

Doing

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 September 2015

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 00] Well, good evening everyone. Let me invite you to turn back to Psalm 119 and to those verses that Neil read for us. And two things we need to do just before we start this evening.

One is you need to ensure that you've got your Psalm 119 handout. If you don't have one then I'm sure if you put your hand up somebody at the back, we'll make sure you get one. And the second one is to pick up your knife and fork and let's put on our serviettes and let's feast on God's words together. And let's pray just before we come to look at it now.

Let's pray. Our Father, we come before your words this evening and our prayer is that you would show us Christ.

We ask that by your Spirit that you would teach us more about him, that you would deepen our understanding, that you would open our eyes, that you would thrill our hearts. And oh God, that you would increase our affection and our love for him. And this is our prayer in and through his name. Amen. Excellent. So you may or may not be aware that Friday saw the kickoff of the Rugby World Cup. Was anybody aware of that? Okay, John on tech. Wow. Okay, a few people. I don't know if you were here last Sunday evening, but just at the end of the service there were four people that came in at the back and they were tourists. And the reason I could tell they were tourists is because they had Edinburgh hoodies on and they were all in different colours. So it was a bit of a giveaway. And so I got talking to them after the service and I asked them what they were doing in Edinburgh. And they said they were up from the weekend from Wales. And so naturally knowing that Wales is a rugby daft country and knowing that they got to the previous Rugby World Cup final, I asked them if they were looking forward to this World Cup. And so they proceeded to tell me that they were very excited.

[2 : 07] And even though they had just lost their star player to injury, they were increasingly confident and extremely optimistic of success. And this week in the build-up to their first match, I read an interview with Wales' ex-captain Jonathan Davies, where he was being asked his thoughts on the upcoming games. And here's what he said, okay?

Now feel some of this fire-breathing Wales passion, talking about their first game. Daffodils in your hands at the ready. He says this, okay? He said, we need to be all in for this game.

We should hit the ground running. We smash them. Make a statement. And put the pressure on everyone else to score points. We need to...

We need to be all in for this game. All in. What an interesting statement, I thought. What does it mean to be all in for something?

Well, it means to give your all to something. To give all of you to something. To hold nothing back. To give all-out commitment. To give nothing but a full and unflinching devotion to the cause.

[3 : 24] Now, I've spent all week with Mr. Sam 119. And he strikes me as a man that when it comes to God's Word, he is all in.

He knows God's Word is true. He knows God's Word is trustworthy. And he knows it's good. Because God is good. And he loves it.

And to him, God's Word, this isn't a condemning word. It's not a crushing word. It's a life-giving, grace-filled word. And he delights in it.

He loves it. He desires it. He depends on it. And brothers and sisters, what a privilege it is tonight. With joy. That in hindsight, we know what he didn't know.

That the grace of God was so dazzlingly revealed to the world in Jesus Christ. The one who laid down his life so that he could give life.

[4 : 27] The one who opened the way up to all who would believe in him. To come and be reconciled. To be made right with God. Let me ask you right at the outset.

Have you been dazzled by Christ this week? Have you savored in? Have you delighted in that life-giving, all-pursuing, freely available, undeserved grace of God that's been extended to every single one of us here?

You see, that's what Mr. Sam 119 knows. And what he loves. This God-breathed, life-giving word is, oh, such a sweet melody of grace to him.

And this week, as we finish our time in this psalm, we're getting our money's worth out of him these last few weeks. We're going to ask him one more question.

We're going to ask him, what does he do with God's words? So this is really practical this evening. In his life, what does he do with this word?

[5 : 30] Well, here's what he's going to tell us this evening. He responds to God's gracious and life-giving words. With all in worship.

All of him worship. Now, what does that look like in his life? Well, I'll tell you what it doesn't involve. It doesn't involve him sitting in a dark room, thinking blessed thoughts and singing kumbaya to himself.

But rather, as he lives his life in the world in which he lives, he is active in his worship and his devotion and his love for God and his words. Now, our verses here, the verses that Neil read out, verses 1 to 16, they are full of what your primary teacher at school used to say, doing words. They're full of verbs. That is, what he's trying to say is that all of him, every part of him, worships in response to God's lavish grace.

He's telling us that there's no part of him that is uninvolved in treasuring God, loving God and his word above all else. And here's how he expresses it to us in these verses.

[6 : 40] He draws attention to his body. This is head-to-toe worship. Now, as we look at this together, this is what I found as I was preparing it this week.

What we need to ask ourselves as we look at this is, are we head-to-toe all in with our worship? Let me show you how this works.

Firstly, see how he is all in with his mind. Verse 7, what does he write? He says, I praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

Verse 15, I meditate. There's our word from last week, meaning he chews it over. Remember, I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. So what is he doing?

He's devoting himself to learning, to considering, to meditating on God's word. He's making every effort to fill up his mind with God's word.

[7 : 38] To have it as the thing, not a thing, the thing that shapes his mind. Because do you know what he's aware of? He's aware that he lives in a world that is constantly trying to shape him into its mold.

And he needs his mind. He knows that he needs his mind to be filled with the truth, God's truth. And he learns it. Let me ask you this evening.

What are you filling your mind with? As you live your life in this world, what are the words that you are listening to? What is shaping your values and your motives?

As my grandpa used to say, what's going on to the noggin? Now just think about it this week. Think about it. What are the words that you've listened to this week?

What are the things that you've watched? What are the images that have gone into your head?

What are the opinions that have gone into your head? There was an Ofcom Scotland report published a few months ago.

[8 : 40] And it reported that the average Scot, I'm not calling any of you average. But the average Scot now spends 19.9 hours online each week. And presumably that figure is not accounting for DVDs and television.

Now I think that's probably almost true in my life. That exposure. Friends, that's a lot of exposure.

What is filling our minds? The American evangelist William Chapman, he used to say, it's not the ship in the water, but the water in the ship that sinks it.

In the same way, it's not the Christian in the world, but the world in the Christian that constitutes the danger. And we have to ask ourselves, as we honestly think about what's going into our minds, the question to be asking ourselves is, is it helping or is it hindering our walk with God?

How much exposure is your mind getting to God's word? What does Paul say in the book of Romans? He says, Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Do you see what the psalmist is saying here? That God's word is the most important voice in his life. And so he pulls out all the stops to make sure it gets ingrained on his mind.

[9 : 55] He learns God's word. He learns it. He doesn't give it a casual glance. He doesn't skim read it. He doesn't gloss over it. He learns it. And he consistently reminds himself, as he does so, of this God of all grace.

Now, why does he do that? Well, he knows his own heart. As we'll come on to see, he knows his proneness to wander. He knows his ability to forget.

Do you not know that to be true in your own life? I do. I forget all the time. And he brings himself to God's word as the means of constantly bringing his wandering heart back to its true destination.

Now, let me just allow you into my life this week. This is how it's worked out for me. There are many times this week that I have felt massively unworthy.

Massively unworthy. That harsh word that I've said about someone. The impatience that I've shown with Alex, my wife. The judgmental attitudes that I've had towards people.

[11 : 06] And that's just the stuff that's made it to my tongue. Leather rolling what's in my brain. And I've felt the weight of my sin. And I've felt the evil ones say, Now, on the one hand, he's absolutely right, isn't he?

Who am I? Well, I've got two options at that point. I can listen to what the devil is saying and I can wallow in it. Or I can address what he's saying with the gospel.

For what did the Spirit of God bring to my mind this week? This verse in 2 Corinthians 5.21. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

It's the verse that we made an effort of learning at the student weekend a few years ago. And it came to my mind. The Spirit of God brought it to my mind. Graham, you are not worthy, but Jesus is.

And your life is hidden with his. You are caught up with him. And the Spirit of God brought me to the cross. The cross, the way of salvation that deeply, deeply humbles man.

[12 : 28] Because this has nothing to do with us earning salvation. And the cross that exalts the grace of God and causes us to wonder, why?

Why? But praise him that he did. He looked upon us. He loved us and he saved us. And he looked upon a sinner like me. Reminding ourselves of the gospel, friends.

Learning the gospel. Preaching the gospel to ourselves is the most important daily habit that we can establish. Jerry Bridges writes this. We should bathe our hearts and minds daily in the gospel as part of our daily communion with God.

What words are filling your mind? What are you learning? Mr. Sam 119, he's all in with his mind. I'm very much tied to that.

See that he is all in with his mouth. Verse 13, look at it there. What does he write? With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

[13 : 36] Now that word to recount is not talking about politics. This is not a recount. I looked it up in the dictionary this week and it means to tell the story of. That's what to recount means. And I think what Mr. Sam 119 is doing here is he is speaking scripture to himself.

He is reminding himself of who God is as he speaks his word to himself. Let me ask you this evening, what are you saying to yourself with your lips?

Are you in the habit of speaking scripture to yourself? You know, there's this wonderful story told about Martin Lloyd-Jones, the famous Welsh preacher. He was speaking to a member of his own congregation one evening and this particular member was really struggling with the gravity and the weight of his sin and he was spouting forth to Martin Lloyd-Jones.

And Martin Lloyd-Jones turned to him after a while and he said this. He said, Have you not realized, have you not realized that so much of the unhappiness in your life is because you are listening to yourself instead of speaking to yourself?

Speak God's word to ourselves. That's what the psalmist is doing here. Let me ask you this evening, what are you saying to yourself with your lips? What are you saying to yourself with your lips?

[14 : 57] What are you saying to others with your lips? Now here, I was thinking about this recently. We were on holiday a few weeks ago with my parents-in-law down in Brittany. My father-in-law, bless his heart, he found a book of old nursery rhymes in his loft and he proceeded to

take this book with us on holiday.

So this book of nursery rhymes from about the 60s, I think, was in the living room. And I'm up early one morning with Chloe, our little girl, and I noticed this book in the corner and I thought, Well, I'll give it a shot.

I'll read her a little nursery rhyme. And this is the first one that I read, okay? This is called There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe. Have you heard of that? This classic. This is how it goes. I thought I'd put it on the screen for you.

This is what my six-month-year-old girl was hearing from me. There was an old woman who lived in a shoe. She had so many children she didn't know what to do. She gave them some broth without any bread and whipped them all soundly and put them to bed.

That's cracking, that. So short of puzzling over the political correctness of that nursery rhyme and how exactly that shoe matches up to current building standards, I'm thinking to myself, What am I saying with my lips to this young girl?

[16:15] Am I passing on to her? Am I speaking to her meaningless fluff? Am I passing on to her empty tales? Or in my life, as a father, as a Christian, am I striving to pass on to her the words of the eternal and the living God?

Would it not be an absolute travesty if she grew up knowing more about Jack and Jill than she did about Calvary's Hill? What are we passing on with our lips to our families?

What are we passing on with our lips to our friends? Am I seeking to bring her up, Chloe up, in a home, a Bible-saturated home where the very atmosphere of Scripture gets down into her bones, gets into her lungs?

That is just what we talk about as a family. What are you passing on to others with your lips? And in our interactions with one another in this church family, what are we speaking to one another with our lips?

Are we seeking to bring this word, this life-giving word that God has given us to bear in each other's lives? Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing as we come to it each day, we could pray and say, Lord, help me to be nourished myself, but help me also to nourish others and to encourage them with what you're teaching me.

[17:35] Are we seeking to build one another up and to strengthen one another with our words? Now, we've got a vision evening next Sunday, and we'll be telling, we'll be launching and discussing together this great resource that John and I have put together over the summer that's designed specifically for us to read the Bible one-to-one together.

And it's really designed for this purpose, that we can get speaking God's word into one another's lives. What are we recounting to one another with our words?

What are we recounting to the world with our words? And I was reading on the news this week. I don't know if anybody saw Alistair Darling's comments about Jeremy Corbyn.

And he simply said this, he said, I need to know what Jeremy Corbyn stands for. That's probably what you're thinking as well. But he needs to know what Jeremy Corbyn stands for.

Friends, let me ask you this evening, does the world know what you and I stand for? Are we recounting, are we telling God's word, are we telling the story, the gospel story to this lost world in which we live?

[18:43] The gospel, the good news that is the hope for this world. Are we telling them about Jesus who is the hope of the nations? The God of all grace has so magnificently revealed himself in Jesus.

Jesus who could not have gone any lower in his mission to save us. And who now has the name, the victorious name that could not be any higher.

Are we using our lips to speak God's word, the gospel to our world? Are we using our lips so that the people in our lives know about Christ?

Do you see how Mr. Psalm 119, he is all in with his mind and he's all in with his mouth. And what we need to see at this point is that this word, this knowledge, God's word, doesn't just stay in his head, but it travels 18 inches down and it pierces and penetrates his heart.

Do you see what God's word is informing him of, this life-giving God, this good God, is the furnace that drives the engine of his affections.

[19:58] John Piper puts it like this. He says, it's the mind that provides the kindling for the fires of the heart. Mr. Psalm 119, his theology, what he knows about God, serves doxology, so his praise of

God.

His reflection on God's word serves the purpose of stirring his affection for God. His contemplation serves his exaltation. You get the point?

It doesn't just stay in his head, it penetrates and changes his heart. This is what we need to see.

He's all in with his heart. He does not remain static.

He does not remain hands folded. Look at the words that he uses in these verses. Verse 7, for example, I will praise you with an upright heart.

Verse 12, praise be to you, Lord. Verse 14, I rejoice in following your statutes as one who rejoices in great riches.

[21 : 00] He is not unmoved by God's word. God's word moves him to worship, to sing exuberantly as he revels in God's goodness.

To come at it from another angle. It's just not what Jesus said was at the heart of how God told his people to live. To obey the Lord God with all your heart, your soul, your mind and strength.

No, no, no, no. To love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength.

Now, of course, obeying is part of that love as we'll come on to see. But do you see how love, loving God is at the very heart of God's words?

We need to understand, friends, that God's word should lead us to love him more. There's a great story I read recently about the great Bible teacher John Stott and somebody asked him what his biggest fear was for the students that came to study under him and his reply was that his biggest fear was that many of his students would leave with a doctorate, would have ceased to be a disciple.

[22 : 16] They would leave with a qualification but they would have long stopped loving the Lord Jesus. That many would go from talking about God in the second person to talking about him in the third.

If that's you this evening, if the fire has gone cold, if the fire has gone out, then can I plead with you from God's word to pray and to ask God that he would help you put that right this evening.

That he would install in you a deep, deep love for him and his son and his words and that it would transform your heart. The study of God's word should lead us to love him more.

And do you notice where the psalmist sees himself storing up God's word? Verse 11. Is it in the mind? No. It's in his heart.

So what starts in the mind travels all the way down to his heart. God's word goes deep, deep, deep down into him. It gets in his bloodstream. Now John Bunyan, the great Christian thinker and writer, his contemporaries used to say of him, why this man is a living Bible.

[23 : 28] Prick him anywhere and his blood would bleed bible. And of course what was hyperbolically true of Mr. Bunyan was absolutely true in the life of Jesus.

The devil tempting him in Luke 4, what does he do in response? He quotes scripture. He quotes God's word. He defends himself with Deuteronomy.

What does he do when he's on the cross? He quotes scripture. Psalm 22, Psalm 69, Jesus literally breathed and bled scripture.

So my question this evening is, as his followers, his example, why would we think it would be any different in our lives? Our Lord devoted himself to learning his father's words.

Mr. Sam 119, all in with all his heart. Next, see how he is all in with his knees.

[24 : 36] He is one that is so dependent on God and he comes before him humbly and he takes that posture of humility. Let me show you how that works.

See him express it in verse 12. In those two simple words, teach me. Teach me. It's almost as if he is saying, Lord, I recognize my need for you.

I need your help. It's the language of a pupil before his teacher. It's the language of a man who recognizes that he doesn't know it all. He needs God's help.

Let me ask you this evening, when it comes to God's words, are you teachable? Do you stop and pray each and every day as you open God's words?

Do you pray, Lord, teach me, teach me, teach me, teach me? Do you adopt that stance of humility as you open your Bible? Friends, let me ask you, have you settled in your understanding of God's word?

[25 : 43] Have you settled? Are you pressing into it? Because the truth this evening is that there is more and more of God to know, to love, and enjoy in his words.

Now let me tell you how that worked out for me this week. I study two mornings a week at the Edinburgh Theological Seminary, and we started up a few weeks ago, and I've been going to this new class, and my lecturer just opened one of the Gospels, I think it was John, and his lecture for the day was the life of Jesus in the Gospels, something as simple as that.

And he just opened up the Gospel, the Gospel that I have read hundreds of times in my life, and I came away thinking, I have never seen that before. I have never seen that before.

And the truth is that there is always new stuff to see in God's word. There's always depths to plumb, heights to climb, things to savour and enjoy.

And you see as well how that humility expresses itself in prayer? This is what he writes, verse 8. Now you'll notice that the word prayer isn't specifically used there, but the action certainly is, and the words look at verse 8.

[26 : 59] I obey your decrees, do not utterly forsake me. Verse 10, I seek you with all my heart, do not let me stray from your commands. In fact, I don't think it's too much of a stretch to say that this psalm is smothered in prayer.

And the reason that it is, is that Mr. Sam 119 is so aware of his complete and utter dependence on God. And that's how humility expresses itself.

Closed door, on your knees, hearts open, conversing with God, praying for ourselves, praying for each other, praying for this world, because the thing is that we need God, don't we?

We need God. Christopher Ashe puts it like this, the place of Christian prayer is not the armchair, but on the edge of a hard seat.

Dependency. Let me ask you the question that I've asked of myself this week is, is your life marked by reverent and dependent prayer?

[28 : 08] Are you quite comfortable? Are you quite set that you've got this Christian life figured out? And how that will show itself will be in your prayer life.

And we went away as an eldership a few weeks back and we asked ourselves the question if there was one area of our church life, one area of our church life that we would love to see grow in the next year, what would it be?

And do you know what came in at number one from each and every single one of us? It was our prayer life. Our prayer life both individually and our prayer life corporately as a church.

Let me ask you, if the Lord Jesus were to return tomorrow, would he find in us that deep longing for God, that deep dependence on God that pours itself out in prayer, or would he instead find a bunch of self-sufficient, lukewarm, respectables who are going through the motions?

It really is, isn't it, the litmus test of where we're at as a church, our corporate prayer life, our dependency on the Lord. Mr. Sam 119, all in with his knees.

[29 : 27] And lastly, let's see how he is all in with his feet. Verse 1, Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.

Verse 9, How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your words. So he draws the attention to his feet.

Did you notice that? And do you see the direction of his feet? He's a disciple that is deciding to walk in the way of the Lord. Now what does that mean? That means he obeys God's word.

It means he follows God's word. It means he lives his life in accordance to God's word. So the governing metaphor of the life of faith, according to Mr. Sam 119, is to walk the way of the Lord.

That's what he's saying. So let's just bring a few of these strands to close. Mr. Sam 119, all in with his mind. He is all in with his mouth.

[30 : 33] He is all in with his heart. He's all in with his knees. And he's all in with his feet. He is all in. And I'll be honest, I reflected on this week, having gone the last two weeks looking at this, Sam, and having seen his affection for God, having seen his devotion for God, I wonder if you're thinking what I was thinking, that I could never do that.

That I fall so far short of what he is writing here, that his life and my life, they seem a million miles apart. Well, let me ask you a question.

How would you have ended that psalm, this psalm? If you were the guy that wrote it, if you were Mr. Sam 119, how would you finish this psalm? Well, if you've got your Bible, say, why don't you turn to verse 176, it's a very long one after all.

Because if it were me, I would have ended this psalm on a real high. As if to say, listen to me, look at this incredible bit of literature that I've written, look at my victorious Christian life, look how I've got it sorted.

I'm the guy that you want to book at your next church weekend away. But where does the psalmist end? Does he end in a real high? No, he ends in real life.

[32 : 01] Now let this encourage you. For the man who has penned this great psalm, is he a colossus of the faith? Is he a spiritual giant? Well, he may well be all in, but his confession at the end, do you notice it?

He is a lost sheep. Mr. Psalm 119 is so, so aware of his weakness, of his fragility, and his complete reliance, utter dependence on God's grace.

And is that not the authentic Christian life? In your walk with God, do you know that to be true? That one minute you're singing, and the next minute you're straying?

This is not a man, this is not a man who's got this Christian life thing sorted. And that should massively encourage us. He is praying, verse 147, what does he say?

Seek your servant. Seek your servant. So he's praying that God would seek him out and save him.

[33 : 07] And how does Jesus speak of himself and the reason that he came? He is the one who has come to seek and to save the lost.

Jesus came to save you, he came to save me, and he came to save Mr. Sam 119. And as we draw this evening to a close, and our time I guess in this psalm to a close, I hope that you've been inspired in your confidence in God's word, that you can trust it and you can love it.

And I hope you've been praying that God would help increase your affection for his words, that you want to be delighting in it, you want to desire it, you want to depend on it, and in your Christian life, I hope after this evening, I hope that we've seen that we want to give our all and do everything according to this word.

But if that's all that we've taken away from this little series, then friends, we have massively missed it. We cannot wholeheartedly sing this psalm, even on our best days, even on the days that you have your quiet time, we cannot sing this psalm wholeheartedly.

Only Jesus can honestly sing this psalm. He is the ultimate psalm 119 man, the blessed man, the obedient man, the man who was and fully delighted in God's word, and the man who came to seek us out and bestow on us life.

[34 : 40] You see, the word of God is where life is, because at the heart of the Christian faith is a God who speaks, and what is it he speaks about, the heart of what he speaks about is Jesus Christ and him crucified and risen.

And as we encounter him and his word, as we know that forgiveness, as we experience that new life and come to love that amazing grace, he transforms us. He puts a new heart in us, he takes out the heart of stone and gives us a new heart that beats for him.

And in Jesus, because Jesus is delightful, only in him and through him can we sing the song of amazing grace, of our wonderful saviour who sought us out, who came to save and to seek the lost. So let's be people who devote ourselves to God's word. Let's be people who love God's word. Let's allow God by his spirit to transform us as we open his words.

Let's pray that we can see Christ everywhere in this book. Let's make it the supreme beauty and the driving force and thing that we value most in our lives.

[35 : 56] And we're going to stand to sing in just a second our closing hymn. But let me read you just the first verse of this song before we do. And let's make this our prayer as we go into this week.

My heart is filled with thankfulness. to him who bore my pain, who plumbed the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again, who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me in his light and wrote his law of righteousness with power upon my heart.

Let's pray together as we close.