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Psalm 119:133 "Free From Sin's Dominion" September 30,  
2018

All right. Let's open our Bibles this morning to Psalm  
119. We're going to start at verse 129.

We mentioned a few weeks ago as we got to Psalm 119 that  
this is the longest chapter in the Bible. There are 66  
books in your Bible. This one chapter is longer than 29  
of them. And I guess there's a reason for that: God is  
interested in you and I realizing how much He values His  
Word. When you read in the Bible that He honors it above  
His name, that should tell you something: That literally  
the judgment that we face one day will be whether we  
believed Him or not, believed in the things He said about  
our life, our sin, our need for salvation, what He said  
about our way of life. And so as you read through this  
long, long Psalm, 22 groups of eight verses, all  
beginning with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet,  
God's word is mentioned in all but four of the verses by  
nine different synonyms: testimony, word, commandments.  
And so it went. The Lord is mentioned as a personal  
pronoun in every one of the verses. The writer writes

300 times about himself, that he wants to believe and know and follow and value and treasure what God has said. And so it's a great argument from the Lord to us about how valuable His word should be to us. And we've been stopping along the way to try to take a look at some of the different principles or lessons that are found.

This morning I wanted to get to verse 133, but let's look at a couple of verses beforehand. In verse 129 the Psalmist says, "Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul wants to keep them. And the entrance of your words give light so that even the simple can have understanding. So I've opened my mouth and panted, longing for Your commandments. Look to me, Lord, be merciful to me, as Your custom is to those who love Your name." I mean, here's a man -- and we don't know who wrote this. We do know that he had a great respect for what God has said. We should know that this book laying on our laps is the greatest advantage that we could ever have. This is what God wants you and I to know. This isn't some book written by a guy or somebody that's popular, or someone's latest theories. This is a promise from God Almighty.

And so here's a man that wants to know it in the worst way. He says in verse 129 that he has come to the

conclusion that God's words are wonderful. The word "wonderful" in Hebrew really meant without parallel or without equal. I know there's no place I can go to get wiser than here. So because of that, in my heart, in my soul, I long to follow what you have said. I know that though I'm not the smartest guy in the world, by Your spirit and through Your word I can be as smart as I need to be in all the things that matter. Even the simple get understanding from the scriptures. He writes in verse 131 about being hungry, panting after, longing for what God has to say. Quite a difference than what you find in a lot of people today.

And he even has great expectations. He says in verse 132, "Lord, could You be merciful to me, as Your custom is to anyone who loves You." Your natural response to someone who looks for You is mercy. That's what You've always done, and I suspect that's what You'll do with me. So that's his attitude towards what the Lord has done and is doing.

And then he comes to this request in verse 133, and there's only two simple questions, or two simple desires from the Lord: Number one, that the Lord would direct his steps according to God's Word; and number two, that

God would not allow iniquity to have dominion over his life. Probably the best prayer you could ever pray. I want to know You, walk with You, and make sure that sin doesn't win in my life. Pretty good prayer. And the desire to live a godly life is one that all of us should have, because the battle that we fight with sin is real. And though God gives to us both the will to do and the ability to do His good pleasure according to Philippians Chapter 2, we still have to make the decision to allow His Word to be our guide. He'll do everything He can except make that choice for you. I think if we look at this verse, verse 133, we would pray this same thing: "God, let Your word direct my steps so that iniquity doesn't dominate."

It is an amazing thing to consider how powerful sin is, and how that the power of darkness can't be overstated. The dominion of sin can't be ignored. We are fighting an unbeatable foe, at least on our own. No way you're going to win. Your flesh will win, the world will win, the devil will win. You're cooked. You might as well surrender or turn to His word. You really don't have a third option. There's really no way you can -- I'm going to grit my teeth and put down my chin. I'm going to stick with it till I get it. Sin is stronger than you

are. The devil is more powerful as well. And the power of darkness, forget it. Why do you think every year you make those New Year's resolutions, only to realize you did really good until the Rose Bowl? We fight a difficult battle, and yet God wants us to live a victorious life. Interesting.

