

WHY READING GOD'S WORD SHOULD BE OUR #1 RESOLUTION! (Part 2)

I started last Sunday's message with this thought: What would be the **last thing** I would want to share with you if I thought it was going to be my **last** sermon? And what was that?

--The necessity **for you** to make a conscious decision to **feed yourself** from the Word of God!

'But Pastor, isn't it **your** responsibility to **feed us**?' To which I reply, "Yes—and no!"

--Jesus told Peter three times to "feed my sheep" (or lambs)

--And God the Holy Spirit **moved Peter** to write to elders—meaning pastors—to "Feed the flock of God which is among you" (I Peter 5:2).

But...God the Holy Spirit **also moved Peter** to write: "As newborn babes, **desire the sincere milk** of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2).

You don't have to be a rocket scientist...or a Mom...or a Dad to know these two things about newborn babes: 1) They **really desire** milk; and 2) They **couldn't survive** if they were fed only once or twice a week!

What about **you**? Do you desire God's Word? Is reading God's Word your number one resolution for the year?

--If **it's not, why not?** Is there a **better** resolution—a more **important one**—than daily wanting to have God speak to you through His precious Word?

--**If there is** a better one—if there is something more important—let me know! But...you'll have to show me **from the Bible** where it says that! I'm not trying to be arrogant—or mean-spirited! But I am trying to impress upon you the wonderful truth that God has put in writing what He wants us **to know**—and what He wants us **to do!**

Please take your Bibles and turn once again to Psalm 19. Last week we noticed three **benefits**—three **blessings**—that come from reading and studying the Word of God. I want to **review those** before we look at the next three.

1. The Word of God converts the soul

We see that in vs 7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, **converting** the soul..." What does **convert** mean? It means to change something into another form. "Transform" carries the same idea.

In spiritual terms, it means to change **an enemy** of God into a **child of God**; a **sinner** into a **saint!** In **what sense** does the Word of God **convert** us—meaning **save** us?

It is the way by which **God reveals to us the message** of salvation!

--We can know **from nature** that there is a God—and that He is the Creator! We see that in vs 1-6.

--And we can know **from our conscience**—and **the feeling of guilt that we experience** when we do something wrong—that there is a Judge we will meet some day.

--And—if we are honest—we can know **from experience** that no matter how hard we try, we cannot **live a sin-free life**—and we cannot **get rid of our feeling** of guilt.

--But it is **only from the Bible** that we learn about **heaven**—and about **hell!**

--It is **only from the Bible** that we learn how **bad sin is**...and that our **sin separates us** from God...and that we are **disqualified** from heaven...and that no matter what we do, we **cannot earn our way** into God's heaven!

--And it is **only from the Bible** that we learn that **God has provided a way** for us to be forgiven—by **giving Himself** as the sacrifice for our sins!

What about you? Are you converted? Are you a child of God? Have you come to God in **God's way**—through Jesus? Jesus said in **John 14:6** "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Rest assured; this verse applies **to everyone!** You will not be **the exception!**

While thinking about these things, I had this thought: Satan is really good at what he does—**deceiving people!** Why do I say that? Because Satan doesn't mind if we **talk** about heaven or **think** about heaven. In fact, I don't even think he minds if we **look at what the Bible says** about heaven!

But...Satan does not want us to think **about hell**. He doesn't want us **to know** what God says about hell—and he certainly doesn't want us **to believe** what God says about hell! And we see the sinfulness of our own hearts when “bristle” against the idea of **everlasting punishment!**

Isn't that something? Even as God's children, we **eagerly embrace** what God says about heaven—but **reluctantly accept** what He says about hell!

How do we remedy this? Read about—and believe **what God says**—about both!

Blessing #1? The Word of God converts the soul.

Blessing #2? **2. The Word of God wisens our minds**

We see that in the 2nd half of verse 7: “...the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”

God wants to be our Counselor; He desires to give us wisdom. And He has—in His Word!

Prov 2:6 “For the **Lord giveth wisdom**: out of **His mouth cometh knowledge** and understanding.”

