity. That's electro magnetism. But the strong force is 100 times as powerful as electro magnetism, clearly making it (according to scientists) the most powerful force in the universe. That force that binds together the fundamental particles of matter to form larger particles.

But the truth is the nuclear strong force is not the most powerful force on earth. There are in fact no forces on earth as powerful – and I want you to think about this for a moment – there are no forces on earth as powerful as the Word of God. Listen to Psalm 33:6: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts.” Psalm 33:9 says this: “...He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”

So the Word of God is so powerful that all God has to do is speak and the far reaches of the universe come into being. And all He has to do is command again and it all stays in its place and functions as it ought to function. So, yes, there is a force stronger than the nuclear strong force; it is the Word of God. It's strong not only in the ultimate sense of creation but it is strong in its work in our hearts. Listen the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 23:28: “...let him who has My word,” God says, “speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?” In the context He's talking about the teaching of the false prophets who say ‘I had a dream’ or ‘listen to this idea’ or ‘let me give you an inspiring talk.’ God says “... ‘what does straw have in common with grain?...Is not My word like fire?’ declares the Lord, ‘and like a hammer that shatters [the] rock?’” He's talking about the hard hearts of men and women. His Word is like a hammer that simply crushes those hearts into the shape He wants. You have, of course, Hebrews. Turn to Hebrews 4. This very familiar passage, Hebrews 4:12:

For the word of God is living [it's] active and [it's] sharper than any two-edged sword, [it pierces] as far as the division of soul and spirit (*doesn't mean your soul and your spirit are separate entities; it means it pierces into your inner being*) both joints and marrow, and [it is] able to judge the

thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

Listen, the Word of God is the most powerful thing in the universe short of God Himself, and of course His Word is a reflection of Him.

Psalm 19 that we’re studying together celebrates the power of Scripture, especially the power of God’s word to transform those who respond to it. Let’s read Psalm 19 together. Turn back there with me. Psalm 19 and let’s read the entire Psalm. Last time we looked at just the first six verses; this time let’s see how it all fits together. Psalm 19, the title begins:

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

- ¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
- ²Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
- ³There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
- ⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
- ⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
- ⁶Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

- ⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
- ⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- ⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.
- ¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
- ¹¹Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; [and]
In keeping them there is great reward.
- ¹²Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.
- ¹³Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins;
Let them not rule over me;
Then I will be blameless,
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

Now the theme of this Psalm we discovered last time is simply the fact that God reveals His glory in his works and in His Word. We looked at the fact that this Psalm is divided into two distinct parts: verses 1-6, you have the glory of God revealed in His creation. And then in verses 7-14 you have the glory of God revealed in His Word.

As I said, last week we looked at the first half of this Psalm and in the first half of Psalm 19 we learned that every day and night the sky above us declares the truth about God. In fact we learned five characteristics of this sermon that's written in the heavens. First of all, it is explicit. "The heavens are telling the glory of God and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." It's clear. You can't miss it. It is constant day to day; night to night. It's continuous. It is silent – there's no speech, verse 3 says. There are no words that it uses; their voice isn't heard. Instead it is silent, but universal. Because he says "their line has gone out through all the earth and their utterances to the end of the world." There's nowhere you can go on this planet where you don't hear the sermon of the skies, the sermon declaring the glory of God. And then he finishes up in the middle of verse 4 running down through verse 6 with an illustration. This sermon of the skies is illustrated by the use here of the sun. Because it's the most dominating part of the sky in our lives he chooses it. He starts out with a very picturesque description of it as a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chambers in the morning. I think David probably, you know, as a shepherd was there on duty tending the sheep early in his life, and he watched the sun come up and this was a reflection of what he saw as he tried to capture the beauty of the dawn. And then his mind turned immediately, as most of us do, after the sunrise our minds turn to the Scripture. And that's why I think this Psalm does this. So clearly you have the revelation of God in His creation; you have the revelation of God in His Word.

