

## Spiritual Taste-buds that Love and Savor Scripture (Psalm 119:97-104)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on January 11, 2009

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Psalm 119:97-104 (NASB95) <sup>97</sup> O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. <sup>98</sup> Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. <sup>99</sup> I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. <sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts. <sup>101</sup> I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. <sup>102</sup> I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me. <sup>103</sup> How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! <sup>104</sup> From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

Don Whitney, in his book *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life* tells the true story of ‘a man in Kansas City who was severely injured in an explosion. The victim's face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He had just become a Christian when the accident happened, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible [he loved]. Then he heard about a lady in England who read braille with her lips. Hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in braille. But he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had been too badly damaged to distinguish the characters. One day, as he brought one of the braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them. Like a flash he thought, “I can read the Bible using my tongue.” [According to a 1988 article in *Our Daily Bread*] the man had read through the entire Bible four times’ using his tongue!’<sup>1</sup>

I can’t help but think he may have paused and found special delight as his tongue felt verse 103 as he read through: “How sweet are your words to my taste, yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth.”

Do you love God’s Word? If you lost your eyesight, would your great disappointment be that you can no longer read the Bible? Do you read it? If not, what’s your excuse? Do you long for it? Do you know we are commanded to? We are not just to *admire* those who do, we are all to *aspire* to love and long more for God’s Word.

1 Peter 2 begins with our need to put off and turn from sins, and it says “like newborn babies, **long for** the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, **if you have tasted** the kindness of the Lord.”

We are commanded to “long for” it (NASB), or “crave” it (NIV) like a newborn babe craves his life-nourishing milk. We are commanded to “desire” God’s Word (NKJV), not just fulfill our duty in God’s Word, it is actually a sin to not desire it and love it. How do we know if we can truly say with v. 97 “O how I love Thy law”? How can we increase our love for Scripture? This passage by the inspiration of God answers these questions and more

### Outline: The Evidence and Effects of Being in Love with God’s Word:

**Heart – what he dwells on – v. 97**

**Mind – whose wisdom he follows - vv. 98-100**

**Feet – how he walks – vv. 101-102**

**Mouth – where his tastes are – vv. 103-104**

The whole person is impacted by what we love. Let's look first at:

**The Heart – What He Dwells On (v. 97)**

<sup>97</sup> **O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.**

The Bible has to say a lot about the heart. We'll talk more about this in our evening message. Love springs from our heart, but in the Bible, it is the seat not only of affections but also thinking as well. The first time the word "heart" is used in Scripture illustrates this – it speaks of sinful **"thoughts of the heart"** (Gen. 6:5) and the next verse says God was **"grieved in his heart."** Both thoughts and feelings take place in the biblical concept of the "heart."

v. 111 speaks of the "joy of my heart" (*emotion*)

v. 11 speaks of memorizing in the heart (focused *thinking*)

The heart is the place where we can hide God's Word, or better translated as "store up" or "treasure" God's Word. This thinking *exercise* of the heart in turn gives *enjoyment* of the heart as well. In the writings of the famous missionary Henry Martyn, one of many who memorized Psalm 119, he said when he came to this ... stanza of the psalm [v. 97-104]: "I experienced a solemn gladness in learning this part, "MEM," of the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm."<sup>2</sup>

That gladness is only found by learning and loving Scripture. It's very difficult to meditate on God's Word, as v. 97 says, if we haven't memorized God's Word, as v. 11 says. Memorization fuels meditation, and in v. 97, love is the kindling of this fire.

v. 48 *And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes.*

The entire book of Psalms begins with this idea of the connection between what we meditate, and what we love or delight in.

*Psalm 1:2 "his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night."*

You can't help but meditate and mull over and repeat things you love. Songs you love you find yourself humming and thinking about during the day, sometimes when not even consciously trying to, they just come up. In fact, this Hebrew word for "meditate" has a very verbal emphasis - it basically means to mutter, to utter, to speak, muse, to murmur in low tones, reviewing or reciting something. It is a very interesting word study, let me give you just a few examples of how the word is translated in other places.

