

## Psalm 19.7-11

### A Sermon Written in the Word Sermon #2 in a Series on Psalm 19

Preached by Pastor Glenn Durham at Dominion Covenant Church, Omaha, Nebraska, on October 29, 2006.

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***Main Idea: God's people are enthusiastic about God's word because of the wonders he has hidden in it.***

#### ***Scripture Introduction***

It is appropriate that we study a song about the Bible on Reformation Day. Since the first years of the church, there has been no greater revival of true religion than during the 1500s, the time known as "The Reformation." In those days women and men found new life and new freedom as they returned to the old writings. May God be pleased again to cause us to delight in his Scriptures.

Read Psalm 19 (the whole). Pray.

#### ***Introduction***

Before Katrina, the most devastating natural disaster in US history was Hurricane Andrew. In August of 1992, it caused about \$45 billion (in 2005 US dollars) in damage. A television news crew, filming the devastation, found a man cleaning debris in front of his house, the only house standing in the neighborhood. The reporter asked, "How did you manage to escape the destruction of the hurricane?"

The man responded: "I built this myself according to code. When the code said to use 2 x 6 roof trusses, I used 2 x 6 trusses, even while I watched builders skimp on these other homes. I was told that if I built to code the house would survive a hurricane; I guess they were right."

A team of researchers, building code specialists, engineers and wood industry experts found similar results after Hurricane Katrina. John van de Lindt, a professor at Colorado State University and team member, reported: "If the (building) code was followed, things seemed to do really well."

When the sun is shining and the skies are blue, it is tempting to ignore foundational structures. As a pastor, I see this too frequently in children raised in the church. Your parents are fighting the "good fight of faith," struggling with sin and Satan in a fallen world, seeking to please the Lord in all things. Under their roof, covenant children reap benefits from their attention to God's building codes. But when on your own, because your parent's spiritual struggles have provided for you fair weather, you may build a life that looks good but lacks the strength to sustain through hurricanes. Psalm 19 is written to motivate you to different attitudes and behaviors.

Last week, the first six verses of Psalm 19 reminded us that *general revelation* proves there is a God, maker of heaven and earth. Everyone knows this truth so that all are without

excuse. But such information is insufficient. We do not know who this God is, what he expects, or how to relate to him.

In verse 7, David begins answering. No longer will he use the mere title, °tI [ lae\_ ] meaning “mighty one,” or “God” in some general sense. Now he is **hwhy** (yhwh), Jehovah, Yahweh, the God who redeems a people and enters into covenant with them. Psalm 19 now describes *special revelation*, information about God that only can be found in the Sacred Writings, books which not only tell us his story and ours, but which also enable and empower a life lived for his glory and our joy. Because God invests such power and wonder in his Word, God’s people must be enthusiastic readers and lovers of Bible. Let’s see why.

## 1. The Bible Must Be Our Passion Because of Its Effectual Work (Psalm 19.7-8)

Four parallel clauses, each composed of a noun representing an aspect of the Scriptures, an adjective modifying it, and a verb describing the powerful working of the Word. This is beautiful poetry, but *not* by being devoid of solid theology. Instead, David carefully constructs his case for the Bible, a book unlike any other. “For the word of God is living and active [powerful, effective], sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4.12).

You may remember Duracell’s advertising slogan: “The coppertop battery. No other battery LOOKS like it, or LASTS like it.” David makes a similar claim: “The inspired Bible: no other book LIVES like it, or LABORS like it.”

So what is it about this book? What does it do and how does it do it?

*First*, (v. 7a) the Bible contains the perfect law which “converts” (NKJ), better, “revives” our souls. The word “Law” is not simply the rules and regulations laid down by Moses, but refers to the whole of the teachings of God. It is the Hebrew word, **hr'AT** torah, the kind and compassionate instruction of a father to his dearly loved children. God’s **hr'AT** torah, his teaching, is perfect, complete, lacking nothing. “He has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...” (2Peter 1.3).

As such the Bible shines into the depths of our darkest motives and frees us from sin’s terrible tyranny. No problem is too desperate for the perfect Word; no issue is too complex for the Bible; no need is beyond the reach of God’s Scriptures; no soul is too dry to be restored to life.