God also wants us to **ask Him for wisdom**—and He will give it when we do!

James 1:5 “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

In vs 8, we see blessing #3 – **3. The Word of God rejoices our hearts**

Do **you believe** that? Do **you believe** that reading God's Word will bring you joy? **If you really believed** it would bring you joy, would you look at reading the Bible as a “chore;” as something you feel **you have to do**?

No! If we **really** believed reading God's Word would **bring us joy**, we will **want to read** the Bible—and we will **want to be in church** whenever the doors are open so we can hear more of it!

Last week I gave you **20 truths** from God's Word that ought to rejoice your hearts. If you weren't here—but would like a copy of those—let me know and I'll get them to you.

That's it **for review**; notice the middle of vs 8 “...the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

Here we see... **4. The Word of God enlightens the eyes**

What does **enlighten** mean? Most of us adults have heard the phrase “shed light upon” something. That doesn't mean to **turn the light of the shed on**, does it? “Shedding light” upon something is not referring to **physical** light at all! It means “to furnish knowledge to; to instruct” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enlighten>). It means to give understanding; to give spiritual insight.

A logical question might be this: “How is this different from wisdom mentioned in verse 7”? I think you'd agree that it must mean **something** different because God is not saying the same thing twice. He sometimes does that, but is not doing that here.

I believe the difference is this: wisdom guides us as to **what to do** in life; **enlightening** guides us in how to **look at life**. MacArthur suggests that this “enlightening” clears up some of the “mysteries” of life like **where** we came from, **why** we are here, and where we **are going** (Grace to You, *The Character of Scripture, Part 1*).

And those are **the easy** “mysteries!” There are much more difficult things that we all wrestle with like: why does **a good God** allow so much evil in the world...and why do **bad things** happen to so-called “good people” ...and what is the **purpose of trials** in our lives?

Even though we may **not fully understand** God's answers to those questions, His Word does shed light on how we are to **view the difficulties of life**. Knowing that God is **in control**...and that He **loves us**...and that He **knows what is best for us**...and that He will **never leave us**...and that trials actually **have benefits**...and that no matter what the trial, they are **but for a moment**—compared to eternity; **and “light”**—compared to the “eternal weight of glory” that we will experience in heaven—clears up a lot of confusion about life!

It is truly “eye opening” to grow in our understanding of how God works in the world—and that “enlightenment” comes from His Word!

Now vs 9 “The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” In vss 7-8, we have 4 different **names** for the Wd of God, followed by 4 diff things the Word does.

--In the 1st half of vs 7, "The law of the Lord" converts the soul

--In the 2nd half of vs 7, "The testimony of the Lord" makes wise the simple

--In the 1st half of vs 8, "The statutes of the Lord" rejoice the heart

--In the 2nd half of vs 8, "The commandment of the Lord" enlightens the eye; the understanding.

But in vs 9, that pattern is broken! We see **different names** for the Word of God—possibly—but neither half of the verse says what the Word of God **does!** Or does it? Let's wrestle with this a little bit.

--We've already established the fact that in vss 7 and 8, we have 4 different names for God's Word.

--Look at vs 10. I think you'd agree that the "they" that is to be desired is the Word of God.

--Now vs 11. Again, we have reference to the Word of God. God's Word is what warns us—and there is great reward—there is great blessing—in keeping/obeying God's Word.

The point I'm making is this: Since vs 7 and 8—the verses **before vs 9**; and vss 10 and 11—the verses **after vs 9**—all talk about the Word of God, it is safe to say that vs 9 is talking about the Word of God, too!

So... "the fear of the Lord" is **another name** for the Word of God! But...that still doesn't answer the question: "What"—according to this verse—"does the Word of God **do**?" I think in this phrase—and the next—that the Word of God **does** what the Word of God **is!** In other words, **5. The Word of God brings the fear of God**

That's true, isn't it? Our understanding of God would be very **small**—and very **wrong**—if God didn't tell us about Himself in His Word!

Does God want us to **fear Him**? Does God want us to have a **reverential awe** of Him?

