

DELIGHTING IN GOD'S LAW

I AM THE LORD THY GOD
THOU SHALT HAVE NO
OTHER GODS BEFORE ME
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO
THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE
NAME OF THE LORD THY
GOD IN VAIN
REMEMBER THE SABBATH
DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY

HONOUR THY FATHER AND
THY MOTHER
THOU SHALT NOT KILL
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT
ADULTERY
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL
THOU SHALT NOT BEAR
FALSE WITNESS
THOU SHALT NOT COVET

an examination of Psalm 119

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IN

GOD'S LAW

- An Examination of Psalm 119 -

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“DELIGHTING IN GOD’S LAW”

(Psalm 119)

Intro ... Last Sunday we concluded our nearly year-long examination of the ‘*Sermon on the Mount*’. I believe that for many of us, it was a transformational study. For the first time many of us, I believe, came to understand that God’s Law is not all bad – that God’s Law is not something for us to ‘*get out from under*’ as fast as we can.

For the first time we began to understand that God’s Grace doesn’t abolish God’s Law but rather somehow enhances it.

Jesus (the ultimate demonstration of Grace) said ‘*Don’t think that I have come to abolish the Law (and the Prophets); I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*’

And then Jesus went on to outline the Principles of Life in the Kingdom in such a way that it became obvious that Grace in no way eliminated the Law – Grace took the Law to a whole new level.

For us now there is no higher or more Godly expression of the Law of God than what Jesus gave us in that great afternoon discourse on the mountain.

There, in that discourse, is the Law of God expressed in its most magnificent form – as we said last week, we need to ceaselessly study it and seek to apply it as faithfully as we possibly can – It’s a comprehensive Manual for Christian Living.

As additional motivation for us to do that, I want us to immerse ourselves in the greatest exposition on the **value** of the Law of God found anywhere in the Scripture ... **Psalm 119**. Here we will be for the next several weeks.

In preparation for our communion today, let me just draw your attention to a single text ...

TODAY’S KEY TEXT ...

“Open my **EYES** that I may see **WONDROUS** things in your **LAW**.”
(Psalm 119:18)

Several Observations can be draw from that single insightful Scripture ...

* There are some WONDROUS things to be SEEN in God's LAW.

Certainly at this point in our study of God's Word, we know this to be true. Over this past year, as we have proceeded thought by thought through the Sermon on the Mount, we have said to ourselves time and time again,

'I never thought of it that way before' or

'That's a whole new way of looking at that old command'.

Six times Jesus Himself said, *"I'm taking these old familiar teachings to an entirely new level"*.

What he really meant was, *"I'm going to throw back the curtain and allow you to 'see' what this Law of God is really all about. What it has really 'always' been about. What those with 'eyes to see' have always seen."*

One of those with 'eyes to see' in days of old was David, the shepherd boy – David the Giant Slayer – David the singer of songs – David the King of Israel during some of Israel's Glory Days.

Here's what David said about the Law of the Lord in Psalm 19 ...

Psalm 19 is the one that begins ...

*"The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands."*

The fingerprints of God are all over the physical realm –
Only men who blindfold themselves can fail to discover them.

But as magnificently as the heavens demonstrate the power and majesty of God, so also does something else ... Something else that is so perfect and pure that man must marvel if he ever comes to understand it. And it's something that can do more than simply cause man to marvel. It's something that can cause man to fully and even gloriously function in this world.

In the 7th and 8th verses of that same Psalm David reveals what that 'something' is and what that 'something' does.

Here's what he says ...

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Indeed, David knew that there were some 'wondrous things' to be discovered in a full-blown understanding of the Law of God. He knew that there was tremendous

'value' hidden away within it.

How he would have jumped at the chance to sit at Jesus' feet and take in all that wonderful *'Sermon on the Mount'* teaching!

Indeed, there are *'wondrous things'* waiting to be discovered in the perfect, trustworthy, right and radiant Law of God.

Here's a second observation that arises from our **Key Text** of the Morning ...

* Such **'SIGHT'** doesn't come NATURALLY ... Eyes must be OPENED.

The Apostle Paul would observe in his first letter to the Corinthian Believers (1Cor. 2:14) that ...

'The man without the Spirit (that is, the natural man) does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned.'

Spiritual Sight is not even possible until a man is *'Born-Again'* and given certain *'Spiritual Capabilities'* – one of which is the ability to *'see'* and *'understand'* the Truths of God.

Spiritual Birth provides a new set of *'spiritual eyes'* but like any *'newborn'* those eyes must learn to focus and distinguish one thing from another.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church (Ephesians 1:18) he says ...

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened ..."

Knowing enough (seeing and understanding enough) to be saved is a far cry from knowing enough (seeing and understanding enough) to live strong, productive, God-Pleasing, Soul-Satisfying Lives.

That's why some Christians never move on beyond spiritual *"Infancy"* ...

They remain *'Baby Christians'* for their entire lives.

Their new spiritual eyes have never really begun to function and they have never been able to *'zero in on'* the wondrous life laid out for them in the Jesus-Delineated, Jesus-Demonstrated Law of God.

They need to learn to see ... Their eyes need to be opened!

Such a recognition of need leads us to the third observation that grows out of **Today's Key Text** ...

* Such **OPENING** of the eyes must be **REQUESTED**.

That exactly what the Psalmist is doing ... “Open my eyes” is his request.

“Open them ever wider; Open them ever more regularly;

Open them ever more effectively ... that I may ‘See’ –

Clearly see, Understandingly see, Purposefully see ...

Wondrous things in Your Law.”

You see ... there’s always more to see.

Turn to somebody next to you and say ... “There’s always more to see” ...

That’s why we keep coming to church; that’s why we keep opening up the book;
that’s why we keep fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters in Christ ...
there’s always more to see than we have thus far seen.

‘Open my eyes, Lord that I might see wondrous things in your Law’ –

That I might understand better and better your Will and your Ways -

That I might live in accordance with your Desires for my life.

Here now is the fourth (and final) observation that seems to me to arise from our **Key Text** of the morning ...

* Those **WONDROUS** things will **TRANSFORM** our lives.

No one could have sat on the mountainside that afternoon and taken in what Jesus taught
and not concluded ...

‘These Teachings of Christ – this exposition on the true and ultimate nature of the Law –

this ‘Sermon on this Mountainside this very afternoon - will totally transform

my life if I embrace it and surrender myself to it .”

This is God’s Plan ... to transform the living of those who embrace and increasingly embody
the wondrous truths contained in His Wondrous Law.

FINAL THOT ...

The **LAW** not only **LEADS** us to **CHRIST** (in despair);

It enables us (once it is properly understood) to **WALK** on with **CHRIST** (in triumph).

“DELIGHTING IN OUR LAW-GIVEN IDENTITY”

“Six Wondrous Things – Six Wondrous Discoveries”

(Psalm 119)

Intro ... Last Sunday we began a brief summer series entitled: *“Delighting In God’s Law”* as a follow-up to our nearly year-long study of the Sermon on the Mount.

Psalm 119 will be our focus and **verse 18** of Psalm 119 provides our theme ...

SERIES THEME VERSE ...

“Open my EYES that I may see WONDROUS things in your LAW!”

(Psalm 119:18)

That’s what Jesus was doing on the hillside that afternoon ...

He was opening the people’s eyes to ‘*see things*’ that they had never seen before – to understand more of the full meaning of the Law of God than they had ever understood before – to hopefully bring them to a place of cherishing the Law of God more than they ever cherished it before and to encourage them to build their lives more solidly upon the Law of God than they had ever done before.

Remember his central confession concerning the place of the Law of God in his life? ...

*‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets,
I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.’*

Everything he said that afternoon he said in light of that objective ... Blessed are those who bring themselves in line with the Grace and Truth contained in and released by the full expression of the Law of God. The Law of God embodies God’s ultimate plan for man – and it’s a good plan!

And then remember his concluding statement?

*“He who hears these ‘Words of Mine’ and puts them into practice
shall be like a man who built his house upon the Rock. The rain came down,
the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house;
yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the Rock.”*

These ‘*words of mine*’ ... that was Jesus’ term for his exposition – his explanation – of the Law of God. Thus we could say that ‘*the teachings of Christ*’ as comprehensively collected in the Sermon on the Mount form the “*Christian Version*” of the Law of God itself ... the very Law into which the writer of Psalm 119 desired to ‘*look more deeply*’.

Now living in 2013 and having both Psalm 119 and the Sermon on the Mount in printed form right in our hands, we are blessed beyond belief.

We possess what the Psalmist hoped for – the fuller truth concerning the Law of God (the will and the ways of God); but he possessed what we seldom attain – an understanding of the glorious things that that very Law of God can do in us and for us.

