

## God's Heart Sanitizer

### Psalm 119:9-16

After today I have three more messages from Psalms. It's a series I hope you have been challenged by as we have looked at what it is to trust God in all the hard times, to have God as our rock and refuge and strength to be for us that ever-present help in time of trouble. He is the one to whom we owe our praise. He is the one who deserves all the glory.

Next week we'll take a look at **Psalm 145**. Then at the end of November we'll look at **Psalms 96 and 100** focusing on themes around Thanksgiving.

As we do in December, we will be looking at messages around Christmas.

We have our upcoming missions conference with George Ross sharing about Forget Me Not Ministries. I'll be gone the end of October and Elias will be here to share with you from **Acts 16**. The other four Sundays I will share some thoughts and challenges with you as I close out the year and my ministry.

Today's message is from **Psalm 119** and no, we are not going to go through all 176 verses. This Psalm is a Hebrew alphabetical tutorial. There are 22 sections comprised of eight verses each. Each section is one of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse in the section begins with that Hebrew letter. It served not only as an academic exercise, but also to teach godly living through the importance of obeying God's Word as our guide in life. Almost every verse speaks specifically of God's Word whether it's the law, commands, precepts, etc. Our focus today will be on **vs. 9-16**.

Thursday I went up to the hospital to spend a little time with Paul while Mary was in surgery. I stopped at the desk to get directions to the surgical waiting room. Next to the reception desk was a little bottle. As I made my way down the hall to the elevator to take me up to the third floor there were other bottles hanging on the wall. When I stepped off the elevator, another bottle hung conspicuously on the wall. When I got to the waiting room, there was yet another bottle.

Knowing how astute you are, you know that all those bottles were hand sanitizer. For years hospitals have had them hanging on walls for people to sanitize their hands before going into a room for a visit. But ever since COVID, it's not unusual to find them in grocery stores, restaurants, the gym where I work out, and many other businesses. We've gotten used to seeing them and using them, well most of the time.

Robyn carries a little bottle in her purse and car. I have one in my car as well. But I have to say that even though the lingering threat of COVID is still there, I don't use it as often as I should. Robyn is much more diligent than I am and maybe it's because her work as a nurse running a dialysis center has conditioned her to do that, COVID or not.

The bottle of hand sanitizer I have on my desk says it kills 99.99% of germs and it does so in 15 seconds. On the back it says that it decreases bacteria on the skin that could cause disease. There are some warnings as well.

Keep out of eyes.

Avoid contact with broken skin.

Do not inhale or ingest.

Keep away from flames.

Keep out of reach of children.

The passage we are looking at today talks about another type of sanitizer. It's a sanitizer for the heart. But there are some unique differences. With this sanitizer, you can have direct contact with the eyes.

This sanitizer is for broken people.

This sanitizer is to be ingested.

This sanitizer will keep you from eternal flames.

This sanitizer is to be in the reach of children.

Again, because you are an astute group of people, you already know that I'm referring to the Bible.

A.W. Tozer rightly stated that **"Satan's greatest weapon is man's ignorance of the Bible."**

With your Bibles open, let's look at **Psalm 119:9-16** and discuss how the Bible is God's Heart sanitizer. We begin in **verses 9-12** talking about the virtue of God's Word.

## I. THE VIRTUE OF GOD'S WORD – vv. 9-12

The dictionary defines virtue as a quality considered morally good. We know that to be the case regarding the Bible because we know that all Scripture is inspired by God and is therefore profitable. It has great virtue for the reader. Things like:

Helping us learn about God and His truth.

Helping enhance our worship.

Helping guide our conduct and showing us how to rightly interact with others.

Helping grow our faith.

Helping us realize how much we need God.

Helping us discern and stand against false teachers.

Giving us strength, comfort, encouragement, peace and so much more as we obey it and live it.

There is one essential reason why we should read God's Word and that is it is His Word to us. I get a lot of junk mail that isn't worth the time to take it out of the mailbox. But when I look in the upper left corner and see someone's name I know, I look forward to reading it because it's personal. God's Word is His letter to us.

Philosophers have pondered many questions through the ages that if they had only taken the time to read the Bible, they would have discovered the answers were found in God's Word. They ask about the meaning of life, which from the Bible is to know God and to enjoy Him forever. Read **Genesis 3** and you will get the answer as to why there is evil in the world. Read it and you the answer to man's final destiny.

As much as people want to debate and refute the Bible as being filled with discrepancies and error, it is totally reliable because it comes from a holy God who is truth and cannot lie.

As much as people say that it is archaic, outdated, and old fashioned, it is what can be called supra-cultural meaning that it is relevant for all people of all time from all cultures and people of all ages. It is just as relevant today as it was when it was written.