When that big hoard of people came to the Garden of Gethsamene to arrest Jesus -- and when we went through Luke there in Chapter 22 we talked about how many. There could have been 1,000 people in that group, armed soldiers, elders, chief priests, captains of the temple. Jesus met this highly armed to the teeth, menacing group, and He said to them, "Do you come out after Me like you would a robber, with clubs and swords? I was with you every day in the temple. Why didn't you grab Me then?" And then He said this: "This is your hour, and it is the hour of the power of darkness." It's a real battle we face.

When Paul stood before King Agrippa there in Acts 26 to explain how he'd gotten saved, how the Lord had delivered him and saved him, and what he had been given to do, he said that God had sent him now to open the eyes of those who were blind, to turn those who were in darkness to the

light, to bring those from the power of Satan to the power of God, to lead them into the light, both Jew and gentile. It's one thing to realize the enemy that you face, it's a second thing to realize the powerlessness that you have, but then to learn that -- how you can get out, how you can end up on top, how you can find life.

Paul, when he wrote to the Colossians in the first chapter of that short little letter, said that he was praying for them ever since he heard from the day that they had come to the Lord, that God would give them wisdom in all of their ways. And he said, "We are now inheritors of the kingdom of God. We're saints that stand in the light. God has delivered us from the power of darkness." We found our way out in Him.

The power of darkness is so strong biblically that there's no way you can deliver yourself from it. Swear if you will, make vow if you like, determine. You're going to fail. You're going to lose. Even the Greeks, who were pretty weird in their philosophies in the first century, in all -- in many of their writings, I should say, wrote that they realized that man could not change himself, that he was a victim of his own demise. Well, that's pretty biblical. When the rich young ruler came

to Jesus, and he threw himself on the floor in front of Him, in front of a big crowd, and asked about eternal life, Jesus, realizing that he had a god all right and a trust in wealth, said to him, "Well, if you want to do it on your own and be perfect, then sell everything that you have, give it to the poor, and if you'll do that, you can come and follow Me." And it said that the young man heard Jesus' counsel, went away sorrowful. He had great possessions. Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "Oh, man, how hard is it for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven? It would be easier to shove a camel through the eye of a needle." And the disciples were dismayed. In fact, it says they were shocked. And they said, "Wait a minute. In that case, who can be saved?" And Jesus said, "Yeah, with men, impossible. But with God, all things are possible."

There is only One person more powerful than the devil, more powerful than the darkness, more powerful than your sin, and His name is Jesus. So the best you can do -- in fact, the only thing you can do, is nuzzle up next to Him, listen to what He has to say, hide under the shadow of His wings, follow His advice, and stand in the light. The devil has nothing on you then. You're safe.

So the prayer of the Psalmist in this one verse, direct my steps to Your word. Let me follow Your advice. Let me incorporate Your ideas. Let me embrace Your direction. And then may sin not rule, not have dominion over my life. That's the gospel really in a nutshell. But we've done a couple of weird things. Number one, we try to deliver ourselves because there's much pride in that if we can pull it off. And number two, if we can't do it, we try to minimize sin so it doesn't look so bad. Because sin looks bad if you let it just sit there. To try to get out of sin yourself is like a fly landing on a spider web: The more you move, the more tension the spider takes, and the more you try to rid yourself of it, the more entangled you become. Pretty soon you're spider food.

I think we've all known and probably experienced in our own lives the desire that we have to extricate ourselves from some kind of power of darkness without success. Anger problems, selfishness. Oh, I'm going to deal with it. I'm going to count to 10. That helps. It just gives someone two seconds before you hit him in the head. And I've found that if I'm mad, I can count really fast, so that doesn't help.

It is vain to struggle against something that I can't win against. And even if I happen to gain some ground, I just lose traction somewhere else, until I surrender. We'll take the example of an alcoholic for a minute. You probably know someone who is, or maybe it's you. But alcoholism is a -- I think a perfect kind of an example of the futility of battling sin on your own and the consuming power of sin in our life.