Now tonight we come to the second half then of the Psalm: the glory of God revealed in His Word, verses 7-14. I wish I had time to show you the many similarities of the second half of this Psalm with Psalm 119, but that's probably several different messages for a different time. But the message of the second half of Psalm 19 is this: Scripture alone is God's perfect, complete, and transforming revelation of Himself. Scripture alone is God's perfect complete and transforming revelation of Himself. Let's look at it together. This portion of the Psalm, the second half, as he now moves from general revelation in the creation to special revelation in the Word of God, he begins with the amazing nature and power of Scripture. This is what we see in verses 7-9. In these verses David attempts to spell out in a sort of comprehensive way what God's Word is and what it accomplishes in our lives. We learn its unique character and we learn its profound benefits.

Now each half of the verses 7 to 9 has the same basic structure. Let me show it to you. First of all there is a title for Scripture. That's how it begins: a basic title for Scripture that identifies something about the nature of Scripture. So you have these six titles: the law of the LORD, the

testimony of the LORD, the precepts of the LORD, the commandment of the LORD, the fear of the LORD, and the judgments of the LORD. All of those are in essence synonyms. At the same time each of them has its own unique nuance that adds to our understanding of the nature of Scripture. In other words they highlight different facets of God's revelation. And we're going to look at those in just a moment. But as you look at these titles for Scripture I want you to notice something else. There is a huge difference between general revelation in creation and special revelation in Scripture. If you look at the first six verses of Psalm 19 there's only one reference to God and it's in verse 1: "the glory of God." And the Hebrew word that's used for God there is the most general word, the least specific, but a word that talks about God's power: El. He is the almighty One; He's the powerful One; He is God. That is what we learn from creation. There is a God and He is powerful. Remember what Paul says in Romans 1, that the creation tells us about His deity and His eternal power. That's what we learn and that's why in the first half of this Psalm as we talk about what the skies reveal, that's all they reveal.

When you come to the second half, however, of this Psalm we run into much more clarity about who this God is, whose glory is revealed. In fact, his personal name, the name YHWH, occurs seven times. That's the name, as we've talked before, that simply means "He is." When God says it about Himself in Exodus 3, He says "I AM." But when we say it, this name YHWH – translated in your English Bibles and in the word LORD in all caps in the Old Testament, and by the way that is the most common name for God in the Old Testament – that's God's personal name. When you see the word LORD in all caps it's our version of what God says when He says "I AM." Our version is YHWH, which means "He is." He is simply the One who is self-existent. He depends on nothing. He depends on nobody. He just is. That's his personal name. It's how He revealed Himself as the covenant-keeping God to Israel, the redeeming God.

So this reminds us – that comparison of the 2 names of God, just one time in verses 1-6, the general word for God versus seven times in the second half, the personal name for God – this reminds us that we learn so much more about who God is from the Scripture. It also shows us, as you look at these titles, it shows us that He alone is the source of this revelation. It is in every case – I mean how could David punctuate it more? It's the law of YHWH; it is the testimony of YHWH; these are the precepts of YHWH; this is the commandment of YHWH, and so forth. That's a point we're supposed to get. He is the only source of what we're going to talk about tonight. He is the only source of this revelation that is filled with such life-transforming power. It is the law of YHWH.

Now let me ask you, just as we begin – and I really want you to think about this because, you know, we talk about the Bible a lot. We all have multiple copies. You have it on your iPad or your phone; maybe you have a hard copy there in front of you; maybe you have several Bibles. I have a lot of Bibles: in my office at home, in my home, here in my office at church. You probably have a lot of Bibles too. But let me just ask you this question: Do you really believe in your heart of hearts that no other source available to you can give you what the Bible can give you? I think a lot of Christians don't, because they don't read their Bibles, and when they have the

choice they drift to something else. But David won't let us. He says I want you to learn the power of Scripture.

So it starts, in each case verses 7-9, starts with a title for Scripture. Then there is a description of Scripture – usually an adjective that reveals its character. So if you look at them there in verses 7-9 you discover the Scripture is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true. And we'll look at each of those. Thirdly there is a participial phrase that ends each of those verses, or those halves of verses, describing the transforming power of Scripture. So that's the structure. Now let's work through it together.

