

God's Word: Its Ministry and Excellency as Applied to the
Believer in Contrast to the Virtual World

Psalm 19:7-14

October 8, 2023

If you missed last week, we started into Psalm 19. And we looked at the first 6 verses of that psalm, which talked about general revelation: the created world, its nature, its effects, and how we can apply that. And today we're gonna finish up this psalm talking about special revelation, the revealed Word of God, and the right response that we should have to it. So if you're not already there, turn with me to Psalm 19, and we will read the entirety of the psalm. Psalm 19 is a psalm written by David.

Verse 1, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, there are no words. Their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. And in them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber and, like a strong man, runs its

course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. And the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. And the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

"Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins, and let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

As I mentioned last week, the reason I chose to go through this psalm is, I was reading (and read) a book, uh, by Tony Reinke called, "12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You." And in one of those chapters he, uh, makes the point: One of the ways that our phone is changing us is that they condition us to feed on that which men produce, rather than that which God has produced for us and wants us to feed on, wants our minds to be dwelling upon. Last week we talked about the nature and the effects of general revelation (the created world), how God designed it to have an effect, drawing our eyes up to glorify God and worship Him. But our phones, they do the exact opposite. We spend all our time looking at what men have produced, drawing our eyes and our worship inward rather than up to God.

Today we are in the same vein of thinking, going to look at what God has given us to fill our minds with, in contrast to what we often turn to: Turning to our phones, turning to all manner of other things to fill our minds. So often, when we get some free time from the good work that the Lord has given us, and other good obligations and responsibilities to our families; so often when we get free time, we're turning to feed on something other than God's Word. For some, it's hours and hours a day wasted in front of a screen, squandering away our time on

something that doesn't satisfy, endless scrolling, video after video.

And statistics range pretty widely, but on average, Americans spend about three to five hours a day on their phones, just on screen time (doesn't, doesn't count the number of hours you actually spend on the phone, which I think for Americans is quite few these days). The screen time, three to five hours a day. And that's just the average. That equals, if you extrapolate that out, two months out of the year. If you live to be 70, that's nearly 12 years straight you will have spent on your phone. And that's just the average. And according to studies, this excessive time on phones is a detriment to our health. It impairs our sleep, leads to depression, and even stifles brain development in those who are still growing.

And now I'm guessing that if we polled our church, that we would probably be on the lower end of that average. I would hope a lot lower than that, but I know we're all human. There's a reason this Christian author felt the need to write that book. We as Christians, we still get sucked in like the rest of the world. We so often turn and feed on what has been produced by

men in varying media options; all these things that are empty (at best), fruitless for our soul, but often (at worst) detrimental and damaging. And yet we continue to go back to it time and time again, seeking refreshment for our souls and our weary lives.

If you are following along in the church's Bible reading plan that we hand out, you have just recently (probably last week, maybe) read through Jeremiah chapter 2. Turn there with me real quickly, to Jeremiah chapter 2. I just want to make a few comments on this. But the Lord is rebuking Israel, or Judah, rather, for leaving him for things that are empty, for idols that do not satisfy; for leaving Yahweh, the life-giving God, for that which is soul-destroying and empty.

In Jeremiah chapter 2 verse 11 he says, "Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?" And it's a rhetorical question. The answer is no. The nations who worship gods that are really no gods, they haven't changed their gods. But he says, "But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit." And what Jeremiah writes is fascinating to think about. Those who worship empty idols, empty gods, they

don't forsake their gods. Those who worship idols are so faithful to them, even though they're vain and empty. Why is that? Because worshiping idols is really worshiping the self. Worshiping idols looks like doing whatever you really want to do anyway. So they're faithful to it, because that's what their heart desires. But those who serve the living God, they so often exchange him for what does not profit: Worshiping idols, worshiping self, our own desires. And I think we do this so often by feeding on our phones instead of searching Scripture and knowing our God more.

And look at, right after this, how God calls us to think about this in the next verse, Jeremiah 2:12, "Be appalled, O heavens, at this. Be shocked, be utterly desolate. For my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and they have hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." We ought to see our own neglect of our time as a great evil, that we squander hours scrolling on a phone; trading the living God for empty, broken cisterns that hold no water.

