

Title: The Wonder Of The Word

Description: In this evening message from Psalm 119:129-136, Pastor Anthony Kim of Calvary Road Baptist Church shows how the psalmist's declaration that God's testimonies are wonderful calls believers to treat the Bible as life-giving truth rather than mere information. Built around the Hebrew letter Pe, the picture of an open mouth, the sermon traces how the entrance of God's Word gives light to the simple, how a regenerated heart pants for His commandments and prays for steps ordered free from the dominion of sin, and how the light of God's face moves His people to weep, like the psalmist, the apostle Paul, and Jesus over Jerusalem, for those who do not keep His law.

Transcript:

If you have your Bible with you, go ahead and turn with me to Psalm 119, beginning in verse 129. And we're going to be going through 136. Psalm 119 verse 129 to 136. And if you have found your place, go ahead and stand out of respect for God's word as I read from verse 129.

Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou used to do unto those that love thy name. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law. This is God's word. You may be seated.

The psalmist introduces us to this text by the words, "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them." Typically use a word "therefore" at the end of a psalm. But he goes immediately into the conclusion, that is, "my soul keep them," or he will be obedient unto them. When the psalmist looks upon the holy statutes of Almighty God, he doesn't see it as some kind of a rigid, burdensome set of rules. No, he sees it as a breathtaking display of divine perfection, whom he has such beauty and such holiness. The word of God is so filled, rich with God's holiness, rich in grace, and rich in eternal truth, that the soul which truly sees God for who he is is then moved with passionate obedience towards him. After all, he is the one that spoke the universe into existence, and he speaks to us as mere humans.

Consider the majestic creation of God for a moment. When a person stands at the edge of, for example, the Grand Canyon, if you've ever been there, and you're at the top and you look down, you are seeing God's amazing design. Layer after layer after layer, as the sun hits, you see the amazing beauty of God.

Another way is not only looking at the bottom of a canyon, but gazing your eyes above, and you behold the starry skies of heaven on a pitch-dark night. It ought to, in both situations, humble you as a person to experience all of his creation, because you get to see the grandeur of God's craftsmanship day in and day out, if you look at the skies at night, for example. Yet as glorious as physical creation is, God's written revelation towers above the physical. It towers over the physical.

The Puritans would write majestically of God's glory. Take one verse and write a whole book on it. One pastor, his whole ministry, get this, his whole ministry was not going through the whole book of the Bible. It took him over 40 years in his ministry to just go through the book of Job. Think about that for a moment. Sometimes that happens, where someone is so profoundly touched by God's depth in his word, and so his word is perfect, pure, and full of life.

And so, one of the divine authors, or rather divine attributes, of God, namely in Christ the Son of God, we see in Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 with the title Wonderful. Wonderful. Unlike the modern use of this word "wonderful," which is attributed to being nice or pleasing. No, in the biblical context of the title Wonderful, the Lord Jesus Christ is described as far beyond what the finite mind can fully grasp. We will never be able to fully grasp God in his fullness. Christ possesses infinite wisdom to guide his church. He is the headship of all local churches. He is the one rescuing souls from spiritual darkness. He is the one that unravels the most difficult, the most complex trials at his weakest, not in his greatest, as one passage speaks on, because he loves his people. He cares for his people, and he wants to rescue his people.

In Psalm 72:18 we see the words, "who alone doeth wondrous things." So we go from his character as Wonderful to wondrous things. The wondrous things refer to the acts that only the Lord Jesus Christ can perform, such as the work of redemption, salvation of his people, a work only accomplished by Christ alone. And when the Lord Jesus Christ opens his mouth to speak, you will know his words evoke deep, abiding wonder in the hearts of his children.

Yet we live in a world that routinely despises, routinely ignores, and tramples underfoot the very holy word of God. Even as believers in Christ, in our own spiritual walk, we face the subtle danger of growing familiar with the Bible, treating it as information rather than life-giving truth. Furthermore, we are beset by external worldly pressures and our own internal sinful inclinations that seek to dominate our daily walk in the Lord. So how can a believer then navigate spiritual darkness, overcome the cruelty of sin that remains, and maintain a burning heart of love towards God in this ungodly age?