Proverbs 8:7 "For my mouth will *utter* truth"

Job 27:4 "My lips certainly will not speak unjustly, Nor will my tongue *mutter* deceit."

Psalm 115:7 "They cannot *make* a sound with their throat" (talking of idols)

Psalm 35:28 "My tongue shall *declare* your righteousness"

Joshua 1:8 may be the most important example, since it's the closest parallel to Ps 1:2:

"This book of the law shall *not depart from your mouth*, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you will be careful to do everything written in it."

This isn't talking about *reading* the Bible, it's talking about repeating it, reflecting on it, reciting it, regurgitating, rehearsing it thoughtfully and constantly, whether under your breath, out loud or internal. Not telling it to others necessarily but telling it to yourself because you need to be reminded all the time, saying and savoring its truths to your soul, mulling it over quietly, thinking hard about it, pondering the rich truths on your lips and heart, dwelling on them. Paul said "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."

So in verse 97, God's law is like a lozenge to be put on the tongue spiritually speaking; we savor it and let it flavor our affections.

Biblical meditation has been compared to a cow chewing its cud, taking it in, but not too quickly; munching slowly over and over and over again, swallowing, ingesting, digesting, letting it impress itself within us and work its way through us ... to bring it back up later! Meditation by regurgitation, recitation, reiteration. It's not just consuming it like a quick meal, but letting it consume more of us beyond the time that we feed on it.

Meditation is not spending 5-15 minutes in the Word at some set time in the day, that's a good start, but this verse is talking about what you do the rest of the hours you're awake each day.

"As a man **thinks in his heart**, so is he." What our heart thinks of and meditates on when it has the opportunity, when it's in neutral, where our thoughts tend to go, this reveals who we are and where we are spiritually, according to Scripture. It shows what we love.

Jesus said, "where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Your heart cannot help but dwell on what it treasures. This is true of all of us, and v. 97 is written by a man who treasures Scripture: *O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all of the day.*

11x in this psalm he speaks of his love for the Scriptures, using various terms or synonyms for the Word of God. The word in verse 97 is *Torah*, which speaks of God's instruction or teaching, not just the "thou shalt not" rules of the first five books of the OT, but the revelation of God Himself who the Torah calls us to love with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (the whole person).

In the Torah that the writer of Psalm 119 loved so much and knew so well, Gen. 27 uses this same Hebrew word "love" to speak of a savory meal which that Isaac loved. It's a similar connotation here – he loves and savors Scripture in his thoughts and meditations that are flavored by it. Song of Solomon 1:3 also connects "savour of good ointments" with "love" (KJV). Chapter 3 of that love poem uses this same word for "love" several times and connects it with seeking the object of her love, pursuing it actively, seeking help in seeking, and when she finds the beloved, she will not let go. That's the way we should treat the Scriptures as well. We should seek and savor, actively pursue with all available helps, and when we have hold of the truths we love, we must never let them go.

Genesis 29:18-20 (NASB95) <sup>18</sup> Now **Jacob loved Rachel**, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ... <sup>20</sup> So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and **they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.**

The years seemed like days because of his love – what a picture! She was on his mind as he worked (a great illustration of loving meditation – not driven by duty but delight). This is similar to the idea in Psalm 119:97 – as we work doing whatever job God has called us to during the day, our great love for Scripture should be constantly on our mind and should make our work so much easier.

Experienced biblical counselor Jay Adams says this ‘is the ideal for the counselee: to come to the place where he so loves the law of God that all day he thinks about in relation to whatever it is that he must do at any given time. He is not speaking of some occupation with Scripture that so consumes him that he fails to assume his responsibilities ... Rather, it is a *use* of the Bible in confronting life’s happenings that is in view. All day long he is biblically guided in his speech, his thoughts, his deeds. That is the idea. When one is thus using the Word of God productively, he will soon come to love it. He will see how broad and how practical its applications are to daily life [prior v. 96]. And in turn, as he learns to love it, he will meditate on it all the more in this way.’<sup>3</sup>

This is the opposite of a vicious cycle – it’s a victorious cycle!