Psalm 19 (if you want to go back there), Psalm 19 holds up before us the nature and effects of special revelation. It displays the excellencies of the Word of God, that we might come, and desire it, and feast on it; to see where true hope lies, to see where true restoration is, and relaxation and rest. Psalm 19 holds up before us the Word of God and its ministry that it can have upon us, that we might feed on the Word of God rather than everything else. My prayer for this morning is that all of our hearts would be renewed in our desire for the Word, that this Word would have the same effect in our hearts as we see in the psalmist, that we would see the ministry that it can have on our souls, it's excellencies, and that we would apply this the same way that the psalmist has in this text.

So, three points for our outline this morning: The ministry of special revelation, the excellency of special revelation, and the applicability of special revelation. The ministry, excellency, and applicability. So let's start.

Point one, the ministry of special revelation. There's an abrupt change from the first six verses as you transition into the seven, second set of verses (7-9). There's a totally

different flow, a different cadence, different vocabulary. Whereas the first 6 verses, they're longer, they're more drawn out to poetically demonstrate the continuous and abundant witness of creation, verse 7 begins with short, rapid-fire descriptive adjectives, effects to capture the wonder and majesty of written revelation; written revelation in its ministry to those who respond to it rightly. Commentators vary greatly on how they approach these verses (7-9), but I just want to look at each line as we read it in the context that David wrote it, and try to apply it that way. Instead of looking at all the synonyms for "Law," and then all the attributes, and then all the effects, I want to just keep 'em in the lines that they're in, and, and go through it that way.

One more overall observation before we get into it: The first six verses use the general term for "God." The first six verses, the first six verses, "The heavens declare the glory of God," the general term for "God," there, indicating his might, his strength. But in the second set of verses, it shifts to repeatedly use the covenant name of God, "Yahweh," which communicates more than the general term for God: communicates his faithfulness, his eternity, his independence, his relationship with the people. Whereas the general term for God,

Elohim, *cs*, communicates transcendence, this communicates imminence, that God is near, he desires to be in a relationship with his people. So even in the names David chooses for God, we see greater clarity here in what and who God is, and how he wants us to interact with him.

So we're looking at the ministry of special revelation. The first ministry of the Word to us is that it is perfect and reviving. Perfect and reviving. "The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." Again, there are many synonyms that he uses for the Word of God: "Law," "testimony," "precepts," "commandment." And they each have a nuance that I want to draw out as we go through this, rather than just chalking this up to "David wanted to vary his words just for the sake of not repeating himself." I think he used each of those for a specific reason, and there's a nuance that I want to draw out.

"Law" is the word *Torah*, which means "instruction." It can be used to refer to the first five books of the Bible. It can be used refer to the Law given at Sinai in its entirety, or it can be used to refer to Holy Scripture as a whole. Most commentators agree that it's referring to Scripture as a whole. All of these

are. But many people, particularly today, hear "Law," and they think of restricting rules with condemnations attached to them. But the Law, it also included all the ritual sacrifices, and God's provision of grace for us to find forgiveness, and come and worship him, and have a relationship with him. George Zemeck notes that this term, "Law," should not be seen as a legalistically-perceived code of mandates, but an underlying principle of life. That is to say, when one follows and obeys this underlying principle of life, there is blessing in life to follow.

And that is precisely the point David makes here in the Psalms, where he speaks of the effects of it being life-giving, restoring. The Law is the teaching that leads to life, and this Law is perfect. It is without fault. It is free of blemish. It is impeccable. The Law is the principle of life, and it is perfect. It's so complete that it covers every aspect of life. There is no deficiency in it. In other words, it is as Paul told us in 2 Timothy 3:17, it is all-sufficient for life and godliness. There is no area of our life that this Word fails to instruct us in the way of life and blessing.

And because it is perfect and unfailing in every way, it ministers to us by reviving our soul. This word "reviving," it's a participle that means, generally, "to turn" or "return." It's the word often translated as "repent," but in this particular form means "to cause to be put back in order." And in context with the soul, it refers to restoring liveliness, vitality, life. And the fact that it's a participle indicates that the subject is in the constant state of performing this verbal action. The Law is in the constant state of reviving the soul.