Psalm 119 helps us with this understanding. We're touching on the Hebrew letter Pe in this stanza, which represents an opened mouth. Picture an open mouth revealing the soul's ultimate remedy, which is: an open word fills an opened mouth. That's what we are opening our mouths to, is for our hearts to be filled with God's word. And that's a wonderful thing about being a believer. We want to be fed by God's word.

So tonight, we're going to examine how the wonder of God's word moves us then from inner longing, that opening of our mouth, to a steady, obedient walk, constantly being fed by God's word and entering into our heart, that grieves at the end. When God's word truly settles deeply in us, it causes us to grieve over those who neglect God's truth. That's where we're going to go at the end.

So let's begin. Verse 129 to verse 131. "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them." The word "wonderful" points us to that which is extraordinary, that comes from God alone and beyond what our human capacity can produce. You see, humans can't ultimately create a soul-filled man. Only God can. And so, because God's word is wonderful, the psalmist's response is not a passive admiration of his word. No, it goes to a posture of being active. When God's word is upon a believer's life, it is active. We are receiving it in a posture of open mouth, active, wanting to obey God's word, with the words "keeping God's word," "keeping them."

And then in verse 130, with the posture of an open mouth towards God's word, it says then, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." By consistently then feeding on and obeying God's word, what you will have is continual light. Continual light amongst darkness. And you will also be able to treasure God's spiritual truth and understand it. Hear this, believer, that you can understand God's word. You couldn't understand God's word before; you were lost. You were lost. You didn't know what God's word was saying. Think about that. So, how much

more than would you want to treasure God's word, so that you can understand more of who he is and what he can do in your life.

The unfolding, then, the opening of the Scriptures, provides spiritual illumination. He provides the light for us to understand. Once we were dark; we couldn't understand. But now he gives us light. He gives us understanding. Praise God for that spiritual illumination.

And that word "simple" refers to those who recognize their lack of self-sufficiency. They don't trust themselves. That's a simple understanding of a believer. They just don't trust themselves. They recognize that self-sufficiency no longer should be in any of a believer's life. And so we come humbly for God's instructions, because we're not going to be instructed by our own hearts. We're not going to be instructed by someone else's heart in the world, but from God himself, when it pertains to all of life. And so, while the proud individuals still want to take upon them the instructions of their own heart, or someone else's heart in the world, they miss the depth of the Father's love through the written words of Scripture.

Look at what Jesus says in Matthew 11:25. He says, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." See, the wise and prudent there is talking about the proud, self-wise, depending upon themselves. But thank God for us as believers in Christ, he has opened up our hearts to realize we can't depend upon ourselves. If we do, we will die in our sins and forever be judged for our sins in hell.

You see, a person that is a believer has what's called a regenerated heart, the new birth, being born again, as Jesus said to Nicodemus, that depends and is enabled to obey God's word. Know that we have a regenerated heart. You can obey, and you are enabled to obey God's word.

And then we see in verse 131, he says, "I opened my mouth, and panted." I love that. "For I longed for thy commandments." Here we see the stanza, the word Pe, described the opened mouth. And it's not just any open mouth. It's a mouth that is panting. A mouth that is panting just like is described in Psalm 42:1, that the psalmist pants in his soul. It's a representative of his soul that desires and thirsts after God and his word. That's the idea.

And so wisdom does not originate from human intellect. No, it flows freely from God as the divine source of revelation. God is the source that is revealed

to mankind. We don't need to get revelation from anywhere else. The Bible is the source, the revealed truth of who God is, the God of the Bible. In Acts 4:13, the religious rulers at the time marveled at Peter and John, who were themselves defined as uneducated fishermen. But because they were spiritually illuminated and had the light opened to their eyes, they had understanding of the Scriptures, and they were able to speak with understanding.