He understood the 'value' of the Law even though he didn't understand the full expression of the Law.

I want us to benefit from both ... knowing the value of the Law should only motivate us more to study and apply Christ's Teachings concerning the Law.

"Open my eyes that I may see Wondrous Things in your Law"

For our purposes, I would modify that prayer this way ...

*"Lord, open our eyes that we might discover
wondrous things concerning your Law in Psalm 119."*

Whether he knew it or not, the psalmist discovered and revealed through this great, long psalm many 'wondrous things' –

In this little summer series we will focus upon **Six** ...

"Six Wondrous Things –Six Wondrous Discoveries"

Today we begin with ...

WONDROUS THING #1 ...

*"In God's Law we can discover a Wondrous,
WORLD-CHALLENGING IDENTITY."*

*We are LAW-LOVING, LAW-EMBRACING, LAW-KEEPING
Citizens of God's Kingdom!*

How's that for a whole new way of 'identifying ourselves'!

That IDENTITY grows out of the text of this Great Psalm ...

Let's examine it one piece at a time ...

1. WE ARE LAW-LOVERS AS CITIZENS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

If there were a Pizza Hut in heaven, the most popular Pizza would be called the “*Law-Lovers*”. It would be covered with an incredible array of toppings – there would be ‘*precepts*’, and ‘*statutes*’, and ‘*sayings*’ and ‘*commandments*’, and ‘*testimonies*’ and ‘*judgments*’ all under the heading of (and inter-changeable with) ‘TORAH’ ... The LAW.

Listen to the way the Psalmist expresses himself ...

We could call it an ‘*unsolicited endorsement*’ ...

vs. 97 ... “*Oh, how I LOVE your Law! I meditate on it all DAY long.*”

Interesting ... the word ‘*meditate*’ means to ‘*chew it over*’ – to ‘*thoroughly digest it*’. It’s as though the psalmist is saying, ‘*I want to enjoy every morsel – I don’t want this flavor to ever leave my mouth*’.

Quite appropriately he adds ...

vs. 120 ... “*I stand in AWE of your laws.*”

These are not things that some man could ‘*think up*’ – Man’s Laws are always confining and demanding; these are liberating and enabling – these stimulate my mind and excite my heart. These come from some higher and more perfect source.

Now that’s what the people said about Jesus’ Teachings when he got done laying them out that sunny afternoon ...

“They were amazed at his teachings, because he taught as one who had authority.”
(Matthew 7:28)

And so, being the ‘Law-Lover’ that he was, the psalmist adds ...

vs. 47 ... “*I delight in your commands because I LOVE them.*”

True Love always turns into ‘Delight’ ... a surge of emotion at the very thought of the ‘*loved one*’ or the ‘*loved thing*’ making an appearance.

That’s Part One of our Identity as born-again, duly processed ‘*Citizens of God’s Kingdom*’ ...

WE ARE LAW-LOVERS!

Here’s Part Two of our ‘World-Challenging Identity ...

2. WE ARE LAW-EMBRACERS AS CITIZENS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Not only has our mind been impressed and our heart stirred and our taste buds tantalized by the wondrous Law of God but our will has been activated.

Hear how the Psalmist puts it ...

He has made a key life-determining decision.

vs. 30 ... *"I have **CHOSEN** the way of truth; I have **SET** my heart on your laws."*

Now that's the process many of us have been in over these past few months as we have carefully examined the '*Teachings of Jesus*' – His fuller disclosure of this wondrous Law of God.

Jesus said, '*Enter through the Narrow Gate*' and we have chosen to do so - to put our feet on the path that lies beyond that Gate.

We have chosen to '*embrace*' this '*Kingdom Lifestyle*' and to '*identify ourselves*' with it regardless of the contrary '*lifestyles*' of those around us.

We have heard the voice of the Spirit urging us onward
and we have heeded it.

Now the Psalmist (not having that inner Presence of the Spirit to both urge and enable him) sought to strengthen his resolve by certain external means.

Here's his testimony of intention ...

vs. 106 ... *"I have taken an **OATH** ... that I will **FOLLOW** your righteous laws."*

Remember how Jesus pointed out the dangers of '*Oath-Taking*'?

The Citizen of the Kingdom today knows that a simple 'Yes' or 'No' is all that is necessary for Born-Again Children of God to communicate their intentions.

So ... We not only are **LAW-LOVERS** – those who '*delight*' in the Law of God but we are **LAW-EMBRACERS** ...

We are those who have activated their wills and who have resolved that this is the Life that we will, in fact, live.

We identify ourselves as those who have whole-heartedly **EMBRACED** the **TRUE LAW OF GOD** and see it as the '*only way to live*'.

Now there is but one more part of our '**KINGDOM IDENTITY**' to consider:

3. WE ARE LAW-KEEPERS AS CITIZENS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Beyond '*Appreciation and Delight*' and beyond '*Recognition and Resolve*' come actual '*Patterns of Behavior*' ...

Remember Jesus said ...

“He who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice ...”

This is, of course, where the ‘rubber meets the road’ – this is where the ‘Life Challenges’ appear – this is where the ‘Watching World’ starts to take notice.

Behavior Patterns are the only thing that man can see – Behavior Patterns make more of an impact than Preaching. “Putting the Words of Christ (The Law of God) into practice” – Showing ourselves to be genuine ‘Law-Keepers’ is the ultimate object of this entire endeavor.

Notice how the Psalmist built his identity (and his motivation) as a 'Law-Keeper' upon his identity as a 'Law-Lover' and as a 'Law-Embracer' ...

vs. 14 “*I rejoice in FOLLOWING your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.*”

Did he somehow anticipate and appreciate the truth of what Jesus would say that afternoon on the hillside ... “*Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal*”?

The Psalmist somehow ‘*made the connection*’ – true riches are found in ‘*walking in the ways of God*’, in ‘*keeping His Law*’ and thus such obedience should bring genuine delight.

vs. 167 “*I OBEY your statutes for I love them greatly.*”

Truth is ... the Psalmist could say, “*I can’t help myself*” ... Obedience to the Law of God flows directly out of my Love for the Law of God. Because I am a ‘*Law-Lover*’ and a ‘Law-Embracer’ I pretty much automatically become a ‘Law-Keeper’.

May the same be true of us who have been exposed to the fuller understanding of the very Law that he so passionately embraced!

Final Thot ...

Those who ALLOW God’s Law to IDENTIFY them will never suffer from an IDENTITY CRISIS. They KNOW who they are!

“DELIGHTING IN OUR LAW-GIVEN LIBERTY”

“Six Wondrous Things – Six Wondrous Discoveries”

(Psalm 119)

Intro ... *“Delighting In God’s Law”* – that’s the Title of our current set of discussions based upon **Psalm 119**.

And let me say, as we begin this discussion on this Father’s Day, that there is nothing a Father can do or be that will benefit his family more than that he be a man who does, in fact, *“Delight In The Law of God”* – that he be a man whose eyes are ever open to ‘seeing’ more and more of the *‘Wondrous Things’* hidden within it.

That was the desire of the Psalmist himself as he penned these words that we have taken as our ...

SERIES THEME VERSE ...

“Open my EYES that I may see WONDROUS things in your LAW!”

(Psalm 119:18)

“Wondrous Things” ... hidden away in the Law of God – wondrous things revealed to us in this magnificent Psalm. Last week we uncovered ...

WONDROUS THING #1 ...

*“In God’s Law we can discover a Wondrous,
WORLD-CHALLENGING IDENTITY.”*

We are LAW-LOVING, LAW-EMBRACING, LAW-KEEPING Citizens of God’s Kingdom!

Did any of you this week try that on for size?

Did you at any point during the week actually say to yourself or run through your mind the thought ...

“I am a law-loving, law-embracing, law-keeping Citizen of God’s Kingdom”?

It’s a powerful, stimulating thought and definitely creates for us a

‘WORLD-CHALLENGING IDENTITY’!

Today we come to ...

WONDROUS THING #2 ...

*"In God's Law we can discover a Wondrous, **BONDAGE – BREAKING LIBERTY.**"*

Here's ...

TODAY'S KEY VERSE ...

*"I will **WALK** about in **FREEDOM** for I have sought out your **PRECEPTS.**"*
(Psalm 119:45)

The old King James Version of the Bible says ...

"I will walk at liberty for I seek your precepts."

The New Living Translation says ...

"I will walk in freedom for I have devoted myself to your commandments."

This is a man who (to use Jesus' Sermon on the Mount) has '*heard my words and put them into practice*' ... Great blessings come to such a man.

Today we declare that any born-again man who '*hears and obeys the Law of God*' – any born-again man who '*puts into practice the teachings of Christ*' – any born-again man who will bring his life into compliance with the Will and the Ways of God - will in fact discover ...

'A BONDAGE-BREAKING LIBERTY'.

