

**PSALMS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Psalm 119 as we continue our study through the Word of God. We began looking at this Psalm last week and we finished the first 56 verses of the 176 verses of this Psalm. And as we saw, this Psalm extols the Word of God as the Psalmist speaks of his love for the Word and the benefits of keeping the Word of God. Since this Psalm is speaking of the Word of God, we should then see it mentioned often in this Psalm and it is! A reference to the Word of God is referred to in almost every verse! The Masorites said that the Word of God is mentioned in every verse except Psalm 119:122. Other people reckon differently (with disagreement about verses 84, 90, 121, and 132). But Scripture, the Word of God is mentioned in at least 171 of 176 verses.

And yet, what we see happening in many churches today is that we are focusing on experience, feelings rather than the Word of God. And don't get me wrong, we do live out our faith but we live it out in accordance with God's Word and not apart from it. And if you don't know God's Word then anything and everything can be accepted and that is what is happening.

Paul warned us that in the last day's this would happen and we should not be surprised and yet, when I see churches that once stood strong upon God's Word move away, I am amazed! Paul warns us by saying, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:2-5.

That time is here and many pastors are succumbing to the desires of the people instead of what God desires of them – to ***PREACH THE WORD!*** Yes they may not like it, they may not want it, but that is exactly what they need. When you were a kid did you want to take medicine? I don't think so because the medicine was bad, not like today with all different kinds of flavors. But our parents knew what we needed and gave to us what we needed and pastors and leaders must do the same today!

And if you reject the Word of God, want more than the Word of God, then you will find those who will give to you what you want because you are no longer satisfied with God's Word and you will end up believing in fairy tales! This Psalmist sees the importance of God's Word and wants to drive that point home and that is exactly what he is doing here.

Also keep in mind that this Psalm was written in an Acrostic, that is, each section begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, the first 8 verses begin with the Hebrew letter Aleph, the second 8 verses with the Hebrew letter Beth, and-so-on. We see all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet used, 22 sections of 8 verses each, giving us a total of 176 verses for this Psalm. With that said, let's begin reading in Psalm 119, starting in verse 57 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word!

### PSALM 119

#### VERSES 57-64

1. The eighth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Het or Heth ה**. Notice what the Psalmist is doing here. He is reflecting on where his life was going, the path that he was on and he saw that it was the wrong one. How did he know he was on the wrong path? The Word of God was a lamp to his feet and a light to his path and he will expound on that more as we will see this evening. As he read God's Word, as he saw his own error, he repented before God and followed the truth of God's Word. And it was not just a status quo for this man, he wanted to go deeper in his relationship with God and that is what will happen as you fall in love with God's Word, you will fall in love with God even more because you will know who He is and you will see who you are and in spite of that, He still loves you! Spurgeon put it like this, "While studying the word he was led to study his own life, and this caused a mighty revolution. He came to the word, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his father."

2. What a great lesson for us. Boice makes this comment regarding this portion of Psalm 119. “Blaise Pascal, the brilliant French philosopher and devout Christian, loved Psalm 119. He is another person who had memorized it, and he called verse 59 ‘the turning point of man’s character and destiny.’ He meant that it is vital for every person to consider his or her ways, understand that our ways are destructive and will lead us to destruction, and then make an about-face and determine to go in God’s ways instead.” He nailed it and maybe the reason so many Christians are struggling is that they don’t know God’s Word or they refuse to follow God’s Word in their lives!

3. We also see that he surrounded himself with other believers, why would he do that? I mean do we really need each other? Why can’t we just be friends with everyone? Here is the reality, like it or not. It is good to surround yourself with strong believers because they will help you keep on track, just as you will help them with their walk. If you hang around those that are playing with fire, living immoral lifestyles, you will get burned. As Paul said in I Corinthians 15:33, “**Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’**” Yes, we do need each other!

#### VERSES 65-72

1. The ninth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Tet or Teth ט**. Notice what we try to avoid in our society today, affliction, pain, and yet those are some of the warning signs that God uses to awaken us out of our spiritual sleep. Thus, we take medication to deaden our senses and we are dulling ourselves to the things of God!

The Psalmists is telling us that it was affliction that God brought into his life that awakened him out of his spiritual sleep. It got him back on track. Spurgeon wrote, “Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray.” God’s afflictions are not punitive, but corrective towards His children. He does not bring them into our lives to destroy us, but to restore us. God does chasten His children, not because He hates them, but because He loves them!