And then John 14:23 says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." So clear, so simple. Do you really love the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, you will keep his words. You will obey his words. True affection for Christ manifests in a deep craving, panting for his commandments. A regenerated heart has a true appetite for the things of God and a love for God's word.

Imagine with me a traveler who is lost in a pitch-black forest. Every step is uncertain, and danger lurks behind every passing tree. Suddenly, a bright and clear beam of light cuts through the darkness, illuminating a clear path under his foot. The traveler does not debate about the light or criticize its brightness. No, he eagerly steps into the very rays that shed light under his foot, so that he can be relieved and feel with joy that he's going down the path that's clearly visible. That's how God's word is then a radiant beam in our dark heart. He gives us a clear path. A clear path to what? To life that is pleasing to God, because his word does not return unto void. And as a believer, we will never desire that to return void, his word.

And so, do you approach your Bible reading as just a dry duty, or do you come with this open heart of panting after his word and being nourished by his word? If your spiritual appetite has grown dull because you have tasted too much of the world, ask God to show you the wonders of his word anew. His mercies are new every morning. Great is his faithfulness. Come to the Scriptures with this humble, simple-hearted plea. Open the Scriptures daily, expecting the light of God to pierce your spiritual confusion and then make your paths straight. Another way of saying it is that he makes the path smooth. It says in Proverbs that the one that is foolish will walk down a path that is full of difficulty. And that should not be of us. We should be men and women, believers in Christ, that see a smooth, straight path. He gives us that through his illumination of his word. Have you recognized this marvelous light and hunger that God's word brings, the psalmist turning him into this holy longing for his word? Because that's what we all want as believers in Christ, right?

But let me also share with you what the psalmist then, with this understanding of God's word and how important it is for his life, he also sees: the importance of prayer in his life. Look down with me at verse 132 to 134. He sees that he has grace and guidance and the path, but every step he is prayerfully considering, each step.

So in verse 132, he says, "Look down upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou used to do unto those that love thy name." The psalmist relies entirely upon God's covenant mercy. It is God's custom, as it says here, "as thou used to do." As thou used to do, to show grace to those who then love his name. See, that's the first marker of God working in a person's life that has been regenerated in their heart and continues to experience God's love in their life. That's a true marker. And when you have that love, though, you want to spend time with that person, don't you? You want to spend time with that person. And this is communion with God, with what? Prayer. You want to commune with him in prayer. That's what love does. We do that in our physical relationships. It's no different than wanting to commune with someone you love. And God gave us that love, right? We sang that hymn this evening: because he first loved us, we can love him. His mercy is granted to those who love God's name. And so a regenerated heart loves to commune with God in prayer, as we see here in the text.

Then we move on into verse 133. Here it is. He says, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Oh, he doesn't want to get away from God's love. He's thinking about God's love every step. "God, I pray that I don't veer off and not commune with you, but every step let me commune with you, every step, and have this understanding of your love. Don't let sin come in. Don't let self-sufficiency come in. Don't let self-dependence come in." That's where a regenerated heart is. We can't walk uprightly, another way of saying it, by our own power. It's not possible. The believer prays for every individual step to be established by what? God's word. God's word. So that sin will not reign as the master in our life.

The regenerate heart recognizes the sinful condition of the heart and does not trust it, because in the heart there is no absolute truth. Only God's written word is the absolute truth, the foundation for our understanding. According to Jeremiah 17:9, we know we can't trust our own heart, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

We live in a time of a philosophy that's going around, and you may have heard it. People will say to you, "Oh, you can live according to your truth. I'll live

according to my truth." You ever heard that? "You live according to your truth. I'll live according to my truth." What this does, this deception, is it centers you as the absolute truth. It elevates your personal feelings, your personal desires, and your subjective perspective to the status of what is ultimate reality. That's deception. You're not living in reality when you trust your heart, according to God. And what it presents is severe spiritual, moral, and psychological dangers. Severe spiritual issues that cause spiritual death and ultimately physical death. From a biblical worldview, truth is not individual, nor can it be changed, meaning be flexible. No, it is absolute. It is objective reality that is rooted entirely in the nature and word of God.