As he discusses this amazing nature and power of Scripture, he begins in verse 7 in the first half of the verse with this: “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul.” Now notice first of all his description of the Word itself: here he calls it the law. It's the Hebrew word *torah*, another Hebrew word you've probably heard. That word *torah* simply means teaching, or it means instruction. It's a comprehensive term for God's revealed will. This word *torah* was used of the Mosaic Law that was given to the people of Israel at Sinai. It's used for the first five books of the Old Testament. We refer to “The Law and the Prophets,” meaning the first five books and the rest of the Old Testament. It's also used, and I think this is the intention here, of all the inspired Word of God that is available at any point in biblical history. And so, when David wrote, it was limited. Of course he added to that under the inspiration of the Spirit, but there weren't a lot of Old Testament books yet. He wrote 1,000 years before Christ. Prophets weren't there, but you had the books of Moses. So that's how it's used here. And it's called God's law. This word reminds us that God's Word is the legislation issued to us by our rightful King. It is His law. We have a responsibility to obey it.

He goes on to say “The law of the LORD is perfect.” That word *perfect* is a word that's used of the animals offered in sacrifice, and when it's used of those animals it means *without blemish, free from defect*. When it's used of human beings it speaks of someone who is without moral defect; they're blameless. Doesn't mean they're perfect; it means there's no obvious defect or flaw. Here, when it's used of Scripture, David means that Scripture is complete. It is without error, it is flawless, and it is lacking nothing – just like the animals that were to be sacrificed. They were flawless and they had all their parts. That's Scripture: it's flawless, it's without error, it's complete. Listen, the Scripture you hold in your hand, this is what David is telling you: it's perfect; it will never lead you astray. We live in a world where we're constantly led astray. But not the Word of God.

He goes on to say, “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul.” This is its power, its life-transforming power. Because it is flawless, lacking nothing, it is able to restore the human soul. The Hebrew word *restores* here is a word that literally means *to cause to turn back* or *to return*. It is a word that's very frequently used in the Old Testament for repentance: *turn* to the Lord. The word for *soul* is the word *nephesh*, which can be used for what we would call the soul or can be used for the whole person. I think it's used for the whole person in Psalm 23 when it talks about ‘He restores my soul.’ But I think here in this context this expression is referring primarily to the

human soul, and I think it's referring to the Word's role in two ways. First of all, the Word's role in salvation. It restores the human soul in that sense. The ultimate renovation: salvation.

James 1:18 says, "In the exercise of [God's] will (*listen to this*) He brought us forth (*that is He regenerated us, He gave us spiritual life, listen to this*) by the word of truth." How did you come to spiritual life? You were dead. I was dead. How do we come to spiritual life? It was by the Word of God. You see how powerful it is. You were sitting there dead and God's Word came and you came to life. First Peter 1:23 says you have been born again, you have been given new life from above, "...not of seed which is perishable but imperishable" seed. What is the seed that gave life to us? "... through the living and enduring Word of God." Listen, the Word of God restored your soul from death to life. It was the Word of God that did that.

Augustin, you've heard the story. He came to faith when he was in a garden and he heard next door in the garden next to him he heard someone reading Romans 13:14. Or he heard someone calling and he picked up the Bible and he read a single verse, Romans 13:14, "...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." One verse. Guess what Augustin's life before Christ was consumed by. Lust. And – boom! – the Word of God spoke, and life! His soul was restored. I heard at lunch today about a member of our church who first heard the gospel when he was about 20 years old – are you ready for this – when Linus read the Christmas story on *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Just the Word of God. That was his first exposure to the gospel and later he came to genuine faith in Christ. Pulled, drawn by those words. They were so compelling. One of our missionaries, Gus Matero, has told me his testimony on a number of occasions, that he went into a seaman's center in Los Angeles. He was drunk and looking for something to eat. And the guy didn't handle himself really well, but he quoted a couple passages to him, and he never remembered the passages; he just remembered the reference. And sometime later he was alone and there was a Bible sitting there and he remembered just the reference. And he looked up the reference and through that verse came to faith in Christ. That's the power of the Word of God.