Remember what Paul said in Hebrews 12:5-6, “**And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’**” You see, God’s desire for us is to heed the warning and draw close to Him. For the Psalmist, that is exactly what he did, as he clung to the Word of God, applying it to his life.

2. And did you notice in verse 69 that the Psalmist is saying that he is going to keep God’s Word with his “**whole heart.**” You can’t decide what you like and dislike in the Word of God, what you are going to obey and what you are not going to obey. Your heart can’t be divided towards God and if you are not obeying Him, then it is divided, it is being pulled in the opposite direction!

And thus, the Word of God must be to us more important than our friends, than our jobs, than our pleasure, than any earthly comfort because God’s Word is living and powerful and it can change our lives if we surrender to God’s Spirit in accordance to His Word!

And yet, you look at this world and how they love all the material things they can get from it. We have the Word of God. They have things that are perishable. We have God's Word which has eternal implications. Their heart is fat and insensitive to the things of God which causes their minds to be dull and brutal. But the Word of God, like a surgical instrument, removes the fat and makes us sensitive to His leading. Our minds are renewed and sharp, and we long to see the lost come to Christ. May God's Word be precious to us, more precious than all the silver or gold in the world, more than any earthly possession because it is God speaking to us in a love letter, His tremendous love for us!

#### VERSES 73-80

1. The tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Yod** י. I like how the Psalmist opens this section up, that God has not only formed him, but God is actively involved in his life. What a comfort to know that we are not just some random chance happenings of primordial goo that evolved through the process of survival of the fittest but God created us and continues to work in our lives.

Now I realize that many would laugh when I speak of creation instead of the known fact of evolution. Folk's, evolution is not a fact; it is a theory and not a very good one. You see, the more we study life the more we see that there had to be a creator and a designer. These things did not just happen by some random chance process. We were formed by the hands of God! And the reality is we see this truth has weathered the test of time and the theory of evolution is being flushed down the toilet!

Schutzenberger, of the University of Paris, at a conference on “Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution” concluded that the probability of evolution by mutation and natural selection is inconceivable. He said, “We believe that it is not conceivable. In fact if we try to simulate such a situation by making changes randomly at the typographic level . . . on computer programs we find we have no chance (i.e., less than  $1/10^{1000}$ ) even to see what the modified programs would compute; it just jams.”

And keep in mind that mathematicians generally consider any event with a probability of less than one chance in  $10^{50}$  as having zero probability, thus, it is impossible! We were created by the hands of God!

Now does it really matter if we believe in creation or evolution? You bet it does. If you can't believe Genesis 1:1 why do you believe any other part of the Bible and chances are you will pick and chose what you believe is true and what you believe is not true if you reject Genesis 1:1. If you believe Genesis 1:1, that God is our creator, then you recognize:

- That we are obligated to Him as the One who gives us life.
- That we respect Him as One who is greater and smarter than we are.
- That He, as our designer, knows what is best for us.
- That since our beginning is connected to the invisible world, so our end will be also.

And if you reject Genesis 1:1 then you will most likely not agree with those things, you will not surrender to God! So it is very important that we believe that God is not only our creator but He sustains our lives, He is actively involved in our lives! What is sad today is many; even in the church do not believe that the Word of God is the Word of God. They deny the Scriptures and that is a dangerous place to be. And yet, we see here over and over again the Psalmist lift up God's Word, showing us the importance of it! May we not lose sight of that!

Listen to what Martin Luther said back in 1521 at the Diet of Worms.

Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.

- Martin Luther, Diet of Worms, 1521

Did you hear what he is saying? Luther is saying that the Bible is our authority and that all human understanding, even that of the venerated Fathers of the church, must be evaluated by and reformed by the Bible. We would be wise to heed his words and cling to the Word of God! Jesus said in John 8, “**. . . ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’**” John 8:31-32.



VERSES 81-88

1. The eleventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Kaf or Kaph** כ. The Psalmist is not crying out for salvation of soul, but to be delivered from the devastating situation he has found himself in. And where does he run to for help? Not his therapist. Not the court system. He does not complain to his friends. He doesn't try to run away and hide from his problems. He turns to the Word of God; his hope is in the Word as he waits for God to fulfill His promise according to His Word.