And so then we go into verse 134. "Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts." We go from the danger of the inward heart to now the external pressure and the external oppression of man. The cruelty due to sin can hinder faithful obedience. So he's saying, "Guard my own heart, Lord. Help me to guard my own heart, and also help me to guard my heart from being faithfully disobedient by being pressured by man in his sinful ways." The psalmist pleads for redemption from worldly cruelty, so his entire life can be devoted to what? Again, keeping God's word.

Referencing back to the first passage again, a regenerated heart understands that a sinner that is not saved in the Lord Jesus Christ is left to oppression due to the deception of their own heart. And that is because they've not been changed, not been transformed by the work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. You see, humanity is naturally vulnerable to the cruelty of sin, sinning against each other and sinning against your own heart. And it's all due to the neglect of divine grace, not receiving the divine grace of salvation through Christ alone.

And so the apostle Paul echoes this prayer, this similar prayer, in fact, in Romans 6:12-13. He commands there that sin must not reign in our mortal bodies, but that we must yield ourselves unto God. See, there's no works there. It's yielding. It's allowing him to move in our lives. Not our desires, not our pleasures, not our own intellect, but God and his word and his power in our lives. And then furthermore, God promises in Psalm 34:17 that when the righteous cry out, the Lord hears and will deliver them out of their troubles.

See, we can never blame anyone but ourselves when we go astray. That's why, when the psalmist cried out when he sinned, in Psalm 51, he says, "I have not sinned against anybody else except thee and thee alone." And so, is there any iniquity trying to assert dominion over your heart, whether that's

bitterness or pride or lust or fear? Because you cannot, here it is, conquer your own flesh. You cannot conquer your own flesh. We are dead in trespasses and sins, as the word of God says. You must bring it to the throne of grace, asking the Lord to establish your footsteps in his truth. Surrender your daily path then to God and his word. Ask him to break the chains of human pressure and sinful habit, so that you may walk in the full freedom of obedience in the Lord.

As the psalmist seeks deliverance from sin and human oppression, he lifts his eyes to the ultimate reward. What is the ultimate reward, you may ask? Well, he says, the shining light of God's presence. And not his presence all around, but personal presence. Personal presence. Look at verse 135. He says, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes." The phrase "face to shine" recalls the Aaronic blessing found in Numbers 6:25, that the ultimate blessing, the reward of God, is that you get to be in his presence. His presence is the light. He is the light in our lives. And then the statutes, the very light of God's word, is then his grace upon you. It is a gift, always to know that his light is his reward to us, and never to neglect that great source of his presence in our lives.

And then we go into verse 136. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Standing in the clear light of God's holy face makes the psalmist sensitive to sin. He does not look upon those that break God's word with self-righteous contempt, but rather he weeps. He weeps with compassion. His tears flow because God's law is despised and souls are perishing, because they are left in their own darkness. You see, true godliness then reflects the heart of God, who grieves over human rebellion.

When the Lord Jesus Christ drew near to Jerusalem, what did he do? He wept over the city. The city, because they failed to recognize him as the only opportunity to find true peace with God. And we see that in Luke chapter 19 verse 41. We also see likewise the apostle Paul, who himself experienced great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart throughout his ministry and his life for those who were alienated from Christ. This is what Romans 9:1-3 says: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He's speaking about his own people, the Jewish people. And he would want to be considered, as it were, accursed, if people will come to know Christ. Can we speak that in our lives? Do we have that kind of sorrow that breaks our hearts because people are not

in the fold of Christ?

