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The Bible and a Bountiful 2021; Psalm 119:17-24
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Introduction – 2020 has been a year not to remember but rather to forget. The more disruptive and chaotic and uncertain that 2020 has become, the more we have looked forward to 2021. We know Jan 1 is not a magic date and by Jan 2 all the hardships and challenges of 2020 will not reverse. But we're hopeful. As vaccines are distributed, maybe we'll return to something like normal, we're hopeful but with caution. As a new president takes office, maybe the political climate will calm somewhat, we're hopeful but with caution. A new year has always represented a new, fresh start, we're hopeful but with caution.

Before we bid adieu to 2020, maybe with a little bit of good riddance, as 2020 passes from us this week, let's not the lessons 2020 has taught us pass from us too. For me personally, 2020 has forced me to face the reality of 3 large lessons that I don't think, or at least, I hope I won't soon forget.

First, the rapid moral decline of our culture has reminded me that this world is not my home. Biblical, religious convictions are now often labeled hatred and bigotry. It reminds me that my citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are looking for a city whose builder and founder is God.

Second, the vast, sweeping, global lifestyle changes brought about by a microscopic virus reminded me to make sure to build my life on a certain, eternal foundation. One that cannot be changed, altered, or weakened by any earthly force. As Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation (coronavirus), will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Third, all the disunity, discord, and division of 2020 has reminded me to not my place my hope in this world or its ideology, or solutions – as the hymn says so well, our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

All of this really brings me back to the Bible, how nourishing it is for our faith, how necessary it is for our daily living, and how it increasingly becomes so essential to navigate the challenges of this life as we make our way to life eternal. The key to a bountiful 2021 will not be found in a vaccine, or a stimulus check, or a political solution, or an adoption of a godless worldview. The things of earth simply will not satisfy souls that were created for eternity. It's not the outward that brings bounty, but the inward awakening and filling of the soul. What is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal. The outward is wasting away, but the soul that has been reconciled to God through Christ is alive and being made ready for an eternal dwelling. Bounty comes when you feed the soul, when we feast on absolute, unchanging, immovable truth. Bounty comes through an abiding in, a delighting in, a cherishing of, and a living out of God's Word.

That's exactly what we find the psalmist expressing in Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible is the psalmist using every single word and writing tool in his arsenal to celebrate and adhere to the life and salvation only found in Scripture. Let's determine right now in 2020 that we will fill our lives with the Word of God in 2021. That we will find a way, a time, a plan to invest our lives in the Bible. That we won't face another or another day until we have faced the Lord in His Word. That we have come to know and believe and practice that we shall not live by bread alone. I challenge us all to step into the light of truth every day, to expose our hearts and thoughts and intentions and actions and words to Scripture, to realign our lives with God's will as revealed in His Word.

- I. Approach Your Daily Time in God's Word with Prayer (vv17-20)
 - a. Notice that's exactly how the psalmist approaches the Bible. He comes to the Word through prayer. 3 prayers and 1 evidence of answered prayer.
 - b. 3 Prayers.
 - i. Deal bountifully with your servant. That is, be gracious, provide help, treat me with mercy. What is the result of God dealing bountifully with us? "that I may live" The psalmist knows that every single breath is a gift of God. He measures our days. He holds our lives in His hands. Bounty for the psalmist was not wealth or fame or ease. Bounty was to breath. To live. To enjoy God and all His gifts. To wake up to another sunrise. Everyone

of us are living today in the bounty of God's grace if for no other reason than we are here!