So it is true that the Word of God initially regenerates our heart and brings our dead soul back to life. But also, as we walk and go through this life as a believer, it continues to revive and restore our soul to health. To the one who indulges themselves in this Word, it continues to give life. It is both the ministry of the Word by the Spirit that regenerates our hearts, but also refreshes and revar, revives our soul through life's, all of life's trials, all of life's sorrows. James Boice says, "Therefore, no matter what our sins may have been, or our problems are, the Bible is able to turn us from our sins, to lead us through our problems, and both feed and enrich us so that we are able to enjoy the full benefits of spiritual life." Jesus testified to this when he told the devil (quoting from

Deuteronomy 8:3), "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

So, beloved, whatever problem you face, whatever struggle you have, whatever anxiety you face, worry that you mull over, discouragement and depression; it is this perfect Word that the Lord has given us that will restore your soul. But where do we so often turn to instead? When we are weak and weary and burdened by struggles, exhausted in the toil of life, we turn to, as Jeremiah said, cisterns that're broken. They hold no water to refresh our souls. We turn to that which is empty, feed on endless entertainment that can be soul-destroying, not life-giving. We trade the living God for that which is no god at all. We trade life for death.

And why, when we are empty and unsatisfied, and even more anxious and more worried, do we return and drink from that well over and over and over again? That's a question each of us must answer for our own heart. For some, it may be laziness, some it may just be weakness, some rebellion. We have to examine our own hearts and answer that question. What I want to do here is hold up, this is what gives you life. This is what will restore your

soul. Nothing else. Feed on this. Drink from this well, not empty cisterns that hold no water. So the Word of God, it ministers to us. It's perfect. It's reviving the soul.

Second, it is "sure and wising," or "sure and making wise." Look at the second half of verse 7. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." "Testimony," it comes from a verb meaning "to bear witness." It's a synonym for *Torah* and all these other words referring to the Word of God. But this refers to Yahweh's own affirmation concerning his nature, his attributes, his promises, and the consequent demands. The written Law, it stands as a witness of God's promises to His people. The word, it emphasizes both authority of their source in the Lord, and the accountability of their reception by men; stands as a witness that we're accountable to it. And this testimony, it's sure, it's firm, it's reliable, it's faithful, it's permanent. This enduring, everlasting testimony, it ministers to us. It stands as a guidepost for us, "making wise the simple."

"Simple," here, it refers to someone who's naive, generally young, but inexperienced, easily seduced, needing instruction.

The Proverbs portray the "simple" as someone who wanders into all kind of dangers, not knowing that they're ahead, stumbling, falling into all kinds of traps. So "making wise" refers to imparting the knowledge and skill to implement what's here, so that one can walk the path of life, avoiding the dangers of sin, falling into them unknowingly. And these instructions, these guideposts are worthy of our trust because they correspond to reality, they do not change. And if we walk in them, we find blessedness in life, again, avoiding the dangers of sin, and stumbling. They're guideposts that stand and testify to the consequences and warn. They stand for all eternity as a faithful witness to us.

But contrast that with what we so often feed on, the instructions and the guideposts of the world. Is the teaching of the world sure, stable to stand on, reliable? Is it corresponding with reality, and trustworthy? Do phones warn the naive of pitfalls, and make someone wise? Well, maybe in the same way that Adam and Eve eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil were made wise. But no, phones don't "make wise the simple." We know there are puppeteers on the other side of them that prey on the simple to exploit them. They call out to the simple like Lady Folly in the Proverbs, "Come and indulge in

sin, enjoy temporary pleasure and indulgence," leading (we know because of the Proverbs) to Sheol and death.

Beloved, don't be instructed by the world. It's only going to lead into sin. But turn to the Word of God and be made wise. Let it minister to your heart and make you wise to walk in this life according to all that God has commanded. Be made wise by picking it up and digesting it. Don't give your time to that which is empty at best, and likely inviting you to sin in some way, like Lady Folly. Don't listen to her calls, don't go to her. Stay away, cut her off. So, the Word is perfect and reviving; it's sure and making wise.

Third, it is right and rejoicing. Look at verse 8. "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." This word, "Precept," it could be translated as "instructions" or "procedures." Not just general instructions, but step-by-step instructions, like a procedure. "Do this, and then this, and then this," like instructions on how to put something together. If you want a blessed life, these are the instructions on how to walk every step of the way. And these step-by-step instructions, they're "right." One commentator says, "This means that they are

exactly right, appropriate, clear and direct." The directions, they're clear and right. They're not crooked and deceptive, muddied. And because they are right, they are "rejoicing the heart." They're rejoicing because, if God's rules or instructions were crooked or unclear, we wouldn't ever know if we were pleasing Him. If his rules were unrighteous or capricious, we wouldn't ever have joy because we could never be confident in His pleasure of us.