It's as imagining a doctor who possesses the complete, proven cure. Now, this is not a real thing. This is just, imagine with me, for the deadly disease threatening his community. He holds out the medicine freely. He's found it. He wants to give it out for all to receive. Yet the crowds mock him for the cure. They throw the medicine into the gutter without even taking notice of it. And yet they don't embrace the very thing that can help them. And they then embrace their own destruction. The doctor does not react with hatred. No, he breaks down in tears over their fatal destruction. That is the weeping heart of the psalmist. That is the weeping heart of the apostle Paul. We know the answer. We know the cure is Christ. He is the answer to our sin problem. And how many people have mocked us, ridiculed us, rejected the gospel? But do we do what the world does and bring contempt, or do we follow the example of the psalmist and the apostle Paul and even the Lord Jesus Christ?

When you look at our culture, rejecting God's holy word and his answer to our sin problem, what is your reaction? Is it anger? Is it bitterness? Is it your own self-righteous judgment? Or do rivers of tears flow from your eyes because God's word is broken and sinners are perishing? You see, when you are seeking the face of God and he shines his light upon you, his presence softens your heart, causes you to weep. Causes you to weep because they don't understand the importance of the truth in their lives.

Tonight we've seen that the word of God is wonderful. It brings radiant light, brings spiritual understanding to those that would receive with a simple heart the answers to our spiritual need of salvation from our sin.

His word is sweet. His word is sweet. It is life-giving. And always picture, when you're in a dry spell, remember that picture, the imagery of a panting deer over the water. God's word is there. You're never distant from his word. So you have no excuse to stay in a dry state. He left us with his word. You have it with you. How do you use his word? Do you rely on his grace to deliver you from the dominion of sin, if you have not received Christ at all? And as we abide in the sunshine, then, of his piercing light and of his grace, we will conclude like the psalmist, like the apostle Paul, like the Lord Jesus Christ. We will have a heart that mourns after sin. And sin will not have its dominion in your life.

We have to mourn over sin in other people's lives. We have to mourn over sin that's still in our lives, in order to have compassion for those that still are left

perishing and need rescuing. You are to be that channel of blessing. The Apostle Paul went to the ends of the earth. That's why we call him the great Apostle Paul, because he didn't get bitter. He didn't get angry. He didn't cause contempt. No, he wept. He mourned. Say, "God, give me the strength. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Whether I'm at the highest or the lowest, if you are there, I can do this. I can go and reach. When I'm unloved, when I'm mocked, I won't see them. I'll see you." He always has his gazing eyes on Jesus. That's what we need as believers in Christ. That's how we can be a church that is a light unto a dark community. That's how we can be a salt to a life-hating community. Let us be a people of the word. Amen. Let's be a people that is known by Christ as Christ followers, truly. May God help us to keep opening our mouths with the open word of God, so that our steps may be ordered in his truth, that our hearts be kept under his grace, and our eyes move with Christlike compassion for the lost. Let's pray.

Father, it's good to mourn when it comes to dealing with sin. And you ask us to mortify the sin in our lives. Mortify the fleshly desires that so easily beset us. Father, I pray for our people, wherever they may be with you, Lord, that they can continue to be refreshed and nourished by your word, so that they can have your love and your compassion for those that you want to use them to rescue, the lost. What a privilege. What an honor. No greater thing to do on this side of heaven than to see lost souls saved, because it's only our souls that we get to be in heaven. No things will be with us. They will all be left here to perish. So, Father, please help us to be so thankful for what we have in Christ. The knowledge that you've given to us. May we not turn it aside as unimportant. Lord, I pray that this message would have cultivated that, to not do that kind of neglect. Help us in our daily devotions, Lord, unto you in word and prayer. And may you be glorified and exalted as you ought to be. I pray for those that are still lost and still remain in sin. Lord, please shed light upon their dark heart. Open their eyes and hearts so that they can behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Point them, Lord, as you can only do, to the finished work of Christ, and may they truly hear those words individually and personally. And I pray for salvation here tonight. Thank you for all these blessings, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.