## **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Evidence and Effect of Loving Scripture: The Mind – whose wisdom he follows**

Will our mind rely on wisdom from the world or from the Word?

**<sup>98</sup> Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. <sup>99</sup> I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. <sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts.**

There’s 3 different words for God’s Word in these verses:

“commandments” (v. 98)                      “testimonies” (v. 99)                      “precepts” (v. 100)

There’s 3 ways he displays their superiority over worldly wisdom:

“they are ever mine” (v. 98)                      “my meditation” (v. 99)                      “I observed” (v. 100)

There’s a contrast with 3 different groups:

“enemies” (v. 98)                      “teachers” (v. 99)                      “aged / ancient” (v. 100)

This knowledge is also described with 3 different words:

“wiser” (v. 98)                      “insight” (v. 99)                      “understand” (v. 100)

He’s has more wisdom, more insight, and understands more. The 3 verses have their different nuances but together the composite picture is a comprehensive expression of the all-sided all-sufficient superiority of Scripture’s wisdom.

*Expositor’s Bible Commentary* points out that the comparison of v. 98-100 ‘is not a prideful assertion of superiority [of himself] but a form of exultation in the Lord himself, whose wisdom is more direct and superior (cf. v.102 [“Your Yourself have taught me”]; Jer 9:23-24 [“Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me ...”]) ... in setting forth the excellence of divine illumination, the psalmist would not have been so arrogant to shun instruction from the [biblical] teachers and elders!’<sup>4</sup>

His teachers may have been Greeks appointed by the Syrian government to instruct the Jews in the religion and philosophy of the dominant power, or Babylonians, depending on who is writing. The context suggests verses 99-100 refer to *ungodly* teachers and aged ones.

On v. 99, Matthew Henry noted: ‘By *meditation* we preach to ourselves, and so we come to *understand more than our teachers*, for we come to understand our hearts, which they cannot.’<sup>5</sup>

No slight is intended to teachers or older people per se in v. 100 – godly teachers and godly elders are honored in Scripture and sources of wisdom – but in these verses and in this context, the writer seems to be comparing *spiritual* learning with mere *worldly* wisdom and experience. He is saying the wisdom of God is far better, far beyond anything he can learn from secular instruction.

It is appropriate to honor the aged, but those who have not lived their life applying God’s Word don’t have biblical understanding or wisdom in the Hebrew sense. The old and the ancient should be honored, but more than all is the oldest of all, the ancient Sacred Scriptures written by the Ancient of Days Himself, our Lord God.

Jonathan Edwards wrote: ‘Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice ... Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more.’<sup>6</sup>

Biblical wisdom has been defined as *right thinking leading to right believing, resulting in right living*. In this context, vv. 98-100 have been paraphrased as: ‘teach me a different wisdom and a better wisdom than theirs; not one which consists of policy, or craft, of human prudence ... that practical wisdom which consists in the fear of the Lord, and which leads him to [avoid] all evil.’<sup>7</sup>

### The 3<sup>rd</sup> evidence and effect of Loving Scripture: The Feet – How He Walks

<sup>101</sup> I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. <sup>102</sup> I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me.

Our passage moves from the affections to the attitudes to the actions. The words for “feet” and “way” or “path” in verse 101 in biblical language refers to what we do as our lifestyle direction.

Verse 105 illustrates this: “Thy Word is a lamp to my **feet** and a light unto my **path**.” In verse 9 we read “How can a young man keep his [path]way pure? By keeping it according to your word.” Verse 101 is saying essentially the same thing, but in reverse order: “I have kept my pathway pure so that I might keep Your Word.”

