

Feeling

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[0 : 00] Well, a very good evening, one and all. I hope you are well. Why don't you turn back to Psalm 119 and the passage that Michael read for us.

And that handout as well, if you have it, is going to be, hopefully, extremely helpful to you in following along this evening. But why don't we pause just for a second, just for a minute or so, and let's just pray as we come to God's Word together.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that we've been singing that you are the unchanging God.

We praise you for the great love that you have shown on us, shown us that you continue to lavish upon us. And Father, it's our prayer now as we turn to your Word, that you would send your Spirit and in the words of this Psalmist that you would give us understanding, that we might obey and love your Word with all our hearts.

And this is our prayer made confidently to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. So what is the nicest thing that you have ever tasted?

[1 : 16] Have you got it? So there's imaginations here. You close your eyes and picture that thing. Picture the smells. Picture the plate.

Picture the sounds. Picture the surroundings. Picture the ambiance. And you're tasting it. And it's succulent.

It's lovely. Now open your eyes again. Now look to the person sitting next to you. What words would you use to describe how that tasted to them?

How would you convey the beauty? And I gave you that word succulent there. It's my word of the week. How would you use the words to convey to them how it tasted? Now I was reading this week about food reviews.

And apparently the trick to a good food review is to use descriptive language that gets people both to step into your shoes and to step into your mouth.

[2 : 20] Now here's an example of how that works. This is influential American food critic Mimi Sheraton, who's based in New York. And here she is describing her love affair with caviar.

She says this. It is now odd to think that when I, when as a child I tasted caviar, it seemed horrible. All that oil fishiness popping on the tongue.

And then one day when I was about 20, I tried it again and couldn't believe that I had not loved it at first taste. What seemed fishy, suddenly I perceived as having an alluring deep sea flavor with a silky gliding texture and a tintillating tongue curling edge of ripe earthiness that spoke to me of endurance, quality and development.

Now I'll be honest, I don't have a clue about what half the words in that mean. I have never tasted caviar in my life. I always think caviar belongs less on my palate and more like somebody who should be playing center forward for hearts.

But having read that review, I really fancy a bit of caviar. But they'll just need to deep fry it first and I'm all over it. But let me ask you this evening, here's the question.

[3 : 36] How does God's word, how does it taste to you? How does it taste? You know, that's the question that we're going to ask of Mr. Sam 119 this morning.

Last week we asked him what he believed about God's words. And he told us that he rejoices in the truth that God's words is God's words.

That God has made himself known by his words. And Mr. Sam 119 knows them to be so utterly trustworthy.

He can trust God's words because they are true words. I'll get the slide up here, you need to see this. There it is. He trusts God's words because they are true words.

They are thoroughly good words. And Mr. Sam 119, he's got the pulpit again this week. And his question that we're going to ask him is, having heard what he believes about God's words, we want to know how he feels about God's words.

[4 : 45] And here's what he's going to tell us. It is hands down the sweetest thing that he's ever tasted. We're going to encounter tonight a man who is so ravished by beauty.

He absolutely loves God's words. He loves it. And because he loves it, he can't get enough of it. And because he can't get enough of it, he wants more of it. And he wants more of it for the pure and simple reason that he needs it.

In other words, God's words is the most delightful, the most desirable and the most dependable words in his life. And here's what we need to see this evening.

What Mr. Sam 119 knows to be true about God's word, what he told us last week, it doesn't remain in his head. But it impacts his heart.

You see, information leads to transformation and affection. That light to his mind has led to heat in his heart. In other words, God's word moves him.

[5 : 49] And where he is, brothers and sisters, that's where I want to be. You know, I found myself this week, I don't know if you've been reading it through this week.

I found myself as I've been reading it, not so much uttering an amen, but uttering a maybe. And the thing is, I want his confession to be my confession.

Because when I read what he's writing, I feel massively shown up. And what we're going to see, Mr. Sam 119, testify to us this evening, that's where I want to be in my affection for the Lord and his word.

And so I would invite you, as I invite myself, to sit under this word this evening, to hear what he's saying to us, and allow God's word by God's spirit to challenge us and change us.

As we see his love affair with God's word. Here's his first exclamation from these verses. He delights in God's words. Now we're going to ask him what I asked you at the beginning.

[6 : 54] How does God's word taste to him? How does it taste? And here's what he's going to say. Verse 103. How sweet are your words to my taste?

Sweeter than honey to my mouth. Now I'm a dentist's son. And so naturally I've got a sweet tooth. And I remember very well the first time I was ever presented with a small spoon to my palate filled with condensed milk.

And it blew my taste buds into oblivion with its sweetness. And the psalmist is saying that God's word is like honey.