And you get the impression that this was not just some casual reading of the Word of God, but he diligently searched the Scriptures for comfort, so much so that it says his **“eyes fail from seeking Your Word.”** As Paul said in Romans 15:4 **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”** Our hope is found in the Lord and His Word which He has given to us. If you lost that hope, then return to Him and His Word!

2. Now you may be thinking, you may be feeling that you are not finding the comfort of God in your life. Let me share with you a few things that maybe you can see is a problem in your life right now and to see what the remedy is. When will comfort come?

- Comfort will come when we put away unbelief.
- Comfort will come when we are finished complaining.
- Comfort will come when we put away the sin that we tolerate.
- Comfort will come when we fulfill the duties we have neglected.

You see, we can let life's circumstances overwhelm us, discourage us, and drive a wedge between us and God. No matter how tough things get, rest in the promises of God that he has for you. For the Psalmist, his heart was dry, but he did not allow that to destroy his devotional life, he sought God's Word and did not forget God's promises. God's Word will re-light the fire within our hearts and break-up that fallow, that hard ground of our heart.

3. Why does God allow us to go through these times? Sometimes it is because of our sin and God is trying to awaken us and get us back on track. Other times God is testing our faith, helping it to grow. True growth occurs when we are under pressure. You see, a diamond is made when pressure is exerted upon a substance of no value. Without that pressure no diamond would be formed. God uses pressure, various situations in our life, to make us into a diamond, you might say. We are being molded and shaped into His image, and we always don't appreciate it as we go through these times. But as we look back, we see that these things were needful for our life. In other words, God knew what He was doing! Thus, keep focused on God and draw near to God even more during these times.

VERSES 89-96

1. The twelfth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Lamed** ל. Here again we see the Psalmist place his trust in the Word of God. Now, let's face it, we place our trust in many things, and in the end the only one that truly stands the test of time is God and His Word. If we put our trust in anything else but God and His Word we will find out they are like the shifting sand. Only God and His Word is like a solid rock in which we can build our life upon. As Isaiah 40:8 says, "**The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.**" I am so thankful for that.

2. Again, many today feel God's Word is out of date, that we have to make it relevant for today's culture. How foolish. You mean to tell me that God, the creator of heaven and earth, could not give to us His Words that would stand the test of time? You see, it is plain foolishness to think like that.

In fact, Spurgeon nails it when he wrote, "Sentiments fluctuate so constantly in this nineteenth century that I suppose we shall soon require to have barometers to show us the variations of doctrine as well as the prospects of the weather. We shall have to consult quarterly reviews, to see what style of religious thought is predominant, and then we shall have to accommodate our sermons to the dictum of the last wise man who has chosen to make a special fool of himself. As for myself, I shall continue to be unfashionable, and abide where I am. 'Sticking in the mud,' says somebody. 'Standing on the Rock,' say I." Amen to that!

Can we say, like the Psalmist, “**Your word is settled in heaven**”? Again Spurgeon puts this into perspective for us as he wrote, “They say that they are thinking out their doctrines. I would be greatly sorry to have to think out the road to heaven without the guiding star of heaven’s grace or the map of the word. Not gospel-preachers but gospel-makers these men aspire to be, and their message comes forth, not as the gospel of the grace of God, but as the gospel of the imagination of men; a gospel concocted in their own kitchen, not taught them by the Holy Spirit. It is the reverse of being ‘settled in heaven,’ it is not even settled in the mind of its inventor.”

Dan Kimball, one of the leaders in the Emergent Church shows how foolish you really are when you move away from God’s Word. He wrote in his book, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, and this is from a section of his book that is subtitled, “*Truly Worshipping in a Worship Gathering.*” He tells us,

We should be returning to a no-holds-barred approach to worship and teaching so that when we gather, there is no doubt we are in the presence of God. I believe that both believers and unbelievers in our emerging culture are hungry for this. It isn’t about clever apologetics or careful exegetical and expository preaching or great worship bands. . . . Emerging generations are hungry to experience God in worship.

- Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, p. 185

Notice, it is not about doctrine, it is not about teaching the Word of God, it is not about careful exegetical and expository preaching, it is about experiencing God. But how do you know if the god you are experiencing is the true and living God apart from His Word? You can't! Jesus said in John 4:24, "**God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**" In other words, if you are going to worship the true and living God you must be saved and you must worship Him in truth, according to the Word of God!

