

Hiding It Someplace Safe

Psalm 19:14; 119:11, 48

Have you ever hidden something so carefully that you couldn't find it later? It happens to me more than I care to admit. My doctor gave me new prescriptions, but since it wasn't time to fill them, I placed them somewhere where they would be safe. Someplace I wouldn't forget. Someplace I would be sure to be able to find them.

Well, they were safe, all right. I looked everywhere I could think of, so I must have hidden them so well that I couldn't remember where they were. I've misplaced keys, books, sermon notes, shoes and a host of other things, some important, some not so important. I think I'm being careful to place these objects in locations which would be logical and safe. Well, at least they're safe, anyway! Usually, *no one* can find them—myself included.

Where do you hide things when you want them to be safe? You may have a safe deposit box in a bank, but even that can become cluttered, and its objects forgotten. You may have a special drawer at home in which you place those items you don't want to lose. Sometimes, no matter how safe we thought the object was, we either forgot where we had placed it, or else we return some weeks, months or years later to discover that either rust, moths, thieves or mildew had destroyed, stolen or damaged that prized possession. As it turned out, it wasn't as safe as we thought it may have been.

The psalmist had a prized possession, one he was careful to guard—the Word of Almighty God. Since there were no printing presses, each copy of each portion of God's Word had to be copied painstakingly by hand onto scrolls or parchment. Because of the time it took to reproduce one, owning your own copy of God's Word could be quite expensive.

So from a purely economical standpoint, it would need to be stored in a safe place. If the psalmist put it on a shelf, or left it lying around, it could be stolen—yes, thieves steal even God's Word. Even if he went to great pains to hide it carefully, he could go back one day to find the parchment rotted or mildewed. There must be a better place, a place untouched by the elements, burglars, or crumbling recall.

We could memorize God's Word, but since our minds are too subject to injury, illness, or just plain forgetfulness, even our brains are not the safest place to keep the words God has revealed to us. Human memory is just too unpredictable. Some

of us older folks can look back on our last high school or college reunion and admit that we couldn't remember the names of our former classmates! Memory is just too unpredictable and unreliable. I'm not saying we shouldn't memorize God's Word—it just seems to me that memorization doesn't go down deeply enough. It only goes as far as the intellect and brain capacity. Even when the psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:11, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you,"* it could be that memorization was not at all what the psalmist had in mind here, but something else, something that even fading memories could not touch.

This something else certainly includes memorizing the Scriptures, but goes beyond that to something more enduring. Alexander Maclaren once wrote, "...when the Psalmist says, 'I have hid Thy Word within my heart,' he means 'I have buried it deep in the very midst of my being, and put it down at the very roots of myself, and there incorporated with the very substance of my soul.'"

But before we go any further, let's review just a moment or two. Psalm 119 is entirely about the Word of God and the value it has in the lives of those who obey it. The psalm even begins, *"Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord"* (v. 1).

But even we who follow the law of God as closely as we know how occasionally have times when we need renewing in our spirits. Four times between verses 25 and 50, the psalmist mentions renewal in some way. The end of verse 25 reads, *"...renew my life according to your word,"* a request made again at the end of verse 37. The petition changes only slightly in verse 40, where we read at the end of that verse, *"...renew my life in your righteousness."*

Then in verse 50, the petition is replaced by a new awareness. He no longer asks for renewal; instead, he makes a simple statement of faith: *"My comfort in my suffering is this: your promise renews my life."* How did the psalmist arrive at such a conclusion, that his renewal came from the promises of God? He learned it from his own personal experience. He had been *"laid low in the dust"* (v. 25), but now he had been lifted up! His soul had been *"weary with sorrow"* (v. 28), but now he had been relieved of the burden!

This renewal came from God, but it came when the psalmist took personal responsibility for preparing himself to receive it. Renewal came as he moved through different levels of his experience with God. The same is true with us today. The first level, found in verse 26, is ***"evaluation."*** The psalmist said that he had "recounted" his ways. He had made a close scrutiny of his life and everything

in his life. Before we can experience renewal on either the church level or on a personal basis, we must ask some very honest questions of ourselves and our relationship to God. It is on this level of evaluation that we fully come to realize that personal, spiritual renewal is actually needed.

But then we must turn from ourselves to take a contemplative look at God. We call this level “*meditation*,” and we see it in verses 27 and 48. Merely thinking about the truths of God in a casual sort of way will never be enough to bring us renewal. We must ponder them, weigh them, consider them and scrutinize them so that they become a part of who we are. Last week we saw that our English word “*meditation*” comes from a Latin word meaning “to measure.” When we meditate on a particular thing, we are measuring its value and worth for our lives. We are measuring our lives against it.

There are two general areas which the psalmist felt deserved such meditative measuring. In our practical experience, we discover that meditating on these two areas helps us to refocus our spirits on Eternal God, so that we are prepared to receive spiritual renewal.