It also restores our souls in the sense of calling us to repentance when we're already in Christ – calling us back to the paths of righteousness. Listen to Psalm 119:176, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments." In other words seek me, and I think implied in the context there is 'seek me through your Word' – use your Word to restore my soul. All of us who are in Christ have experienced that. We've found ourselves wandering from the Lord; we've found ourselves in a bad place. And somehow, maybe through a friend, maybe through our own memory, maybe through the Word preached, God in his Word has restored our souls. This is the amazing nature and power of Scripture. The law of the LORD is perfect, flawless, complete and it restores the soul.

Secondly, the second part of verse 7, "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Scripture is God's testimony. This Hebrew word speaks of truth as that to which God Himself testifies or gives witness. Do you understand? This is God's testimony. This is God's witness to you about everything you need to know in the universe. It's important for you to live

in a way that honors Him. It's His testimony. And it says "the testimony of the LORD is sure." This describes not only *that which is firm or secure* but it also is a word that describes *that which has been verified*. It's used that way, for example, in Genesis 42:20 where Joseph says, "Bring your youngest brother to me, so [that] your words may be verified." That's our word; that's the word *sure, verified*. The Word of God is verified. It's completely verified as true. It's dependable. It's reliable. It's completely beyond all doubt.

"The testimony of the LORD is *reliable*, making wise the simple." You are familiar with the simple. If you read Proverbs at all you know the simple person is the person who simply doesn't have enough life experience to understand how things work. And therefore the word describes someone wide open, who is wide open everything, wide open to every conceivable influence, to whatever comes. They really don't have a clue as to the right path to take in life. God's dependable, reliable, verified, testimony is able to make you wise. It's able make you wise to salvation. That's what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:15. Scripture is able to "give you the wisdom that leads to salvation." And Scripture is able to give you the wisdom necessary for living in this world in a way that pleases God. Do you believe that this book is God's verified testimony to you, and that if you will spend time in this book it will make you no longer a simple person, wide open to everything, without a clue how life works? It will give you God's own wisdom.

Thirdly, he says "The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart." *Precepts* speak of detailed, precise directions. Now we're talking about the nitty gritty. We're down to the details. "The precepts of the LORD [His individual commands] are *right*." This refers to *that which is morally right; that which is straight*. The point here is when you follow all the details of God's commands, all the details of His law, it will lead you on a morally right and straight road. It's not like that GPS on your phone where you end up who knows where. Oops. The Word of God is never like that. It's never like that. It's right. It's straight. And as a result, notice verse 8 says, it rejoices the heart. Because the specific and precise directions in God's Word keep us on the morally straight path, they produce joy in our hearts. Why? Because we know, and if you're in Christ and you've walked in obedience to the Scripture at all, you've experienced this: you know that you are living in a way that God intended. You know that your marriage is, while not perfect, is reflective of the divine intention for marriage. You know that the way you speak with your words reflects the heart of God. You know that these things are true as opposed to wondering. It rejoices the heart. When we follow the precepts of God we are able to live life as God intended and it produces not only human flourishing but human rejoicing. If you're struggling with joy in your life let me just ask you: How are you doing with following the precepts of this book? If you're not, then you're not living the way God intended for you to live, and it's no wonder that you're struggling.

Number four: "The commandment of the LORD is pure," verse 8 says, "enlightening the eyes." *The commandment of the LORD*. This description of God's Word reminds us that God's Word comes to us with an inherent authority; a right to order; a right to command. And God Himself addresses this to us. We dare not ignore it. "The commandment of the LORD is pure." The word *pure* is an interesting word. It's a word that can mean *clear* or even *radiant*. It's used in Song of

Solomon 6:10, “as pure as the sun” is how it's phrased there. “As pure as the sun.” What does that mean? As clear, as radiant, as piercing. The commandment of the LORD is as clear as the sun and because of that notice what we experience: enlightening of our eyes. It's like the light turning on. In a dark world where we're stumbling around in the dark the Bible comes into our lives and we have light. It enlightens the eyes in the sense that it gives us a true understanding of what life is all about. It shows us the path that we're to take. Psalm 119:30 says “I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed your ordinances before me.” The faithful way. Psalm 119:105, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Is that true of you? Is that how you think of the Word of God? Does it really provide light for the next step you take? That's what it's intended to do. The commandment of the LORD is clear like the sun, piercing, radiant. And therefore it enlightens our eyes to the reality of how things are in the world.