He does, doesn't He? In fact, the Bible **has so much to say** about "the fear of the Lord" that I almost didn't want to bring it up! But...it is here in our text—and it is certainly something God's people **need to know about**—and **start doing!** "The fear of the Lord"—is found 30 times in our King James Bibles—and almost half of those are in the book of Proverbs. Here are **three truths** regarding the fear of the Lord:

1) It is the **beginning of wisdom**. **Job 28:28** "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, **that is wisdom**; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Also, Ps 110:10; Prov 9:10)

2) God **wants us to have** the fear of the Lord. **II Chron 19:7** "**Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord** be upon you...." (Also, Ps 34:11; Prov 1:29; Prov 15:16; Prov 23:17)

3) The fear of the Lord should **motivate us not to sin!** **Prov 16:6** "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord **men depart from evil.**" (Also, Job 28:28; Prov 8:13; Prov 14:27; Prov 23:17) **Ps 36:1** "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

Interesting verse, isn't it? When David saw the transgression—the sin—of the wicked, he said to himself: "There is no fear of God in them." Paul says the same thing of the wicked in **Rom 3:18** "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

What about **you**? Do you fear God? We noted just a minute ago that **God wants us** to have the fear of the Lord. That probably doesn't surprise you, but this might: God says **you are foolish and rebellious** if you **don't fear Him!** Does the Bible really say that? Yes, it does, and I want you to turn there to see it for yourself.

Mark your spot; we will come back here in a little bit. Please turn to Jeremiah 5.

We know from vs 20, that God is specifically talking to the **nation of Israel**. But we also know that a **truth taught throughout the Bible** is that God wants to fear Him. Please follow along as I read vss 21-24.

Pretty pointed, isn't it?

--In vs 21, God says we are foolish and without understanding if we don't fear Him!

--In vs 22, it is almost as if God asks in amazement, "Fear ye not me?"

--In vs 23, those that don't fear God are said to have a **revolting and rebellious heart**

--And in vs 24, God in essence says the "light bulb" hasn't come on and they **still have not chosen to fear Him!**

Again, I must ask: Do you fear God? He's the Judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25). He will bring every work into judgment (Eccl 12:14). Every knee shall bow to Him (Phil 2:10). All things are opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb 4:13). He is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29).

Much, much more could be said, but we must move on. Please turn back to Psalm 19.

Notice again the 2nd half of vs 9 “...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” Here we see another name for the Word of God—“the judgments of the Lord.” **God’s judgments**—the decisions He makes and how He deals with mankind and His world—certainly are true and right.

I tend to think that “the judgments of the Lord” refer to the Word of God **as a whole** like we’ve seen throughout these verses. But—just like the **first half** of the verse—we are not told what the Word of God **does**. And because it doesn’t say specifically what the Word of God **does**, I believe what it **does**—what it **produces**—is what **it is**: truth and righteousness.

And since the Word of God **is truth**, blessing #6 is this: **6. The Word of God is our basis for truth** Aren’t you glad God has given us the truth? Let’s consider first... **A. Characteristics of God’s truth**

1) God’s truth is forever settled and unchanging. Some truth—according to some churches—is a moving target. It changes with the wind—or the whim—of a new leader. But God’s truth does not change.

Ps 119:89 “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” (See also Ps 119:160; Is 40:8; Mt 24:35).

2) God’s truth is knowable; it has been declared. It is deep—and difficult—sometimes, but it is not unknowable. It is not **shrouded in mystery** where only a select few can understand it.

Ps 33:11 “The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.”

Amos 4:13 “For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought...” Two things we should **never cease to be amazed about**: i) that Jesus left heaven to die for us; and ii) that God has declared His thoughts to us!

B. Reasons to trust God’s Word as true

1) Because God declares it is true. **Ps 119:142** “Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.” **John 17:17** “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

2) Because Jesus trusted in it! At least 17 times in the Gospels, Jesus said “It is written”—referring to what was written in the Old Testament and verifying its truthfulness.