The Quran portrays Allah this way. It says that when a Muslim dies, he'll be put on the scales, and his life weighed. And even if he was a good Muslim, if Allah feels unhappy that day, he'll just push on the other side of the scales and condemn you. Is there any rejoicing under that kind of rule? But under the clear, righteous rules of our God, there is much rejoicing, because we're told the wise way to walk. We can rejoice as we obey and follow him. We can be confident that he is pleased as we walk in obedience to him.

But can we ever please the gods of the Metaverse? Is what is "right and good" to them clear and righteous, stable and unchanging? No, what is right to them is always changing. What

pleases them today will get you canceled tomorrow. There's no rejoicing in that kind of capriciousness. The one who feeds on God's Word rejoices, knowing that he is pleased, that God is pleased as we walk wisely according to the way that he has set before us. But there is no rejoicing when we feed on what the world has to offer, 'cause we can never please them. We can never follow their capricious, ever-changing rules. So let's not even bother trying. Let's seek that which brings true rejoicing to our hearts: Knowing God better, and being confident that we are walking according to his Word.

Fourth ministry that the Word has to us: It is pure and enlightening. Pure and enlightening. Look at the second half of verse 8, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." "Commandment" emphasizes authority, and it expresses the insistent will of a personal God, that he reigns over his people. He has the authority to tell us what to do. Whereas our world sees authority as oppressive, keeping people under bondage, authority subdues people, it's wicked and polluted; here David says, "The commandments of the Lord, they're pure." True authority from God is pure. It's without error. It's good, it's not bad, and it is enlightening the eyes. It is light and freedom for our souls, not bondage.

Whereas the simple is made wise to avoid going down certain paths, here the Scriptures are portrayed as the instrument that will give our eyes light to see and walk the path of life without stumbling. Lets us see this hazard over here and step over it. It shines a light on the path that we need to walk.

But not only does it do that, it also shines a light into our hearts to reveal sin. When the light comes on in the room, it reveals all kinds of things. And beloved, we cannot say we want to be sanctified more than anything else in life, and, w, at the same time, waste away in the dark Metaverse, keeping our sin hidden. If we truly want to be sanctified, we will expose ourselves to the light of the Word and the commandments of the Lord regularly. And true freedom is found in exposing sin and putting it to death, mortifying it, having our eyes enlightened to our own sin, and seeing the path that we need to walk on. That's what the Word of God does for us. It exposes our hearts, gives us the path to walk on. It's freedom and life.

Following the world is wandering around in darkness, tripping over everything. Misery. So God calls us into the

light. You want to walk in the light, you pick up your Bible, you read it. This is what the Word of God does to us. It exposes our sin. It shines a light. But when we neglect the Word, the light dims, and we don't see clearly. So let the Word of God minister to your heart by shining this light into your life.

Number five: The Word is clean, and its ministry to us is enduring. Look at verse 9. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." The pattern of the synonyms for the Word of God is broken with this use of "fear," but Calvin suggests that it's just a, a metonymy, which means a substitute of one word in place for another, still, um, referencing the Word of God, but rather the effects of it. They cause the fear of God in our hearts. But almost every commentator I read say this is still referring to the Word of God by its effect. So it's still a reference to the Word.

The Word of God is clean. While all filthiness brings decay, cleanliness brings incorruptibility. Think of a piece of iron that doesn't have any rust on it. If you keep it clean, it doesn't rust. But as soon as you get rust on there, corrupts and decays. It's clean, it's incorruptible. And because it's

incorruptible, it is enduring forever. And if it endures forever, its ministry to us never ceases. It will endure forever. It will last just as long as we last in this life. We can trust it to never change, and always be there to minister to us. We won't have to learn new ways to please God, because it doesn't change. It won't one day fail. It endures forever. It will lead us to enduring.

Contrast that with the ministry of your phone to your heart. Is it incorruptible and enduring forever? Can we trust it to always be there? Oh, maybe as long as we have a cord, and the Wi-Fi doesn't give out, cell service doesn't give out. But no, it's dependent upon so much, ever changing. Moreover, does it lead you to fear the Lord, thus wanting to keep yourself clean, enduring to the end? God's Word will do that in you. Metaverse will more likely corrupt your soul, rather than lead you to greater and greater sanctification.

So the ministry of the Word, it is reviving us. It's making us wise, causing our hearts to rejoice. It et, lighten, enlightens our eyes. And it is doing these things enduringly.