A fifth expression of this amazing nature and power of Scripture is “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever.” Now that is a most unusual title for Scripture: the fear of the LORD. But that's what it is. It is a title for the Word of God. It's referring not so much to what Scripture is but to what Scripture produces. Scripture produces the fear of the Lord. You see, properly understood, the Bible teaches us how to fear God, to hold God in that proper sense of reverence and respect. Proverbs 1:7 says “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” That's where the journey starts. Now this reverence that we're to have for God, this fear of God, comes from the proper recognition of who God is: that He is awesome. When you really understand the God is awesome you have no trouble fearing Him. Psalm 47:2 says the “Most High is to be feared, [why? because he is] a great King over all the earth.” When you get the greatness you get the fear. And the Word of God teaches us how to fear God and specifically how to worship Him appropriately.

He says “The fear of the LORD is clean.” This word *clean* is used of precious metal that has been refined and freed from all of its dross. Psalm 12:6, “The words of the LORD are pure words;” and then he adds, “as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.” The words of God are pure of all dross. They're free from anything that's false, that's phony, that doesn't have value. “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever.” Of course God Himself endures forever, right? Psalm 102:26, man perishes “...but You endure; ... all of them will wear out...” – the earth as well, will wear out – “...like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.” But you endure and so does the Word of God endure. Psalm 119:89, “Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in heaven.” Isaiah 40:8, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”

You know what David is telling us here? He's telling us that the Bible is eternally relevant. You know, there are a lot of guys who go out and hang up a shingle outside of some shopping center and start a church. And there are some good guys who do that. But there are other guys who go with their own ideas about how this ought to be done and they think they know better than God. And they think, ‘Well, you know, come on, you can't stand up and teach the Bible for 45 minutes. Nobody's going to come if you do that. You've got to do something relevant.’ David's saying nothing is more relevant. It endures forever; it outlasts the trends of time. It survives when the

rest of it's gone. I wish, even in my lifetime, I wish I could sort of take you through the mental pictures of all of the different ideas that have come along about how to do church. One after another and, guess what? They're buried away in somebody's attic today. Not the Word of God. If you have the spirit of God in you, then you have an appetite for the Word of God. It endures forever. In every age, and at all times, it is an unerring, unchanging guide. That's the other part of it is you don't have to worry that, 'well, you know, maybe those ideas in there are outdated.' No, it's eternally relevant. It endures forever.

He says in verse 9, "The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether." The *judgments* of the LORD. Here again is an interesting description of Scripture. This is a legal word, this word *judgments*; it's a legal word that comes out of the courtroom. It describes God's Word as a collection of judicial decisions, of judicial precedent that God has made about various human situations. You know, our court system is based on precedent. What are the decisions that have been made before? And that drives the decisions that are made. David's saying this book contains God's precedent - all the legal decisions God has made about every conceivable human situation that we need to know about is here, or can be deduced from and applied from this Word. All of God's legal decisions about the details of human life and community are here in this book. Legal precedent.

And it says "The judgments of the LORD are true." *True* is literally in Hebrew *truth*. The judgments of the LORD are *truth*. God's Word is dependable, it's trustworthy. It has, like God Himself, an unchangeable moral foundation and so it's trustworthy. It's worthy of your trust. Doesn't change. God's Word, let me put it this way, God's Word contains permanent, legal decisions about what is and what ought to be. And then he adds "The judgments of the LORD are *truth*; they are righteous altogether." Now that adverb *altogether*; the Hebrew word can be a little confusing. It means *all alike*. All of God's Word collectively, and every commandment individually, meet the standard of righteousness. In other words, nothing in this book will ever lead you astray. Nothing.