1. But notice further how does the psalmist understand real living, real life, really living in the bountiful grace of God? "and keep your word." That's a marvelous insight into the Bible that so many miss and so few find. God has given His Word, not to keep us from living but rather that we might know real living. When God told Adam and Eve to not eat the fruit of this one tree, He wasn't trying to keep something wonderful from them; He was keeping something wonderful for them! The worse thing they could have possibly done would be to not trust God's Word, to not keep God's Word. For the very moment they failed to adhere to their Father's direction, death awaited them, not life. Life was in the keeping of His Word.
 2. May we not be fooled by our drifting desires or the enticements of the world or the charming voices of others, but may we find the bountiful life in 2021 by keeping the Word of God.
- ii. That leads to the second prayer. To keep God's Word, we need to be able to see the wonders, the treasures, the glories that are there for us. So the psalmist prays, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderous things out of your law."
1. The psalmist struggled to read the Scripture as we all do. When he read his Bible, he too didn't grasp it, didn't understand it, forgot what he just read, read the words of life and missed the life there.
 2. Sin made him spiritually numb and blind and neglectful and busy and lazy and disinterested just as it does us when we attempt to prize the Scripture. But he had seen enough little glimpses of glory here and there to know the Bible was filled with treasure, he just wasn't seeing it. He needed God's help, God's grace, to open his eyes so that he could see and behold and delight in it! The veil is not on the book but rather on our hearts.

3. Let this be our prayer as well when we come to the Bible. The beauties and wonders there are astounding and thrilling and life-giving and soul-warming. But we need God's grace to enable us to behold it. III. Ps 107:9
 - iii. That leads us to the third prayer. "Hide not your commandments from me!" I may not want to see them. I may not want to embrace them, but if life, bountiful life, is in the keeping of them, hide them not from me. Show me their goodness, their grace. God's commandments are for His glory and my good. I'm earthly, I need God to reveal what is so heavenly and divine about His revelation to me
 - iv. When we come to the Scripture in that manner, knowing it is a treasure of life and realizing we need God to help us see it and love it, God is faithful to open it up to us and open our hearts to receive it.
 - c. Evidence of Answered Prayer v20. You see, we have to go through vv17-19 to arrive at v20. But once we are there, there is nowhere else we would rather be. Communing with our God and Savior through the means of His divine Word of truth and life.
 - d. Approach your daily time in God's Word with prayer.
- II. Take God's Word with You Throughout the Day (vv21-24)
- a. That's what the psalmist is doing in vv21-24. He's come to the Bible with a hungry heart, longing for the Lord, relying on the Lord to speak, and the result is that the Word is at work within him.
 - b. The wonders that he sees in v18 have kept him from wandering in v21. Those who wander from the Word only find heartache and destruction and consequence of sin. That's what Adam and Eve found when they wandered, and that's what we are sure to find when we wander.
 - i. But those who behold the wonders, they find life.
 - c. But now notice with me in v22, God has answered the prayer of v17! V17 - Deal bountifully with your servant that I may live and keep your Word – v22 – for I have kept your testimonies. What is a testimony? It's something you affirm that is true of yourself. The Bible is God's divine disclosure, His self-revelation, His testimonies.

- d. Just like the psalmist, if we keep the Word, we can be absolutely sure of two things. (1) We will find life. We will find treasure. We will behold wonders. But we can also be sure we will face (2) opposition and ridicule. Vv22-23. Those who wander from Scripture will despise those who taken by its wonders.
- e. But the psalmist doesn't meet his opposition with fear or hate or retribution, he simply goes back to the source of life and meditates on the Word in times of persecution. There he finds the promises and assurances that sustain him through any trial.
- f. Then finally we find in v24 that God has answered the prayers of vv18-19. He has beheld those wonders and they are now his delight. He has seen the goodness of God's commands and they are now his counselors.
 - i. Let me ask you something. Do you need counseling? Are you struggling with life? Are you weighed down with sin? Are you burdened with doubt, seeking direction, desiring to do what is right? Do you need help? We all do. It begins and ends with the truth and life of God's Word. If you are seeing a counselor and they haven't opened the Bible yet, find another counselor. This is the words of life!
- g. Approach the Bible in prayer and then take the Word with you throughout your day. That's how we find a bountiful 2021.

Conclusion:

5 Bible Reading Options:

5 x 5 Plan

4 x 5 Plan

1 x 5 Plan

Dive into One Book Plan

Pick your own Plan

3 Steps to Help You Stay with it:

Choose a version that fits.

Set aside a time and a place

Find a Reading Partner