3. Here we see that the Psalmist is saying God's Word has given him life. How can that be? It is as Paul said in Romans 10:17, "**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" You see, it not only reveals to us the giver of life, Jesus Christ, but it helps our faith to grow as we trust in the Lord and His Word. Thus, as you go through difficult times, if you begin to doubt God's Word, distrust what He has to say, what He has promised, you will be devastated by the situation, overwhelmed. All we have to cling to is God and His Word, without that, everything seems hopeless! May we be able to say as the Psalmist did, "**Your word is settled in heaven.**"

#### VERSES 97-104

1. The thirteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Mem** ם. As I read this section I can see the Words of Jesus come forth when He said to the Devil, who was tempting Him, "**... 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'**" Just as our physical bodies need nourishment, so too does our spirits and our spirit needs the Word of God!

Do we treasure the Word of God like that? Do we make it a regular part of our diet? Do we let God speak to us or do we make God's Word say what we want it to say? You see, it is important that we feed upon God's Word, that it is a regular part of our diet. We need to treasure it more than gold. It needs to be sweeter to our lives than honey! And we must not twist God's Word to make it say what we want; we must let God speak to us through His Word.

Spurgeon made these remarks regarding this issue. He wrote, "You cannot bend the Bible to your mind; how much better it would be for you to bend your mind to the Bible, and to say, 'O how I love thy law, - the doctrines of it, the precepts of it, the promise of it, the ordinances it enjoins upon me, the warnings it sets before me, the exhortations it gives me!' Love the whole Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, and be prepared even to die rather than to give up half a verse of it." Very wise and important words!

2. Now most of you know me and you know that I am not the most intelligent person in the world, I am far from that. But God has made me wiser than many through His Word. He has given insight to me and yet the top intellectuals of the world are blind to these things of God. You see, an all-knowing God can take a simplistic person like me, like you, and make us wise. There truly is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. To the Jew it was not just the knowledge that you had, but what you did with that knowledge, that is wisdom!

Boice tells a story about the life of Harry Ironside, the pastor and author and Bible commentator. Ironside went to visit a man near death, suffering from tuberculosis. The man was almost dead and could barely speak. As Ironside spoke to him he asked, “Young man, are you trying to preach Christ, are you not?” Ironside said that he was, and the man replied: “Well, sit down a little, and let us talk together about the Word of God.” Then the man opened his Bible and spoke with Ironside until his strength was gone; he shared insights from the Bible that Ironside had not appreciated or even seen before. Ironside was stunned, and he asked the man: “Where did you get these things? Can you tell me where I can find a book that will open them up to me? Did you get them in seminary or college?” The old man replied: “My dear young man, I learned these things on my knees on the mud floor of a little sod cottage in the north of Ireland. There with my open Bible before me, I used to kneel for hours at a time and ask the Spirit of God to reveal Christ to my soul and to open the Word to my heart. He taught me more on my knees on that mud floor than I ever could have learned in all the seminaries or colleges in the world.” What a lesson for us to learn and apply to our lives! God wants to teach us, are we willing to learn and fall on our knees and seek His wisdom?

3. So in these verses we have seen that God’s Word is our spiritual food and should be as sweet as honey to our lives. If God’s Word is bitter to you that means you are fighting against His truth, His words. You don’t want to apply what God has said into your life and it shows you are immature. Let God’s Word be sweet to your taste!

VERSES 105-112

1. The fourteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Nun** נ. Notice that God's Word is not darkness, it does not lead you into darkness, there is no darkness in it. God's Word is a lamp and a light to our lives and how important that is especially in the dark days we are living in.

Imagine being blind and not knowing where you are going, what is the right way and what is the wrong way to go. That is how it is for people who have rejected God and His Word, they are in spiritual darkness and they are groping for anything and everything, but it remains darkness to them. God's Word is there to direct our lives, to keep us on the right path, it is truth!