It's the sweetest thing he can imagine on his lips. Is it as sweet as honey? No. It's sweeter than honey. Oh, it's so much sweeter than honey.

It's the best thing he can think of to describe what it tastes like on his lips. Do you see here a deep yearning that he possesses? A longing after.

[8 : 02] A hungering for. A thirsting for God's word. Now he's going to use that word delight seven times throughout this psalm. What an incredible thing to say.

And I guess the question that's screaming at us this evening is, is that as we come to God's word each day, as we come to read it, is that how it tastes to us?

You know, when I first moved to Edinburgh, I used to live with a good friend of mine. And he used to have for his tea every single night, emphasis on the word every, and on the word single, and on the word night.

Every single night, a microwaved baked potato. Quick, dry, bland, boring, repetitive, zero taste.

Not something to be enjoyed, but something just to fill a hole. Friends, is God's word, if you had to describe the taste, is it less honey, and is it more microwave baked potato?

[9 : 06] Is reading it, is encountering it, is it way more about duty than it is about delight? Does the thought of reading it, does it brew in you more frustration than it does affection?

And so as we read, as we encounter the psalmist's affectionate exclamation here, the question that I'm asking my head, as I look at my own heart, is how has he got there?

Because that's where I want to be. Well, if that's your question, look at verse 97. What is he saying? He says this, Now you might have noticed it as you've read through it there.

Twice in these verses alone, he uses that word meditate. And indeed, he uses that word seven times throughout this psalm. The same amount of times that he uses the word delight, he uses the word meditate.

I'll let you draw any conclusions that you want from that. Now, what we need to understand is that that isn't accidental repetition. That is not evidence of a limited vocabulary.

[10:20] That is affectionate emphasis. He meditates on God's word. Meditates. It's a beautifully biblical word, but it's a word that our society has hijacked.

It's not just Eastern religions at the other side of the world that are talking to us about meditating. It's yoga classes and Pilates classes at the other side of our streets that are talking to us about meditating.

What does it mean? Well, Christopher Ash, who has so helped me see the beauty of this psalm, he comments that the biblical idea of meditating isn't so much about putting your mind in neutral.

It's actually about putting your mind in gear. It's not about emptying your mind out. It's about filling your mind up. It's not a technique with rules, but it's a relationship with living dynamics.

The word meditate, the Hebrew word here, is to chew something over. So the psalmist is saying that he's spending quality time reading God's words.

[11:32] He's chewing it and he's swallowing it. He's chewing it and he's swallowing it again. Brothers and sisters, join with me, okay? Let's chew it. He chews it and he swallows it.

He chews it and he swallows it. He marinates himself in God's words. He considers it. He ponders it. He examines it. He exposes himself to it.

And this isn't some kind of fleeting glance that he gives God's words. This is a fixed gaze. Now, how often does he do this? All day long.

Now, let me ask you this evening, knowing my own heart in this area, how much of your day do you spend meditating on God's words?

What would your teeth be like, the state of your teeth, if we chewed on this every day? And can I draw the conclusion, again knowing my own heart, is it any wonder that our affections for the Lord are sometimes stale and lukewarm when we go sometimes days without reading God's words?

[12:49] Are we cultivating, are we creating space in our days for God's words? Now, when I used to live down in Bristol, I encountered many people there who told me about this great man called George Muller.

Some of you might have heard of him. A great Christian evangelist and director of the Ashley Down Orphanage in Bristol, just around the corner from where I used to live. They've named a street after him.

It's said that he cared for, in his lifetime, 10,024 orphans. And people asked him the secret to how he was able to keep going in the busyness of his life.

And he said this. He said, the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord.

The first thing in my day to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, but how I might get my soul into a happy state and how my inner man might be nourished.

[13:56] Isn't that a wonderful thing to say? How insightful. Delight in the Lord. Are we making time in our day to be happy in the Lord?

As Corrie Ten Boom famously said, do we make an appointment with God and do we keep it? And that's the example that Jesus sets for us as well as we read the Gospels.

It always amazes me as I read them through the question that people so often ask Jesus and say about him is, where does this man get his understanding from? You'll find an example of that in Matthew 13.

Where does this man get his understanding from? Here's what we need to see. That our Lord didn't download it from heaven's archives. He learned it.

He devoted himself to it. Jesus got his wisdom from the word of God. He delighted in it completely and on it he meditated day and night.

[14:54] He is the true Sam one man. You see the thing is God won't love us more or less based on whether we've had a quiet time each day or not.

