

Treasuring Scripture in Your Heart to Keep Your Way Pure from Sin -- Psalm 119:9-16
Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on September 28, 2008
www.goldcountrybaptist.org

The psalms were written to be sung by the ancient Hebrews, and singing Scripture set to music is a great way to hide God's Word in our heart, which of course is the most famous verse of this stanza, if not the entire psalm, v. 11. The children's youth choir of Foothill Bible Church (one of our sister churches at Family Camp in the summer) actually sings the entirety of Psalm 119 set to music word-for-word in the KJV text, with a different arrangement for each stanza, and they're scheduled to be with us on November 2, 2008, in the PM service to sing it for us. I've been listening on CD to it in my car as I drive my 5-year-old Ella to and from school daily and she and I are memorizing the psalm together and I'm excited to be able to hide these great words in our hearts.

That's not just a great way for young people to memorize Scripture, but for all of us at any age. Some of you have already expressed interest in learning Psalm 119 and I hope others of you will consider joining us and learning together as families or individuals in our church (and as we're able, we can help print flash cards for those interested and we're also working on getting copies of the CD available).

The writer of Psalm 119 also used a device to help young men (and others) learn its words. As I told you before, the original Hebrew was alphabetically alliterated for every line in each stanza in a masterful acrostic, which in part was a mnemonic or memory aid. Below is one attempt to translate from the original Hebrew in a way that reflects this structure.

ALEPH Stanza (v. 1-8)

All joy for those who are the complete of the way who walk in the teaching of JEHOVAH
All joy for those observing his testimonies they seek him with their whole heart
Also they do no injustice they walk in his ways
And you commanded your precepts to keep with care
Ah that my ways were directed to keep your statutes
And then I would not be ashamed to gaze on all your commandments
And I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn the judgments of your righteousness
And I will keep Your statutes you will not forsake me for ever

BETH stanza (v. 9-16)

But how will a young man cleanse his path to keep it for your word?
By all my heart I have sought you do not let me stray from your commandments
By my heart I have hid your promise in order that I will not sin against you
Blessed are you JEHOVAH teach me your statutes
By my lips I have declared all the judgments of your mouth
By the way of your testimonies I have rejoiced more than all sufficiency
By your precepts I will [meditate] and I will look to your paths
By your statutes I will delight nor will I forget your word¹

This pattern is followed for 22 stanzas, as we saw before, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order (ex: in English, “C” would be next, *gimel* in Heb.), and in the original language each stanza follows that pattern. Besides being a memory aid, this alphabetic acrostic in this context communicates that this is the A-Z on the subject of the Word of the LORD, a complete look at God’s complete revelation, nearly every verse using a term referring to Scripture.

Charles Spurgeon called Psalm 119 “The Golden Alphabet” and he published a book with that title with his expositions of this psalm. The heading in one Bible translation is: *The Christian’s golden ABC of the praise, love, power, and use of the word of God, for here we have set forth in inexhaustible fullness what the word of God is to a man, and how a man is to behave himself in relation to it.*²

Our text today, verses 9-16, has the heading *beth*. This second letter of the Hebrew alphabet when spelled out is also the Hebrew word for “house” (ex: Beth-lehem = house of bread) and these verses have to do with making our heart a home for God’s Word.

That last line we just read expresses the writer’s determination not to forget God’s Word. And he doesn’t want his readers to forget God’s Word either. He wants them to memorize it, meditate on it, make it their delight – not merely remember it, but rejoice in it.

So in this stanza in particular, he extols the value of beginning when young, as a young man or young person as early as possible in God’s Word, as v. 9 says. If you are a young person here this morning, this may be one of the most important messages in all of God’s Word for you to take to heart, before it’s too late, before you grow hardened to and calloused to the things of Scripture.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 is along this vein: *Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw night when you will say, “I have no delight in them” ...*

v. 12-14 *But beyond this, my son, be warned ... The conclusion when all is heard, is: fear God, and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.*

That passage addresses a son particularly, but the verse said it also applies to every person. Similarly, Ps 119:9 begins with young men in particular, and it also essentially has the same point about keeping God’s commandments, which “applies to every person.”