So, there's the amazing nature Scripture. What is it? Listen to it: Scripture is without defect, it's verified, it's morally right, it's clear and radiant and piercing like the sun, it's completely refined without any dross, it is completely trustworthy, and it is dependable. And what is its transforming power? It restores the soul in salvation and in ongoing repentance. It gives wisdom to those who are morally gullible or misled. It produces genuine joy in our lives as we conform to our Creator's design. It enlightens our eyes in the sense that it gives us a true understanding of life and eternity. It is eternally relevant and appropriate. And it provides a comprehensive standard of righteousness and a life of righteousness when obeyed. That's the book you hold in your hand. Derek Kidner writes, speaking of verses 7-9, he says: "Together these terms show the practical purpose of revelation: to bring God's will to bear on the hearer, evoke intelligent reverence, well-founded trust, and detailed obedience." That's the Word of God.

Now when you see the amazing nature and power of Scripture, you need to understand, secondly, and David takes us there, the incomparable worth of Scripture. This is the point of verse 10. First

of all, when you think about the Scripture in light of all we've just learned, understand the Scripture – the Bible you hold in your hand – is more valuable than life's greatest treasures. It's more valuable than life's greatest treasures. Look at verse 10: "They [meaning all of these commands of God that are contained within the Scripture, they] are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold." Now *much fine gold* is a large inventory of the finest purified gold that was available in the time David wrote. In 1 Kings 10:18 we read, "the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold." That is fine gold. Fine because it's been refined, because all of the impurities have been taken out. There is nothing in life – here's the point of what David saying it and let this settle into your soul – there is nothing in life that you currently have (think about everything you have for a moment), there is nothing in life that you currently have and there is nothing in life that you could have that is greater in value than the Scripture you hold in your hand. That's what David is saying. Do you believe that? The Psalmist certainly did. Look over at Psalm 119. One of those magnificent Psalms, and this one, of course, the longest and devoted to a celebration of the Scripture. Psalm 119:72, "The law of your mouth" – Solomon's talking to God – "The law of your mouth" – by the way, I love the fact that this Psalm is a prayer. The longest Psalm in the Bible, and it's a prayer to God about the Bible. "The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." Folks, that's not hyperbole. That's the Psalmist saying 'this is how it is with me; if I had to choose, if on one side I had the Bible, and on the other side I had thousands of gold and silver pieces – a fortune – I choose the Bible every time.' Because he understood its true incomparable value. Look at verse 127, "Therefore I love Your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold." This is how the Psalmist thought. This is how David thought. The question is: is it how you think? Do you understand? Whether you think this is true or not, this is true. Okay, this is not about your personal value judgment, 'Well, I think this is worth more.' No. The verdict on Scripture is not out. The verdict on you is out. It is more valuable than life's greatest treasures. The question is, have you awakened to that reality yet?

When we look at the incomparable worth of Scripture, not only is it more valuable than life's greatest treasures, but secondly, it's more satisfying than life's finest joys. It's more satisfying than life's finest joys. Notice how he goes on in verse 10, "They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb." Honey is obvious. The drippings of the honeycomb, however, that describes virgin honey. Now I'm out of my league here but I'm just telling you what I've read. The purest honey flows naturally from the cells. That's that virgin honey; that's the drippings of the honeycomb. In the ancient world honey was one of life's simple but profound joys. Not always easily accessible. You didn't go to your local Walmart or Costco and, you know, buy a huge jar. But it was one of those joys, one of those fine joys in life. That's the point here. What David is saying, and I want you to think about it this way: there is nothing that you enjoy in this life – and again I want you to think about the things you enjoy; if I said 'What do you enjoy most?' what would you put at the top of that list? – there is nothing that you enjoy in this life that is ultimately more satisfying than Scripture properly understood. Look at Psalm 119:103, "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" The Psalmist, when he digested the Word of God, when he tasted it, when he really came to understand it, to grasp its meaning, it was like life's finest joys. To have the

Word of God is better the life's greatest treasures. To have it is better than life's greatest treasures, and to truly taste it is better the life's finest joys. That's the incomparable worth of Scripture.