And we need to be very careful that we get our thinking right on that one. We are saved by grace alone. But, but, as we encounter God in his word and as his spirit speaks to us through it and reveals to us how much God loves us to the length that he's gone to achieve our salvation.

Friends, how can we not love God more? How can we not love God more? Mr. Sam 119 he delights in God's word.

He chews it over all day long. And naturally as it tastes so good he wants more of it. He desires it.

And he tells us why he desires it. Look at verses 98 to 100. He says this, Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies.

[16:03] I have more insight than all my teachers for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders for I obey your precepts.

Do you see what he's saying there? He's saying that God's word makes him wiser than the world around about him. It gives him more wisdom, more insight, more understanding than those people that he's living with.

And how can it do that? The answer is the source of it. Where it comes from. Mr. Sam 119 what does he do?

He lifts his eyes up and he contemplates the source of this word. Verses 80, 90, 91 he says this, Your word Lord is eternal.

It stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations. You established the earth and it endures. Your laws endure to this day for all things serve you.

[17:08] So do you see what he's doing here? His eyes are looking upwards. He's taking stock of the skies that God's word originates in eternity past.

That God's word established the world. And God's word will not be moved or grow powerless. It is timelessly perfect. One of you know that feeling when you find an old photo of yourself from many, many years ago.

Maybe with a meticulous comb over. I dare say that's true of a lot of gentlemen in here. Or a groovy set of ripped jeans. What's the thing that you always think to yourself and say to those who are looking at the photo with you?

What was I thinking? And then you think about how you used to think ten years ago. And what do you say to yourself? What was I thinking? Here's what the psalmist is saying.

God's word unlike us is never going to change. It does not change with the seasons like we do. It is eternal.

[18:15] It endures to this day. It is perfect. And so what he does he does a really simple maths equation. His logic is that the eternal powerful and established word from heaven what it says is able to make him more wise in life than the finite voices of the earth and the people round about him.

This wisdom God's wisdom is never going out of date. The psalmist sees this as wisdom and thousands of years later people still see this as wisdom.

You wouldn't be sitting here today if that wasn't the case. That is one of the things that convinced me that this is true that this is timeless truth. Because people are looking to this for wisdom.

And guess what? People in the future will look to this as wisdom. Why? Because it's God's eternal words. There's never coming a day when this is not wisdom.

C.S. Lewis put it beautifully when he said, anything that isn't eternal is eternally out of date. Let me ask you this evening, where are you looking for your wisdom?

[19:22] Who are you looking to for your wisdom and your understanding? Are you looking in? Are you looking into the hero inside yourself as M people so wonderfully sang?

God's word will tell us the folly of that, the foolishness of trusting in the deceitfulness of our own hearts to guide us through life? That the way of man is not to be found within himself?

Are you looking in? Are you looking out to the world out there, to people's opinions and logic and interpretation? Now don't hear me wrong, there's a lot we can learn from the world outside, but we need to understand that it is finite and fallen.

or are you looking up to the one who created the world in wisdom? Do you see what the psalmist is doing?

He is looking up to the heavens, the heavens that declare to him the glory of God, the sky that declares to him God's handiwork, the stars that are singing to him that the God that made them and the God that made him is incredible.

[20:31] And as he looks up, he looks down. He looks down to God's words that he has in his hand. The God who threw stars into existence has spoken to him and so he's taken his chances with this wisdom.

Friends, are you looking to the creator for your wisdom? Or are you looking to the creature? I know in my own heart how easily I'm deceived into thinking that a better life a better joy, a better wisdom is found out with God's words.

And the truth that we need to understand here is that God's ways, God's ways are so much higher than our ways. That God's wisdom is so far above and so much better than the wisdom of the world.

And how is God's wisdom so supremely seen? It's seen at the cross. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, he says this, Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom.

But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

[21 : 57] For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Just pause for a second and take that in.

one of the TV shows that Alex and I love to watch is Dragon's Den.

Don't know if we have any Dragon's Den fans out there. There's a place that you will see the world's wisdom on full display. And there is some very impressive stuff in there.

We're watching it yesterday and there's a couple of gentlemen on who have invented a flat pack that you can build in under two minutes. They fully made a wardrobe in less than two minutes.

That is impressive. That is impressive. And I'm watching this the other night and I'm thinking to myself, I wonder how the Apostle Paul would get on in Dragon's Den.

[22 : 56] You ever thought that? You have now. How would Paul get on in Dragon's Den? Imagine the scene. Paul, nice to meet you. What's your business proposition?

Well, it's this message called the gospel. This new life that we have in Jesus Christ. The wonderful message that the world needs to hear. That God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son who came to die the death that you and I deserve to die on the cross so that we could be forgiven and restored.

