

The 4 “R’s” of the Bible – Psalm 119:113-152

Several years ago, there was a most interesting obituary in the Lansing State Journal. It was entitled, Bernie Hague, Biblical Scribe. The article told of a Michigan man named Bernie Hague who had just gone home to be with the Lord. Bernie was unique in a Bible study method that he had devised. In 1960, his pastor had challenged the entire congregation to read the Bible through completely during that next year. Bernie found that he learned much more through using his hands than mere reading, so he went a step beyond what the pastor had challenged. Bernie Hague began to copy the Bible. To write it out. Word after word, verse after verse, chapter after chapter. He found in his study that he got much more out of the Scriptures when he physically wrote out the text. In just a little more than a year, Bernie Hague had copied the complete Bible. By the time he passed away and was buried in Jackson, thirty-some years later, Bernie Hague had copied the entire Bible 10 times by hand. In the process, he had consumed over 500 pens and nearly 20,000 pieces of paper. Several of the scribal copies of the Scriptures are displayed in Michigan churches and the Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina also has one copy. But more important than any oddity factor that the newspaper, of course, was interested in, was the fact that Bernie said that by copying the Scripture he had filled his heart and life with it. And do you know that his daughter, Pamela Sims, has also begun to follow this same pattern of Bible study.

We hear a lot about education today. At one time, we were told that education was going to cure all the ills of society. If only we could educate

everybody, then we wouldn't have any more crime or greed or need for prisons. But then white collar crime became a major societal concern. And now identity theft and computer crimes are escalating faster than authorities can keep up with them. Here are the most educated people using their intellects for more sophisticated crimes. We have learned as a society that the true nature of sinful people could not be educated away. And in trying to cure all of the ills of society, public education had moved way beyond the scope of what traditionally was called education. Now our public schools have become not only places where academic disciplines are taught, the burden of providing balanced diets, giving direction and counseling with student problems, providing health care with clinics, and now even sometimes becoming day care centers for working parents, these and many other concerns were diverting attention from academic learning. We have seen a recent cry in the past decade to go back to the basics. The basic "R's" - reading, riting and rithmetic. Let's not forget the central priorities of education- that our children are able to read, able to write and able to add and subtract.

The bible is the most basic text that God has given to us for instruction in life. The Psalmist wrote, "I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes" Ps. 119:99. We have been looking at Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, during these past Sunday Evenings.

- *longest chapter in Bible - 176 verses

- *171 out of 176 directly refer to Scriptures; 97%

- *acrostic form of Hebrew poetry. 22 sections of 8 verses apiece each beginning with a consecutive letter in the Hebrew alphabet

And now, this evening, we want to look at sections that would direct our attention to 4 R's of the Bible. 4 more Great Blessings that the Bible can bring into our lives.

1. READ Psalm 119:113-115

I hate double-minded men, but I love your law.

You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God!

Now I want to talk with you about this important blessing of God being our REFUGE for we all face a temptation in this area of life. When we speak of protection, we most often think of God defending us in some area of physical deliverance. Perhaps protecting us from bodily harm when a thief breaks into our house, or sparing us from serious injury when our car is hit by a speeding motorist, or bringing us through a surgery successfully at the hospital, or some other of the many ways in which God's angels watch over us every day. And it is certainly true that God does protect his people from physical harm. The Psalmist said, "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Ps. 91:11,12. This verse is certainly speaking of protection in the physical realm. And it is interesting that this is the very verse that Satan used to tempt Christ as they were standing at the pinnacle of the temple. But with the Psalmist here, Jesus at that time recognized that the physical dangers were not his greatest temptation. Yes, these are important, and we thank God for his hand of protection in these areas. But there is an even greater potential area of danger in each of our lives.

That area would be the temptation to be deterred from God's perfect path of life by Satan's subtle means. And the enemy usually uses other people to do this. Double-minded people. Evildoing people. People who will criticize and slander. People who will try to lead us astray from the path of God's perfect will for us. You see, when Satan tried to use the verse concerning God's protective hand in physical matters to lure Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple mount, Christ immediately recognized the fact that the enemy was trying to lure him away from the path of God's perfect will. What did Jesus do? Our Lord Jesus Christ immediately went to the Word of God. He quoted the Scriptures to Satan. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." Matt. 4:7. The Word was his protection against the temptation that Satan was bringing before him.