Such a man will live ...

*** FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF FLESHLY DOMINATION ...**

*"Direct my footsteps according to Your **WORD**, let no sin **RULE** over me."*

*"I have **HIDDEN** your word in my heart that I might not **SIN** against thee."*
(Psalm 119:133 – Psalm 119:11)

Man's Fallen Nature (the flesh) and the Law of God are polar opposites.
Like the similarly-charged ends of a magnet they just naturally repel one another.
The Flesh says 'yes' whenever the Law says 'No'.

The flesh says '*Indulge Yourself*' while the Law says '*Control Yourself*'.
The flesh promotes '*Independence*' while the Law promotes '*Submission*'.
The flesh seeks to '*Dominate*' while the Law seeks to '*Liberate*'.
The best way to gain freedom from the flesh is by consciously submitting yourself to the '*Teachings of Christ*' – to the '*Will and the Ways of God*'.

Centuries later, the Apostle Paul would confidently declare to those who had committed themselves to Christ ...

"Sin shall no longer be your master." - Romans 6:14

Paul goes on to explain ...

'Sin is no longer your master because righteousness has become your master.'

And as Jesus himself said in the Sermon on the Mount ... *'No man can serve two masters'* – it's going to be one or the other that really controls our lives.

The Psalmist expressed it this way in Psalm 119:32 ...

"I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free."

Oh, how great it is to be **Free from the Bondage of Fleshly Domination!**

But there's more ... The man who commits himself to living according To the Will and the Ways of God – The Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping man will live ...

**** FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF ENDLESS INVENTION ...***

*"Your Word is a **LAMP** to my feet and a **LIGHT** for my path."
(Psalm 119:105)*

How freeing it is to not have to be continually *'making it up* (inventing it) *as we go along'*... to not always feel the pressure of the responsibility to *'figure it out'* in every situation of life.

'Cause the truth is ... you can give it your best thought; you can even faithfully ask yourself in every situation *'What would Jesus do?'* and try to imagine you had such insight at your disposal; you can *'figure it to the best of your ability'* and come to the same point of exasperation that Buddy Hackett reached in that hilarious scene from the movie *"It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World"* when he said ...

*"We have figured it and we have figured it and every way
we have figured it somebody didn't like the way we figured it,
so I say it's every man (or woman) for himself!"*

Sometimes it's we ourselves who don't like the way we *'figured it'* – we have no real confidence in the *'solution'* we came up with and we wind up just *'trudging along in the dim glow produced by our own inventions'*.

How refreshing (and liberating) it is to realize that God has *'figured most things out'* for us in advance.

The question that my mother implanted in my head from an early age as the most relevant and helpful one was simply this ...

“Mark, what does the Bible say?”

Open the Book ... See first what God has said ... You might be surprised to discover that He has already expressed His Will on the subject.

Why re-invent the wheel ... especially when you are such an inferior wheelwright compared to the Master Himself!

Can't you just sense the Psalmist's joy and the relief and his sense of liberation from the 'Bondage of Endless Invention' when he exclaims ...

*“Your Word is a Lamp (a 1000 watt bulb) to my feet and
a Light (a blazing beacon) for my path.”*

Liberty ... Freedom from the Bondage of Fleshly Domination ...

Liberty ... Freedom from the Bondage of Endless Invention ...

Here's yet another thing ... The man who commits himself to living according To the Will and the Ways of God – The Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping man will live ...

*** FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF HUMAN DECEPTION ...**

*“The WICKED have set a SNARE for me ...”
(Psalm 119:110)*

Do you sense the presence of the wicked - the ungodly – in your world? Have you discovered that they are busy *'setting snares'* (though today it would be more relevant to say *'planting roadside explosive devices'*) to do you in?

Indeed there are those in the world who would love to see you fall – particularly if they know that you have taken a *'stand for Christ'* and are seeking to *'live your life in accordance with His Teachings'*.

In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount itself Jesus told us to anticipate such people ...
“Enemies” – “Persecutors” even He called them.

These are those who have correctly identified you as a *“Law-Lover”* and a *‘Law-Embracer’* and a *‘Law-Keeper’* ... Your lifestyle irritates them even as it most likely shames them.

They would love to see you fall! They will seek to *'mess you up'* – to *'muddle your mind'* – to *'de-rail your resolve'*.

They can be found in the school house and in the state house; they can be found sometimes even in our own house.

They need to be *'Recognized'* and their efforts *'Resisted'*. They are the sworn enemies of the *'Cause of Christ'*.

However in a broader sense, the *'wicked'* in the context of this discussion this morning are actually all those who *'resist the will and ways of God'* and who are in fact still living in that *'bondage to fleshly domination'* or under the *'pressure of endless invention'*.

Some of them might even be our fellow-believers; some might be mis-guided teachers – those who have followed their own human inventions right into false conclusions and thus false doctrine.

Our adherence to the *'Word of God'* – our commitment to live according to the expressed Will and Ways of God will free us from the Bondage of Such Human Deception.

Sense the confidence in the Psalmist regarding freedom from such human deception as he wrote these words ...

*"The unfolding of your word gives ... **UNDERSTANDING** to the **SIMPLE**."*
(Psalm 119:130)

And these ...

*"I have more **INSIGHT** than all my **TEACHERS**."*
(Psalm 119:99)

Such an awareness of the sufficiency of God's Word is not intended to *'make us cocky'* for there will always to *'more to see in God's Wondrous Law'* but that awareness of the sufficiency of God's Word is intended to make us wonderfully *'confident'* as we build our lives upon it.

And now for the *'Final Thing'* this morning ...

The man who commits himself to living according to the Will and the Ways of God – The Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping man will live ...

*** FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF EARTHLY FRUSTRATION ...**

*"Great **PEACE** have they who love your **LAW** ..."*
(Psalm 119:165)

Here's the rest of that verse ...

*"Great peace have they who love your Law and
nothing can make them stumble"*

Perhaps this is the most wondrous thing of all ... to live with a heart at peace – with steps that are steady. Their feet have been surely set upon the well-lit path and the way is clear before them.

Years after the Psalmist penned those words the Prophet Isaiah would pen these ...

*"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast,
because he trusts in You."
(Isaiah 26:3)*

And then he adds these ...

*"The path of the righteous is level; O upright One,
You make the way of the righteous smooth."
(Isaiah 26:7)*

Those who trust in the Lord – those who recognize the value and the wonder hidden away in God's Law – find themselves freed from earthly frustration.

They have a quiet confidence that God is in control and that the truth of His Word will prevail and that His Will will eventually come to pass.

And so they can say along with Isaiah ...

*"Yes Lord, walking in the way of your laws,
we wait (confidently and thus peacefully) for you."*

Thus we come to our **Final Thot** which I trust by now is a no-brainer ...

Final Thot ...

We are never so **FREE** as when we are securely
BOUND by the **DICTATES** of God's **LAW**.

“DELIGHTING IN A LAW-GIVEN PURITY”

“Six Wondrous Things – Six Wondrous Discoveries”

(Psalm 119)

Intro ... Once again I would ask you to open your Bibles to Psalm 119 and I would draw your attention to the 18th verse – Our Series Theme Verse.

SERIES THEME VERSE ... Psalm 119:18

“Open my EYES that I may see WONDROUS things in your LAW!”

That’s what Jesus was doing that long afternoon on the mountainside in his now famous ‘Sermon on the Mount’ – ‘Opening the people’s eyes wider and wider regarding the Will and the Ways of God’ ... Explaining in greater detail than any teacher before him just what the Law of God was all about ...

*“Think not”, he said, “that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets,
I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

And he could have added ...

*“For properly understood they reveal the very heart and mind of God
Himself – to understand them is to gain great understanding of Him.”*

That was the plea of the Ancient Psalmist some 900 years before Jesus appeared in the flesh.

The amazing thing is that by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Psalmist’s plea was wonderfully answered ... His eyes were opened; His heart was energized and His pen faithfully and accurately recorded all those wondrous things the Spirit of God enabled him to see.

Six wondrous things we are uncovering this summer in the great Psalm that he wrote ... Six things that mean even more to us (who have heard the words Jesus spoke on the Mountainside) than they did to him.

WONDROUS THING #1 ...

*“In God’s Law we can discover a Wondrous,
WORLD-CHALLENGING IDENTITY.”*

*We are LAW-LOVING, LAW-EMBRACING, LAW-KEEPING
Citizens of God’s Kingdom!*

Just last week we identified ...

WONDROUS THING #2 ...

*"In God's Law we can discover a Wondrous,
BONDAGE – BREAKING LIBERTY."*

And now today is unveiled ...

WONDROUS THING #3 ...

*"In God's Law we can discover a Wondrous,
SIN-DEFEATING PURITY."*

Today's Key Verse poses the question that many a determined but probably frustrated Christian has raised ...