And the wonderful news is he hasn't stayed dead. He has risen from the grave. He has ascended into heaven where he rules and reigns and one day he's coming back to judge the living and the dead and you need to believe in him.

Nah. One dragon's out at that point, I'm guessing. Carry on a little bit more, Paul. That's a ludicrous idea, but we're into money making here.

What kind of profit is this business making you? Well, none actually. I used to be pious and an achiever, but since meeting Jesus and having been transformed by him, I am no longer my own.

[24 : 07] I am his servant. My life is his now. In my life now, I've been shipwrecked. I've been beaten. I've been given lashes. My life is constantly in danger.

I know hunger. I know cold. But whatever again I had, I count as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything of loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ my Lord.

For his sake, I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. What profit am I making? No thought. All the two dragons, I imagine, will be out at that point.

One of them might give him pity and say to him, well, Paul, we've heard you this far. How are you going to gain followers for this gospel? How are you going to sell this to people? Well, ultimately, we follow Jesus.

the one who commanded us as his followers to follow his example, to die to self, to take up our cross and to follow him. And that's the message that has won me.

[25 : 08] And that's the message I'm going to keep proclaiming because it is the power of God unto salvation. All dragons out at that point. Friends, do you see how God's wisdom is not as the world's wisdom?

God's wisdom is so far above the wisdom of this world. Tim Keller writes this, yes, God is a king, but is a king who came to earth and went not to a throne, but to a cross.

Where are you looking to for your wisdom? Are you looking in? Are you looking out? Are you looking up? And as you look up, does it compel you to look down?

Mr. Sam 119, he desires God's word because he knows it's the source of true wisdom. Look at his declaration at verse 96. To all perfection I see a limit, but your commands are boundless.

He loves it. He delights in it. He desires it. And third thing to see is that he depends on it. Now I'm one of three boys and when we'd all flown the nest, my parents decided to do what all parents do when their boys fly the nest and get a dog.

[26 : 34] And so they got a little parson terrier and Alex and I went home recently and we took the dog with my parents for a walk up the moors. They live in Glasgow up beside the moors.

So we went for a walk with this dog and the minute they took this thing off the leash. It caught a whiff of deer or highland cattle in its lungs and boom, off. And I turned to my dad and I said, dad, should I be chasing this thing? Is this not panicking you? Why? And my dad turns to me and says, don't worry son, you'll find his way on home. You'll find his own way home. And sure enough, half an hour's walk came back around and there he was. He's standing there. What is Mr. Sam 119 saying? He depends on God's word. Why? Because he is not a sheepdog. He is a sheep. [27 : 33] He cannot find his own way home. He depends on God's word. His bringing home is entirely reliant on another. And he knows it.

Now look what he writes at verses 92 to 94. This is the confession of a man with strong awareness of his frailty. Look what he writes. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

I will never forget your precepts for by them you have preserved my life. Save me for I am yours. I have sought out your precepts.

So he knows affliction. He knows his constant need for the leading of God's word in his life. Do you see what he's saying in his testimony? That if it wasn't for God's word, he would have died.

This word, this divine word is a life-saving word. It gives him life. It's a redeeming word. And because of that, he submits himself to it.

[28 : 39] Do you see the submission there? I am yours. He casts himself on the grace and the mercy of God. Let me ask you this evening, do you think you can find your own way home?

Is there within you a deep and utter dependence on God's words? Because the truth is that if you and I were left to our own devices, we would be chasing our own dreams and fantasies.

In the words of Psalm 1, we would be chasing chaff. We would not find our own way back. Like Mr. Psalm 119, we are completely dependent on God's gracious words to bring us home.

But just living this side of the cross, we know that gracious words finds its fullest and most glorious expression in Jesus Christ. Now here's the question that's puzzled me this whole week as I've been reading this Psalm.

As Mr. Psalm 119, as he opens God's word, as he looks at God's law, how is it that he feels delight? Surely he would look at that and he would feel condemnation.

[29 : 52] He would feel like a complete failure for his inadequacy to live up to this. How has he got from there to being a delight? Well, the answer must be that by his spirit, God was showing him that his word is a gracious and life-giving word.

And how does John introduce us to Jesus at the beginning of his gospel? Jesus full of grace and truth. Do you see how God's word is ultimately all about Christ?

Do you see how it is leading us to him? The life giver, the truth. Jesus, the perfect law keeper. The one who succeeded where you and I have failed.

You see, when we accept him and love him, his reward comes to us. The reward for his perfect law keeping comes to us.

And why? Because our punishment for our failure to live up to that went to him. Only in Jesus can we say that God's word is truly a delight to us because we see gospel.

