

WHY READING GOD'S WORD SHOULD BE OUR #1 RESOLUTION!

Here we are—the last day of 2023! Provided nothing “crazy” happens **during** the sermon—and Jesus doesn’t **interrupt the sermon** via the Rapture—these will be my last words to you for **this year**. While thinking on that—and praying about what I should preach on—I had this thought: “What if this was **my last sermon**—ever?”

What **would I want to say** if this was my “**farewell**” address?” **A lot!** In fact, rather than leaving out some of what I wanted to say, I’d probably be like Paul in Acts 20 and preach **until midnight!** In some ways, it would be **easier to preach for a long time** than it would be trying to **narrow it down** to 45 minutes!

That—for me—is one of the biggest challenges in preaching: to know **what to say**—and to know what to **leave out!** How do I go about doing that? I pray...and read...and wrestle with what I think **you might need** from God’s Word—and **what I need** from God’s Word.

But I often **don’t know** your circumstances...or doubts...or feelings...or struggles...or questions. And **your** circumstances and doubts and feelings and struggles and questions **are different** than the person **next** to you...and in **front** of you...and **behind** you. And—since **only God can know** all those things about all of us—I am really **trying to do what** is impossible!

And then it really struck me: the **absolute best way** for you to be fed from the Word of God is for **you to feed yourself!** “**Give** a man a fish and you feed him for a day; **teach** a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

You’ve heard that before, haven’t you? I used it to introduce a sermon **about faith** back in May. In the same introduction, I also said this: If the only “spiritual food” you take in is **what you get from me** on Sundays and Wednesdays, **we’re both** missing the boat! Either **I haven’t stressed enough** that you need to read the Word of God outside of church—or **you haven’t listened** when I stressed it—or **a combination** of both!

So this morning I want to impress upon **your** heart what God has impressed upon **mine**—that **each one of us** needs to be **reading**...and **praying over**...and **studying** the Word of God—**for ourselves!** It is impossible **for me** to know what **each of you** needs—but it is not impossible **for God!**

I’m **going to continue to read** and pray and wrestle with what God **wants me to preach** each week, but nothing will **help you more than** you opening your Bible—and your heart—and asking God to **change** you and **teach** you! **My heartbeat** is that each of us develops the attitude that Job had as seen in Job 23:12 “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have **esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food**.” David expresses a similar attitude in Ps 119:97 “O how **love I thy law!** it is my meditation all the day.”

Does God want us to have this kind of love for His Word? Yes, He does! **How do we develop** that kind of love for the Word of God? One way is by seeing what God says about the **benefits and blessings** of His Word. That is what we will be looking at today—and probably over the course of the next few weeks.

So where do **we begin?** Psalm **119** would certainly be a **good place**, especially in light of the fact that at least 171 of the 176 verses in that Psalm—97%—refer to the Word of God! And even though we looked at that Psalm roughly a year ago, there is certainly much more that could be said.

But...instead of Psalm **119**, we are going to look at Psalm **19**—even though we’ve looked at that in the past, too! Let’s turn there. Verses 1-6 deal with what we call **general** revelation—meaning what we can learn from God **through nature**. Verses 7-11 refer to what we call **special** revelation—what God has made known to us through **His Word**. Please follow along as I read verses 7-11.

Maybe you noticed as I read that there are different words God used to describe His Word. --**Vs 7** has “law of the Lord” and “testimony of the Lord.”

--Vs 8 refers to "statutes of the Lord" and the "commandment of the Lord."

--And vs 9 mentions the "judgments of the Lord."

Although each word is different—and important—the intent of this passage is not to focus on which parts of the Bible are "law" ...and which are the "testimony" ...and which are "statutes"... and which are "commandments."

The intent, I believe, is simply this: **God has revealed Himself to us** through His Word—and what He has revealed are **benefits and blessings to us!** What are some of those blessings of the Word of God we see here?