TODAY'S KEY VERSE POSES TODAY'S KEY QUESTION ...

*"How can a young man (any person-any Citizen of the Kingdom) **KEEP** his way **PURE?**"*
(Psalm 119:9)

Every true Child of God – every genuine follower of Jesus Christ – every born-again believer – every brand new Christian - every Prodigal who is returning from a period of riotous living - will find that question right on the tip of their tongue – right in the forefront of their mind.

How can I keep my life pure and thus pleasing to the One who saved me?

THREE KEY DEFINITIONS help us come to grips with this vital question:

"PURITY" – Free from any **CONTAMINATION** or **CORRUPTION**

Now that 'definition' simply creates the need for two more.

"CONTAMINATION" – Things that **POLLUTE**

'Things that don't belong – that interfere with the intended outcome'

Could be characterized by the phrase ...

*"There's a **BUG** in my **SOUP**"*

The soup might be good - might have been made perfectly - but the 'bug' definitely interferes with the intended outcome.

Our lives as Christians can get seriously contaminated by 'stuff that doesn't belong' ...

* stuff like '**self-absorption**' that makes others and their needs or life circumstances 'invisible' to us – a kind of '**contamination of heart**'.

* stuff like 'rationalization' that gives me permission to do things that I would not find acceptable for others to do - a kind of 'contamination of mind'.

* How about stuff like 'self-actualization' that inspires me to '*blaze my own trail*' unencumbered by any authoritative standard – a kind of 'contamination of will'.

These '*contaminants*' definitely affect the '*purity of the soup*' – they enter into the mix and drastically change the outcome.

The watching world (to say nothing of our watching Lord) finds such lives to be a whole lot less attractive than advertised.

"Take it back" they would say 'I don't want anything to do with it'.

Now here's the other thing ...

"CORRUPTION" – Things that **PERVERT**
'Things that fundamentally alter the essence of something'

Could be characterized by the phrase ...

*"There's **POISON** in my **SOUP**"*

Obviously this is a far more serious situation than 'mere' contamination for though '*contamination*' can distress someone – '*corruption*' can kill them.

And while they can 'see' the '*contamination*' and know that something isn't right, they usually can't 'see' the poison (unless it's foaming). It's usually the '*medical examiner*' who is given that opportunity!

'Corruption' can kill ... '*Corruption*' can so distort our lives that we actually never get back on track. '*Corruption*' fundamentally changes the essence of the thing. '*Corruption*' produces its own perverted version of the thing.

And there's certainly '*corruption*' in our world today ... there's '*corruption*' in Christendom today. There are perverted versions of the Christian Faith that are deadly and damning to all who '*drink of them*' – there is, (to use our expression of the day) '*poison in the soup*'!

And the tragic thing is ... Some people are dead and don't even know it.

A Christianity that promotes things that violate the Word of God is a perverted, poisonous form of the '*faith once delivered to the saints*'.

A Christianity that accommodates things like 'gay marriage' and 'the slaughter of the unborn' and 'casual divorce' and 'evolutionary methodology' and 'human philosophy' - a Christianity that denies the sufficiency of the Word of God to guide Christ's Church and either takes away from it or adds to it is a 'Poisoned Version' of our wondrous faith.

These things are deadly and (as I said before) very likely damning.

And so we ask perhaps even more urgently than before ...

"How can we keep our lives pure – that is, free from contamination or corruption?"

TODAY'S KEY VERSE PROVIDES TODAY'S KEY ANSWER ...

By **LIVING** according to your **WORD!**

(Psalm 119:9)

THREE GREAT ACTIONS OF THE WORD OF GOD IN OUR LIVES ...

These reveal the '*wondrous thing*' that the Psalmist discovered!

*** *God's Word PROMOTES Purity***

"Blessed are they ... who walk according to the Law of the Lord.

They do nothing wrong; they walk in His Ways."

(Psalm 119:1-3)

God's Word is filled with behavioral instructions.

As we pointed out last week, God's Word delivers us from the '*Bondage of Endless Invention*'. We don't have to '*make it up as we go*'. We merely need to ask ... '*What does the Bible say?*'

You will never go wrong following the dictates – the directions – of God's Word. God's Word is the Roadmap for the Journey that begins at the Narrow Gate. God's Word will direct our path all the way from that Narrow Gate to Heaven's Gate. No mis-steps need to be taken.

Those who read and follow God's Word live much more '*pure*' –uncontaminated and uncorrupted – lives than those who don't. God's Word promotes and motivates such purity in living.

True Citizens of the Kingdom live pure lives because they want to – they find their hearts and minds and will energized in that direction by the clear teachings of God's Word.

For any of you who are just starting to understand the full scope of God's Word regarding human behavior – for any of you who find the immensity of the book to be a bit daunting – I would recommend that you go to our church website and download a copy of our *Sonlife Community Church Covenant* – it's an excellent compilation of Biblical Teaching regarding our earthly living. It's the Covenant of Behavior that we agree to follow each year on our Membership Commitment Sunday.

Now here's another thing that the Word of God will do for us as we seek to 'keep our way pure' ...

*** God's Word Makes Sin REPULSIVE**

"Because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path."
Psalm 119:128

"I hate and abhor falsehood but I love your Law."
Psalm 119:163

The first thing that the Word of God does for us is that it '*Makes every wrong path recognizable to us*'.

As the Apostle Paul said to the Roman Believers ... (Romans 7:7)

"I would not have known what sin was except through the Law."

God's Word holds up and promotes the '*Pure Life*' – the '*Right Life*' – the '*God-Pleasing Life*' and the more we become aware of the nature of that life, the more ugly and undesirable the '*Contaminated* or *Corrupted*' Life appears.

Imagine yourself standing in the grocery store at the fruit counter picking peaches ...

You hold up a few that are flawless.

They are fuzzy and properly colored and smell like you just plucked them from the tree. You put them in your basket.

And then you hold up one that your fingers actually sink into because it is so soft ... It has bruises all over it, is obviously far past ripe and when you picked it up it left a small puddle of some kind of slime behind.

You are disgusted and actually look for a trash bin to throw it into.

The psalmist says that because we *'consider all God's precepts to be right we hate every wrong path'* – He actually upped the intensity a bit when he added *'I hate and abhor falsehood'*. As did he so should we.

Such *'wrong paths'* – any such *'falsehoods'* become *'repulsive'* to those who consider God's precepts to be correct and even more so to those who have come to *'love'* – to *'delight'* in those precepts.

No way would we want to put any of that false stuff *'in our basket'*!

Now if that isn't enough to explain how it is that the Word of God can keep a man's way pure, here's one more...

*** God's Word GENERATES Godly GRIEF over Sin.**

"Streams of tears flow from my eyes for your Law is not obeyed."
(Psalm 119:136)

Beyond being *'Disgusted'* – *'Repulsed'* - by the sinful behaviors rampant in the world, the true Child of God finds himself *'Distressed'* by those very behaviors.

How far mankind has fallen from the Creator's Original Intention!
How God must grieve over such a situation.
How can those who love him and His Laws not do the same?

And how could those who *'love Him'* ever allow themselves to *'add to His Grief'* or to that of the Holy Spirit within them?

They simply cannot, for their heart is too attuned to His for them to knowingly do it harm. Their *'grief over sin'* helps keep them from committing any such blatant sin.

And so I offer for our consideration today's ...

Final Thot ...

**LOVING God's Word and LIVING an Impure Life – INCONCEIVABLE!
May it be so for each of us who bear His Name!**

“DELIGHTING IN OUR LAW-GIVEN AUTHORITY”

“Six Wondrous Things – Six Wondrous Discoveries”

(Psalm 119)

Intro ...

If you were contemplating surgery and the Doctor said that you would have a one percent **(.01)** chance of survival (that only 1 out of 100 patients survive such a surgery), would you go through with it? What if he said that there was only a tenth of one percent chance **(.001)** meaning that only 1 out of 1000 patients survive?

Of course, your answer would be no ... most of us would think long and hard about a surgical procedure where the chance of survival was even as low as 50/50.

Who would want to ‘*bet his life*’ on such slim odds? Who indeed?

What if I told you that the view of life that you hold and that you rely upon as your interpretive principle for life had only a tenth of one percent chance of being true? Would you continue to hold it? Would it make sense to do so?

Now there is a view of life called ‘***evolutionary theory***’ that is held by vast numbers of educated and uneducated people alike.

‘*Evolutionary theory*’ (and the atheistic philosophy behind it) seeks to explain the existence of all living things.

‘*Evolutionary theory*’ (and the atheistic philosophy that underlies it) also seeks to explain the fact that this earth is uniquely suited to sustain the existence of all the living things on it and the fact that our solar system is also uniquely suited to support the needs of this planet as well as the fact that the entire universe seems uniquely suited to support the over-all needs of our solar system and thus our existence within it.