[31 : 08] Only the gospel can rewire our hearts so that this word is not a word of condemnation, but it's a word of grace and truth and life. Let me ask you this evening, is it a word of grace to you or do you still feel condemnation as you look at it?

The moralistic person obeys the word of God out of fear. The Christian says, I delight because obeying God's law delights the one who delighted me so much when he died for me.

You see, only in the gospel, friends, do we get the verdict. Only in the gospel do we get the verdict before we get the performance. We need to make sure we get that right.

God says, I love you, therefore love me. I love you, now you can love me. You see, the law exposes the disease the gospel tells us and gives us the remedy.

We are completely reliant and dependent on Jesus Christ to bring us home. And now when we look into the word of God, we don't see a crushing burden, we see beauty and delight.

[32 : 22] Tim Keller puts it beautifully when he says, only in Jesus does the law become a honeycomb. You see, once we understand the gospel, only then can this word be a delight to us.

Let me ask you, friends, as we bring things to a close. Jesus Christ, how does he taste to you? How does the gospel taste to you?

Have you grown lukewarm? Have you grown cold in your affection for Jesus Christ? You know, we went away yesterday as an elders team. It was a brilliant day.

Thank you so much for your prayers. And we started the day looking at Jesus' words in revelation to the church in Ephesus. And Jesus says to that church, I know you.

I know your toil and your hard work, but I have this against you, that you have left, you have lost your love that you had for me at first. What a warning that is to us.

[33 : 23] Friends, can I ask you, are you busy just running around doing things? Now, there's nothing wrong with that as long as behind it there is an affection and a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Does the gospel still thrill your heart? Do you rejoice in the new life that Jesus Christ has given you? There's something that we can do this week.

There's something I've tried to do this week, and I pray that you'll join me in doing it this week coming. It's really just to put, really simple, just put a post-it note at the front of your Bible. And it just says, simply this, show me Christ.

Show me Christ. And as you come to your Bible every day, if you stick that post-it note on it, make that your prayer. Make it your prayer and say, Lord, help me as I come to your word this morning to see the beauty and delight in Jesus Christ.

Now, you're thinking to yourself, where am I getting a post-it note from? They're down there. Show me Christ. And as that happens, ask that God would place within you a growing and a deeper desire and a love for Jesus that bursts into praise so that we can exclaim with the psalmist, Lord, I delight in your words.

[34 : 42] Do you desire more of Jesus Christ each day? Do you delight in Jesus Christ? Do you depend on him? Do you think? Now, just as we close, I read this story this week about the German pastor, Martin Nimler.

I think that's how you say his name. I'm not looking at John because he told me how to say it, and that's not right. German pastor who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp from 1937 to 1945.

And he was imprisoned for his stance against Nazi state control of the churches. And reflecting on his time in the camp, he said this of his Bible.

He said this of God's word. The Bible, what did this book mean to me during the long weary years of solitary confinement? And then for the last four years at the Jachau cell building, that's where he was.

The word of God was simply everything to me. Comfort and strength. Guidance and hope. Master of my days and companion for my nights.

[35 : 47] The bread which kept me from starvation and the water of life that refresh my soul. And even more, solitary confinement ceased to be solitary.

Isn't that an amazing thing? There's a man who we can't even begin to imagine the things that he saw and the things that he experienced. But there's a man who absolutely delighted in God's words. It was his comfort in affliction. Brothers and sisters, as we close now, do we have that same mindset and desire for God's words? Can we offer a hearty amen to what Mr.

Sam 119 has told us this evening? Because we've asked him what he feels about God's words.

And he's told us that he loves it. He's told us that he desires it. And he's told us that he depends on it.

So this week, as you dive into Sam 119, I pray that that will be your experience. I pray that's the experience of all of us. And why don't you come back next Sunday and we'll ask Mr. Sam 119 one more question.

[36 : 50] We'll ask him, knowing what he believes, knowing how he feels, we'll ask him, what does he do with God's words? So why don't we just pause and pray together as we close?

And just in the silence, I wonder if you just want to pray simply this. Lord God, show me Christ. Our loving Heavenly Father, we are so grateful, Lord, for our time together this evening.

And the opportunity that we've had just on the cusp of another week to spend time delighting in your words. And Lord, it's our prayer that you would help us desire it more, to delight in it more, to depend on it more, and to see Christ.

Father, we want to pray that we would be blown away by his glory this week. Would you come and help us? Would you help turn our eyes from looking to worthless things?

And would you help reorientate us? So that your statutes and your Son become our absolute delight. And so this is our prayer in Jesus' name.
[38 : 23] Amen.