We do a lot of counseling over the years with folks with substance abuse. It's an interesting thing. You can beg people to stop drinking. You can threaten to leave them. You can elicit promises from them to never do it again. And they don't change. You can show them what drinking is doing to them. You can mention the three drunk driving arrests, the recent accident where people were hurt, the possible jail time that he may have to face, the civil suit for damages. It makes reasonable sense. It doesn't change a heart. Can't you see what you're doing to yourself? "Oh, I see it. I'll never do it again. I swear this time for sure." Can take them down to the morgue and show them what a diseased liver looks like, how it's discolored, how years of trying to flush all the alcohol out of the system it has become hard and rigid and unable to function, the permanent damage that

comes as a result. Nothing good about this. "I know. I know." How do you get out? Show them how many brain cells are being destroyed -- like we have many to lose. I -- I need all of mine. How their judgment is impaired or -- you can argue with them about the consequences of having a criminal record, of how that's going follow them around. It's going to mess up their job applications or their promotions or their getting ahead in life. You can tell them where they're hiding the bottle, that left-hand drawer, and that you know that they haven't stopped drinking for two weeks, and that they're lying to you about when the last time they had a drink was. You can even run into long periods of times with people that are alcoholics where they'll just tell you they don't have a problem. "Leave me alone. Who are you, perfect? As soon as you get perfect, you come tell me. But I'm just fine. I can quit whenever I want." But they can't. You can say to somebody, look what it's doing to your mom. She's not able to sleep. She wakes up in tears. Look what it's done to your wife or to your children. They're embarrassed by your behavior. They're afraid of you when you're drunk. You can point out their marriage that has failed or their friends who won't tolerate their behavior. And yet the most important to thing to the alcoholic is alcohol.

Sin dominates. When the Lord wrote or had Solomon write Proverbs 23 about drinking, he said, "Who has woe? And who has sorrow? Who has contentions? And complaints? And wounds without cause? Or redness of his eyes? It's the one who lingers over the wine and goes searching for it with mixed wine. And looks upon it while it is red, and sparkles in the cup, and goes down smoothly; and yet it bites like a serpent, stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, your heart will utter perverse things. You'll be like someone that lays down in the middle of the ocean, or climbs up to the mast and says that 'they've struck me, but it didn't hurt. They've beaten me, but I didn't feel it.' And in morning he'll wake up and look for another drink." Just one example.

You that have never drank a day in your life, good for you, but you don't get off the hook either, because that same dominance of sin is found in every life. If it isn't alcohol, maybe it's drugs, or pornography, or adultery, or some of the more acceptable sins like anger or selfishness. Or the desire to get ahead at all costs, worldliness.

Paul when he wrote to Timothy said, "Look, if you desire

to be a rich man, you're going to fall into temptations and snares and foolish and harmful lusts that are going to destroy your life, because that's how sin works." So the cry of this man who writes this Psalm to say, God, I want to walk in Your ways so I'm not dominated by sin, that's a real prayer.

And even when strong determination or help from others can deliver you from drinking and all of your life now you have to guard yourself, you have victory. You're still not free until the Lord becomes the Lord. It's the sin in the heart that we have to be delivered from. It's the darkness in the world and the life without light that we can't escape from.

The greatest power of sin is to convince you that you have no problem with it. That's not me. Oh, yes, it is. Sin is so powerful, the darkness so great, that any hope of escape is lost unless the Lord moves into your life.

We're told in the Bible that we were born in sin. "I was brought forth in iniquity," we read in Psalm 51. "In sin my mother conceived me." It wasn't her sin, it was yours. We are dealing with satanic forces. Paul said, "We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. We wrestle

against every power that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." And so he said, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the --" willies, or the "wiles, of the devil. And having done all, to stand. So stand therefore. And withstand. Having done all, stand." See, that's where the battle is.

Ultimately your challenge and mine is to walk out these doors and live a godly life in an ungodly world, with everything around us to suggest otherwise. And all of the promises of the enemy out there, that will let you down. Man left to himself will surrender to a life of sin, no matter how polished it looks when he's finished.