To put it in ‘*laymen’s terms*’ we live in a ‘*Goldilocks’ Universe*’ – a place where every conceivable thing necessary for life – is ‘*just right*’ – not too hot and not too cold; not too hard and not too soft.

‘*Evolutionary theory*’ employs ‘*random chance*’ and some form or another of ‘*spontaneous generation*’ and billions of ‘*haphazard mutations of DNA*’ (placed within an almost unlimited time frame) as the mechanisms whereby all things currently in existence have come into existence. There are many who believe whole-heartedly in the “*Evolutionary Explanation*”. They, of course, believe that it is a most scientifically correct thing to do.

Dennis Prager ... (a nationally syndicated radio talk show host whose editorial articles are regularly found in The Daily Press) ... reported in his column this past Tuesday on a startling conclusion reached by an eclectic group of scientists who gathered the week before in Nice, France – a meeting he actually attended.

These scientists ran the gamut from physicists to biologists to mathematicians – from theists to atheists. They included professors from Yale, Harvard, Berkeley, Columbia, MIT, and the University of Chicago. They gathered to compare notes on the nature of the universe and on the likelihood of it arising by *‘fortuitous chance’*.

At the culmination of their time together they concluded that the likelihood of this world (that is so marvelously and intricately structured to support life – particularly intelligent life) coming into being by random occurrence is one in a number too big to have a name – the decimal representation of that number would look like this ...

[illegible]

'Random Chance' as a believable mechanism (they would say) has been absolutely destroyed by the facts of the case. There is just no way that the precise environment needed to sustain our kind of life came into being without help – without some kind of pre-set design and thus some kind of pre-existent designer. Thus says today's 'best science'.

Now, of course, that's exactly what the Bible declares to be the case.

*"In the Beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."
(Genesis 1:1)*

And the more carefully the scientists examine and the more fully they come to understand the various mechanisms that hold the almost infinite expanse of things together, the more in awe they are of the design that they have uncovered and the Designer whose fingerprints are all over it.

And, of course, the Bible declares that to be the case as well ...

"The heavens declare the Glory of God – the skies proclaim the work of His Hands!"
(Psalm 19:1)

That there is a 'Master Designer' and that we are 'Enjoying the benefits of His Design' can now be said with 'Scientific Certainty'.

In that respect we can applaud science for having finally '*gotten its act together*' – for having finally declared to be true what the Bible has declared to be true all along.

However, science cannot discover the purposes **behind** the Master Designer's Work – science can only discover and declare the fact **of** that work.

To delve any further into the matter than Science can take us will require some form of communication from the Master Designer Himself –

“What kind of being is He; what are His Purposes in bringing such a universe into being; why go to such lengths to provide the precise environment in which life – human life – can exist?”

Answering those questions requires ‘Revelation’ ...

The Master Designer must either choose to ‘*reveal*’ such information or we the ‘*Products of His Design*’ will just have to live out our lives on this perfectly prepared earth in this precisely formed universe in a continual state of ignorant blessing and (hopefully) gratitude.

We will enjoy the **benefits** of the ‘*Design*’ but we will never know *why* we are in fact the beneficiaries of them.

It's like receiving a vast inheritance from a man whom you have never met or even heard of. You would definitely appreciate the deposit in your bank account but your mind would be spinning with nearly endless questions.

Who ***is*** this benefactor of yours? Why did he choose ***you***? How does he even know ***of*** you? Did he have any expectations of how you might use his generous gift? Does he, by the very fact of his gift, anticipate that you will seek out information about him?

Does he anticipate that you might in some way use His great gift to ***emulate*** him – to bring such an unexpected blessing to someone of your ***own*** choosing when the time is right?

Unless he included an information letter with the gift, you will never know the answers to any of those questions.

However, that's exactly what the Bible declares has been done ...

“The Master Designer ***has*** spoken; He has sent along ***with*** His Gift of Physical Life in a Perfectly and Precisely Designed Universe a ‘*Letter of Instructions*’ ...

A letter expressing His **Intentions** and His **Expectations** and His **Observations** and His **Evaluations** and His **Provisions** for the human beings that He formed and placed in the midst of this Awesome Place.”

It is a letter originally written in stone – It's a letter now preserved in print. It's a letter intended to be read and cherished, to be reflected upon and followed. It contains the very Words of the Master Designer Himself.

The Psalmist in ***Psalms 119*** extolled the virtues of this “**Letter from God**” – this set of instructions from the Creator Himself.

The Psalmist continually sought for more in-depth understanding of that
“*Set of Instructions*” ...

Our theme verse for this very set of messages (Psalm 119:18) expresses that
heart-felt search ...

SERIES THEME VERSE ... Psalm 119:18

“Open my EYES that I may see WONDROUS things in your LAW!”

(That I might have insight into the WILL and the WAYS of God!)

So far we have discovered in the Law of God (specifically Psalm 119) ...

“A World-Challenging Identity” - (Wondrous Thing #1)

(We are ‘Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizens of God’s Kingdom’.)

“A Bondage-Breaking Liberty” - (Wondrous Thing #2)

(We are free from the Bondage to ‘*Fleshly Domination*’ – The Bondage to ‘*Endless Invention*’ –
The Bondage to ‘*Human Deception*’ – The Bondage to ‘*Earthly Frustration*’)

“A Sin-Destroying Purity” - (Wondrous Thing #3)

(God’s Word Promotes Purity; God’s Word Makes Sin Repulsive;
God’s Word Generates Godly Grief Over Sin)

Today I would add ...

“Wondrous Thing #4” ...

“In the Law of God we discover a Wondrous Time-Defying AUTHORITY!”

Today’s Key Verse identifies that ‘*time-defying*’ quality ...

TODAY’S KEY VERSE ...

“Your Word is ETERNAL it stands FIRM in the Heavens!”

(Psalm 119:89)

God’s Word is not subject to any evolutionary process – God’s Word does not
‘*Change with the Times*’ – God’s Word does not ‘*Fall out of Date*’ or
become ‘*Irrelevant*’.

‘God’s Word stands firm in the heavens’ – the very heavens that have declared
His Glory longer than men have been around to notice.

What does that mean to you and me?

FOUR INCREDIBLE MEANINGS I find arising from the Psalmist's Declaration ...

**1. IT MEANS THAT YOU AND I ARE LINKED TO
SOMETHING ETERNAL!**

(Psalm 119:89-90, 142, 152)

Feel the impact of these powerful statements:

*"Your Word, O Lord, is **ETERNAL**; it stands firm in the heavens ...
You established the earth, and it **ENDURES**."*
(Psalm 119:89-90)

*"Your Righteousness is **EVERLASTING** and your law is true."*
(Psalm 119:142)

*'Long ago I learned from your statutes that you
established them to **LAST FOREVER**.'*
(Psalm 119:152)

Our God is not a God of the 'short-run' – Not a God of the 'quick fix' – Not a God of the 'knee-jerk reaction' - Not a God whose view of things changes 'day to day'.

God placed the operating principles for every living (and non-living) system in place long before any of them came into being.

They are unchanging – His Hand upon them is steady and they will remain as long as He chooses for them to remain. Time does not alter them.

You and I (through our faith in Jesus Christ) have been born into a family that has been around for a very long time. Its values and viewpoints are from eternity past.

This Thursday my family and I will get on a plane that will take us to London, England ... for three days we will walk in places that by human standards are ancient. We will see buildings that were old long before any 'permanent' structures were erected in this land. I have no doubt that I will be impressed – every moss-covered wall will have its story to tell whether I hear it or not.

While we are there it's possible that a new heir to the Throne of England might be born and with that birth will be continued a line of leadership that has continued unbroken for over 1000 years.

For a few days, we will be linked to something 'quite old' – something that has placed its mark on the entire history of western civilization. I'm looking forward to the experience.

But compared to the 'Kingdom of God' ... The 'English Commonwealth' is but a most recent arrival on the scene and the citizens of that 'Commonwealth' are linked to something that will someday fall.

You and I as Citizens of God's Kingdom are linked to something that is **Eternal** ...
Our Magna Charta – our King's Pronouncements - stands '*Firm*' and '*Unchallenged*' in the Heavens.

Don't allow the ever-changing circumstances of life to cause you to become short-sighted and time-bound. You are linked to the '**ETERNAL**'.

Here's another meaning that I draw from the Psalmist Declaration ...

**2. IT MEANS THAT YOU AND I ARE LINKED TO
SOMETHING AUTHORITATIVE!**

(Psalm 119:4; 37; 91)

Consider the impact and the importance of these divinely inspired words ...