So as we think about its virtue, I have eight benefits which show that God's Word is a great heart sanitizer.

The first thing we notice from **v. 9** is that it cleanses.

## A. God's Word Cleanses Us – v. 9

I once helped a friend who was a farmer with some 600 pigs. The first day or two the smell was nauseating. After a few days you don't even know that you smell.

When we are too close to the world and its values we can begin to smell like the world, and we don't know we need a good spiritual cleaning.

The psalmist says that God's Word cleanses us or makes us pure. The psalmist used this word to refer to what is moral. God's Word not only makes us clean, it can keep us clean if we read it and if we obey it. That's what **James 1:22** says, that we should be doers of the Word and not just hearers only. Otherwise, he says we are just deceiving ourselves. The word 'cleanse' literally means to be free from moral taint. God's Word is the soap that makes us morally clean.

**Psalm 1:1-2** shows us that the person who meditates on God's Word day and night will be kept from choosing the wrong companions and then living like them.

In **Psalm 119:8** we see that the psalmist had determined to obey God's Word, something repeated in **verse 145**. His obedience was intentional.

When I was 20, I determined that I would run a marathon. It took me 21 years. Not that it took me 21 years to run 26 miles, but that I finally got around to it. There were days when I was dog tired, days when it was raining, days that I would have rather done anything else, days I didn't want to run 20 miles. But I was determined to run that marathon, so I committed myself to doing all the workouts no matter how I felt or what the weather conditions were. I was determined to obey the workout schedule .

The psalmist asks a question: **How can you keep your way pure? How can you be right with God?** Let me rephrase the question. **Do you want to be made pure, be right with God?** If so, it can't be some half-hearted today I don't feel like it, or I'll try harder tomorrow attempt. If we want to be pure, then we must determine to live according to God's Word. Not just when we want or what we want, but

do our best to diligently keep it all the time.

As Jesus was praying in **John 17:17**, He asked the Father to sanctify them by the Word which is truth. We'll come back to that in a moment.

**Do you want to live right?** Then be in God's Word. **Psalm 119:105** tells us that His Word is a lamp to our feet and light to our path or as I like to say "*it guides our steps and guards our path.*"

Charles Spurgeon says the difficulty isn't in the beginning, it's beginning right, choosing the right way to go. He goes on to say that the Word not only leads us in the right way, it keeps us in the right way. Every step of life is a choice. Christian found that out in Bunyan's book *Pilgrim's Progress*. The right path may be the hard path, but it's still the right path and the destination is worth all the right choices. Jesus said now are you clean through the Word spoken to you.

We then see in **verse 10** that God's Word controls us.

## B. God's Word Controls Us – v. 10

Notice the affection that the psalmist has for God. Maybe he was thinking back to **Deuteronomy 6:5-6**. **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts."**

The passage shows the sincere devotion he had for God. It was so great, he asked God to not let him stray from His commands. Again, the word 'heart' conveys the idea of loving God with his whole being, just as it is mentioned in **Deuteronomy 6**. The demonstration of that affection is in wanting God to direct his steps, keep him on the right path.

Warren Wiersbe rightly says that **"We need a heart that seeks God, for if our heart is seeking God, our feet will not stray from God."**

**Proverbs 4:23 "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."**

To put it another way, the heart directs the actions and choices we make. Jesus said that whatever is in a man will come out in what he does.

We will always fail at keeping God's Word if we

only attempt to keep it half-heartedly or read it occasionally.

We learn a valuable lesson on keeping God's Word wholeheartedly from Jesus. When He was in the wilderness for those 40 days, Satan gave some compelling temptations for Jesus to consider. But Jesus used the Word of God to control His actions.

**Do we love God that much that we'll live by His Word to keep from straying?** Make God's Word your rule for daily living and decisions. Let it control you.

God's Word is the control signs on the highway of life. The truth is we need signs to control our direction.

We have signs that control our speed, which side of the road to drive on, signs that tell us to turn right or left or go straight, slow down, watch for children, merge, not to pass, and so on.

We have signs that tell us how much something costs.

We have signs that tell us to enter or to exit. Signs control our actions.

MacLaren Hospital is under some major renovations. I followed the signs taking me to the surgical waiting room. I made it without any trouble. Coming out was another story. I followed what I thought were the right signs to the lobby, but soon discovered that main lobby was under construction. So I back tracked. There was another temporary main lobby. I stood in the middle of the hallway looking confused and hopelessly lost. A woman who worked at the hospital came out of the cafeteria and asked where I was headed because she saw I didn't know where I was going. Fortunately for me, she had read the right signs and knew the way to go. The truth is, I didn't follow the right signs. I let other signs control where I went.

God's Word knows the right way for us to take. **Are you following it, or are you following the wrong signs that will take you in the wrong direction?** If I want to get to some place I've never been before, I type in the address and let my GPS controls the route I take.

This past Tuesday I was driving home from Southfield, but couldn't take the normal route home because of construction on Square Lake Road. So I pulled up the GPS on my phone to get me to I-75. I was in unfamiliar territory following the GPS directions when Randy called to check on a couple of things. My GPS switched off when I took the call. I was, as the saying goes, driving blind. I hoped I was going the right way. Once we were done talking, I reestablished my GPS and it got me to I-75.

The truth is, we need God's Word to control us. Then, we need God's Word to convict us.

### C. God's Word Convicts Us – II Timothy 3:16

The word convict means to declare guilty. We don't like that word because it tells us we've done something wrong. We watch shows about court cases whether real or fictional and when the judge's gavel comes down, a conviction of wrongdoing has been determined by the judge and he or she passes a judgment or sentence on the convicted.

I know a couple who will soon go to trial. The husband faces 11 counts and the wife 17 counts of wrongdoing. If convicted, they both face up to life in prison.

Inspired by God, the Bible shows us that all of us are convicted of going astray, we have all sinned. It tells us that we have not met God's standard of holiness, that we have all missed His mark. It tells us that without exception we are all guilty

Paul says that the inspired word of God reproves us. The Amplified Bible puts it this way: **“Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable...for reproof and conviction of sin.”**

A lot of people don't want to read the Bible because they don't want it telling them that what they are doing is wrong. They think they can plead ignorance because they never knew, so if they don't read it, they don't have to feel the guilt that comes from reading in black and white what God disapproves of.

But I'm really glad that the Bible doesn't just show us that we have all sinned, convicting us as guilty. It goes on to show us what we can do to get right, not just initially, but when we mess up again and again. God's Word not only convicts us, it changes us.

### D. God's Word Changes Us – Romans 1:16

I think for the most part, people want to change. We change jobs. We change addresses. We change cars. We change hairstyles.

Those things may work for a bit, but the reality is we are still the same on the inside. All we have done is change the shell.

But try as we may, we can't change the inside on our own. But the Word of God tells us that it can change us from the inside. The power of God's Word reveals how we can overturn that conviction of sin. It tells us that Christ took our conviction upon Himself and suffered our penalty and paid our debt. It tells us that we need to confess our sin and trust Christ as Savior and then we will change from the inside out. The Word of God saves us by our believing and receiving it and then says that change is forever. When that change occurs God no longer looks on us as convicted felons awaiting an eternal sentence of separation from Him without the possibility of parole. He now sees us robed in the righteousness of Christ. My sins are gone and will not be remembered.

Now that doesn't mean God has developed some type of divine amnesia. When it says He will remember our sins no more, He means that He will never hold our sins against us because we have put on the righteousness of Christ. We have been changed.

Yet there are times I still fall short, times I sin and for that I need the consecration of the Word of God.

### E. God's Word Consecrates Us – John 17:17

The word 'consecrate' means to make holy or separate as holy. That's what they had to do in the Old Testament with the utensils used in the

Tabernacle. They performed a special ceremony that made something common into something sacred. The word consecrate can also be the word sanctify, or to set apart for special use.

When we trust Christ as Savior, we have in a sense been set apart for the sacred duty of serving God. The Word of God sanctifies us. There are two ways we are sanctified.

One way we just talked about in the change that comes on us when we trust Christ as our Savior. In theological terms it's called positional sanctification which essentially means that we stand positionally right with God through the righteousness of Christ. When you trust Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit instantly changes you. Paul likens it to being taken from the dominion of darkness and put into the citizenship of light.

The second type of sanctification in theological terms is called progressive sanctification. That simply means that each day as I yield my life to the control of the Holy Spirit, He begins the process of changing my character – what I think, what I say, and what I do – so that it comes more in line with the new nature I have been given because in Christ we are a new creation. We are progressively being made like Christ in character. Which means that sometimes we mess up. Sometimes the old nature still lurking around tries to take over and sometimes we give in. So we need the consecration of God's Word to keep working in us to make us more like Him. So when we sin, we need the Word of God to correct us.

#### **F. God's Word Corrects Us – vv. 11-12**

Turn back to **Psalm 119**.

I am glad that my GPS has a feature that helps me when I go the wrong way. When I make a wrong turn, it tells me "rerouting." That means it's going to redirect my path to get me on the right road again.

That's what God's Word does. When I have taken the wrong path, God's Word shows me how to get back on the right path I need to take in following God.

For example, if I have in some way hurt someone else, it tells me that I need to go to the person and ask forgiveness.

If I sin in some way, it tells me to confess my sin. If I am angry, bitter, proud, hateful, anxious, etc., it tells me to let the Spirit develop the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, and so on in my life. There are only two choices: the right way or the wrong way. There is no right way that sometimes will be wrong and there is no wrong way that sometimes will be right. The Bible does not teach situational ethics, where in certain situations I can be justified to do wrong. But the Bible does tell us how to get back right with God when we do something that is wrong.

We all need correction, to get back into the right way with God. Use His Word to guide your steps back to the right path. Treasure it, value it, commit it to memory, meditate on it, so it can not only direct you back to the right path, but keep you on the right path. Treasuring God's Word trains us to live and do what is right. It will always provide us with an escape.

#### **I Corinthians 10:13**

Notice that the psalmist asked God to be His teacher. He wanted to be a disciple and there is no better teacher than God Himself. Treasure God's Word.

#### **Job 23:11-12**

Let God's Word correct you and after the correction, let His Word cheer you.

#### **G. God's Word Cheers Us – Jeremiah 15:16**

That comes from the guy who was known as the weeping prophet, the guy who wrote Lamentations. The Word given to Jeremiah was filled with condemnation on the nation who strayed from God and lived in idolatry. They had abandoned God. But Jeremiah loved God's word. Even in the harshness of the message they were words of hope, love, mercy and forgiveness. God was giving Jeremiah words that would cheer them up if they only repented and obeyed.

So while God's Word corrects us, it does so in a way that is loving, showing us His mercy and grace and forgiveness and compassion for His own. God's Word comforts us, strengthens us, guides us, encourages us, builds us, and yes it cheers us. May our desire be like that of this psalmist who later wrote "**Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it**"

**all day long...How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:97, 103)**

**Do we come to God's Word with dread or delight, in despair or with desire? Does it cheer us?**

There is one more benefit that brings value to the word of God and that is it completes us.

## **H. God's Word Completes Us –**

### **II Timothy 3:16-17; Isaiah 55:10-11**

God through His Word finishes what He started in us. He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ and Paul says in that we can have confidence (**Philippians 1:6**). His Word will not return void without first accomplishing its intended purpose. It will bring about completion.

I hope you see the virtue of God's Word. It brings about great change in the person who will obey it and love it. In the closing verses of this segment, the psalmist speaks of the value of God's Word.

## **II. THE VALUE OF GOD'S WORD – vv. 13-16**

In **v. 13** we notice that God's Word is to be proclaimed.

### **A. God's Word Is To Be Proclaimed – v. 13**

We need to share with others about the change God's Word has done in us. It is valuable because it changes us. Paul said he wasn't ashamed of the gospel because it had the power to save (**Romans 1:16**). The psalmist recounted the affect God's Word had on him and gave a testimony to others about its impact.

What we value, we talk about and share with others.

We talk about a book we have been reading.

We talked about our vacation.

We talk about a great restaurant we just tried.

We talk about a lot of things.

**Do we talk about God's Word?**

**Do we talk about what we read from devotions?**

**Do we talk about what we heard in a sermon?**

Let's not be ashamed to proclaim God's Word. It is

**THE** best-selling book of all time. Proclaim it.

The psalmist then concludes by telling us that God's

Word is to be prized.

### **B. God's Word Is To Be Prized – vv. 14-16**

The psalmist said back in **verse 11** that he treasured God's Word by hiding it, storing it up in his heart. Here he says that he rejoices in God's Word as a person rejoices in great wealth. There is a sense of contentment that exists for the person who prizes God's Word, for the person who recognizes its value.

He understood its value and spent time meditating on it. When he thought about God's Word, it gladdened his heart and he thought about it more. As I like to say, he noodled it, pondered it, considered what it meant to him and how to apply it. Because of its value to him, he would not neglect to obey it.

Charles Spurgeon noted that **"men do not readily forget that which they have treasured up, that which they have meditated on, and that which they have often spoken of."**

Matthew Henry adds that **"Those that meditate in God's Word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it."**

Alexander MacLaren stated that **"God's Word is a fixed point to guide by unchangeable standards... No other literature should ever take the place of the Bible. No other book will ever do for the reader what the Bible does."**

Don't let the business of life or sin for that matter crowd out God's Word. It is the sanitizer of the heart.

In **Psalm 119:92** that **"Unless God's Word had been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction."**

**Do you find virtue in God's Word?**

**Is God's Word of value to you?**

God's Word has wonderful and lasting benefits if we would but spend the time to mine the depth of its riches, riches that will benefit us and others. Let it sanitize your heart.

A.W. Tozer rightly stated that **"Satan's greatest weapon is man's ignorance of the Bible."**