Now let me try to make this as clear as I can, for there is a lesson here that we all need to understand. Satan does not want you or me to follow God's perfect will in our lives. He will do whatever he can to get us to stray from that path. Very often, he will even use other people in his temptation. These people will try to lure us into sinful practices. These people might criticize us when we are trying to do what is right. These people will try to make their second-rate priorities ours so that they can feel less guilt about them. Like the People the Psalmist was talking about, these people will be double-minded, not completely sold on the Scriptures as their final authority. They will be evildoers, trying to salve their own guilty consciences by luring more people to join them in their sins- if everyone does it, it can't be that bad, will be their motto.

Now all criticism is not bad. In fact, the wise person is the one who learns from criticism. How can we know what people the Lord is bringing into our lives to sharpen us and what people Satan is trying to use to tempt us. The key here is God's word. If we line our lives up unequivocally with God's principles and commands, then we will have the confidence that we are doing what is right.

We have to realize that we have no other absolute standard. The world's standards are relative, changing. We can't line up with them and have the confidence that we are doing what is right. The Bible can be our only authority. For it is absolute truth. The Scriptures are God's inspired word. They are eternal, settled in the heavens. They will never change. Heaven and earth will pass away some day, but my words will never pass away, Jesus said. We will only have confidence in life as we line ourselves up with God's word. This is the protection that God offers to us, and it is the most important protection of all. It is the assurance that we are going what is right with a clear conscience before God.

One of the most amazing men in the history of the church is Martin Luther. Yes, he is amazing because of his intellect and abilities to communicate and lead people. But he is even more amazing to me because of the confidence and assurance that he had in life.

*Luther lived during a time when the established church had completely left the basic truths of God's word. Church was authority over Bible. Grace was bought and sold thru indulgences. People were taught to work their way to heaven thru prayers to saints.

*Luther stood alone. How could he have that confidence? How could almost everyone else be wrong, and he alone be right? Solo Scriptura. The bible alone is our authority. It was his confidence in the Word of God that enabled him to initiate the reformation.

2. Notice now the blessing of redemption from verses 133, 134. READ PSALM 119:133,134

PS 119:133 Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

PS 119:134 Redeem me from the oppression of men,
that I may obey your precepts.

Now this concept of redemption was far more clear to the people living in Biblical times than it is to us today because they saw it practiced regularly in the market place. Periodically, there would be an auction of slaves. Usually, these slaves would either have been taken in battle or would have been sold into slavery because of debts. In any case, they were not free people. They were owned by another. When the bidding was finished at the auction, the person who had offered the most money would give that ransom to the auctioneer and the slave would be redeemed. The slave would not be the property of the one who had purchased him.

Now we have to realize that even though we don't have to witness the social blight of slavery in our society today, the same concept continues to go on in the spiritual realm.

*sin enslaves us. Now this is most obvious in the more extreme examples (e.g. alcoholism, drug dependency, pornography, etc) but we need to realize that

every sin that we commit takes away a little bit of our freedom. "The wages of sin is death". The Apostle Paul said that Christ died for us so that we might no longer be a slave to sin (Rom. 6:6). The Psalmist here expressed concern that sin not rule over him- in other words, that he not become a slave to the mastery of sin in his life.

*how can we obtain redemption from the slavery of sin. Jesus Christ came to be the ransom to purchase us out of sin's slave market. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." 1 Pet. 1:18,19

*But amazingly, many Christians having been freed from the slave market of sin, then choose to return to sin's bondage after being saved. Imagine a slave in Biblical times refusing to be set free! How can we protect ourselves against the enslaving power of sin in our lives?

*The word of God:

the living word - inner protection

the written word- outer protection

3. Word is not only a means of redemption for us, it is also a source of righteousness for us. READ PSALM 119:137,138

PS 119:137 Righteous are you, O LORD,
and your laws are right.