And finally, the Word of God, it is true and righteous. Look at the end of verse 8. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." The end of verse 8, "The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." This word for "rules," it comes from a word that means "to judge," has a heavy forensic weight behind it. But this word refers to the judge's revealed decisions or judgments. God's judgments in Scripture, and of Scripture, are "true and righteous altogether." That means that what he says here about his own Word is true. It's corresponding with reality. You will never find it to be wrong. All that has been declared about the Word is true. Believe it, trust it, even when your emotions tell you otherwise.

The Word is altogether reviving, making wise, giving you a spirit of rejoicing, enlightening the eyes, making you clean and fearing the Lord, sanctifying you. In contrast, we might put all of this, the ministry that the Word has on this, we might contrast that poetically with what man produces. We might say the law of man, in contrast, is flawed, killing the soul. The testimony of man is deceptive, destroying the simple. The precepts of man are false, sorrowing the heart. The commandment of man is defiled, darkening the eyes. The fear of man is

corrupt, fleeting always; and the rules of man are untrue and unjust altogether.

So, beloved, with these two things before us, why do we so often drink from that well, that cistern that holds no water? We continue to drink from a spigot that has no water coming from it. The Scriptures, Psalm 19 here sets before us life and death. Choose life. Let the Word have its intended effect on you as you feed on it. Let us no longer go to broken cisterns that hold no water. Let us no longer trade the living God for that which is no God at all. Let us no longer trade the benefits of this Word that we have seen, and its ministry to us, for vain empty promises of the world. Choose life.

So we've seen the ministry of the Word to us. Now let's look at the excellencies of special revelation. Verse 10, "Moreover to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb." So we see here the excellency of special revelation, the Word of God. David continues to lift up the Word of God before us, portraying it in such a way that we cannot deny the veracity of

its claims. It's abundantly obvious. Why would we pick something other than the Scriptures to turn to?

He declares two excellencies for us. First, it is most desirable. And it is most satisfying, second. It is "to be desired." This is a participle, which means the emphasis is on its fixed and permanent quality, the fixed quality of the Word of God, that it is more desirable than gold, even much fine gold. That is, you should seek after it like it is the most valuable thing ever, because it is. You should work for it like you would if you knew you had access to a gold mine.

The Word of God is a veritable gold mine waiting for you to dive in and reap its rewards. But it isn't like the words of this book, the true words of God are buried somewhere in there, and we have to get 'em out. Rather, the word here is "refined gold." It's already been dug up. It's telling us that this is like a truckload full of gold bars. More desirable is the Word of God than even refined gold.

It's more desirable than anything else because of the benefits we just talked about, how it ministers to us. Don't

believe the lies of the world, that tells you there are many more desirable things out there. Lots of things popping up on your phone telling you, "This is desirable, this is desirable." There's nothing more you should seek than the words in this book, knowing God. Nothing you seek, no job will satisfy, no promotion, no sin you can indulge in, no status. Many of those things are desirable, but they do not compare with the Word of God. This is more desirable than a truckload of refined gold. It is the most desirable thing in the universe, because it teaches us to know God, to commune with him. It's the most desirable thing.

Second, it is the most satisfying thing. It's "sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb." Honey was a delicacy. If you had a sweet tooth, honey was really the only way to satisfy it. There's no processed sugars in abundance like there is today. Proverbs 27:7 says, "The one who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry, everything bitter is sweet." Honey is chosen here because the idea is, if you're too full to eat honey, then you're too full to eat anything. But the Word of God, it's even sweeter than honey. It's more satisfying, more pleasing. The one who's hungry is going to eat something. You can either feast on the Word of God that is more satisfying than

honey, sweeter to the taste, enjoyable; or you can feast on what man produces. And if you're starving, even the most bitter thing tastes sweet. So you can eat all that the world has to offer, but it goes down and it is bitter in your soul.

And if we are used to feeding on what the world has to offer, our taste buds are not used to the Word of God. One commentator says, "We have to retrain our senses 'cause our senses have been so dulled by the sweetness of the world." By the world, it's, our sweetness towards the Word of God has been dulled. Therefore, we have to mortify our love for the world and stop feeding on that, to taste the sweetness of the Word of God. But if you do that, you will find the Word of God to be so satisfying.