Inside John Bunyan’s Bible, he wrote: “This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.” We must each decide whether we will love sin or the Scriptures—they cannot cohabitate. This book revives souls, turning you from sin to God.

*Second*, (v. 7b) the Bible contains the sure testimony making wise the simple. It is a testimony—evidence given to support a claim. But not just any evidence—God himself testifies, making it sure, certain, absolutely correct in everything it says.

Living in a fallen world results in lies permeating virtually every interaction we have. Someone always seeks to cheat us. We have experienced this effect in purchasing another house.

Of the myriad of papers we must sign is the one that says sometimes people who type these documents make mistakes. By signing this paper you promise not to steal or cheat based on a typographical or other administrative errors.

When a man gives his word, the testimony is unsure. God's word, on the other hand, is certain wisdom about life and death, heaven and hell, the condition of your soul in sin and the freedom of salvation and sanctification.

*Third*, (v. 8a) the Bible contains right precepts, making the heart rejoice. The word, "right" does not refer to the opposite of wrong, but to that which is level or straight (as opposed to crooked). God's directions reveal the straight way.

Maybe you have had an experience similar to the woman who came to Jesus because her medical doctors did not help. Listen carefully to her story: "There was a woman... who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse" (Mark 5.26). Rather than "right" treatment, she received crooked counsel leading away from the goal and depressing her heart and soul.

God's Word is right—he gives it to us straight. Other writings tickle our fancy and please the flesh, but the Bible comforts inward fears, quiets stricken consciences, warms souls with eternal consolation—rejoicing the heart!

*Fourth*, (v. 8b) the Bible contains pure commandments, giving light to the eyes. Those who snow ski know you need sunglasses for that sport because of the reflectivity of pure, white snow. God's commands are also pure light, but instead of blinding the eyes, they cure blindness. Apart from the commands of the Bible we are unable to see the trap as the bait draws us inexorably to it. Sin offers a treat but soon it will snap shut with a deadly force.

So the Bible must be our passion because of its four works: reviving the heart; making us wise to sin, self, and Satan; bringing joy; and giving light to our feet. God's word is alive—it acts! Listen to the description in Isaiah 55: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55.10-11).

But what if we do not want the Scriptures to change us? The Word is a sword, but it hurts to be cut. It gives wisdom, but we are embarrassed to be called "simple." It sanctifies, but we are grieved to be thought foolish and sinful. The Bible has power, but what if I do not want its work done? God answers...

## 2. The Bible Must Be Our Passion Because of Its Invaluable Worth (Psalm 19.9-10)

David continues describing God's word with two more parallel clauses. In *form* they match the four we already have. But the content differs. David no longer praises the *work* of the Bible; he now focuses on its *worth*. It endures forever and is righteous altogether.

As an engineer, I designed various cutting tools: drill bits, scraping blades, self-tapping screws, diamond pointed awls. The key to each is a sharp edge. While studying these, I learned why razor blades dull so quickly. It is not primarily because the hair nicks the blade and damage

the edge. It is corrosion. The leading edge of the blade, the super-sharp, thin edge, rusts so that it no longer cuts cleanly.

The edge of a razor cannot endure because the world corrodes. God's word, however, is perfectly clean, undefiled, "un-corrodible." And not just parts; it is righteous *altogether*. The whole is good and every part in it—every dot, every letter. God carefully chose each word to perfectly convey his judgments so that everything said is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

At the church Helen's family attends, they respond to the reading of the sermon text each week by reciting responsively **1Peter 1.24-25**: "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever."

And yet God's people do not know the Word. Some British children were asked questions in Sunday School:

- Who was Noah's wife? "Joan of Ark."
  - What happened to Lot's wife? "She was a pillar of salt by day, and a ball of fire at night."
  - What was the first commandment? "Eve telling Adam to eat the apple."
- Those are funny, but the hard statistics are not. In a Barna Research poll:
- 75% of people claiming to be Christians could not define the phrase, "Great Commission."
  - Only 61% knew that Jonah is a book of the Bible.
  - Only 38% correctly answered this: "Is the expression 'God helps those who help themselves' in the Bible?"
  - Only 18% of all Christians read the Word every day and 23% admitted that they do not read the Bible at all.
  - Less than half of all Christians can name 5 of the 10 commandments.
  - Only half know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

Why would a people who profess the Bible to be God's word be woefully ignorant of its content? The answer is in verse 10: we do not believe that it is valuable.