PS 119:138 The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy.

*God is the absolute standard of what is right. He is righteous by his very nature, perfect in holiness and truth.

*God's word is an expression of who he is. That is the reason for the critical nature of the inerrancy of the Bible in the original manuscripts. Many have said, why is this so important? We don't even have the original autographs of the Bible? They don't realize the nature of the attack. If the Bible as it was originally written had errors in it (mistakes in dates, numbers, etc.) then that reflects upon the righteous character of God himself. For ultimately, the Bible is God's product, God breathed. It is an expression of who God is.

*Now if God is righteous, then His word must be righteous. Therefore, it is the standard for our morality and actions.

*Now this is very important for us to realize. For we have many today who want to both acknowledge God and at the same time contradict His word. We have national leaders who invoke God's blessing and at the same time propose legislation and directives that directly oppose principles and morality that God clearly has revealed in His word. And this brings confusion to our nation. It brings an uncertainty. It brings a relativism.

*God's word is the expression of God himself. Therefore, it will never contradict God's will. So as God is the ultimate standard of righteousness, the Bible is righteous as well, our standard for morality and practice.

*It is almost impossible for us to imagine what this world would be like if God had not revealed His absolute standards in His word. When Thomas Paine showed the manuscript of The Age of Reason to Benjamin Franklin, Franklin

advised him not to publish it. "The world is bad enough with the bible; what would it be without it?", Ben Franklin said.

*Many have tried to erase the Bible from human society. Voltaire , the famous atheist who lived during the 18th century, once bragged that the Bible would be an extinct book in 100 years. The new liberalism was taking over human thought, and he was confident that the Scriptures were doomed to be forgotten. It was interesting that the library of the Earl of Dudley was auctioned off just a few years before W.W.2. The 92 volumes of Voltaire's works bound in calf leather were sold for just 2 dollars. Just about the same time, the British government paid the Soviet Union five hundred thousand dollars for the Codex Sinaiticus, an ancient Bible manuscript.

*Yes, the bible throughout history has been like the fence that the old Irishman built that was 4 feet wide and 3 feet tall. When someone asked him why he built it wider than it was high, he simply replied. "This way, if anyone kicks it over, it will be higher than it was in the first place." That is how the Bible has been down through history. Every time it has been attacked, it has resulted in greater estimation in the minds of people and great distribution throughout the world. This is because it is righteous and true. The Bible alone can be a solid foundation for life and morality.

J.J. Pruitt once penned this poem entitled THE BIBLE OUR COMPASS

"Once a captain strong and sturdy sailed his ship out to the deep;
Left the harbor far behind him, braved the mighty billow's sweep.
But he soon met dire disaster when with shame and fear, too late,
He discovered that his compass had been loaded with the freight.

Once a strong life, young and hopeful, sailed out on the stormy wave;
Met the shock of every tempest with a purpose noble, brave.
Now you ask, did he reach heaven, or was wrecked, a fearful fate?
Was his Bible in the cabin or just bundled with the freight?"

4. Yes, the Bible is a refuge for us, a source of redemption for us, and a source of righteousness for us. But finally, notice with me that the Bible also provides a remedy for so many of the ills that we face in this life. The Psalmist brings this out in the section entitled Qoph. Let me read this section for you.

READ PSALM 119:145-152

PS 119:145 I call with all my heart; answer me, O LORD, and I will obey your decrees.

PS 119:146 I call out to you; save me
and I will keep your statutes.

PS 119:147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I have put my hope in your word.

PS 119:148 My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

PS 119:149 Hear my voice in accordance with your love; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your laws.

PS 119:150 Those who devise wicked schemes are near, but they are far from your law.

PS 119:151 Yet you are near, O LORD,
and all your commands are true.

PS 119:152 Long ago I learned from your statutes
that you established them to last forever.

Did you notice all of the common problems that we as human beings have that were addressed by the Psalmist giving the Scriptures as a source of remedy?

*worry and anxiety can so easily rob us of our joy and contentment in life.