But I want you to see the third part of the celebration of God's Word. It's the believer's response to Scripture. This is in verses 11-14. You see Scripture evokes a one-on-one personal response to the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture. In fact, the rest of the Psalm is a prayer from David to God in response to His Word. This is the first time we meet personal pronouns. *I, me, my*, as he references his own response to the Scripture. This should be our response to God and His Word as well. Because of the nature and power of Scripture, here's how we should respond. First of all we should heed its warnings of spiritual danger. Verse 11 says, "Moreover by them (by the commands of Scripture) your servant..." That's not just David; that's a description that's used of all true believers. If you're truly a believer in God through His Son then you're His servant. "...By them Your servant is warned." That's exactly what Paul says, isn't it, in 2 Timothy 3:16. He says "All Scripture is ... profitable ... (for what?) for reproof." *Reproof*. And the word *admonish* is used often in the New Testament as well. Heed its warnings of spiritual danger.

Secondly, pursue its blessings. The blessings and promises on consistent obedience. Verse 11 says, "...in keeping [these commands] there is great reward." We don't earn eternal life by obeying Scripture, but there is reward and blessing for obedience to God. Disobedience comes with its troubles and its trials and difficulties. Obedience puts us in the path of blessing and God's kindness toward us. Pursue the blessings on consistent obedience.

A third response you should have the Scripture is receive its confrontation of personal sin. Look at verse 12: "Who can discern his errors?" The word *errors* are *unintentional sins*, both of ignorance and of weakness. You didn't intend to. In one case; you sinned and didn't know you sinned. In another case you sinned not intending to, but it was born out of your weakness. Calvin said "We are entangled in so many nets and snares of Satan that none of us can perceive the one hundredth part of the evils that cling to him." It's errors. David's question invites the answer – "Who can discern his errors?" – no one. That's the answer. Nobody can. That's where Scripture comes in; it discerns our errors and confronts them. One author put it this way: "The Word of God lays a man bare to himself. It judges him. It shows him what is in him; convinces him how much there is that needs to be cleansed; how far even one who lives in it is from perfect obedience. It is at once a copy of the will of God [listen to this] it's at once a copy of the will of God and a mirror of the heart of man." That's what the Scripture's like; it's like a mirror. You look in and you see yourself; you see yourself reflected. It confronts us. It confronts our sin. And if you're going to respond rightly to the Bible, let it do that. As James 1 says, as we learned this summer: don't argue with God, don't argue back with the Scripture. Let it confront you. Let it change your thinking. Let it challenge your behavior. Receive its confrontation of personal sin.

Fourthly, believe its promise of forgiveness both in justification and daily confession. He goes on in verse 12 to say "Acquit me of hidden faults." *Hidden. Of the things hidden*, literally the

Hebrew says. It means all hidden sins. What are hidden sins? Well, all the sins that we hide from others and those that are hidden even from our own hearts, that we don't see. Hidden sins are sins that maybe we haven't yet observed in ourselves. Or maybe hidden sins are sins that we have observed but forgotten. Or sins in which we have deceived ourselves. Even sins we have willfully but secretly cherished. Kidner points out that a sin may be hidden, not because it is too small to see, but because it is too characteristic to register. Hidden faults.

Notice he says “Acquit me of hidden faults.” The word *acquit* means *to refuse to hold me guilty, to declare me innocent*. This may be a prayer for justification. Like the sinner in Jesus’ parable in Luke 18:13, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” Or this may be a prayer, and more likely so, a prayer for ongoing forgiveness of one who's already God’s servant. Like 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Listen, believe the Scripture’s promise of forgiveness. Both in justification and in daily confession and forgiveness.

Now a prayer of confession and forgiveness leads naturally to a prayer for holiness and sanctification. So your fifth response to Scripture should be this: pursue its protection from deliberate or willful sins. Notice what he says in verse 13, “Also keep back [hold me back] Your servant from presumptuous sins.” The word *presumptuous* is often translated as *arrogant*. It refers to the sins that are born of arrogance, that are deliberate, high-handed, premeditated. David prays that God would use his own Word to protect David from arrogant, deliberate, premeditated sins; from open acts of rebellion. You understand that if you're in the Scripture God can use His Word to that end in your life.