You know, 60 years ago on television, when television kind of first started, a man and a woman that were married were not allowed to lay in their bed together though they were married, because it was an offense to the public sentiment. We've come a long way, baby -- in the wrong direction. But you see, sin can be much more palatable if you package it right. Yet our only concern ought to be to serve the Lord, make Him happy, and live the kind of life that a Father would want for His children. He has His life to give. That's what you have

on your lap. This is life-giving direction. Paul said to the Romans in Chapter 6, "You've become a slave to whomever you serve." Well, if I'm going to be brainwashed, I want to be sure I know who's washing my brain.

If you look at the destructive power of sin in our culture, just watch T.V. for a couple of days with the news. The police can't keep up with it. The prisons can't hold all of the lives destroyed by it. Mental hospitals overflow. And yet God wants to give you life. You watch and you say to yourself, well, how can anyone who has just got half a common sense mind look at this kind of life and the fallout and want to be like that? It seems so foolish. Who wants to be a drug addict? Or a thief, or cheat and lie and deceive? And the straightforward answer is, sin blinds, and it promises what it can't deliver to lure into bondage those it can't free. Every sinful activity in our life begins with a promise that this will be better for you. If I just did this, if I could just do that, if I could just get one of those. The guy who is cheating on his wife in some adulterous relationship is convinced that he's finally found the love of his life for the first time. Even justifying his wickedness by saying endlessly, "Doesn't

God want me happy?" Yet a relation started in darkness will not look good in the light. That's the way sin dominates.

I remember doing cocaine as a kid. I might have done a lot of it. Thought it was the most wonderful drug. The rush was amazing. It lasted for just a little while. And then I got saved, and the rush hasn't stopped. Amen.

So the escape that sin offers, the deliverance for a time from the realities of life, usually causes more problems than it solves. And the excuse that you hear from people is, well, my life is so difficult, and I live under such pressure. I need to get -- just let myself go for a few hours. I mean, how can that be bad if I'm just kind of out of my mind for a few hours? I need it. No, you need freedom, not the dominance of iniquity.

So how do you get out of it? Well, just go back and look at the verses we just read. If you can view God's word this morning as wonderful and unsurpassed and there's nothing like it, nothing better, then your devotion will be to learn it, to live it, to follow it. If you understand, as the Psalmist did in verse 130, that God's Word will make even the most simple person wise. I may

not know everything I should know in the world or wish I knew, but I know everything I need to know for life. I know Who to follow, I know Who to serve, I know what He has said is true. I'm not going to look somewhere else or depend upon someone else. You can tell me it's not fair and it won't matter to me. I'm going to follow Him. Where else can I go? If you do that, get your Bible out, start loving what God has to say, your feet won't slip. You'll find yourself living out of the reach of the devil, because he can't convince you of all the junk he sells to the world. The darkness goes. The Holy Spirit comes. He empowers you to believe in God and not the empty promises of the world.

I actually heard a guy the other day -- I think I was at Starbucks -- but anyway, he was talking to another guy and he said, "Well, I'll try anything once." And I thought to myself, idiot. I didn't say it. You can, by the way, think whatever you want and nobody seems to care if you don't say it out loud. He felt like he was missing out. Well, I'll try anything out, kind of like I don't want to miss out on anything. Look, miss out on all that junk. I'm telling you, just miss out. If I had it all to do over again, I'd have missed out on about four years of my life. Missed out would have been just

fine. I never broke the heart of God more than those four years, I'm sure.

Seek the Lord, resolve to stay clear of the world, and stay close to the Lord. That's what we got to do. And the good thing is if you're overtaken in sin, the way out is just the same: You go back to where you started, God's promises, and you give yourself wholeheartedly to them. I don't feel like it. Well, just do it then. You'll feel like it later. You're not feeling too good now.

Jesus can break the power of sin in your life. When He stood up in that Nazareth synagogue to read on that day that He was asked, and the book was open that day to Isaiah 61 verse 1, the Lord began to read, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. The Lord has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, anointed me to heal the brokenhearted." And then He said, "And He has anointed Me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to set open the prison doors to those that are bound." That's what He can do for you and I. I don't want dominion of sin in my life. I hate when I give in to junk around me and not believe what God has to say.

Paul said to the Romans in Chapter 6 verse 14, "Sin shall no longer have dominion over you." The word "dominion" in Greek, "kuriotes." Normal translation, Lord. