

# The Word That Restores

## *Psalm 119:25-32*



Last week I noted my interest in poetry. Can you guess the author of these poems from the first line?

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun, by the men who moil for gold...*

**The Cremation of Sam McGee** by Robert W. Service

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments...*

**Sonnet 116** by William Shakespeare

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow, between the crosses, row on row, that mark our place...*

**In Flanders Fields** by John McCrae

Last week we noted the nature of **Hebrew poetry** – parallelism. In our text today we will see this pattern in the form of petition to God, in regard to His Word, followed by an obedient response. In each of the four couplets there are two requests for God to use His Word to bring restoration into the believer's life.

Our series is “**All In: Living with loyalty to the way of the Lord**”. Are we completely committed to pursue God's Word and way? Do we seek Him with all our heart? Let's read Psalm 119:25-32. Psalm 119 is designed as alphabetical acrostic. Verses 25-32 are under the title of the Hebrew letter *daleth*. The term for God's Word we will highlight today is *dabar* (vv.25,28). Remember, there are eight synonyms for “Scripture” in Psalm 119. Along with *dabar* there are six found in our text.

“decrees” *huqqim* (v.26)

“precepts” *piqqud* (v.27)

“law” *torah* (v.29)

“laws” *mishpat* (v.30)

“statutes” *edot* (v.31)

“commands” *mitsvah* (v.32)

The term *dabar* means “word, matter, thing, speech, command, promise.” “*This is the most general term of all, embracing God's truth in any form, stated, promised or commanded.*” (**TOTC: Psalms**, Derek Kidner, IVP, 1973, 419) In Psalm 119:25,28 it is consistently translated “word” (ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV).

Let's consider **four ways** in which the Word of God provides a restoration and renovation for our lives.

|                |                              |                                                   |
|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Torah</b>   | <i>zayin</i><br>vv. 49-56    | Law, <b>instruction</b> from revelation of God    |
| <b>Dabar</b>   | <i>daleth</i><br>vv. 25-32   | <b>Word</b> , matter, thing, speech, command      |
| <b>Mishpat</b> | <i>tsadhe</i><br>vv. 137-144 | Judgement, justice, <b>law</b> , ordinance, right |
| <b>Edot</b>    | <i>gimel</i><br>vv. 17-24    | Witness, <b>testimony</b> , ordinance             |
| <b>Mitsvah</b> | <i>vav</i><br>vv. 41-48      | <b>Commandment</b>                                |
| <b>Huqqim</b>  | <i>samekh</i><br>vv. 113-120 | Statute, <b>decree</b> , law, ordinance           |
| <b>Piqqud</b>  | <i>mem</i><br>vv. 97-104     | <b>Precept</b> , statute, commandment             |
| <b>Imrah</b>   | <i>resh</i><br>vv. 153-160   | Word, saying, command, <b>promise</b>             |

## [A] The Word of God Revives – vv. 25-26

In this first couplet there is an invitation extended for God to use His Word in reviving our hearts. There is a link between the truth of God's Word and His gift of life to humanity. Deep human need is answered by God's Word. Essentially, the prayer is “cause me to live” (see also vv. 37,40).

As one writer puts it, the psalmist “*experiences his earthiness and mortality.*” (***Expositors Bible Commentary: Psalms***, Willem VanGemeren, Zondervan, 1991, 742) God meets that need through His Word. What is your soul situation today?

In Psalm 119 the author confesses to having a soul that “*clings to the dust*” (v.25) and is “*weary with sorrow*” (v.28). There are many expressions in Psalm 119 of enduring **affliction** and **suffering**. In each case, the appeal is to the reviving work of the Word of God.

In II Timothy 4:3-4 we read, “*For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*”

## [B] The Word of God Renews – vv. 27-28

In this couplet, there is a cry for God’s help in thought and deed. **First**, there is a request not only to understand the purposes or ways of God, but to deeply contemplate them. Do we allow our minds to ruminate and meditate upon God’s ways (v.27)? The only sure place to understand the truth of God’s character and ways is in the Word of God. As J. I. Packer explains in his classic ***Knowing God*** (IVP, 1973, 98), “*Two facts about the Triune Jehovah are assumed...in every single biblical passage...that He is king...that He speaks.*” **Second**, and in consequence of God’s speaking (divine, inspired revelation) the believer may exchange “soul tears” for the activating strength of the Scriptures (v.28).

## [C] The Word of God Rescues – vv. 29-30

In this couplet, the psalmist prayed for the removal of the **false way** in favor of God’s Law. What “false ways” have you followed in your spiritual journey? It need not be spectacular (member of cult, etc) to be destructive! Even a small difference of degree in a ship’s heading will eventually end in danger. The psalm seeks God to “graciously grant” (v.29) His law (*torah*). God’s law is not to be feared but to be welcomed as His good gift for our welfare. Consider how the Word of God rescues us from the pain and the punishment of sin.

There is a wonderful response to God found in verse 30: “*I have chosen the way of truth*”. Notice how “**chosen**” links with “**cling**” (v.31) and “**run**” (v.32) to form a robust response to the benefits of God’s Word. God’s Word rescues us by restricting us from what is spiritually unhealthy or unwholesome. The more we experience Scripture-rescue the more teachable we become.

## [D] The Word of God Releases – vv. 31-32

The last restorative work of God’s Word is that it releases us to a life of obedience which includes **freedom** and **fruitfulness**. Hebrews 11 documents the lives of those who chose to live God’s way, often despite great opposition – they did so by faith! Notice how intentional and intense are these obedient responses to God’s Word: “cling/hold fast” (v.31) and “run in the path” (v.32). When was the last time you took God’s Word so seriously that you were clinging to it or running after it?

This all sounds very noble – but seems to be born of self effort. However, the final phrase of our text corrects any idea that we cling to, or run after God’s Word by personal resources. Rather, God will renovate our heart: He will “enlarge” (NASB) or “set free” (NIV). The Word of God releases us to all the Holy Spirit produced possibilities that God desires for us. Paul expressed this in Philippians 3:12-14 – “press on”.

## Conclusion

Have you had the joy of a restoration company coming into your house after a flood or fire? Do you like renovating? Do you watch renovation shows? What I love about a program depicting house renovation is the **before and after**. The in-between is tedious, but necessary! Think of how God desires to create His “before and after” in your heart and life!



In Hebrews 4:12-13 (MESSAGE) we read...

*God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one can resist God's Word. We can't get away from it – no matter what.*

What word **restores** you? After a defeat, it may be some kind comment. However, the only ultimate source of restoration is the living Word of God!

- ***We need to be experientially grounded***

Psalm 119 gushes with love for God's Word. But our emotions must have good grounding. As Kevin DeYoung writes, “the authority of God's word resides in the written text...of Scripture, not merely in our existential experience of the truth in our hearts.” (***Taking God at His Word***, Crossway, 2014, 35-36).

- ***We need to be personally oriented***

Loving God's Word is vital: “What we believe and feel about the word of God are absolutely crucial, if for no other reason than that they should mirror what we believe and feel about Jesus.” (DeYoung, 21)