1. The Word of God converts the soul

Vs 7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, **converting** the soul..." What does **convert** mean? One on-line dictionary defines it "to change (something) into another form, substance, state, or product; to transform." In spiritual terms, it means to change **an enemy** of God into a **child of God**; a **sinner** into a **saint!**

--It is going from a state of being **condemned already**—to being **not condemned**.

--It is going from the state of being yet **in our sins**—to being **forgiven of our sins**.

--It is going from **lost to found**—and from being **blind to seeing!**

--And it is going from the state of **not having the Son**—and not having eternal life; to **having the Son**—and having eternal life!

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! **Spurgeon** put it like this: "The great means of the conversion of sinners is the Word of God..." (Treasury of David, Vol 1, pg 308). Jesus' death on the cross is **what** saves—but the Word of God is what **conveys that truth** to us! Mark your spot here, and let's turn to Romans 10.

Romans 10:13-17 "¹³ For whosoever shall **call upon the name** of the Lord **shall be saved**. ¹⁴ How then shall they **call on Him** in whom they **have not believed?** and how shall they **believe in Him** of whom they have not **heard?** and how shall **they hear** without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that **preach the gospel of peace**, and **bring glad tidings** of good things! ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath **believed** our report? ¹⁷ So then faith cometh **by hearing**, and **hearing by the word of God.**"

Notice the progression we have here:

- 1) To be saved, you need to **call upon the name** of the Lord—you need to receive Jesus as your Savior.
- 2) But in order to **call** on Him, you need to **believe in Him and on Him!**
- 3) And in order to **believe** in Him and on Him, you need to **hear about** Him!
- 4) And in order to **hear** about Him, someone needs **to tell you**.
- 5) **What** do they need to tell you? **The gospel** as found in the Word of God.

So for saving faith to take place, we need to hear—and respond to—the Word of God!

I Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever."

And let's not forget some of what we've looked at so far in our study of II Peter. **II Peter 1:3-4a** "According as **His divine power hath given unto us** all things that pertain unto **life** and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ⁴ Whereby are given unto us **exceeding great and precious promises**: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature...**"

God's divine power has brought about what we need for eternal life—the death and resurrection of His Son. When we receive Jesus and are born again, we become **partakers of His divine** nature. But...that truth is conveyed to us through the "exceeding great and precious promises" that are contained in His Word!

What about you? Are you converted? Are you born again? Are you a child of God and heaven-bound?

--**If so**, it is because you learned—from the Word of God—of your sin...and the penalty of sin...and that Jesus came to save you from the penalty of your sin!

--**But if you are not saved**, there is **only one place** you can go to find the truth about being saved. What is that place? The Word of God! Let's not just think **about ourselves**, though. What about our family members...and neighbors...and co-workers? The only way **they** will be saved is if they "call on the name of the Lord."
--But they **won't call** on Him if they **don't believe** on Him.
--And they can't believe on Him unless **they hear** about Him.
--And they **won't hear** about Him unless someone tells them!
What do we need to tell them? **The Word of God!**

Back to Psalm 19:7 again, this time **the second half** of the verse: "...the testimony of the Lord is sure, **making wise the simple.**" Blessing #1, the Word of God "converts the soul."

Blessing #2? **2. The Word of God wisens our minds**
What does "**wisen**" mean? Ever hear the saying, "Wisen up?" It simply means to become wiser...to exercise discernment and wisdom. According to this verse, how does a simple person **become wise**? By going to the **Word of God** for advice...and counsel... and direction...and guidance...and wisdom.
Ever need any of those things? **Every day**, right?

You should consider yourself extremely blessed if there is someone in your life that you can go to for counsel. And getting counsel is a **good thing!** **Proverbs 11:14** "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the **multitude of counsellors there is safety.**"

But...there is only one Counselor that you can go to at any time... with any problem...and get **perfect advice—every single time!** We know **who** that Counselor is, don't we? We just celebrated His coming to earth last Sunday and Monday! And let's not forget that "Counselor" is one of Jesus' many names!