Imagine if I dump a thousand Krugerrands on the floor. (The Kruggerand is the 22 karat gold coin made by South Africa.) If I allow each of you to take home as many as you wanted, you would immediately ask, "What's the catch?" We would doubt such a free and wonderful gift could be given without strings attached.

But if I convinced you that it really was free and clear, you really could take what you wanted, there would be none left. Gold has an intrinsic value that demands our attention and insists on our taking it.

God says the same is true of the Scriptures. Here is a treasure that never tarnishes, a jewel that never can be stolen, a prize that never fades, a food that never spoils. But if eating this bread of life is not sweeter than honey for you, how do we cultivate a taste?

The answer is twofold: 1) Ask God for new taste buds on the tongue of your heart; 2) Meditate on the promises of God.

*First*, ask God for new taste buds. Psalm 119 says, "How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (119.103). He could taste the word. But the same author prays:

“Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (119.18). He admits that God must give a taste for holy things. None naturally hungers for God’s wisdom. Ask!

And while you do, also meditate on the reckless promises God makes to his people. How can we *not* delight to read the book which would change us from dry chaff to lush trees? Surely we do not want to be rootless, weightless, useless. We desire to draw strength from the deep river of reality and be fruitful, useful people. Such ability is found in the Word.

George Müller lived from 1805 to 1898 and is famous for establishing orphanages and relying on God through prayer. Yet listen to his testimony about meditating on Scripture:

“I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord.... It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this.... And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain *food for his inner man*. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man.... Now what is the food for the inner man? Not *prayer*, but the *Word of God*; and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts. After having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day come upon one!

1) The Bible will do a great work; 2) The Bible is of inestimable worth. Now, third...

### 3. The Bible Must Be Our Passion Because of Its Gracious Warnings (Psalm 19.11)

Next week, Lord willing, we will consider in some detail how God’s word changes us. For today, simply notice in verse 11 the warning and rewards promised.

It is difficult to navigate through a fallen world full of minefields of sin and wickedness and malevolent powers. What hope have such frail creatures, whose hearts and minds are born inclined toward evil? The answer is God’s warnings and rewards.

God warns us of evil, preparing us for the troubles ahead. He desires to protect and deliver his people. And obedience contains such a reward that none who obey lose anything of value. Here is the way, walk in it. God has plans for you, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Will we trust his warnings and saturate ourselves in the Scriptures?

### 4. Conclusion

The story is told of a father whose son was leaving to study for the ministry at prestigious university in Germany. When the son explained his plans, the father said, “Don’t let them take Jonah away from you.” The dad was concerned that his son’s simple faith would be spoiled by sophisticated, unbelieving professors. And he felt that the story of the great fish swallowing the prophet would be the first attacked.

Two years passed in which the boy labored at this liberal institution. When he returned, his dad immediately asked: “Do you still have Jonah in your Bible?”

The son laughed. “Jonah! That story is not even in *your* Bible!”

The father was confused: “What do you mean? Yes, it certainly is. What do you mean it is not in my Bible?”

His son laughed again with a sneer and said, “There is no Jonah in your Bible. Go ahead, show it to me.”

Dad fumbled through his Bible, looking for the book of Jonah, but he could not find it. At last he was forced to sheepishly turn to the table of contents to find the page. When he turned there, however, he found that the three pages comprising Jonah had been cut from his Bible.

His son said: “I cut it out before I left two years ago. What’s the difference whether I lose the Book of Jonah through studying under non-believers or you lose it through neglect?”

Many of us tell the world that this is the bread of life. Yet we do not eat it. We study sports’ statistics and know our novels, but not the Bible. We tell our children that God speaks on these pages, yet we cannot find the book of Jonah.

Have you taught your children how to read a commentary, how to have devotions, how to acquire a taste for the holy things of God? Of course we tell them what they ought to do. Have you shown them and done it with them? Do you do so yourself?

I do not want you to feel guilty. I desire that you answer this question honestly: “Do you believe this more valuable than gold?” Repent and believe this good news: here is treasure that will satisfy your soul forever and ever.