The first of these two is seen in verse 27, where the author of the psalm wrote, “*Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders.*” Meditating on the wonders of God as we see them in history, in Scripture and in the created world—even our own bodies—helps us to remember the vastness and immensity of God. It helps to bring us renewal because we realize that God is a much bigger God than the problems or sins which caused our spiritual decline in the first place. It helps to put everything into proper perspective.

Contemplating the wonders of God enables us to worship God. In fact, we cannot truly worship Him unless we are able to sit in wonder at His feet. We must meditate on the wonders of God.

The other area which deserves meditative measuring is to be found in Psalm 119:48—“*I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.*” There it is, right out where we can see it plainly:

We must meditate on God’s Word.

We will find many different words in this psalm which refer to the Scriptures: *laws* (v. 1), *statutes* (v. 2), *ways* (v. 3), *precepts* (v.4), *decrees* (v. 5), *commands* (v. 6) and *word* (v. 11), to name just a few. All of these describe God’s written revelation of Himself.

But close examination shows us that the Scriptures *never* command us to merely *memorize* Scripture, but we *are* commanded to *meditate* on the words God has given us. It is important to remember that meditation is concentrating on a truth until it becomes incorporated into our lives, until it becomes a part of who we are. This meditation can be described in various ways. Let's take a quick survey of what the Scriptures say about meditating on the Words of God.

As Moses was about to give the Law of God to the people, he instructed them, *"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts"* (Deuteronomy 6:6). The rest of Scripture teaches that the Words of Almighty God can be on our hearts only as we meditate on them. For example, after Moses died, God commanded Joshua, *"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful"* (Joshua 1:8). In other words, Joshua was to so concentrate his being on the Word of God that it became a part of him, manifesting itself in his outward actions.

David observed in Psalm 1:2 that the righteous person meditates on the Law of the Lord day and night. He also wrote in Psalm 40:8, *"I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."* Meditating on the Word of God is mentioned again and again just in Psalm 119:

v. 15 *"I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways."*

v. 23 *"Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees."*

v. 78 *"May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts."*

v.97 *"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."*

v. 99 *"I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes."*

v. 148 *"My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises."*

As we meditate on His Word we discover what those things are that please Him; more and more the desire of our hearts becomes to do those things which please Him. So in Psalm 104:34, we read *"May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord."* His Word becomes more valuable to us than ever before. We look on it in a different light than before. Job stated with confidence, *"I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth*

more than my daily bread” (Job 23:12). In Psalm 110:103, we read, “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Not only does the Word of God become valuable to us, but we find ourselves turning to it at odd times throughout the day. It provides us with a standard for living. *“How can a young man keep his way pure?”* is the question of Psalm 119:9, and by extension, *“How can anyone keep his or her way pure?”* The answer: *“By living according to Your Word.”* God’s Word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our paths (Psalm 119:105). We learn that the *“unfolding”* of the words of God *“gives light”* and *“understanding to the simple”* (Psalm 119:30).

As the Word becomes a part of our very beings, we experience a remarkable change in our attitudes: *“The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes”* (Psalm 19:8). We are opening our minds to the truths of God when we meditate on Scripture, and we find that we often come under conviction about personal sin or negligence of some spiritual duty. After all, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3:16). We are renewed through meditation on the Word of God!

Different words are used, but we see the same concept in Colossians 3:16: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”*

Today’s message is a call for us to once again learn the secret of meditating, concentrating on, pondering over, weighing, scrutinizing and examining the Word of God as being a personal Word from The Eternal One for us today. Let us so focus our beings on it that it becomes a part of who we are and all that we do.

W.A. Criswell was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, for fifty years. He once wrote a book entitled *Why I Preach That The Bible Is Literally True*. Here is a quote from that book:

The Bible is like a gold mine in which one finds one inexhaustible vein of treasure after another. Like a diver in the sea who, having brought up jewels from the depths of the ocean, still finds greater riches of gems lying on the floor, the reader discovers inexhaustible treasures in the Bible. Like the widow’s oil and the widow’s meal which nourished Elijah, and which never wasted or ran dry, so the contents of the Bible are never exhausted. Just as a

fresh supply of manna was given each day to the Israelites in the wilderness, so the spirit of God ever breaks anew the Bread of Life to those who hunger or thirst after righteousness. Just as the loaves and the fishes in the hands of our Lord were more than enough to feed the famished multitude with a surplus still remaining, so the honey and milk of the Word of God are more than sufficient to satisfy the hunger of every human soul. The supply still remains undiminished for every new generation.

A. B. Simpson once wrote:

When you cannot understand the Bible through your brain, take it in your soul, press it to your heart, bring to it your sorrow, your sin, your need; and you will know it is true because it has searched you, it has converted you, and it has satisfied you.

So I ask you again: do you need renewal in your life today? Has life gone stale and flat? You will find that nothing in the world can satisfy but the Eternal Word of God. Hide the Word of God someplace safe—in your heart. Will you surrender yourself to a God who loves you so much that He speaks to us in such a way?