*'You have laid down precepts that are to be fully **OBEYED**.'*

(Psalm 119:4)

*'Turn my eyes from **WORTHLESS** (lesser) things.'*

(Psalm 119:37)

*'Your laws endure to this day for all things **SERVE** you.'*

(Psalm 119:91)

Oh! How I would hate to be a Supreme Court Judge in this day and age!

The Supreme Court Judge has sworn an oath to defend and to properly interpret one of those "*Lesser*" and sometimes seemingly '*worthless things*' namely the '*Constitution of the United States*'.

Our Constitution upholds the '*Will of the People*' as the highest authority in the land – not the '*Will of God*'.

Now as long as the people are themselves submitted to the '*Will of God*' then everything works out fine; but if the '*Peoples' Will*' turns from God then we have legal rulings like we had this past week and there's really not much that the Justices can do about it.

However, our '*Constitution not withstanding*' God has laid down precepts (as the psalmist points out) that He intends to be '*fully obeyed*'. God's Laws endure to this day because '*All things*' (whether they know it or not) '*Serve Him*' – that is, are under His Jurisdiction – Under His Authority. And God has never '*Set Mankind Free*' from that '*Authority*'.

Through our faith in Jesus Christ we are linked to that **UNYIELDED AUTHORITY** –
Don't allow human opinion to confuse or sway you!

Here's yet another meaning that can be drawn from **Today's Key Declaration ...**

**3. IT MEANS THAT YOU AND I ARE LINKED TO
SOMETHING AWE-INSPIRING!**

(Psalm 119:120; 140; 175)

Listen to the Psalmist ... Sense the wonder in his heart ...

'I stand in AWE of your Laws' - Psalm 119:120

'Your PROMISES have been thoroughly TESTED' - Psalm 119:140

'Let me live ... and may your laws SUSTAIN me.' - Psalm 119:175

Without the assistance of scientific discovery, the Psalmist understood that his very life was sustained by the guidelines for life laid down by and maintained by and interjected into everything by his Creator.

Physical laws – **Moral** Laws – **Societal** Laws – **Spiritual** Laws ...

They are all part of one big package put together by the Master Designer Himself. They have proven themselves to be sound time and time again. Whenever they are discovered they produce awe and wonder and they provide a '*fullness of life*' that expresses the Creator's Ultimate Desire for His Creation.

One final meaning that can be drawn from the Psalmist's Declaration that '*God's Word is Eternal*' and that it '*Stands firm in the Heavens*'.

Hopefully you have already drawn it yourself ...

**4. IT MEANS THAT YOU AND I WOULD BE FOOLS TO
EXCHANGE WHAT WE HAVE FOR ANYTHING ELSE!**

"He who HEARS these words of mine and does not PUT them into PRACTICE is like a foolish man who built his house on SAND." - Matthew 7:26

That was Jesus' concluding comment on the subject. He brought God's Law into human form – He revealed God's Law in its finest form.

Only a fool would ignore what he had to say for as our **Final Thot** puts it ...

Final Thot ... **ETERNAL** vs. **TEMPORAL** ... Should be a **NO-BRAINER!**

“DELIGHTING IN OUR LAW-GIVEN STABILITY”

“Six Wondrous Things – Six Wondrous Discoveries”

(Psalm 119)

Intro ... When I arrived home this past Tuesday, after traversing nine time zones in the course of some 36 hours, and as I started to shift my mind back into ‘*Sonlife Gear*’, I experienced a little bit of difficulty coming up with the answer to the question ...

“What exactly am I currently preaching?”

Now if it took my mind (the preacher) a little bit of time to establish the answer to that question, I imagine that you (the listeners), whose lives have traversed at least nine changes of circumstances since that last message a long three weeks ago, would be equally challenged to answer that question.

So both for you and for me let’s begin today with a bit of a review.

We are currently engaged in a rather comprehensive examination of Psalm 119 and we are looking at this psalm because we have just emerged from a nearly year-long immersion in the ‘*Sermon on the Mount*’ – the most comprehensive set of Christ’s teachings ever assembled.

Perhaps the pivotal verse in the entire Sermon on the Mount is this one ...

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets;
I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

(Matthew 5:17)

After listening to Jesus explain what the ‘*Fulfilled Law*’ looks like, we concluded that the life of a ‘*Genuine Born-Again Law-Keeper*’ is the very best life to live. It is indeed the ‘*Abundant Life*’ that Jesus came to give and that he demonstrated throughout his earthly life.

In fact, Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount by declaring that those who would ‘*put His Teachings into practice*’ would experience not only an abundant life but a life that would be virtually indestructible!

Without a doubt there is more to see in the ‘*Law of God*’ than most of us American Christians have up to this point seen ...

We found a verse in Psalm 119 that expressed the yearning of our hearts – a verse that we chose as the **Theme Verse** for this current series of messages ...

SERIES THEME VERSE ... Psalm 119:18

*“Open my EYES that I may see WONDROUS things in your LAW!”
That I might have insight into the WILL and the WAYS of God!*

We decided to restrict ourselves to **Psalm 119** – the longest and most comprehensive Tribute to the Wondrous Law of God found anywhere in the Scripture ...

So far in this awesome Psalm we have discovered for ourselves and for every born-again Child of God ...

“A World-Challenging IDENTITY” - (Wondrous Thing #1)

(We are 'Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizens of God's Kingdom'.)

“A Bondage-Breaking LIBERTY” - (Wondrous Thing #2)

(We are free from the Bondage to 'Fleshly Domination' – The Bondage to 'Endless Invention' – The Bondage to 'Human Deception' – The Bondage to 'Earthly Frustration')

“A Sin-Destroying PURITY” - (Wondrous Thing #3)

(God's Word Promotes Purity; God's Word Makes Sin Repulsive;
God's Word Generates Godly Grief Over Sin)

“A Time-Defying AUTHORITY” – (Wondrous Thing #4)

(Through God's Law we are linked to something Eternal, something Authoritative – something Awe-Inspiring – something we would be most Foolish to Forsake.)

Today we add to our list ...

“Wondrous Thing #5” ...

*“In the Law of God we discover a Wondrous
STUMBLE-PREVENTING STABILITY!”*

That 'Discovery' flows directly out of ...

TODAY'S KEY VERSE ...

*'Great PEACE have they who LOVE Your Law,
Nothing can make them STUMBLE.'*

(Psalm 119:165)

Now as I would seek to unlock this verse and focus on the '*wondrous thing*' that arises from it, let me share with you (by way of introduction) four 'life observations' ...

Life Observation #1 ...

“STABILITY is an amazing and most beneficial life quality.”

***STABLE – fixed, firm, focused – not easily knocked off stride;
resists being manipulated or dominated by external forces.***

Life Observation #2 ...

“STABILITY characterizes our SAVIOR.”

***‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.’
(Hebrews 13:8)***

Life Observation #3 ...

“STABILITY should characterize all those who BELONG to Christ.”

***‘Therefore, my dear brothers, STAND FIRM – Let nothing MOVE you.’
(1 Corinthians 15:58)***

Life Observation #4 ...

“Anything that can provide STABILITY possesses great VALUE.”

And that fourth and final ‘Life Observation’ brings us back to and causes us to realize just how ‘wondrous’ is ‘**Wondrous Thing #5**’ for it tells us that ...

“Wondrous Thing #5” ...

***“In the Law of God we discover a Wondrous
STUMBLE-PREVENTING STABILITY!”***

Once again, I would draw your attention to ...

TODAY’S KEY VERSE ... Psalm 119:165

***‘Great PEACE have they who LOVE Your Law,
Nothing can make them STUMBLE.’***

That verse is talking about you and me ... Remember our ‘**World-Challenging Identity**’?

“We are Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizens of God’s Kingdom!”

Now right here in this Great Psalm we discover a tremendous promise extended to those of us who do indeed '*Love the Law of God*' as defined and demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

Consider and rejoice with me that ...

THOSE WHO TRULY 'LOVE GOD'S LAW' ...

*** WILL NOT STUMBLE In The Face Of OPPOSITION or PERSECUTION**

*'The arrogant mock me without restraint but I will not
turn from your law.'* (Psalm 119:51)

Jesus made it very clear to his disciples that they would indeed experience opposition and/or even persecution in this fallen world ...

Sometimes it would come just because they were living good and righteous lives - '*Persecuted for righteousness' sake*' Jesus called it.

Sometimes such persecution would come simply because they were identified with Jesus Christ and with His Call upon the earth – '*Persecuted for my sake*' he called that).

The point is that (thought these things might come) '*The Law of God*' (the '*Teachings of Christ*') can so captivate us that no opposition or even persecution will be able to '*knock us off stride*' or '*off our feet*'.

The very fact that we do '*Love the Law of God*' reminds us that we have entered through a narrow gate and belong to a rather small fraternity.

Opposition and persecution do not catch us by surprise – we have no illusions regarding the path we have placed our feet upon.

The opposition and or persecution rather serve to strengthen our resolve and make God's Law that much more precious to us.

THOSE WHO TRULY LOVE GOD'S LAW ...

*** WILL NOT STUMBLE In The Midst of AFFLICTION**

*'My comfort in suffering is this: Your Promise preserves my life.
Great peace have those who love your Law ...'*
(Psalm 119:50; Psalm 119:165)

This too shows God's Law immersing itself into a real life situation and having a decisive impact. Suffering/affliction comes to us all ...
Life in a fallen, broken world absolutely guarantees it.

Christians are not immune to the curse that God has put **upon** this world.
Neither are they guaranteed protection from the corrupted people who live **in** this world.
Sickness, natural disasters, the collateral damage wrought by the evil deeds of evil men ...
these afflict both the just and the unjust.

But here's the deal ...

While these disasters push the unbeliever toward despair, these disasters pull the
Citizen of the Kingdom toward the Promises of the King ...

Promises of Sustaining Grace, Promises of Godly Intervention, Promises of an eventual
Home in Heaven. These Promises contained in the Wondrous Law of God (in the
'Teachings of Christ') sustain and stabilize.

Now consider this ...

THOSE WHO TRULY LOVE GOD'S LAW ...

* **WILL NOT STUMBLE** During Times of **TEMPTATION**

'Direct my steps according to your Word; let no sin rule over me.'

'The wicked have set a snare for me but I will not stray from your precepts.'
(Psalm 119:133; Psalm 119:110)

The amazing thing is that the more our eyes are '*Opened to behold the wondrous things
that are in God's Law*' the more they are also '*Open to recognize the 'Ways of the Wicked*'.

These are the very things (as we saw a few weeks ago) that have '*become repulsive*' to
the true Citizen of the Kingdom. He absolutely '*abhors them*'; they are anything but
attractive to him.

His love for the Law of God (the Teachings of Christ) will keep him from stumbling during
times of temptation ... He will find himself more likely '*laughing at the tempter's attempt*'
than '*lured into the tempter's lair*'.

And Satan (just like you and me) '*hates to be laughed at*'.
It's one very effective way to '*resist him*' and cause him to '*flee from you*'.
Try it next time.

Final Thot ...

'STANDING FIRM' is one of the most **GOD-HONORING** things we can do.
Allow God's Wondrous Law to **STABILIZE** you!

“DELIGHTING IN OUR LAW-GIVEN INTEGRITY”

“Six Wondrous Things – Six Wondrous Discoveries”

(Psalm 119)

Intro ...

So here it is. Put on the screen for probably the last time though
I trust embedded on the ‘screen of our minds’ forever.

OUR SERIES THEME VERSE ... Psalm 119:18

*“Open my EYES that I may see WONDROUS things in your LAW!”
That I might have insight into the WILL and the WAYS of God!*

So said the Psalmist long centuries before Jesus Christ came as the literal embodiment of the Law of God, declaring and demonstrating the Wonders of God’s Law to all who would listen to his words and watch his life.

In this singular psalm, (Psalm 119) he reveals at least six of the ‘wondrous things’ that he ‘saw’ as the Heavenly Father flooded his mind in response to this heart-felt prayer.

Six Wondrous Things To Be Found in the Law of God

So far we have discovered five:

“A World-Challenging IDENTITY” - (Wondrous Thing #1)

(We are ‘Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizens of God’s Kingdom’.)

“A Bondage-Breaking LIBERTY” - (Wondrous Thing #2)

(We are free from the Bondage to ‘Fleshly Domination’ – The Bondage to ‘Endless Invention’ – The Bondage to ‘Human Deception’ – The Bondage to ‘Earthly Frustration’)

“A Sin-Destroying PURITY” - (Wondrous Thing #3)

(God’s Word Promotes Purity; God’s Word Makes Sin Repulsive;
God’s Word Generates Godly Grief Over Sin)

“A Time-Defying AUTHORITY” – (Wondrous Thing #4)

(Through God’s Law we are linked to something Eternal, something Authoritative – something Awe-Inspiring – something we would be most Foolish to Forsake.)

“A Stumble-Preventing STABILITY – (Wondrous Thing #5)
(Those who ‘Love God’s Law’ will not stumble either in the face of Opposition/
Persecution or in the midst of Affliction or during times of Temptation.)

Today (as we complete the set) I would draw your attention to ...

“Wondrous Thing #6” ...
***“In the Law of God we discover a Wondrous
GOD - HONORING INTEGRITY!”***

Here’s Webster’s definition ...

‘INTEGRITY’ – The state of being **COMPLETE** or **WHOLE**

It means being ... **“TRUE to the very ESSENCE of the thing.”**

A person who possesses integrity is ...

Not necessarily perfect but absolutely authentic - **‘THE REAL DEAL!’**

Consider with me this morning ...

AN AWESOME OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE ...
‘Job MAINTAINED his INTEGRITY’
(Job 1:8; 2:3; 2:9; 13:15; 27:5)

Check out these verses from this most familiar story and see how the story is really the story of one godly man holding on to his Integrity - continuing to be *‘the real deal’* - even in the face of a tremendous test.

God says to Satan ...

*“Have you considered my servant, Job. There is no one on earth like him;
he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.
(Job 1:8)*

Satan challenges God’s assessment and asks for permission to ‘test Job’ believing that Job is not a man of integrity at all but merely a man who is ‘playing the odds’ that are in his favor. Better to obey God than disobey.

Permission is given – Job’s life is torn completely apart but his faith does not waver.

God points out to Satan ...

*"He still maintains his integrity, though you have incited me
against him to ruin him without reason."
(Job 2:3)*

However, Satan is not convinced ... *'Let me touch his body – Let me bring some real misery to him'* ... Permission is granted – Job's body breaks down – sores appear all over him – He becomes pitiful looking.

His wife said to him ...

*"Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"
(Job 2:9)*

Job says to her (and to the others who challenge him) and ultimately to Satan himself ...

*'Though He slay me, yet will I hope in (trust) Him.'
(Job 13:15)*

And again ...

*"Until I die, I will not deny my integrity ... my conscience will not reproach me."
(Job 27:5)*

Basically Job was saying (to use the vocabulary of this sermon series) ...

*"I am a Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizen of God's Kingdom ... That's my **Identity** –
That's who I am – that's what I have been enabled to be. Nothing is going to change that ...
(To use Jesus' words) *Let the rain come, let the winds blow, let the flood waters rise,
my life is anchored to the Rock of God's Law and I will not be moved.*"*

Now that's the kind of **integrity** that a true understanding of the Law of God (the very Teaching of Christ) can create in us who embrace it.

What an Awesome Old Testament Example!

A man of incredible **Integrity** – without a doubt, Job was ***The Real Deal!***

Consider with me now ...

AN EQUALLY AWESOME NEW TESTAMENT EXPECTATION ...

*'Be **PERFECT** (Telios) as your **HEAVENLY FATHER** is **PERFECT**.'
(Matthew 5:48)*

Or to use the language of today's lesson ...

*'Show yourselves to be Genuine, Authentic, Card-Carrying
Citizens of God's Kingdom – Men and Women of Integrity!*

Jesus saw His Followers – those who would ‘*put those teachings of his into practice*’ – as people who would (in a sense) ‘*out-Job Job*’ ... Job was operating so much in the dark while we ‘walk in such light’ – ***Integrity*** should be the Hallmark of our lives.

Being People of Integrity is exactly what Jesus desires and expects us to be!
Surely being ‘*people of integrity*’ is what we want to be, isn’t it?

So having made that observation, let me introduce ...

TODAY’S COMPOUND CONCEPT...

Faithfully following the **LAWS** of the **KINGDOM** (the teachings of Christ) develops **INTEGRITY** (authenticity and consistency) and those who possesses such **INTEGRITY** are truly **BLESSED!**

There’s that word again – ‘**BLESSED**’. We started our study of the ‘*Sermon On The Mount*’ with it and with it we end our study of ***Psalm 119***.

Notice the types of blessings that come to one who is truly a ‘*Law-Loving, Law- Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizen of God’s Kingdom*’ ... to one whose life exhibits (what we are calling today) **GOD-HONORING INTEGRITY**.

For this message we have saved the first for last.
Consider with me this morning the first seven verses of this fantastic Psalm ...

GOD-HONORING INTEGRITY LEADS TO ...

**** The Blessing of BLAMELESSNESS***

“Blessed are they whose ways are blameless ...”
(Psalm 119:1)

Now keep in mind that blameless doesn’t necessarily mean ‘*sinless*’ or ‘*mistake free*’.

Citizens of God’s Kingdom do mess up from time to time and do sometimes cause other people pain ... the kind of pain that causes those people to ‘*blame us for their difficulty*’.