But let’s start where v. 9 starts – it says “how shall a *young man* keep his way pure?” The time of life when minds of young people can learn so much and are so moldable and so influenced by what they choose to fill their minds and hearts with, this is such a crucial age that near the beginning of this long psalm, we have a section devoted to address those who are near the beginning of their life, and the principles laid down here should be our lifelong pursuit.

This passage demands the attention of every young man and woman, every parent, every person who works with young people, every young Christian who would like to keep His way pure, and by extension, every Christian who desires not to sin against God.

Many commenting on the text of v. 9 would argue that the word “pure” (or “cleansed” in some versions) functions as the theme and heading of this whole section. Young people who want to be happy (as the psalm began in v. 1-2 and following) need to enroll in this school of purity in this classroom image:

The curriculum is real life
 God is the gracious teacher
 The psalmist is the dependent disciple [student]
 The textbook is the sufficient Word of God³

The question for this semester (or section), really the question for all the years, is v. 9 “How shall a young man keep his way pure?”

The second half of verse 9 doesn’t answer it in detailed terms, but it may be more of a general heading to vs. 10-16. It could also be argued that the entire rest of the psalm expounds and expands on the question in v. 9 in how to live according to God’s Word.

OUTLINE:

- **The Question (v. 9)**
- **The Answer (v. 10-16):** 7 ways to keep pure from sin by the Word of God

First, let’s consider the Question in v. 9

**⁹How can a young man keep his way pure?
 By keeping *it* according to Your word.**

Over 300 years ago Henry Scougal wrote *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (one of the most influential books in the life of men like George Whitefield and John Piper). When Scougal was a youth, he opened his Bible on this very verse, Psalm 119:9. It went to his heart, and he gave himself to God, and to the Christian ministry.

Over a hundred years earlier it was the truth of this verse that caused Theodore Beza in his dying will and testimony to express thanksgiving that as a young man God had brought him to His Word and kept him pure by it from many defiling and destroying sins.

The Bible has much to say about the critical formative time of a young man and his need for staying pure by living according to God’s Word. The book of Proverbs begins its first 10 chapters addressing this explicitly in many areas of life, as a young son is addressed by this subject for chapter after chapter about how to fear God, be wise, and stay pure. Chapters 5-7 of Proverbs in particular address the need for sexual purity so that you don’t destroy your life.

I already read from Ecclesiastes 12 which addresses young men as well in its culminating chapter, a book written to young people with a message “Don’t waste your life on vanity (life without God) – remember / fear God when you are young before you waste your life!”

In 2 Timothy 2:22 Paul also addresses a young man of God with the words “Flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith ...” (where do we do that? In God’s Word, living according to it). God’s Word gives examples of young men who were able to keep their way pure in an impure world by living according to God’s truth

- Joseph in Egypt (protected him in sexual temptation as well as from temptation to despair in a dungeon for years, or temptation to want revenge later on his brothers)
- Daniel in Babylon would not defile himself in what he ate and did (great study of a godly young man in ungodly world)
- His friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not defile themselves by bowing to idols. As they sought to keep and live their lives according to God’s Word they experienced the blessedness of verses 1-2 of this psalm, even in the midst of circumstances that would not be considered happy in and of itself, in the midst of a very pagan society.

WAY (v. 9) – is a term that could signify a track or rut made by the wheel of a cart or chariot. I’ve heard it said it refers to the highways of our life, more literally a course, journey, or pilgrimage. It is the patterns and habits formed as a young person that set the course for our life.

How can a young man keep his way pure, when the world is so impure, when his own internal sin nature is corrupted, and the world, the flesh, and the devil are intent on corrupting him further?

KEEP PURE – verb with causative nuance, to make or keep clean or pure. An alternate translation could be “how can he purify his path?”

This is a question the world isn’t going to ask or answer properly. In fact, there seems to be an assumption that purity is a lost cause for the youth. For example, in the area of sexuality for school-age kids, our culture assumes we can’t try and teach purity and monogamy to young people, our only recourse is to teach “safe sex.” The reality is there’s no such thing as “safe sex” outside of what God’s Word has laid down for intimacy within the bounds of a marital covenant – any violation of God’s good laws has devastating consequences, which you can read about in Proverbs 5-7 and other places.

The world tells us the opposite of the answer Psalm gives in many areas of purity and life in general. As James Boice has written:

‘The world has its answer. It says, Have your fling when you are young and settle down to being religious when you get old, if then. God’s answer is quite different. God says, If you are going to live for me, you must begin at the earliest possible moment, without delay, preferably when you are very young (v. 9). If you do not live for me when you are young, you will probably not live for me when you are older either, and the end of your life will be ruinous ... the decisions of youth form habits that guide us from that point on and are hard to break. If we form good habits when we are young – reading the Bible, spending time in prayer, enjoying the company of God’s people, going to church, rejecting sin, and practicing to be honest and do good – these habits will go with us through life and make good choices later in life easier. If on the contrary we make bad choices, later we will find good choices harder to make and the bad habits nearly impossible to break ... it is the small things that form habits, and it is our habits that determine the course and outcome of our lives ...

Are you a young person? Then you should pay particularly close attention to this point. Most young people want their lives to count, and most Christian young people want their lives to count for God ... But youth is also often impatient and undisciplined, and young people are tempted to let the little things slide. You must not do that if you are God's young man or young woman. God [can] make your life count, but this will not happen unless you determine to live for him in the little things now. This section of Psalm 119 is telling us that the best possible way to live for God and establish and maintain a pure life is by starting young.⁴

Verse 9 says purity comes “by keeping it according to Your word” (NASB) or other translations have “by guarding it” (ESV), or “by taking heed” (NKJV), or “by living according to your word” (NIV).

This protective keeping, guarding, or preserving of way refers to the general course of life, from all defilement. Figuratively, it refers to character and/or conduct. God's Word is the answer.

Commenting on v. 9 where it says *Thy word*, the Puritan writer William Gurnall wrote: ‘The word is the only weapon (like Goliath's sword, none to equal this), for the hewing down and cutting off of this stubborn enemy, our lusts. The word of God can master our lusts when they are in their greatest pride: if ever lust rage[s] at one time more than another, it is when youthful ... it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts ... a young man ... is farther from the fear of death's gunshot, as he thinks, than old men ... Well, let the word of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery ... with the point of its sword ...’⁵

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB95)

¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Ephesians 6:17 tells us the offensive weapon we have for spiritual warfare is the Word of God. When Jesus, as a relatively young man by Jewish reckoning, at age 30 was tempted by Satan, each time he countered each attack with the Sword of Scripture: “It is written ...” (quoting passages he had hidden in His heart)

If you do not have the Word of God with you (inside of you) you are unarmed, and you are going to fail in the battle for a pure life.

So we've looked at the question in v. 9, now I want to spend the rest of our time looking at the answer in verses 10-16. How does the Word of God keep us pure from sin? 7 key words

#1 - Seeking wholeheartedly the God of the Word (v. 10)

¹⁰With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

Look at the end of v. 2, where it says the truly happy or blessed ones are those who seek God with the whole heart. This word for seek in both places conveys an intense pursuit, his singular focus.

Psalm 27:4 ⁴ **One thing I have asked** from the LORD, that **I shall seek**: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To **behold the beauty of the LORD** And to **meditate** in His temple.

The Bible tells us to seek and we shall find, but Deuteronomy 4:29 clarifies that God is only found by wholehearted seeking:

But from there you will **seek the LORD** your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him **with all your heart**

The phrase “with all your heart” is in fact part of the first and greatest commandment: “Love the Lord your God **with all your heart** ...” Scripture repeatedly makes the connection between loving God and walking in His ways or His word, as v. 1-2 says.

Deuteronomy 10:12 (NASB95) “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you ... to **walk** in all His **ways** and love Him ... with **all your heart**” [also serve, fear - 6:5, 11:12, etc.].

The psalmist doesn’t want any part of his heart or life or thoughts to wander, as the 2nd half of verse 10 prays: *Do not let me wander.*

Charles Bridges reminds us: ‘daily progress in the heavenly walk is not maintained by yesterday's grace. Humble and dependent prayer must fetch in a fresh supply continually [like daily manna]—"*O let me not wander from thy commandments.*" 'Lord, I feel my heart so prone to wander. My affections are often scattered to the ends of the earth. "Unite my heart to fear thy name." (Ps 86:11.)’⁶

In the song, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” the song-writer confesses a concern shared with the writer of this psalm “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.”

There’s a 2nd way God’s Word keeps us pure: Memorizing the Word of God (treasuring or storing it in our heart – v. 11)

¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

Like many of you, I learned this verse with the translation “*hidden* in my heart.” The word “hidden” can potentially be misunderstood. I trust you understand the writer does not want to keep God’s truth to himself or as a hidden secret never to be revealed (in fact if you keep reading, in v. 13 he wants to declare it to others, he’s going public with it and proclaiming it everywhere he can).

The word translated “hidden” in the original language was used for storing up valuable things, like treasure, which you would keep in a safe place so it won’t be lost and so that it won’t be taken from you.

The writer “treasured” up the word of God, as the most valuable thing, in his heart; it was “there,” though unseen; it constituted the secret power by which he was governed; it was permanently deposited there, as the most valuable of his treasures.’⁷

The ancient writer Cicero wrote that he had never known a covetous old man who had forgotten where he had buried or hidden his treasure. The reason is obvious. His heart is in it.⁸

Jesus used both words “treasure” and “heart” together, elucidating a somewhat related concept:

Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB95)¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.²⁰ “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;²¹ for **where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Luke 6:43-49 (NASB95)⁴³ “For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit.⁴⁴ “For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush.⁴⁵ “The good man out of the good **treasure of his heart brings forth** what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from **that which fills his heart.**

Whatever fills your heart will come forth. We all treasure and store up what we take in. Young people, what are you filling your hearts and minds with? What you do and say reveals what’s in your heart.

Proverbs 7:1 addresses a young man in words similar to Psalm 119 “My son, keep my words And **treasure my commandments within you.**”

‘Scriptures memorized in childhood are potent, time-released capsules that can save and salvage many a situation, and many a life. When Howard Rutledge’s plane was shot down over Vietnam, he parachuted into a little village and was immediately attacked, stripped naked, and imprisoned. For the next seven years, he endured brutal treatment. His food was little more than a bowl of rotting soup with a glob of pig fat—skin, hair, and all. Rats the size of cats and spiders as big as fists scurried around him. He was frequently cold, alone, and often tortured. He was sometimes shackled in excruciating positions and left for days in his own waste with carnivorous insects boring through his oozing sores. How did he keep his sanity?

[He wrote:] *It took prison to show me how empty life is without God, and so I had to go back in my memory to those Sunday school days in Tulsa, Oklahoma. If I couldn’t have a Bible and hymnbook, I would try to rebuild them in my mind. I tried desperately to recall snatches of Scripture, sermons, gospel choruses from childhood, and hymns we sang in church.*

How I struggled to recall those Scriptures and hymns! I had spent my first eighteen years in Sunday school, and I was amazed at how much I could recall; regrettably, I had not seen then the importance of memorizing verses from the Bible. Now, when I needed them, it was too late. I never dreamed that I would spend almost seven years in a prison in North Vietnam or that thinking about one memorized verse could have made the whole day bearable. One portion of a verse I did remember was, “Thy word have I hid in my heart.” How often I wished I had really worked to hide God’s Word in my heart. ...⁹

I don’t think you’ll ever meet a godly man or woman who will say at the end of their life that they regretted taking time to memorize Scripture. There may be a lot of other things they regret and ways they wasted time, but hiding scripture in the heart is an investment of priceless worth for true believers. I’ve talked to enough senior saints to know that memorized Scripture is often the greatest treasure of their heart, even if they didn’t recognize the value of learning those verses at the time, while they were younger.

John Ruskin wrote: “It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child’s mind most repulsive, the 119th Psalm, has now become, of all, the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God.”

Memorizing Scripture is not for the purpose of showing off, but for shielding us from sin, that we might not sin against God. The grammar and syntax of verse 11 is a purpose clause, the purpose of memorizing God’s Word is so that we might not sin against God.

It’s the best thing hidden in the best place for the best of purposes
 The best thing – “thy word”
 Hidden in the best place – “in my heart”
 For the best of purposes – “that I might not sin against you”

Ultimately, it is the sin against God we should be concerned about, not merely consequences to ourselves when we sin.

SIN – *chatta* – is used literally in Judges 20:16 this way:

¹⁶ Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not **miss** [*chatta*]

Continuing that image into our day and age we might refer to such a close photo finish where someone missed the gold medal by the smallest fraction of a second, like the guy who got 2nd place to Michael Phelps in that one incredible race (8-2008) that it was hard to tell even in slow motion but you could see the other guy missed the gold by just a fraction of a section and part of a finger length.

In archery, this word would refer to anything short of a bulls-eye, anything that falls short of exactly what is aimed for. In modern weaponry, it could be a sharpshooter who barely missed the precision target, just grazing past, slightly off. Building upon that literal usage, this word “sin” in biblical language was the missing of the mark, anything that falls short of the glory of God and the absolute perfection demanded by the perfect judge whose rulings cannot be disputed (as some Olympic judging was questioned last month).

Sin is not just what our culture would define as “really bad stuff” – it would include any transgression of God’s law in thought, word, or deed, as well as any failure to live up to God’s Word, or even doing good things with the wrong motive. Romans 14:23 says “whatever is not from faith is sin.”

This is one of the key verses in all of Scripture on how to fight sin, and it is by storing up Scriptural truth in your heart as your treasure

I’ve been told the memorization of Psalm 119 was at least at one time required as a test before graduation from rabbinical school.

Many who have made a difference for God in church history memorized and treasured Scripture in their heart, even Psalm 119 in particular.¹⁰

There is frequent reference to the psalm in the diary of a noted missionary named Henry Martyn: “Found some devotion in learning a part of the 119th Psalm.” “In the evening grew better by reading the 119th Psalm, which generally brings me into a spiritual frame of mind.” “Again in a fretful frame; it was not till I learned some of Psalm 119 that I could return to a proper spirit.”

David Livingstone, the famous missionary explorer, at the age of 9 won a NT from his Sunday School teacher for repeating Psalm 119 by heart.

Matthew Henry, author of the most famous and widely read commentary from over 300 years ago, wrote in his biography of his father: “Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of Psalm 119 every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in a year; and that, he said, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures. He often said, *All grace grows as love to the Word of God grows.*”

William Wilberforce, the Christian who fought tirelessly for the abolition of slavery in Britain, found comfort in memorizing Psalm 119. There was a movie made about his life last year called *Amazing Grace*.

Right in the midst of a London season, and in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, 1819, William Wilberforce writes in his diary, “Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort.”

There’s a third way to live according to God’s Word (v. 12) and keep our way pure from sin: PRAISING and prizing more teaching

¹²Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes.

Last week I read from our country’s declaration of independence about the God-given pursuit of happiness – well this week we see that this man who is truly happy is expressing in this verse his declaration of **de**-pendence upon God. We are thankful for the freedoms secured by our founding fathers, and that many of them understood happiness as defined by God’s Word and found in God. Many of our spiritual forefathers understood that we are to pursue true happiness, true blessedness, in the truly blessed God that this verse praises and some clearly recognized and declared their utter dependence upon God for everything, as this psalm does. Verse 12 goes on to ask God to teach us more from His Word, that our joy may be full, and that our happiness and thankfulness will overflow in worship from a true heart. Verse 7 is very similar to verse 12:

⁷ I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgments.

‘Although the psalmist was very mature (e.g., v. 98-100), he was always aware of the fact that he had not arrived [footnote says “he gives thanks for every advance . . . and through the Psalm he prays repeatedly for teaching and direction”]. He must keep on learning God’s “righteous judgments,” and as he does, praise directed to the Master Teacher will consistently flow through his lips from an undivided heart.’¹¹

*We have seen the key words of Seeking (v. 10), Memorizing (v. 11), Praising (v. 12), now in v. 13 we see him **SPEAKING** it to others.*

We've gone from seeking to speaking, from praising to proclaiming.

¹³**With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth.**

“I have told” is a word that can be translated “publicly declare” or “proclaimed.” You can't help but talk about what you love, and neither can the psalmist about Scripture (and neither should we).

The old adage “if you don't use it, you lose it” applies to a lot of things, and it can apply to our retention of Scripture as well. The best way for most people to remember something is to vocalize it (ex: saying name throughout conversation of someone you just met, repeating things out loud, etc.). Why not spend time after sermons or Bible Study talking about some of the things you just heard, something that impacted you, something you would like to think about more, rather than talking about everything except God's Word right after a message (or racing to see who can be the first one out the back door at the end of the message and not talking to anyone after)! Why not talk about things of God's Word in the car as you drive home after Sunday service, AWANA, etc.? God actually commands us to talk of such things in such ways:

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NASB95) ⁶“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart ... **talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.**

Psalm 119:13 gives special emphasis on the source of all Scripture being the very mouth of God, it is His very God-breathed ordinances / judgments / rules proceeding from God's very mouth. Jesus quoted another verse from Deuteronomy (8:3) to emphasize this in His temptation by Satan: “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every **word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.**”

Notice how Ps 119:13 mentions God's “mouth” at the end, and at the beginning he says he uses his “lips” to communicate what has come from God's mouth. He sees himself as God's mouthpiece, using his human lips to teach others all that God has commanded him (sounds very much like the Great Commission Jesus gave “teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you”).

One pastor has shared about his time at an international meeting of BSF (Bible Study Fellowship) where he learned about an African woman who attends one of the large classes in Nairobi. Each week, after attending the Nairobi class, she goes back to her village and teaches what she has learned in the city to about forty women who gather to hear her in the village. Who do you think learns most from the Nairobi class? Who will retain it longer?¹²

‘The taught one of verse 12 is here a teacher himself [v. 13]. What we learn in secret we are to proclaim upon the housetops ... what the Lord has revealed it would be shameful for us to conceal.’¹³

Hiding God's Word in our heart is not only important to help us not sin, it's also important because at a moment's notice, we need to be ready and able to speak to others about what we have learned. Jay Adams comments that: 'The heart should move the mouth ... [if someone] has been helped by learning, following and storing up God's truth within his heart ... should that be the end of it? Of course not! In order to spread the honor of God and the glory of His Word, he should also be willing to tell others what God has done for him. Moreover, he must be able at any time, to help another who is in trouble by declaring the truths that he knows are applicable to his situation ... Less counseling would be necessary if Christians were regularly repeating the Scriptures to one another in appropriate ways in appropriate circumstances.'¹⁴

The man of God in this Psalm is seeking, memorizing, praising, speaking, and in v. 14 his heart is moved to Rejoicing

We won't spend as much time on these last 3 because they go together and will be repeated in different ways throughout Psalm 119. But verse 14 is a great picture of rejoicing in the law of God in the way some in the world might rejoice over winning the lottery.

¹⁴**I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches.**

A somewhat parallel passage in Psalm 19:10-11 says after describing God's Word in 6 poetic lines of praise, that it's "***more desirable than gold, yes than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them your servant is warned and in keeping them there is great reward.***"

Another passage that uses similar language to our text today in describing the type of wholehearted seeking and the supreme value placed on God's Word as great treasure is Proverbs 2:

¹ My son, if you will receive my words And **treasure my commandments within you,** ² Make your ear attentive to wisdom, **Incline your heart** [**see Ps 119:36 "Incline my heart"*] to understanding; ³ For **if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding** [*Ps 119:69 "Let my cry come before you, O Lord, give me understanding"*]; ⁴ If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures [*v. 72 better "than thousands of gold or silver"*]; ⁵ Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God.

Prov. 2 is great to study further as it explains and expounds how this type of person will have his way kept pure from life-destroying sins as the young son keeps it according to thy Word. Until you see Scripture's supreme value you won't experience its supreme blessing

The last 2 key words in our passage today: MEDITATING (v. 15) and DELIGHTING (v. 16)

¹⁵ **I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways.**

¹⁶ **I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.**

I don't have time to do justice to the subject of meditation today, which is ok because we'll see the word in next week's text and 7 more times in this chapter. But for today, I just want to point out the connection between meditating and delighting in these verses:

Psalm 1:2 *But his **delight** is in the law of the Lord
And on His law he **meditates** day and night*

The key to abiding in God's Word is delighting in God's Word. There's a connection between what we delight in and what we meditate on. In fact, you can't help but think about and meditate on what you delight in the most (your favorite hobby or thing to do, your loved ones, etc.)

Psalm 119:97 *O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day*

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (which in biblical language includes our thoughts and meditations). In Luke 2 it says twice of Mary the mother of Jesus, that she treasured all the words spoken about Jesus in her heart, and she pondered them or meditated upon them often.

In verse 16, "delight" is a reflexive verb that has the idea of "I will delight *myself*" or even seek my pleasure in (here's where the pursuit of happiness finds fruition, in God and His Word alone). I will find my joy in, or perhaps better translated "make myself happy in."

This is not just a nice thing the psalmist pledges here, that we should say "good for him," and move on. This delight is not optional icing on the cake, it is actually commanded, and it is vital to our life!

"Delight yourself in the LORD" (Ps. 37:4)

If we're going to have regard to God's ways (v. 15b), if we're going to not forget God's Word (v. 16b), we're going to have to be striving with all our heart for our spiritual life to obey this and to follow what verses 10-16 have patterned for us in the Word: *Seeking God in it, Treasuring / Memorizing it, Praising and prizing it, Speaking it, Rejoicing in it, meditating on it, and delighting in it.*

Our spiritual health depends upon it. This week I read of a great and encouraging real life example of someone who sought to live the truths of our passage today:

'George Müller (1805–1898) is famous for establishing orphanages in England and for joyfully depending on God for all his needs. How did he kindle this joy and faith? In 1841 he made a life-changing discovery. The testimony of this from his autobiography has proved to be of tremendous value ... and I pray that it will also bear fruit in yours:

While I was staying at Nailsworth, it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now ... more than forty years have since passed away.

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, **to have my soul happy in the Lord**. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord ... but **how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished ...**

The first thing I did [each morning], after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to **begin to meditate** on the Word of God; **searching**, as it were, into every verse, **to get blessing out of it**; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake or preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of **obtaining food for my own soul ...**

As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food ... the *Word of God*: and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but **considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts**

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow-believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials and the temptations of the day come upon one!¹⁵

How is a young man (or any person) to keep his way pure from sin? By living according to God's Word, loving God's Word, learning from God's Word, longing for God's Word. In a word, *treasuring it*. I invite you back tonight where I hope to give some practical help for memorizing and storing up Scripture in our heart.

¹ <http://drmacdonald.blogspot.com/2008/08/acrostics-119.html>

² F. Delitzsch, *Psalms, Commentary on the OT in Ten Volumes*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, n.d., 3:243

³ George Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God*, 85.

⁴ James M. Boice, *Psalms*. 3:978.

⁵ As cited by C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 3:164.

⁶ Charles Bridges, *Psalm 119*, Banner of Truth Trust, p. 20.

⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the Bible*, 119.10.

⁸ Bridges, 34.

⁹ Adapted from Howard and Phyllis Rutledge with Mel and Lyla White: *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, Co., a division of Baker Book House, 1973), passim.

¹⁰ The accounts listed in this section are from Herbert Lockyer, *Psalms: A Devotional Commentary*, p. 536-537.

¹¹ Zemek, 78.

¹² Boice, 3:981.

¹³ Spurgeon, 160.

¹⁴ Jay Adams, Counsel from Psalm 119, p. 11.

¹⁵ *Autobiography of George Müller*, comp. Fred Bergen (London: J. Nisbet, 1906), 152-4. Cited by John Piper, *Desiring God*. Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Publishers, 132-34.