3) Because it is from God. God is perfect...Jesus is truth...and God’s Word is God-breathed (II Tim 3:16). Listen to **John 1:5** “This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that **God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.**” There is **no darkness...no sin...no untruthfulness in God**—so what He says is truth! *Everything God says about anything is true!* Why is that important?

--Because some people think that only the **spiritual** parts of the Bible are true! Think about what that means.

--It means if God talks **about science**—like creation; maybe what God says is right—but maybe it’s wrong!

--It means if God talks **about history**, maybe what God says is right—but maybe it’s wrong!

--And if God talks about **gender and marriage**, maybe what God says is right—but maybe it’s wrong!

Do not buy into that **worldly way of thinking!** I said it once, but I’m going to say it again:

Everything God says about anything is true! “...let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4)

C. Responsibilities to the truth

1) Know what it says. God expects us to know Him—and the only way we know Him is through His Word!

In Jer 9:23-24, God says He delights in **being known**. On the opposite side of the coin, Jesus told some “religious” people in His day, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures” (Mt 22:29)

2) Believe what it says. Does God want us to believe what He says? Of course, He does! In fact, Jesus asked people why they didn’t believe Him! **John 8:46** “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” (See also, Mark 11:22)

3) Use it to guide what you believe and practice.

Maybe you know this—and maybe you don’t—but one of the things that sets us apart from most other churches is that **the Bible** is our sole rule of faith and practice. What exactly does that mean?

It means that we look to the Bible for **our doctrine**—our teaching—and for **our doing** (how we behave). But don’t all churches do that? They might **say they do** that, but in reality they don’t!

--If you **baptize babies**, are you following the Bible? Nope! Why? Because no babies were baptized in the Bible!

--If you teach you can **earn your way to heaven** by being baptized...or joining a certain church...or giving money...or “doing good,” are you following the Bible?

Nope! Why? Because the Bible says salvation is not of works! (See Ephesians 2:8-9)

--If you **perform a "wedding"** ceremony between two men or two women, are you following the Bible?

Nope! Why? Because God is against it! For proof of that we can look at Sodom and Gomorrah in the OT (Genesis 18 and 19)—and Romans 1 in the NT!

--If you have a **woman pastor**, are you following the Bible? Nope! Why? I Timothy 2:12

--If you **speak in tongues—or having healing services**—are you following the Bible?

Nope! Why? Because the sign gifts ended when the Bible was completed.

--If you follow a **cult leader** like David Koresh, are you following the Bible? Obviously not!

--And yet, he supposedly **used the Bible** to justify what **he did**—and what **he believed**.

--But he certainly **didn't rightly interpret** the Bible—and I believe he knew he was misleading his "followers."

But sadly; **they didn't know** they were being misled and on April 19, 1993—in Waco, Texas—76 people—including Koresh himself and 25 children—needlessly died in a fire!

Why does God want us to read and study the Bible for ourselves? Why should reading God's Word be our #1 resolution for the new year?

- 1) Because it tells us how to become a child of God
- 2) Because it gives us wisdom for living
- 3) Because its truths bring joy
- 4) Because it sheds light on how to view life
- 5) Because it develops the fear of the Lord in us which will keep us from sin
- 6) And because it reveals to us the truth and what we should believe

We know what God wants us to do. The question is, are we going to do it?

So what would God have us do with what we have heard this morning?

1. One question we ought to ask ourselves is what one dying sinner—on a cross next to Jesus—asked another dying sinner. What was that question: "Dost not thou fear God?"

--Do you fear God? We know in our heads—kinda sorta—that we could meet God literally at any moment, and yet we live our life like we have lots of time.

--We don't know what a day may bring forth—and this could be the last Sunday you ever darken the doors of a church.

--Are you ready to meet God?

--If you are not born again—if you have never put your faith and trust in Jesus alone to pay the penalty of your sins—you aren't ready to meet God!

--And if you are too busy to read your Bible...and too busy to go to church...and too busy seeking first your kingdom—instead of God's—you aren't ready to meet God either!

If that's you, you need to ask God to forgive you—then start doing what you know God wants you to do!