

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON's SERMON- 15th October 2023

TITLE: "A Life-saving Investment"

TEXT: Psalm 119 verses 1-16

Scripture references from the ESV

Psalm 119:1-16

¹ Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!

² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,³ who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!⁴ You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.

⁵ Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. ⁸ I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.

⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. ¹² Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!

¹³ With my lips I declare all the rules^[c] of your mouth. ¹⁴ In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

We have been looking at how we live out the life of Christ that is in us and have seen the absolute necessity of being born again. Being a Christian is much more than just agreeing with the teaching of the Bible.

Being a Christian is about having the very life of God in our souls.

When Christ makes himself at home in our hearts, we will:

- Think and act as he thought and acted
- Love the things he loves and hate the things he hates

Ask yourself whether you have you been born again:

- Do you know this life of God and is the living God real to you?
- Do you know what it is to have communion with him in the same way you commune with friends and family?

If you have not been born again, then no matter how you live your life you do not yet have this eternal life of God.

A Christian is a person in whom Christ has come to live but

How do we live out that life of Christ?

The evidence of Christ's life in us is love for God and his word, and love for his people, but it is not a passive life, as Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20: **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

We live out this life of Christ by faith in Christ and trust and confidence in his word. As we do so, the Holy Spirit changes us, producing fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control. We have seen that we need to fight the fires of Satan's lies with the prescribed fire of faith in God and his promises, taking up the shield of faith to extinguish all the fiery darts of the evil one (**Ephesians 6:16**). Satan may lie to us, telling us that we would feel better if we retaliated against someone who has hurt us. Instead, we lift the shield of faith and trust that by obeying God and not retaliating, we will lead a life that is free from bitterness. When we find ourself in an unplanned place, Satan may try to tell us that God cannot possibly love us if that is where he has put us. Then we lift the shield of faith and trust that God is always good, and in this unplanned place he is working for our good, giving us his grace while we wait for him to change our situation.

So we quench the fiery darts of Satan with the shield of faith, and we fight the fires of Satan's lies with the prescribed fire of faith in God and his promises.

We have looked at verses that help us deal with the challenge of facing hostility and that of patience, but there are many more challenges in our daily lives. Every day we are hit by evil that comes at us (suffering) and evil that rises within us (temptation).

- **Suffering** includes physical illness, opposition from people we have to work with, anxiety over those we love, financial loss and much more
- **Temptation** includes a desire to retaliate, to escape through social media, computer games, alcohol, tobacco or shopping, to satisfy our lust through pornography, adultery or fornication. It can include pride in our achievements or our family.

We need to be armed with Bible verses that will help us to fight whatever comes at us even at times when we do not have a Bible to hand to find what is needed. If we are going to live this life of faith then Psalm 119 helps us to see two essential elements.

1. We need to have a Bible savings account. (v11 above). We are used to the concept of saving money for our future, or to cover unexpected bills. On the same principle, we need to store up reserves that will enable us to have faith when suffering and temptation hit us. The Psalmist knew the importance of storing up God's word.

He banked scripture so he had a spiritual savings account.

He did this so that he would be able to stand when temptation came, realising that there is a link between resisting the evil that rises within us and banking the word of God. He applied the same principle with regard to suffering (119:92) **If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.**

- Because he had stored up God's word, he was able to fight with faith against the lies of Satan in the face of both temptation and suffering.

Just as we save money when we have it so that we can deal with the unexpected, so we ought to be banking scripture while we can.

In general as we read God's word and the Holy Spirit shines a spotlight on a verse that speaks to us, it pays to write the verse down, think through what it means and memorise it. This applies even more to the promises of God.

When we read a promise in God's word and the Holy Spirit makes it stand out, write it down in a book, think through what it means and memorise it.

Then use it to fight against the lies of Satan.

How do we do that? The Psalmist tells us that he stored God's word not just in a notebook or even just in his head, but

he stored God's word in his heart.

The heart is the control centre of our lives, the place where our decisions are made, our actions are motivated and our thoughts about life are formed, and the Psalmist see that God's word needs to be in that central place of control. At one time, the values of the

world drove all his heart told him to do, but now God's word is written on his heart and is the driving force. If we are going to live out the life of Christ in us, then

God's word needs to be stored in our heart

How does that come about?

- 2. We need to have a Bible conversation with God.** The Bible is God's living word to us, but often we don't listen properly to what God is saying or give it our full attention.

When we read the Bible, God is speaking

This is an awesome thing.

However, because we don't take time to ponder and process what God has to say, we find the word of God does not change us. We do not take God's word into our hearts, where it can shape our thoughts, motives, attitudes, actions and speech. The remedy is to do as the Psalmist did.

We need to turn Bible reading and Bible study into a conversation with God

Psalm 119 is generally considered to be a meditation on God's word, and so it is, but it is much more than that. If you slow down and read it carefully, you will notice that it is one long prayer. Conversational phrases are everywhere, including in **v11** where the Psalmist is clearly talking to the living God. Again, in **v92**, where he **says if your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction**, he is not just stating a truth about God's word, he is speaking with God about what God has said. The consistent use of 'I – You' and 'I – Your' reflect a conversation with God and we are invited into this man's prayer to God about what he has learnt from God's word.

- The Psalmist is making sense of his life through talking with God about how God's word speaks into his life.

He has suffered, but he knows that the suffering has been God's affliction to keep him in the path of eternal life. He would have read the following in Deuteronomy: **Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. ⁶ So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. (8:5-6).** He has taken what he read, applied it to his own life

and is talking to God about it. So in **v67** he says **Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.**

Psalm 119 is an outcry of faith in what God has spoken

Faith takes what God says in his word and talks to him about it.

There are many examples in the Bible to help us see how to exercise faith in God's word, as his people took what he has said, and in faith spoke to him about it and then held him to his word. When the early church were told they couldn't preach Christ (see **Acts 4**), they didn't write to their MP or grumble to other believers.

The early church prayed God's word

They took the opening chapters of **Genesis** and **Psalm 2** (please read in your Bible), reminding themselves of God's power in creation, and of his promises to shake the earth. They cried out to him to give them boldness to preach Christ and to perform miracles as they did so to authenticate their preaching. They called on God to keep his promises.

Jesus was abandoned by everyone and even his heavenly Father had turned his face away when he was on the cross but he sustained his soul in that hell by praying **Psalm 22**, which begins '**My God, my God why have you forsaken me?** That psalm goes on to express confidence that God would rescue him, and asks for that deliverance (v19-21). **But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! ²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!** Jesus is calling on God to do what he had promised to do, and the psalm ends with confidence that he who prays it will lead God's people in praise (v22). **I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.**

Jesus had banked up scripture, taking it into his heart, and in his hour of greatest need he had words that promised victory and would strengthen his soul.

In faith Jesus prayed for the Father's help.

We live out the life of Christ in us in the same way he lived his life – through faith in him
If that is how Jesus did it, then surely it is how we must do it too.

To live out this life, we need a Bible savings account, which is of far more value than any money-saving account, and a Bible conversation with God.

Then we will have a life-saving investment.

When suffering and temptation come,

that life-saving investment will result in us experiencing the Spirit of God in our lives.

The Spirit will produce the life of Christ in us, growing the fruit of

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Self-control

When we take the word of God and talk to God about it, we develop a relationship
and the life of Christ is formed in us.