Isaiah 9:6 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, **Counselor**, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Let's ponder for a moment God the Son as our Counselor.
--We can go to Him for counsel **any time**—He is never too busy...He is never sleeping...He is never unavailable.
--We can go to Him with **any problem**. None of them will **shock or surprise Him**—and none of them will be "above His pay-grade," so to speak!
--And His advice...His counsel...His direction and guidance, will **always be perfect** because He is **only, always perfect!** We **need** that kind of counselor—and should be thankful that **we have** that kind of counselor!

In fact, A. God promises to give guidance and wisdom
Ps 25:9 "The meek **will He guide** in judgment: and the meek will **He teach His way.**"
Ps 48:14 "For this God is our God for ever and ever: **He will be our guide** even unto death."
Ps 73:24 "Thou **shalt guide me with thy counsel**, and afterward receive me to glory."
Isaiah 58:11 "And the Lord **shall guide thee continually**, and satisfy thy soul in drought..."
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.**"

It should be obvious from these verses that God **wants to** guide us...and teach us...and give us wisdom. The problem is not **with Him**—the problem is with us **not going to Him!**

B. God's Word is the source of wisdom
Ps 119:24 "**Thy testimonies** also are my delight and **my counselors.**"
Ps 119:99 "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy **testimonies are my meditation.**"
Prov 2:6 "For the **Lord giveth wisdom**: out of **His mouth cometh knowledge** and understanding."
Jer 8:9 "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have **rejected the word of the Lord**; and what wisdom is in them?" They rejected the source of wisdom—the word of the Lord!
Mt 7:24 "Therefore whosoever **heareth** these sayings of mine, and **doeth them**, I will liken him **unto a wise man**, which built his house upon a rock:"

So...God **wants to give us direction** and guidance and wisdom—and **His Word is the source** of those things.

But how do **we receive** “counsel” and wisdom from God’s Word? We can’t **invite Him over** for coffee and share with Him our problem—and we can’t **call Him up on the phone!**

How **do we get** wisdom from God’s Word? We come to His Word in a humble, prayerful spirit—**asking Him** to show us what to do. We also need to come to Him **in faith—expecting Him** to show us what He wants us to do! But we also need a desire to obey! Will God show us what to do if **He knows we won’t do it?**

Here’s a **real-life, personal example** of what this looks like—hopefully without giving too much detail. A number of years ago—**way** before we came here—my wife and I were put into a pretty difficult situation as parents. It was one of those “should we do this thing—or shouldn’t we”—and there was no easy answer.

I went to my pastor for counsel, and he wisely said: “Ask God to give you a verse!” What did he mean by that? Before I tell you what **he meant**, I’m going to tell you what he **didn’t mean**. He didn’t mean that I was supposed to close my eyes, flip open my Bible, put my finger down on the page, and do what the vs said!

What he meant was that I was **to ask God** to impress upon my heart a verse that **fit this situation**—either from my **normal daily Bible** reading or from verses that I already knew. And God **very specifically** gave me a verse! I can’t remember **how quickly** He gave it to me—this happened close to 20 years ago—but I still remember the verse! God **can do** that—and wants to do that—for **each of us!**

He wants **each of us** to go to His Word for guidance and wisdom—and He will bring that needed guidance to our attention as we are in His Word! But...you have to give God “some ammo,” so to speak.

Listening to me once or twice a week won’t “cut it”—you need to be in God’s Word yourself!

One more; look at vs 8 “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart...”

3. The Word of God rejoices the heart

I mentioned last week that one of the main reasons people were unwilling to give up their place of comfort for Mary and Joseph was because they **didn’t believe what they were told** about the baby Mary would give birth to. If they had believed Mary’s child was also **the Son of God**, I believe they would **have fought** to help them.

But **they didn’t**, did they? You see where I’m going with this, don’t you?