This imagery is how the entire book of Psalms begins: “Blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the **path** of sinners ...” (Psalm 1:1)

When verse 101 says he restrained his feet, this is a strong Hebrew verb that means he hindered / even shackled my feet, and it implies his recognition of his inability to keep his feet from straying.<sup>8</sup>

In 1 Samuel 25, David wants to take violent revenge on Nabal, but Abigail restrained (same Heb. word) his path from bloodshed by interceding with him and David says in v. 33: “blessed be you,

who **have kept me** (that's the same word "restrain") this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand."

So this word includes holding back of strong intentions and drives and passions. Verse 101 says as we keep our feet from sin with all our might, we will keep God's Word. And it is by keeping God's Word that we can keep our feet from evil drives and desires.

I believe it was John Bunyan who first said, "This book will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from this book." Both are true.

Verse 102 continues the idea, but makes clear it's not by our own resources: "I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, **For You Yourself have taught me.**"

It wasn't mere human teachers, as v. 99 says, but God **Himself** taught Him. God can teach through human teachers who know His Word if they are faithful to teach what God Himself taught, rather than their own thoughts. When I teach God's Word, I pray that you will be able to say that God Himself has taught you and that the focus would be on Him speaking through His truth, not through me

God's effectual Word, when taught right, equips us and enables us to not turn aside with our feet or life. This is why I love God's Word so much, not because I love *just a printed page*, but because I love *the Person* who took care to not only write down what is good but who personally teaches us individually through His Word by His Spirit.

If your Bible says "You Yourself" in v. 99, it's because the original text uses an emphatic personal pronoun. In other words, the Bible 'is no do-it-yourself manual which God has handed over to man to use as best he can. It is the written part of a lifelong teach-in.'<sup>9</sup>

#### **The 4<sup>th</sup> Evidence and Effect of Loving Scripture: Mouth – where his tastes are (v. 103-104)**

How sweet are Your words to my taste! *Yes, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

Our text began with love (v. 97 "O how I love thy law") and it ends with "hate" (v. 104 "I hate every false way"). If we truly love the truth, we will truly hate its opposite, the error of false ways.

v. 128 "I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way"

v. 163 "I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Your law."

This type of hate is not antithetical to love, it's essential to love

Romans 12:9 "love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" (NIV)

If we truly love what is good, we cannot love its opposite. We will abhor and hate whatever hurts the One we love, and we love what He loves and hate what He hates if our heart is in tune with His.

Proverbs 8:13 (NASB95) <sup>13</sup>“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the more we fear God and grow, the more we should hate sin. A wise person, biblically speaking, does not want to see how close he can get to sin, he sees how far away he can stay. He hates it, even though he's not immune to it or free from it, he hates it when he sins.

A Christian isn't *sinless*, but as his Christian life progresses he will sin *less* than before. When he does sin, he will hate it more than he did before. He hates what sin does to him and his relationship with God and he strives to kill his sin rather than cozy up with it. Our flesh is still drawn to evil, but our spiritual new nature is drawn away, and the more we taste and see that the Lord is good, the more we taste and see the emptiness and wretchedness of sin.

To use the metaphor of v. 103, we are known by our tastes and also what we find distasteful (v. 104). There's nothing wrong with having a spiritual sweet tooth as long as it loves *the real thing*, rather than the cotton candy pleasures of sin that leaves cavities.

Scripture is more satisfying than honey (v. 103), a good taste in our mouth, but sin leaves a bad taste in our mouth (end of v. 104). This moves from the truths he loves to the false ways he hates. Both are important. You need to avoid fluffy empty spiritual junk-food so you won't spoil your spiritual appetite for what you truly need. Our parents don't tell us those things to be kill-joys, but to give true joy

When our heavenly father calls us to find satisfaction in Scripture, James Montgomery Boice says it 'will soothe the bitter experiences of life with God's sweetness, the ugly things with God's beauty, and the sad times with a genuine joy ... [but as we move into v. 104, we're reminded] we still live in a sour, ugly world, and it is equally important to learn to hate evil as well as love the good ... For us "attraction to the true and revulsion against the false are ... acquired tastes," ... hatred of evil is the only ultimate proof that we love God. Are you indifferent to the Bible? Do you find it boring, unattractive? If so, you will not be kept from sin or from what is ugly and offensive in this world.'<sup>10</sup>

Someone has written: 'You are what you eat.' Maybe you've read the book entitled *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* or perhaps you have seen the movie *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. In this story one spoiled girl who must have everything at once takes a piece of gum, which has the flavors of a full meal, and she begins chewing. When it comes to the dessert flavor, blueberry cobbler, she begins to turn blue and rather plump like a blueberry. This story demonstrates that our appetites can get the best of us and what we hunger for will change us. In teaching the values of His kingdom, Jesus explains the equal reality, that in our spirit we are what we eat. What our spirit hungers for will change us. That for which we hunger will shape us into its image and likeness [you are what you eat spiritually, or at least will be what you feed on]

... C. S. Lewis observed that the problem is not that our cravings are too big but that our cravings are much too small and too easily satisfied with lesser things. We assume that we must get a control on our cravings and subdue them if not eradicate them. The reality of satisfaction is not in the denial of our cravings, but in redirecting them from small things to the One Great Thing. Our cravings tend to favor things like food, drink, and clothing (Matt. 6:25–34). We crave

power, pleasure, prestige and possessions. Our cravings are far too small. The Lord teaches us that those who crave the righteousness of God and His kingdom are blessed ...

The satisfaction of our cravings is found only in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Here is the promise, “They shall be [satisfied who hunger and thirst]” (Matt. 5:6b). They will be satisfied! Jesus says in John 6:35, “... He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (NIV). The words of this poem called *Satisfied*, written by Clara T. Williams (1858–1937), beautifully illustrate [spiritual satisfaction]:

*All my life long I had panted For a drink from some cool spring  
That I hoped would quench the burning Of the thirst I felt within.  
Feeding on the husks around me Till my strength was almost gone,  
Longed my soul for something better, Only still to hunger on.  
Poor I was, and sought for riches, Something that would satisfy;  
But the dust I gathered round me Only mocked my soul's sad cry.  
Well of water, ever springing, Bread of life, so rich and free.  
Untold wealth that never faileth, My Redeemer is to me.  
Hallelujah! I have found Him Whom my soul so long has craved!  
Jesus satisfies my longings; Through His blood I now am saved.<sup>11</sup>*

Satisfaction is the desire of every human soul, but it is not found in any human source. Every creaturely satisfaction is from God.

Psalm 145:16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Psalm 107:9 For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.

When our passage speaks of honey, that's an image of satisfaction

Psalm 81:16 - "... with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

A heart hungry for the purity and sweetness of God's Word will be dissatisfied with anything less (even disgusted by substitutes).

Honey not only satisfies, it sustains (ex: Jonathan in I Sam. 14)

Proverbs 16:24 says "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."

There's no more pleasant words than God's, and this Book is not only sweet to souls, but its truths can affect our bodies physically.

Even the physical taste and sweetness of honey was intended to communicate the superiority of Scripture for spiritual enjoyment

Proverbs 24:13-14 <sup>13</sup> My son, eat honey, for it is good, Yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste; <sup>14</sup> Know that wisdom is thus for your soul; If you find it, then there will be a future, And your hope will not be cut off.

I've read that centuries later in the history of Israel, this idea was still being communicated to Jewish sons in an interesting way. When a boy would first go to school in NT times, 'he went down to the synagogue while it was still dark to listen to the story of how Moses received the law. Then he was taken to the teacher's house for breakfast, where he received cakes with letters of the law written on them. In school, the boy received a slate with passages from the Scriptures written on it. The slate was smeared with honey. He had to trace the letters through the honey with his pen, and it was natural to lick the nib of the pen as he proceeded. The idea was that he

would realize that the purpose of his going to school was to absorb the Scriptures [and learn they were like honey, but even better].<sup>12</sup>

Both Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3) and John (Revelation 10) are given God's Word to eat in a vision, and it says it tasted sweet like honey.

Honey was the sweetener of that day, the sweetest thing he knew here on earth, but in v. 103 he says the Bible is even sweeter, as Psalm 19 says, sweeter than the freshest purest honey dripping from the honeycomb. God's Word is pure, fresh, sweet, and if we have tasted and seen how good the Lord is in his Word, we should desire not to keep that delicious and delightful dessert to ourselves, but we should seek to open the jar of honey to others so that they too will soon agree with this psalmist. That's what I desire to do as I give out this message, however imperfectly I may do so, God's Word is perfect and satisfying and energy-giving and enlivening far beyond my words or any human words. Taste and see!

This is the blessing experienced by those who are cultivating their spiritual taste-buds, savoring the satisfying Word of God often, memorizing and treasuring its sweet-tasting, sweet-sounding truths

John Newton was the slave-trader saved by God's amazing grace "how sweet the sound" as he would write in a hymn called "Amazing Grace." Newton had this to say of what we love and treasure: 'All mankind have something near at heart, on which their dependence is placed, and wherein they find their chief pleasure. This (whatever it is) is their good; and according to the object in which they delight is their proper character ... [For true believers] God is their good in the highest sense, and every thing else is good so far as it leads to him, and assists them in maintaining communion with him ... the means of enjoying and glorifying their God ... All the doctrines, precepts, and promises, contained in the Scripture, are a very precious treasure, in which they rejoice more than those who find great spoil. Each of them can say, in the language of the Psalmist, "The law of thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth! O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day long." (Ps. 119:72, 97, 108) By this word they are enlightened, quickened, warned, comforted, and supported: therefore it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts, and more than their necessary food. [Job 23:12 "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food"]<sup>13</sup>

Psalm 34:8 commands us to "taste and see that the Lord is good." This is not merely duty, but is for our delight, for the palate and for our pleasure in the sweet and enriching goodness found in the Word of the Lord. As we feed on God's Word, pure as honey from the comb, our spiritual taste-buds can develop more delight in it.

This week I read of a pastor in Boston many years ago, John Cotton (died in 1652). In his declining years he was asked why he read late into the evening. "Because I love to sweeten my mouth ... before I go to sleep," he replied ... We taste the sweetness of God as he meets us in his Word ... This is what we love to sweeten our mouths with before we go to sleep ... the aim of all life is to see and savor and show this perfection and this excellency [in God and His Word].<sup>14</sup>

Is this your aim? Or are you one who have “lost its taste” as Jesus said? Where are your spiritual tastes? What do you love and hunger and thirst for? If you’ve lost your first love, how can you get it back?

I hope to help encourage you to re-cultivate love for Scripture and recommit and rekindle your spiritual taste-buds. But before I do, I need to recognize a very real possibility. It’s one thing if you have lost your love for God’s Word, and want it back. It’s another thing to have never truly loved God’s Word. If you have zero desire or delight for the precepts of our Lord, it’s very possible you don’t have the person of our Lord Jesus within you. If you never have been able to identify with these many Scriptures I’ve been reading, I would never want to assure you are saved. Where your treasure is reveals where your heart is.

Loving God’s truth is not just optional icing on the cake for those who are saved. It’s an evidence of what it means to be saved.

2 Thess. 2:10-12 speaks of “those who **perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved** ... [v. 12] they all may be judged who **did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.**”

Believing God’s truth, in that passage, is paralleled with love of the truth, instead of love of its opposite, pleasure in other things. We do not truly believe, by biblical definition, if there is not love along with it (when Scripture calls us to “believe” it is more than an intellectual agreement, there is affection and commitment, too, like our belief in the Lord includes love for the Lord).

John 8:31 says “Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide in my Word [remain / continue], then you are my true disciples.’”

John 14:23-24 <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. <sup>24</sup> “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.

<sup>1</sup> John 2:5 <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

David Brainerd wrote: “The distinguishing marks of a true Christian:

1. He has a true knowledge of the glory and excellency of God, that he is most worthy to be loved and praised for his own divine perfections. Ps 145:3.
2. God is his portion, Ps 73:25. And God’s glory his great concern, Matt 6:22.
3. Holiness is his delight; nothing he so much longs for, as to be holy as God is holy. Phil 3:9-12.
- 4 Sin is his greatest enemy. This he hates, for its own nature, for what it is in itself, being contrary to a holy God, Jer 2:1. And consequently he hates all sin, Rom 7:24; 1 John 3:9.
5. The laws of God also are his delight, Ps 119:97; Rom 7:22. These he observes, not out of constraint, from a servile fear of hell; but they are his choice, Ps 119:30. The strict observance of them is not his bondage, but his greatest liberty, Ps 119:45. <sup>15</sup>

If you are not a true believer who loves the Lord and His Word, plead the prayer of v. 94 “I am Yours save me.” This Heb. word for “save” speaks of the LORD’s ‘saving care over individuals, especially over those who in their helplessness and trouble need and claim His protection.’ <sup>16</sup>

But notice this is not a passive prayer of an inactive spectator who is lazily waiting for God to do something with no desire or effort or willingness to obey on our part. Verse 94b says “for I have *sought* your precepts” – a word meaning “to seek with care, to inquire of, to examine.” Scripture calls on us to seek the Lord while he may be found, and He is found in His Word.

Seek him like a man who seeks and finds treasure, and when he does he is willing to give up all he has to buy that field. Recognize you’re a sinner with a heart that loves itself and so many other things rather than God, and plead with him to give you a new heart, to take over your life, to be your Lord and Master. Turn from your sins, trust in His satisfying saving grace. Seek Him in prayer

They would use this word *seek* for someone pursuing something valuable to them, like a lost ox or needed animals (Deut. 22:1-2). Most importantly it’s used in Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek [study] the law of the LORD, and to do it ...”

As Spurgeon said it, “consecration is a good plea for preservation.” If you’re a Christian who wants to make a meaningful New Years resolution this year, resolve yourself to seek God’s Word daily and to increase your hearing of God’s Word weekly, whether Sunday School or Sunday night or on CD or reading solid books, etc.

Have you set your heart to seek after God’s Word? Do you seek His kingdom first and His righteousness? Do you seek and savor the preaching and teaching of God’s Word at every opportunity? Do you seek to satisfy your delight in the fountain of living waters or are you putting your focus and priorities in the unsatisfying broken cisterns of this world which can hold no real water or joy? May we all taste and see that the Lord is good in His sweet and satisfying Scriptures. And may God helps us to cultivate spiritual taste-buds that relish in the right things, and reject the wrong things so that you and I can say more truly “O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day.”

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p. 30-31; citing Robert Sumner, Oct. 5, 1988 article on “Treasuring God’s Word,” in *Our Daily Bread*.

<sup>2</sup> John Ker, *The Psalms in History and Biography*, 148.

<sup>3</sup> Jay Adams, *Counsel from Psalm 119*, p. 82-83.

<sup>4</sup> *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 5:753.

<sup>5</sup> *Matthew Henry’s 6 Volume Commentary*, 3:274.

<sup>6</sup> *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2:162.

<sup>7</sup> J. J. Stewart Perowne, *Commentary on the Psalms*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Vol. 2, p. 360.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *Devotional Commentary on the Psalms*, 579

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 143.

<sup>10</sup> James Montgomery Boice, 3:1023.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan, R. J. (2004). *Nelson’s Annual Preacher’s Sourcebook : 2004 Edition*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, p. 310.

<sup>12</sup> Ralph Gower, *New Manners and Customs of the Bible*.

<sup>13</sup> John Newton. *The Works of John Newton - Volume II*.

<sup>14</sup> John Piper, J. (2005). *Taste and see: Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life*. Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Publishers, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> “The Life and Diary of David Brainerd,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 2, p. 441.

<sup>16</sup> Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 124.