2. It seems as you read these verses that the Psalmist's life was in continual danger. So what did he do? He clung to the Word of God. It is what sustained him during these times. He trusted in the Word of God no matter what came upon his life. May we understand that truth! We may not understand why these things are happening, but as we cling to God's Word, as we believe in His love for us, then we will be able to rest in Him. That is a heart of a true disciple, as Job 13:15 tells us, "**Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him . . .**"



Now let's put these dangers that are out there into perspective for us. Boice points out, "Whenever we find the psalms talking about danger, we usually think of physical danger . . . But the psalms also speak of spiritual dangers like falling into sin or forgetting God." That means we have to be prepared, we have to be ready as Spurgeon tells us, "From this verse let us learn to be on our guard, for we, too, have enemies both crafty and wicked. Hunters set their traps in the animals' usual runs, and our worst snares are laid in our own ways. By keeping to the ways of the Lord we shall escape the snares of our adversaries, for his ways are safe and free from treachery." **"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."** Psalm 119:105. May we not forget that!

#### VERSES 113-120

1. The fifteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Samekh or Samek ם**. The Psalmist speaks of hating those who have a double or divided heart, why? Because they are wishy-washy, they tend to go whatever way the wind blows and they are being pulled in different directions.

And make no mistake about it, God hates those with a divided heart. Remember when the Prophet Elijah had the encounter with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah on Mount Carmel. He not only confronted the false prophets, but also his own people for their double-mindedness. He challenged them by saying, **“... ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word.”** I Kings 18:21. How sad when a person refuses to make a choice. In doing so they are rejecting the true and living God. There is no room to be lukewarm! You either love the Lord or you don't.

Jesus said to the church in Laodicea, **“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’; and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”** Revelation 3:15-17. You see, the person becomes self-sufficient, in need of nothing, not even God, and thus God said He will vomit that person out of His mouth, discard him who is in need of nothing. Jesus would rather have them be cold because He can work with them, but lukewarm is a comfortable place to be and a dangerous place to be!

Boice put it like this, “Double-minded people are people who know about God but are not fully determined to worship and serve him only. They are those who want both God and the world. They want the benefits of true religion, but they want their sin too . . . The Psalmist hates this double-mindedness; he also hates it in himself. Otherwise, why does he continue by asking God to sustain him, according to his promise, and uphold him so that he might be kept from sin?” We need to check our hearts and make sure that we are not double-minded or have a divided heart. May we be sold out to Jesus!

2. We also see here his love for God and also his fear of God. How can that be? Think of it like this. We should obey God out of love, for as we come to know Him through His Word we see how much He loves us. Now to fear God does not necessarily mean to cower or tremble because we expect Him to clobber us. It is a reverential fear, a respect of who He is. We tend to speak of God as our equal, our “good buddy,” but He isn’t. He is our creator, He is Almighty God, holy and righteous, and we are not! If we don’t obey Him out of love then we should obey Him out of fear, for He will chasten us if we are one of His, or He will bring judgment upon us if we are not one of His. But how much better is it to obey the Lord out of love than out of fear!

And as Boice points out for us, as we love God and fear God it gives us a correct perspective. He wrote, “It is only as we tremble before the exalted and holy God that we will ever see the world and its distorted values to be the empty things they are. If we do not tremble before God, the world’s system will seem wonderful to us and consume us pleasantly.”

VERSES 121-128

1. The sixteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Ayin** א. And here we see the Psalmist pleading with God to help him in the situation he was facing. And what I like is that he is not going to give up. Yes, with man, with our plans, our ideas, we might as well give up, but not with God. He will bring salvation to the situations we face and we may not always like the way that they turn out, but He does have a perfect plan according to His timing!

And he even cries out for understanding and there is nothing wrong with that. Just understand that God does not always tell us why we are going through situations and we must then lean upon what we know of God, rest in Him!

2. It is very clear today that many have rejected the Law of God or the Word of God, even in the church. May they not sway us to do the same! You see, God's Word tells us what is right, it tells us what is wrong, it tells us how to get back on track when we have gone astray and it tells us how to stay on track. It is profitable to us, it is a treasure for our lives, it is the truth of God. And as we know His truths then the lies, the false teaching will be exposed as just that. May we stick to God's Word, which is right and hate every false way!

VERSES 129-136

1. The seventeenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Pe** פ. As we allow the light of God's Word to enter into our lives it gives us wisdom, understanding to the simple. I am glad it says simple and not the intelligent, those that have many degrees after their names. God's Word can give light to my life, this simple man, because God's Word is living and powerful and it can transform my life as I am open to what the Holy Spirit is showing me through the Word!