The Word of God will so fill you with satisfaction in God that, as that proverb said, if you're full with this, you're not gonna desire sin. Not entirely. It's not that you'll never ever desire sin, but the more satisfied you are in God, the less you will look to sin to satisfy you. You'll look at sin like you look at the leftovers in the garbage can after Thanksgiving dinner. Do you want to eat that when you're stuffed from

Thanksgiving dinner? No. You loathe the sight of all of that after you are stuffed and satisfied. Such is the excellency of the Word of God. It is all-satisfying to the soul.

But compare that to Proverbs 26:11. "Like a dog that returns to it v, its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." How satisfying is vomit to return to? Disgusting to think about. That's how we ought to look upon that which draws our affections away from God; that we turn to instead of God. That's how we should look upon that which is returned to for satisfaction of our souls, instead of God. We ought to see it as vomit. But the Word of God is satisfying as honey. So the Word, it is more desirable than much fine gold. And unlike earthly pursuits, when we get it, and we indulge ourselves in it, it is all-satisfying.

These, beloved, are the excellencies of the Word. And while we may have fleshly desires for what the world offers, struggling with that (as we read from Romans 7), we know deep down they don't satisfy, that their desirability is only an illusion. Let us renew our minds with this truth. Let us trust that what the Word says here is true, and seek that which is truly desirable, that which truly satisfies.

So we've seen the ministry of the Word and the excellencies of the Word. Now the applicability of the Word, the applicability of special revelation, how we apply this, how the psalmist responds to this. And such glorious truths demand a response. You cannot hear such marvelous realities of what the Word can affect in you, nor its excellencies, and just shrug, and, "Meh." The psalmist responds and expresses how every servant of the Lord should respond. This is how we should respond.

First (I think I have five things in here), first, we are to be circumspect. Verse 11, "Moreover, by them is your servant warned. In keeping them there is great reward." We are to be circumspect; that is, prudent and mindful of the consequences of our action. Looking from the present to the end, the consequences of our actions. We are to consider the positive and the negative consequences of our actions. We are to be warned regarding the outcome if we do not heed these words.

"Warned." It is a participle, again, indicating that the Scriptures are constantly in the state of warning the servant of

the Lord that, if you go down the road of folly, the end is death. But the path of obedience is life, and in keeping them there is great reward. We must be circumspect and keep our eyes on the outcome of our choices. Down this path is death. If I go down there, I know that's coming in the end. I go down this path, there is reward in life. We have to keep the long view in mind. We must first be circumspect regarding going down the wrong path; warned against sin, the harmful effects of it, even as believers. We must be warned against the lies and errors of this world, knowing that they all end in death. And we need such warnings 'cause the world is deceptive, and it's clever, and it's pervasive; leads to all kinds of vices. It whispers to us like Lady Folly, "You can come down here, indulge in this. There won't be any bad consequences." No, we've got to see the true end of that. We've got to be circumspect. We're to look at the path that we're on. We're to be warned by seeing those who have given themselves to such sins, as we are prone to. Observe the consequences. Be warned not to go the same way.

But also, positively, we are to look down the path of righteousness and see its end. "Reward." This word is a word that means "heel," or "hindquarters," or "behind." That refers to the very back of something, the end of it. And it often

takes, as it does here, a meaning of reward or wages. I want to make sure, David could have used another word for reward or wages, but I would think David wants to make sure that there's no mistake regarding what he's talking about. He's talking not about immediate rewards, or rewards we'll see immediately, but the end result. The rewards that we see right now were delineated in 7-9. He wants us to look at the end, to be circumspect about the end, the reward that's to come at the end.

And this is difficult for us today because there's so much instant gratification that can be had in our world, and particularly on our phones. But no matter how much instant gratification you manage to attain in this life, when the end comes it will just be disappointing. If you're a believer, all of your squandered time, it won't count against you. But Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3 that it will be burned up in the fire. It's only what survives the fire that you will be rewarded with in eternity, have something to show for the stewardship of your life.

And yes, there are reasons to be warned temporarily, and motivated for our rewards temporarily in this life. But we're to be circumspect, thinking about the long game. We need to fight the urge for immediate gratification and keep the long game in mind. When we have time to invest in something, we keep in mind the long game. Are you going to invest in cisterns that hold no water, give no return, lead to death? Are you gonna keep the long game in mind, and feed on the Word of God even if you don't feel like it? Serve the Lord even when it's hard. Invest in what will produce great reward for us in the end. So we first need to be circumspect; consider the warnings of sin, as well as the reward that we can have as we walk faithfully according to His Word. We need to be circumspect.