Worry usually makes its ugly appearance in the nighttime, stealing our sleep.

But the Psalmist says that when he rises before dawn to cry out for God's help, he puts his hope in God's word. When his eyes are open through the watches of

the night, he meditates upon God's promises. One of the best ways to cure insomnia is to use those times when wide awake in the middle of the night as

times to study God's word and pray. If the insomnia has been caused by the enemy, Satan will quickly move to a different tactic- for he doesn't want us to

study God's word. If the insomnia is just natural, there still can be no better way to use the time. But if we just lay awake worrying and worrying, Satan

has got us just where he wants us. And you can bet that the anxieties are going to keep coming our way. Paul said, that we are not to be filled with worry, but

we are to allow the peace of God to garrison our hearts and minds. Prayer and we could add the meditation on God's word are keys in that process. Phil. 4:6

*The Psalmist also speaks of God's word as a remedy when facing life-

threatening disasters. How often are we faced with possibilities that literally could affect the entire direction of our life? God's word is of great comfort to

us during these times. For the Bible gives to us God's perspective on life. It helps us to see the value and significance of this earthly existence from God's

point of view. The world continually tells us that this life is all that there is, and that the worse fate that can possibly befall us is to die. This is simply not

true. The Bible helps us to have a godly perspective on life. And then God's word also brings the presence and comfort of God into our life-threatening situation as well. WE are reminded of the power of God. We are reminded of the fact that God knows the end from the beginning. We are reminded of God's sovereign hand in all of life's events. This is a valuable source of remedy for us.

*Wicked people who are plotting evil schemes against us. What a problem this can be in our lives. But again, it is the Bible which provides a great remedy. The searchlight of God's word uncovers the wickedness behind their plots. The confidence that the Bible gives to us reaffirms the fact that we are walking in God's paths. What a blessing it is to have God's word during times when schemes are being plotted against us - it is a great remedy that brings confidence and assurance into our lives.

*Loneliness. This is one of the greatest fears that many people face today. Perhaps you heard of the man who made an appointment with a psychiatrist and asked him if he could lead him into becoming schizophrenic. The doctor was amazed. I have had many people ask me to help them solve this psychological problem, but none has ever desired it. Why do you want to have dual personalities? The man responded that with 2 personalities he might not be so lonely in life? Imagine that! Desiring a severe psychological disorder in order to not be lonely. According to Dr. Leonard Zunin, noted psychiatrist and author, "mankind's biggest problem is simply loneliness". Well, the Psalmist found God's word to be the best remedy for his loneliness. For the Scriptures constantly reminded him of God's presence very near.

*And insecurity, instability - what a tremendous problem this is in life. People afraid that they will lose their resources, people afraid that they won't be accepted by others, people afraid that they will run out of money. God's word can bring great security and stability into our lives. The Bible which reflects the very character of God himself is unchanging. We are reading the same law from Sinai that Moses himself read. Just think of that. 3,500 years have passed and the 10 commandments are exactly the same. We can read the same Psalms that David did. Yes, the culture is very different, but most of the basic human problems remain the same. These psalms speak to our hearts today as they did 3,000 years ago. We can read the same Epistles of the N.T. that the Apostle Paul wrote and read. The basic purpose and plan for the church has not changed in 2,000 years. What stability the word of God can bring into our lives.

*We need the "r's" of education. We all need to read and to write and to be able to do arithmetic.

*But we need the 4 "R's" of God's Word even more.

*We need the refuge that God's Word can give to us to weather the storms of life.

*We need the redemption that comes from God's word- the ability that it has to free us from the bondage of sin in our lives.

*We need the righteousness that comes from God's word- the absolute standard of right and wrong that can give to us guidance and direction in life.

*And we need the remedies that the Scriptures can give to us- help in all areas of life

*e.g. of John Wycliffe if there is time - Morning Star of the Reformation.
Persecuted for preaching and teaching. Locked away in exile by the leaders of the church of England. Wycliffe - you can lock me away and stop me from preaching. But you can not suppress the word of God. It will conquer. He then made the first English Translation.