Spurgeon put it like this as he wrote, "Jesus the eternal Word is called wonderful, and all the uttered words of God are wonderful in their degree. Those who know them best wonder at them the most." In other words, God's Word, if applied to our life, is for our good, not for harm or to keep us from something enjoyable. We need to understand that and not let Satan rip us off by dangling some candy coated poison in front of our lives and we take a bite! And notice how important God's Word is to the Psalmist. He is saying that he is like a man panting for air, in that he just can't get enough of the Word of God. Instead of air hunger, he is hungering after the Word of God, taking in as much as he can. May we have that kind of hunger for God's Word in our lives!

2. How can we be directed by God? How can we hear the voice of God? Like we have been saying all evening and in these verses we have just read, allow God to direct you according to His Word. You see, the World wants freedom and they seek to find it outside of God's Word. The reality of that is they have put themselves in bondage, the bondage of this world. True freedom is found as we walk according to the Word of God.

3. Let me ask you a question. “Are you broken over those who reject God and His Word? Or do you look down at them, mock them, make fun of them? Do you tell them they are only getting what they deserve?” You see, the Psalmist is broken over those who reject God and His Word. In other words, he is broken over those that are lost. Do we have that kind of passion for the lost? Are we broken over the spiritual darkness that is in this world? Are we broken like John Knox, who, as he looked over the lost walking aimlessly through Scotland, and said, “Give me Scotland or I die!” Are we willing to say, “Lord, give me Manitowoc or I die”? Where is our heart, looking out for what we can get or are we willing to sacrifice our lives for the lost? Something to think about!

#### VERSES 137-144

1. The eighteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Tsadi or Tsadde** צ. The Psalmist starts out by saying that he is very troubled because they have forgotten God’s Word. The result of that is they have turned from God and their lifestyles reflect that. We see immorality run wild because they have turned from God and God will give them what they want, what is in their heart, which is evil. And look at the evil we see today!

2. For the Psalmist, he sees that God's Word is "**very pure.**" In other words, it has stood the test and there are no impurities that have been found. Horne put it like this, "In the original, 'tried, refined, purified, like gold in the furnace,' absolutely perfect, without the dross of vanity and fallibility, which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them." And Spurgeon wrote, "In the word of God there is no admixture of error or sin. It is pure in its sense, pure in its language, pure in its spirit, pure in its influence, and all this to the very highest degree – 'very pure'."

And think about this for a minute. If you added anything to God's Word or if you take anything away from it, would you make it more pure? No, in fact it would be less pure and that is what we need to understand, especially in the days we are living in when people have no problem adding to or taking away from God's Word! Jesus said in John 17:17, "**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**" Notice that Jesus did not say that God's Word is partial truth. He did not say that it is almost truth. What Jesus did say is that God's Word is truth! And it is the truth of God's Word that helps us to understand the things that we are going through in life, giving us hope and strength.

3. Now I think we need to spend just a little time here because many try to refute the Word of God and say that it has been corrupted over the years, we can't trust it. Please understand that when the scribes were copying the Word of God they were very diligent in what they were doing. Listen to what they did as they copied the Word of God.

- The parchment was made only from the skin of clean animals. It had to be prepared by a Jew only, and the skins were fastened together by strings taken from clean animals.

- Each column must have no less than 48 and no more than 60 lines. The entire copy must be first lined before writing began.
- The ink must be of no other color than black, and it had to be prepared according to a special recipe.
- No word and no letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he must read and pronounce out loud each word before writing it.
- He must reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the word for “God” (*Elohim*) and he must wash his whole body before writing the word used in place of “Jehovah” or “Yahweh” [*LORD* in the New King James Version) so as not to contaminate the Holy Name.
- Strict rules were given concerning forms of the letters, spaces between letters, words, and sections, the use of the pen, the color of the parchment, and so forth.
- The revision of a roll must be made within 30 days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless. *One mistake on a sheet condemned the entire sheet; if three mistakes were found in any larger section, the entire manuscript was condemned.*
- Every word and every letter was counted, and *if a letter were omitted, or an extra letter inserted, or if any letter touched one another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed.*

I think that they were very careful as they were copying the Word of God, more so then what we are seeing today with those that are making new translations of the Scripture! First let’s deal with the Old Testament. Now the oldest complete manuscript of the Old Testament we had came from 916 A. D. That is some 1400 years after it was written, and many argued that it had to be unreliable since all that time has passed from the original writings to the manuscript of 916 A. D. That was until 1947 when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.