Second, we need to be discerning. Look at the second part of, or all of 12, "Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults." "Errors" here refers to transgressions made in ignorance. In light of the hope of reward for those who obey the Lord and seek him, the psalmist here, he expresses a bit of despair as he contemplates his own life, and he cries out to God, "Who can know all of his sins and, done in ignorance? Who can know all of his sins?" It's rhetorical, but in light of what we've just learned, we have the Word of God to

expose all of those sins. We should grow out of our ignorance into knowledge of the sins that we commit and turn from them. Be warned and turn away. Come to a greater knowledge of God and how He wants us to live. We should read and study Scripture so we can discern our errors and repent of them.

But maybe you thought it was acceptable to spend 5 hours a day glued to your phone. Maybe you were ignorant. You thought it's acceptable to live your life that way. Maybe you didn't know your life is a stewardship that you'll have to give an account to the Lord someday for. Well, now you do. If you didn't before, now you do. Don't squander your life away in the Metaverse. If the time you spend on your phone is not inherently sinful, you're not doing something inherently sinful, we have the freedom to enjoy God's creation in moderation. But our life is a stewardship. We have to set everything in that context. We have to be discerning regarding that. We have to be discerning to see sin. Avoid it. Look at the Scriptures. Examine our hearts. We might be knowing, and not sinning in ignorance.

But thirdly, we also have to be confessing. Look at the second half of verse 12. "Declare me innocent from hidden

faults." Some commentators say that this is just David's asking God basically to dismiss his sins of ignorance that he doesn't really know about. "I was ignorant, so declare me innocent of those things, Lord." Others say no, this is David confessing that he has most certainly sinned in ignorance many times, things that he is either ignorant that it is a sin, or ignorant that he committed a sin. But here David acknowledges (I, I agree with the latter, this is David confessing), David acknowledges, "I know I have sinned in ignorance. Please forgive me and declare me innocent."

When we learn that we have sinned in ignorance, we must confess and seek the Lord's forgiveness. We shouldn't play off our sin like it's no big deal. "I was just weak. I didn't know any better." It's still sin. Confess and commit to obey. For we know if we do not confess, if we regard iniquity in our hearts, we don't confess and repent, we can't expect the Lord to answer any of our prayers.

Thus, fourthly, David moves on to petitioning. After we have confessed, then we petition the Lord. Look at verse 13. "Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins. Let them

not have dominion over me, and then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression." One commentator says, "By the word 'Keep back,' he intimates that such is the natural propensity of the flesh to sin, that even the saints themselves would immediately break forth, or rush headlong into it, did not God, by his own guardianship and protection, keep them back. It is to be observed that while he calls himself the servant of God, he nevertheless acknowledges that he had need of the bridle, lest he should be arrogantly and rebelliously break forth in transgressing the law of God."

This is David, who is probably much more advanced in the fear of the Lord than we are, and he petitions the Lord, "Lord, hold me back from sinning." If David needs to pray this prayer, how much more so do we need to petition the Lord that he would hold us back from sinning?

David in particular asked the Lord to keep him back from presumptuous sins. Presumptuous sins are a willful, intentional disregard for the Law of God. "I know this is sin. I'm gonna do it anyway." It isn't something you do by accident. It is willful and intentional. And such sins are particularly destructive

because they sear our conscience, they harden our hearts. God took these kinds of sins so seriously that in the Law there is no provision for them. There's no atonement for them. Rather, there was the death penalty.

Now that doesn't mean that there is no forgiveness for them. But we cannot take lightly when we willfully and deliberately go on sinning. When we look at something, we say, "I know it's sinful for me to do this. I'm gonna do it anyway," there is something seriously wrong in our souls that we need to address, need to examine our own hearts.

David says, "Keep me back from those things, Lord, let me never presume upon your grace and go on sinning." But let us follow David's example here and turn to the Lord to strengthen us by the power of His Spirit. May we petition Him to keep us back from intentionally disregarding His Word as our source of life, in order to willfully seek other things for our soul's satisfaction. David knows, without the Lord giving him strength, these fleshly desires would rule him. So he petitions God to not let them rule over him, protect his heart from any other rule than the lordship of Yahweh in his life.

And we would do well to make the same petition to our Lord, that he might keep us from giving ourselves to any other lord, being taken by any other rule, enticed by any other rule. And we must attempt not to walk in our own strength. We ought to wake every day recognizing that we walk in His strength, and so we would do well to petition Him for greater strength, greater restraint upon our sin, greater zeal to kill our sin and grow in sanctification, walk in faithfulness.

