

After listening to the bible reading, you may have gathered that today's topic is all about the bible – God's Word ...
What do you think about this book? Is it just a reference book that we might turn to on a Sunday morning?
Would you agree if I told you that they are really important - too important to be open just once a week?

So my question to you this morning is this: **What is the rightful place of the Scripture in our lives?** Psalm 19v :

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

¹⁰They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

¹¹By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

A good place to start is to pray as the psalmist prayed: Ps119 – the longest chp in the bible – a poem that sings the praises of God's law ... v18 "*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.*"

Many people have access to God's law, but only a few manage to find wonderful things there.

Let's pray that WE will this morning.

19v7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.

Have you ever considered how the scriptures can revive someone – whatever their situation?

"Perfect" means that there is no flaw in them – 100% right all the time, *every* time.

And it's just right for every occasion –

- from thank-you's to apologies
- from valentines to wedding anniversaries
- from birthdays to funerals

} ... the scriptures are perfect

If you want to encourage me, then don't be afraid to quote scripture! Drop me a txt!

They revive the soul like nothing else can ... They give encouragement, comfort, strength, guidance,

119v50 "*My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.*" They keep us going when the going gets tough.

19v7 The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

How trustworthy are my words this morning? How sure are you that the word preached from this pulpit is sound?

How about following the example of the Bereans [Act17v11], *who received the message with great eagerness, [and] examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.* In checking up on what was preached, they did a noble thing.

And if that's what they did under the Apostle Paul's preaching, how much more so for you today!

MY words are **fallible**; God's word is **infallible**. So check-up on me to make sure that it *is* God's word that's being preached today.

Use Keith's Fact Sheets to do a bit of an investigation for yourself. You'll be the richer for it.

The beauty of God's word is that you can trust in it ... *all* of it.

When we *don't* understand it, or see the sense behind it, we can still confidently trust in it – knowing that the *scriptures* are trustworthy because our **GOD** is trustworthy.

The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are steadfast forever and ever. [Ps111v7]

19v8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

In today's society, we have turned what is right and wrong into a debate! To assert any absolute views is seen to be arrogant.

"What's right for *you* might not be right for *me*." But in many cases, there is no room for that – because the scriptures give us the black and white on the most pressing issues of today = ...

... righteousness, salvation, eternity, ... the scriptures are absolutely clear. On such issues, don't argue with the word. It is always right. Indeed, I might say, 'don't argue with **God**; for *he* is always right'.

Example, ALL have sinned and fall short. After death, the judgement. Jesus said, "No one comes to the father, except through me". Salvation is found in no one else. ... Don't be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God to save.

Even so, there *are* times when we ignore, or wilfully go against God's word. How foolish of us; for it is *we* who stand to lose-out ... But lose-out on what? We lose our peace, our hope, we lose a clear conscience. God doesn't lead us down the garden path. ...

His paths may be straight and narrow, but they are **right**; and they lead to life – life to the full.

After all, '*the precepts of the LORD are right, giving **JOY** to the heart.*' - **not "misery"** as the devil would have us believe.

Ps119v35 *Direct me in the path of your commands, for there **I find delight.***

19v8 The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Have you ever been in need of more light along the path of life? ... Desperate to know the will of God? Well it's no mystery!

The answer to the **will** of God is in the **word** of God.

For far too long we struggle on our own – groping our way through the darkness. And it's not until we trip or fall, or bump into something unpleasant, that we eventually turn to God = *Then* we see light. The pathway becomes clear.

Probably the most famous verse from Ps 119, *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path*(v105)

19v9 *The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.*

The Law of God endures forever: (1Pe1v25) "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but **the word of the Lord stands forever.**" And this is the word that was preached to you.

Jesus himself declared, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but **my words will never pass away**" Lu 21v33
... we may have just passed into a new decade, but the relevance of God's Word will never pass away. It endures forever

19v9 goes on to say... *The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.*

His word is "Sure". When life seems to get out of control or we lose our bearing, the fog is so thick, "Which way is North?" the scriptures can help us regain confidence and certainity.

Oh how we need his word in our day-to-day lives – not just when we're struggling. Are the scriptures a part of *your* day-to-day life? Or has God's word perhaps become dry ... or tasteless.

Is there a danger that we become *too familiar* with it; that we take for granted just how precious his words are?

That may be so, but not for the psalmist ...

19v10 *They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

How much do you value the scriptures? ... "more precious than much pure gold"?

... or [quoting a TV ad] would you rather "exchange your unwanted gold for CASH"?

Do you find his words as sweet as honey to the soul ... or has it become tasteless?

Unfortunately, it is when we **lose interest** in the scriptures that we need them the most.

So even when, tasteless, **do not abandon his word** [as if HE has abandoned you]. Keep at it. As we saw in v7 they **revive** the soul.