The Dead Sea Scrolls is the term that is used of the manuscripts that were discovered in 1947 in caves some 500 yards from the Dead Sea, in the area known as Qumran, along the Northwestern shore of the Dead Sea.



The story goes that back in 1947 a shepherd boy was herding his goats when one of them got lost in this area. And this Arab shepherd boy named Mohammed was looking for this stray goat in the Judean wilderness when he tossed a rock into the air. When the rock landed it fell into a cave and broke some pottery that was in this cave. In hearing the breaking of the pottery, it raised his curiosity and he went into this cave, which is now called cave number 1, and to his surprise he found jars filled with ancient scrolls, which lead to the search for other caves that nearly lasted a decade, once word got out. And during that time they found 11 caves producing over 800 scrolls and scroll fragments written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, covering a time period of almost 1000 years.

Why are the Dead Sea Scrolls so important to us? Yes, we have found every book of the Old Testament there except for Esther but one of the most important finds was discovered in cave number 1, where two scrolls of Isaiah were found, one damaged, but the other one was complete, along with other scrolls. This 24 foot leather scroll of Isaiah could tell us the accuracy of the text transmission over a 1000 year period. You see, this scroll of Isaiah dates back to 100 years before Christ and the next closest text we have dates all the way back to 916 A. D.!

The fascinating thing about this is you can go to Israel today, and visit the museum called the Shrine of the Book, which holds this priceless Biblical manuscript, and if you were able to read Hebrew, and you compared this to a Hebrew Bible, you would discover the Hebrew Bible's reading of Isaiah is almost identical to this text that is over 2000 years old! There is no major difference between the two. Imagine that, the book of Isaiah has 66 chapters, 1292 verses, 37,044 words, and the integrity of the text has held up all these years for over 1000 years between those two manuscripts.

According to Norman Geisler and William Nix, in their book *A General Introduction to the Bible*, they said, “Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of those letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word ‘light’ which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly . . . ***Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission - and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.***”

After comparing the entire Isaiah manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls with the present Hebrew text of Isaiah, Old Testament scholar Gleason L. Archer concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls “Prove to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.” Not bad when you consider they did not have computers, spell-checking, and-so-on, as we have today.

If you had any doubt of the accuracy of the Old Testament, then the Dead Sea Scrolls should help clear that matter up right away. Yes, we don’t have any of the original manuscripts of the Old or the New Testament, but looking at the various texts it shows how accurately they were copied and passed on. As the renowned archaeologist William F. Albright has said, “There can be no doubt that Archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition.”

Thus, we should be in awe of the Word of God. We should cling to it, believe it, and apply it to our lives, just as the Psalmist did. He cried out to God to teach him the truth's of His Word, to open his eyes and his heart to the things of God, and not just to cling to worthless things. To see the rich and deep treasures that God has in His Word for him and for us!

What about the New Testament? Make no mistake about it, the accuracy of the Greek Scriptures; the New Testament is very astonishing! You see, because of the vast number and quality of ancient Greek manuscripts and the existence of relatively early copies, scholars often say that error rate is between 0.5% and 2%.

Greg Koukl wrote, "New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very misleading. Most of the differences are completely inconsequential--spelling errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side by side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement a full 98% of the time."

Now don't let that throw you. Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. This means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and none affects any significant doctrine. (Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*).

What does that mean? It means that God's Word is very pure and we can trust it and we should love it! And Poole puts it into perspective for us when he wrote, "Therefore; because of that exact purity and holiness of it, for which very reason ungodly men either despise or hate it."

As I close this evening, and we will finish up Psalm 119 next time, make no mistake about it, God's testimonies, His Word was right back then, it is right today and it will always be right! Remember what Jesus said to the Devil in Matthew chapter 4, when He said, "**It is written**" these words are written in the perfect tense and thus, Jesus is saying, "It was written, it is written, and it always will be written." In other words, the infallibility and immutability of the Word of God! We can trust it 100%!

And if we understand that and apply the Word of God to our lives, there is tremendous joy that we will find! As the Psalmist said, "**How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! . . . Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. . . . Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold! . . . Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me. . . . The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; Give me understanding, and I shall live.**" Psalm 119:103, 105, 127, 133, 144. May we love God's Word to us because it is the voice of God speaking to us through His Word!