A sixth response to Scripture is pursue its protection from ruling sin, from dominating sin, from enslaving sin. Verse 13 goes on to say, “... keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me.” You see, deliberate sins, when they are repeated again and again eventually become dominating sins. They become the master. And you become their hopeless slave. David asks God to use His Word to protect him from such ruling, dominating sin. You say, ‘how does this protection of the Word of God work?’ It works because as you read the Word of God, as you learn it, as you see it, you see yourself in the mirror. And if you have the spirit of God within you, you have a desire for your life to match what you're reading. As Psalm 119 begins, “O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes.” That's where your heart goes. God, I want to be like that, I want to live like that. And as your heart then moves toward the heart of God you are preserved and protected from these kinds of sins. Not perfectly. Not always. Not in perfection, but in direction.

And then the final response to Scripture is: understand its role in ongoing sanctification. This is from the middle of verse 13 down through verse 14. You see, David's final words in this Psalm bring him back to his relationship to YHWH. A relationship that will affect how he lives, what he says, and what he thinks. If you and I respond to Scripture properly, notice verse 13, “Then I will be blameless.” If the Word of God protects us from sin, then I will be blameless, that is, morally without defect or obvious flaw. It's really a prayer for holiness, that's what it really is.

And it's a prayer for pardon and forgiveness. "And," he says, "I shall be acquitted of great transgression." This is a prayer for the grace of pardon and forgiveness again, even for transgression (that's a word that means deliberate sin of rebellion) that is great. That is, that goes beyond the normal boundaries.

When you come to verse 14 it's really a prayer for sanctification. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight." The Hebrew word for *acceptable* is often found in the context of Old Testament sacrifices. David ends this Psalm by offering to God the only proper response to God's Word: God, let my mind and my mouth be offered to you as a sacrifice, as a living sacrifice. Just like Romans 12:1-2. Here I am, here's my body and my mind. A sacrifice.

I love the way he ends the Psalm. Notice how refers to God: "O YHWH, my rock and my Redeemer." David saw YHWH as his rock. There he probably means that God is our source of strength, our Gibraltar in the battle to keep God's Word. You are my rock; you're my strength. And David also understood, notice, that God was his Redeemer. I love that word. The Hebrew word is *gā'al*. In everyday Jewish life the *gā'al* referred to your next of kin. Usually it was a brother. But it was the person who in the Jewish frame of reference, in God's prescription, was the person who had to accept responsibility for you. Maybe you have a family member that you've just accepted responsibility for. You're a *gā'al*. In this case it was just expected; it was required. And in that life if you were, for example, to lose a piece of property or you were about to lose a piece of family land or property, the *gā'al* was responsible to purchase it so it wasn't lost. If a member of the family was forced to sell himself into slavery, the *gā'al* was responsible to purchase his freedom. It was the *gā'al* who was responsible to marry his brother's childless widow. You see he was like the everyday rescuer. That's what we have here. Brothers and sisters, God Himself has become our *gā'al*.

More specifically, God has appointed Christ as our *gā'al*. As our redeemer. Jesus our Lord has assumed full and complete responsibility for His people and He has redeemed us from the worst possible circumstance: our inexcusable and insurmountable guilt before God, our Creator. My redeemer is the one who delivers me from the guilt and power of sin. And how does He do it? Well, He does it through His death. But He does it day-to-day through His Word. Let me ask you: what is your greatest treasure? Really – don't give me the right answer, don't give me the spiritual answer: What is your greatest treasure? What is your finest joy in life? Is it God, your rock and your redeemer? And is it His eternal, enduring Word? If you want to be a man or a woman after God's own heart, it has to be.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you. Thank you for the treasure that you have given us in your Word. Forgive us for how lightly we think of it. Lord, forgive us for how poorly we treat it. Forgive us for how seldom we seek it out. Forgive us for how badly we obey it. Father, help us to think on what we've studied tonight. And may we begin to think, by your grace, by your Word, like David thought about your Word. May it be our greatest treasure. And may it be our finest joy. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.