If we believed that reading God’s Word would bring rejoicing to our heart, would we look at it as a “chore”?

No! If we **really** believed reading God’s Word would **bring us joy**, wouldn’t we **want to read** the Bible—and wouldn’t we **want to be in church** whenever the doors were open so we could hear more of it?

Please know that David wasn’t the only one who said this. Jeremiah 15:16 “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and **thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart**: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.”

And let’s not forget that they both felt this way about God’s Word **before the NT** was written! In other words, the little bit of the Bible they had contained **next to nothing** about Jesus coming into the world to save sinners—and all the blessings we have as children of God!

So **how** does the Word of God **rejoice our heart?** How does it bring us joy? We obviously can’t spend a lot of time on this—unless we go until midnight 😊—so I’m going to **simply list 20 truths** from the Word of God that ought to cause our hearts to rejoice. First, **some disclaimers**.

1) This is not an **all-inclusive list**. There are many more than what I’m about to give you.

2) I’m breaking the “rules” of outlining and should be using **letters** instead of **numbers**. If you have no idea what I’m talking about, disregard.

3) This list is only for born-again, blood-bought believers! **Some** of these things are true for the **unbeliever**, but **most of them are not**. They are, however, **true for all** genuine children of God. Here goes:

1) God loves you! (Jer 31:3; John 3:16; Rom 8:38-39)

2) God provided a way for us to become His child (John 1:12; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Titus 3:5)

3) Once in God’s family, we are forever in His family (John 10:27-29; Phil 1:6; I Pet 1:3-5)

- 4) God promises to forgive you (Psalm 103:12; Rom 4:7-8; Heb 10:17; I John 1:9)
- 5) God knows what is going on in our lives. (Ps 139:1-12; Mt 10:29-30; Luke 12:6-7)
- 6) God hears and answers prayer. (Ps 65:2; Jer 33:3; Mt 7:7-8; Phil 4:6; Heb 4:16; James 4:2)
- 7) God will never leave you or forsake you. (Heb 13:5)
- 8) God provides a way for us to escape temptation (I Cor 10:13)
- 9) God gives peace in the midst of suffering and trials. (John 14:27; 16:33; Phil 4:7)
- 10) God controls the future. (Ps 115:3; 135:65; Is 14:24; 46:10; Dan 4:35)
- 11) Nothing is too hard for God (Jer 32:17, 27; Lk 1:37)
- 12) Jesus is preparing a place for you (John 14:1-3)
- 13) Satan, sin, and sorrow will someday be forever gone! (Rev 20:10; Rev 22:3; Rev 21:4)
- 14) We will someday be sin-free and live forever with God. (Phil 3:21; I Cor 15:49-54)
- 15) We will spend eternity with family members that are children of God (II Cor 5:8; I Thess 4:13-18)
- 16) God knows what you do for Him—and will reward you accordingly! (Rom 5:10; I Cor 3:8-15; Heb 6:10)
- 17) God works all things together for good (Rom 8:28)
- 18) The suffering of this present time is nothing compared to the wonderful future that is ahead of you (Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17; I Peter 4:13)
- 19) God has something that He has prepared you to do (Eph 2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:8,14)
- 20) God gives us His Word so you can know all these things about Him! (Ps 33:11; Amos 4:13)

There you have it—20 truths from God’s Word that ought to bring rejoicing to your heart. And—as mentioned earlier—there are more!

Why should reading God’s Word be our #1 resolution for 2024?

Because the Word of God converts our soul...and wisens our minds...and rejoices our hearts!

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

1. First, are you saved...are converted...are you born again?

--God created you with a soul—a part of you that will live forever

--And God has put within you an awareness of Him—and an awareness of your sin

--And God has given you the truth about how to be forgiven of your sin

The question is: will you believe what God says—and submit to what God says?

2. Most of us, though, are children of God. Do you believe what God says about His Word?

--If so, make a commitment to read God’s Word for counsel—and to rejoice your heart!