They are our daily sustenance. Here's a very simple children's song: "Read your bible, pray every day if you want to grow."

The "scriptures to our souls" are to be as "bread to our bodies". Indeed, Job [23v12] went further ...

*I have treasured the words of his mouth **more than** my daily bread.*

Could you say the same? Perhaps it's something you can agree with in **principle**; but what about in **practice**?

I think that the importance of breakfast is accepted wisdom. And yet we have lost the importance of our spiritual breakfast.

To what lengths did God go to teach us this point? ... When the Israelites wandered in the desert, "God humbled them." Why?

Deut 8v3 God humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna. [Why?]

to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

For the children of Israel, it was a lesson that had to be learnt through bitter experience (40yrs!). Looking back we can see the purpose of their hunger - that they might learn that they couldn't live without God's word. **[Quote verse again !!!]**

So the next time God disciplines you, fly straight to his word. One-day, you'll be able to look back and echo Ps119v71 = **It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.** ... Do we *really* need to be afflicted/humbled?

From my experience, it is during adversity, that those familiar verses suddenly mean so much more.

There is a depth there, a whole new dimension, that you never imagined.

19v11 *By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

Having READ the word, we need to LIVE the word ...

It speaks of 'no reward' for merely reading, or for just paying lip service to the scriptures.

It is only in keeping them that *there is great reward*

Jesus said in Lu11v28, *Blessed are those who hear the word of God **and obey** it.*

You may be familiar with the parable of the wise and foolish builders, but how familiar are you with the interpretation?

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does **not** put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

So what *are* the rewards in keeping them? I've touched on some already. I'd encourage you to read Ps 19 again in your own time.

And then there are rewards of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge ... about the things of eternity, and the things of today. It also promises great peace, encouragement, and hope.

But the greatest reward has to be this – the gift of **new life – eternal life**...

John6v63, Jesus said, *The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life*

1Pe1v23 "For you have been **born again**, through the living and enduring word of God".

How sad it is, for those who have read God's Word, and yet have fallen short of its great reward. Some may approach the bible as a great work of **literacy** ... in the same league as Shakespeare, or Wordsworth. Others might refer to the bible as a **philosophical** resource ... or as part of some **historical** research.

They can become experts in the contents of this book, and yet miss out on its true value.

... yes, according to 2Tm3v16, it **IS useful** for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness; **but first and foremost** (as we read in the *preceding* verse) it is able to make you **wise for salvation**.

There was a group of Experts in the Law who knew their bibles inside out ... Probably better than anyone in this room. And yet Jesus said to them, "*You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.*" (Mat 22v29) May that never be true of us.

These Sadducees were out to trick the Lord Jesus. Their knowledge of the bible was strictly **academic & political**.

Now don't get me wrong: I believe that there *is* a place for God's law in education and in politics ... wouldn't society be a better place for it? ... Yes, ...but where's the **best** place for God's law?

The best place for God's law is to reside ... **in your hearts**. That's the answer for today's society.

Ps119v11: *I have hidden your word **in my heart** that I might not sin against you*'.

Let us not use the scriptures purely for intellectual leverage – as the Sadducees did.

They studied it with their minds, but never pondered it in their hearts ... and allowed it to blossom in their lives.

Col 3v16 *Let the word of Christ **dwelt in you richly** as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom*

... otherwise, you'll be like a Pharisee – the other group of experts in the law of God.

Jesus came down on them like a ton of bricks, "Woe to you, you hypocrites! You say one thing, yet do another ... You hypocrites"
[Mt 23]

So where do we go from here?

Read the bible & pray every day, if you want to grow.

God's Word is a mighty sword. With it you can stand firm against the attacks of the Evil One.

Remember how Jesus stood against each temptation that the devil threw at him? Each time, he said, [Mt 4v1-11]

It is written ... man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God

It is written ... do not put the Lord your God to the test

It is written ... Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only

Now you won't **always** have the bible to hand; therefore **MEMORISE it today so that you can draw upon it tomorrow**.

Having armed yourselves with the scriptures, you must 'correctly handle the word of truth.' As the Lord's temptation in the wilderness demonstrates, the scriptures can be used for both good AND ill – for **Satan also quoted it**.

*All Scripture is **God-breathed*** Tim 3v16

And because they are "God-breathed", we need to pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as we read his word.

After all, what better interpreter for a book than the author himself !

And so the Holy Spirit is able to make God's Word **come alive** [literally] to every reader who so prays.

*For the word of God is **living and active***. Heb4v12

My prayer is that you take God's Word to heart, **and** put it into practice – just like the **wise man** who built his house on 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

Let me finish with one more quote: Ps119v 165 *Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.*

*Great **peace** have they who love your law, and **nothing** {come rain or shine} **can make them stumble**.*

Love his word: ... Read it, ... breathe it, ... live it. Amen