The person who possesses God-Honoring Integrity though will never allow that situation to remain unaddressed. He or She will seek to rectify the damage and relieve the pain. They will seek to bring God’s healing heart into the situation. They will admit their error and seek forgiveness.

To use a Bill Gothard definition - ***Blamelessness*** means that ...

No one can point a finger at you and say
*'You have **WRONGED** me and have done **NOTHING** to make it right.'*

The Law of God (the Teaching of Christ) does not allow our errors to just '*hang in the air*' ...
We deal with things with that '*Beatituded Heart of ours*' and we come to peace with those we have in any way offended or damaged. We experience the *Blessing of Blamelessness*.

Secondly, the writer of Psalm 119 points out that those who follow after the Laws of God enjoy ...

**** The Blessing of FAULTLESSNESS***
"They do nothing wrong; they walk in His Ways."
(Psalm 119:3)

It's kind of like saying ...

'If you never exceed the speed limit, you will never get a ticket for speeding'.

For those who truly are '*Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping*' Citizens of God's Kingdom (men and women of integrity) there is ...

*'No conscious or willful **DEVIATION** –
When given a choice between doing ***good*** or doing ***evil***, they choose ***good*** every time.'*

O again, I would quickly point out that this does not mean that they are perfectly sinless for we all sin – we all fall short of God's Standards – without even being aware of it but here we are talking about our deliberate actions – the ones we are aware of – the ones we think about before we do.

Our commitment to the Law of God (to the Teachings of Christ) can keep us from doing those kinds of things.

Therefore never do we need fear the Lord pointing a finger at us and saying,

"You have consciously and willfully and deliberately violated one of my commands."

And as a result, we can actually experience the *Blessing of Faultlessness*.

Now without a doubt this next blessing is one that God would have all Citizens of His Kingdom experience.

It's surely one that those who possess '*God-Honoring Integrity*' will experience ...

**** The Blessing of SHAMELESSNES***
"Then I would not be put to shame." (Psalm 119:6)

There is no doubt that there are '*shameful things*' in this world – things that people do that ought never be done. These are the kinds of things that cause a mother or a teacher or any authority figure to say '*Shame on you*' ... the kinds of things that '*blot your record forever*'.

These are things that have no redeeming value – things that generally are perverse and perhaps cruel – disgusting things ... things that usually bring great embarrassment and regret when they are found out.

However, these ...

SHAMEFUL things (gross sins) and the **FEELINGS** of shame that go with them are definitely avoided by those who '*Keep God's Law*'.

The narrow path that proceeds from the narrow gate just does not lead toward these kinds of things. The narrow path leads in the direction of wholesome things.

Thus those who live according to God's Law experience the **Blessing of Shamelessness** – never having to be ashamed of the way they are behaving.

And now just finally ... a ***fourth blessing*** that comes to one who demonstrates '**God-Honoring Integrity**' in his life ...

*** The Blessing of SELFLESSNESS**

*"They seek him with their whole heart ...
I will praise you with an upright heart"
(Psalm 119:2, 7)*

The selfish **FOCUS** that would challenge and test the limits of God's Law does not even come into play – '*Keeping God's Law*' is their way of seeking and praising and pleasing the **ONE** they love.

Here again we return to our essential declaration:

'I am a Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizen of God's Kingdom.'

Those who truly '*Love the Law*' (of course) love the '*Law-Giver*' above all and their love for Him assures their adherence to His Will and His Way!

They simply cannot be moved for they possess a Rock-Solid, ***God-Honoring Integrity!***

Final Thot ...

A person of **INTEGRITY** is both a blessing to **KNOW** and to **BE** ...
May both experiences be **OURS!**

“GRACE IS THE KEY”

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

Intro ...

Two months ago today we began an examination of Psalm 119 – an examination that followed right on the heels of our nearly year-long study of Jesus’ *‘Sermon on the Mount’*.

The thing that caught our attention in the Sermon on the Mount was Jesus’ statement recorded in Matthew 5:17 ...

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;
I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

The Law of God has not passed away ... The Law of God is not something that we need not concern ourselves with. The Law of God (as delineated and demonstrated by Jesus Christ) is still intended to be our Guide for Life.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus took us deeper into the Law than man had ever been taken before ... The Law of God (the Teaching of Christ) provides a rock-solid foundation for our lives.

Now the thing that caught our attention in ***Psalm 119*** was the eager plea recorded in verse 18. We made it our ***Series Theme Verse*** ...

*“Open my eyes that I may see
wondrous things in your law!”*

Six Wondrous Things we found in that Psalm alone and we related each of them to the *‘fulfilled version of the law’* Jesus gave on the mountainside that sunny afternoon so many years later ...

We discovered:

A *‘World-Challenging Identity’* and A *‘Bondage-Breaking Liberty’* and
A *‘Sin-Destroying Purity’* and A *‘Time-Defying Authority’* and
A *‘Stumble-Preventing Stability’* and A *‘God-Honoring Integrity’*.

These are indeed ***Six Wondrous Things*** but the most wondrous thing that we discovered (or are perhaps still in the process of discovering) is that the Law of God (the written revelation of the Will and Way of God as given by Jesus Christ) is just as applicable in this *“Age of Grace”* in which we live as it ever has been.

For the truth is 'Law' and 'Grace' are not adversaries; Law and Grace are not contradictory to one another ... Law and Grace are more like the flip sides of the same coin – the coin that is in fact the legal tender of the Kingdom of God and the Church of Jesus Christ.

This morning I want you to see the link between Law and Grace as we transition into the study of one of the greatest '*Grace Books*' in the New Testament – The Book of Ephesians.

First of all consider with me ...

THE THREE STAGES OF LAW-KEEPING

STAGE ONE: The Law **POINTS** Out My Fallen-Human **CONDITION**.

(Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23)

'For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God'

'The wages of sin is death ...'

Could Sum Up Stage One This Way:

*"My failure to keep the law brings me to a place of **CONDEMNATION**;
Condemnation brings me to a position of **DESPERATION** and/but
Desperation brings me to the possibility of **ILLUMINATION**."*

STAGE TWO: The Law Is **FULFILLED** Perfectly By **CHRIST**

(2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:1)

*'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that
in him we might become the righteousness of God.'*

'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ...'

Could Sum Up Stage Two Like This:

*"Christ's Perfection is **IMPUTED** to me as I put my faith and trust
in Him – I am **DELIVERED** from that place of Condemnation and
BROUGHT to a place of Justification by the **GRACE** of God –
A Grace that not only **FORGIVES** but **ENABLES**."*

Think of Grace as not only 'unmerited favor' but as 'overcoming power'.

In Acts 4:33 ... *"With great power the Apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and **great grace** was upon them all."* – In other words, the '*ability to function as followers of Christ*' was given to them all.

And that fuller understanding of ‘Grace’ draws our attention to what I’m identifying as the “Third Stage of Law Keeping” – a stage that we perhaps have not heard so much about – a stage that for some reason many Christian Leaders are reluctant to even talk about ...

STAGE THREE: The Law GUIDES ‘Grace-Enabled’ Believers Into Abundant/Obedient Living.

“Grace opens the door to Godly Living – the kind of living that the Law was always intended (and desired) to produce.”

So consider now (finally) ...

TODAY’S KEY CONCEPT ...

GRACE is the **KEY** that unlocks the **DOOR** to a
‘Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping **KIND** of Life!’

(And here I would identify and draw upon the **Key Passage** of our next major study.)

Today we just look at a snippet – the fuller look will come later.)

*“For it is by **GRACE** you have been saved through **FAITH** (and thus)
We are God’s workmanship **CREATED** in Christ Jesus to do **GOOD WORKS**.
(Ephesians 2:8-10)*

INDEED ... GRACE IS THE KEY – THE KEY TO EVERYTHING ...

- * Grace **OPENS** My Eyes – ‘*I behold wondrous things in Thy Law.*’
(In the revealed Will and Ways of God)
- * Grace **AMAZES** My Mind – ‘*It’s so much more than ‘Dos and Don’ts!’*
(It’s an entire framework for living.)
- * Grace **ENERGIZES** My Heart – ‘*I sense God Himself embedded in it.*’
(Can’t love Him and not love His Law – It’s an expression of His Own Nature.)
- * Grace **ACTIVATES** My Will – ‘*I determine to live according to it.*’
(What genuine Child of God could make any other choice?)
- * Grace **CONFORMS** My Life – ‘*I am forever defined by it.*’
(I become known as a ‘Follower of the Teachings of Christ’.)

Final Thot ...

Though my attempts to ‘Keep the Law’ will never bring God the **PERFECTION**
He **DEMANDS**, they certainly can bring Him the **PLEASURE** He **DESERVES**.