So we are to be, as His servants, we're to be circumspect, we're to be discerning, we're to be confessing, we're to be petitioning. And, finally, we are to be increasing. Verse 14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." Here David becomes very Jesus-esque when he petitions the Lord to help him obey the Law, not just outwardly, as the Pharisees did, but even to the deepest recesses of his heart. David wanted not just to obey the Lord outwardly, but he wanted that to increase even to the words that he spoke, the thoughts of his heart.

David isn't con, content with outward compliance. He wants the deepest recesses of his hearts, of his heart, the words that overflow from his mouth, to be pleasing to the Lord. And this hints at the fact that David knows where the ultimate problem resides, and that's in his heart. He petitions the Lord that his compliance with the Law not be merely external, but increasing even into his heart. It's a matter of the heart.

Tony Reinke states in the preface to his book, in "12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You," he says, "My phone screen divulges, in razor sharp pixels, what my heart really wants. The glowing screen on my phone projects in my eyes the desires and loves that live in the most abstract corners of my heart and soul, finding visible expression in pixels of images, video and texts for me to see, and consume, and type, and share. This means that whatever happens on my smartphone, especially under the guise of anonymity, is the true expose of my heart, reflected in full-color pixels back into my eyes." End Quote.

So were we to throw our phones away today, it would not solve the problem. Our hearts are prone to wander. Our phones just give us a very convenient path to wander on aimlessly. But

it is a heart problem. Like David, we need to ask the Lord that He might do such a work in us, that not only our outward actions comply, but our hearts be pleasing to Him. We need to ask Him to kill the desires in us that lead us away from him, from studying His Word more.

The problem of idolatry is in the heart, yes. But when Israel was worshiping all kinds of idols, he didn't just tell them to change their desires. He told them, "Tear down your shrines and destroy your altars." Destroy the idols that you worship. Just as Jesus said, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off," so we also must be willing to go to the extreme to mortify sin. And that might be throwing out the phone altogether. But just throwing out the phone doesn't solve the problem.

We must be circumspect, discerning our sins even in the recesses of our heart, confessing those things, petitioning God that He might increase our obedience to the Law, even to every corner of our heart. But David doesn't just leave us here. Having increased the realm of our necessary obedience to the heart, he doesn't leave us where many of us (if we have

sensitive consciences) might go, in feeling despair as we think of how we fall short from perfect obedience, maybe how much time we've squandered. David finishes by reminding us that the one whom we appeal to is "Yahweh, my rock, and my redeemer." David doesn't just expose our sin here, but He leads us to the One who can forgive and deliver us from our sin and, wonder of wonder, majesty of majesty, the one who is close and redeems us is the one who created the heavens and the earth.

The all-powerful God of the universe is the one who is strong enough to break the bonds of sin in our life and in our hearts and set us free. He is the rock upon which the redeemed man or woman can stand for refuge, for surety, for salvation. This rock on which we stand is Jesus Christ. We stand secure in his righteousness, never to be moved or shaken. It is this one who is, as 1 John 1:9 says, "faithful and just to forgive." "If we confess to him, he is faithful and just to forgive all of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

So, beloved, let us recognize that we have not treasured the Word of God as we ought. We have not been satisfied in it as we ought. We have not read it as we ought. We have not studied

it as we ought to. We have not been so deeply satisfied with it. Let us confess that. Commit to putting away whatever else it is that draws our affections away. Pick up our Bible that actually ministers to our souls, actually gives us what we truly need: life, joy, and light.

Let us be circumspect about the long game, the warning and rewards of what we do with this book. Let us be confessing. Let us be petitioning God for help. Let us be increasing in our obedience even to the deepest recesses of our hearts. But let us rest in the righteousness of Christ, that all our failures and sins have been paid for. We are robed in His righteousness. We have been given robes that declare that we have, in Christ, obeyed perfectly, even to the depths of our hearts, with a renewed zeal to obey more and more every day. May the Lord work this in us, amen? Let's pray.

Lord, our prayer is David's, here. Though we fall short, we stand in Christ, and we pray as David prayed at the end of this, Lord, with all of our sin and failing to follow you day in and day out, we confess that; we ask you to help us. We ask, Lord, that even to the deepest recesses of our hearts, we beg of you

for strength to obey. So as David prayed, we pray, "Lord, let the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer."
Amen.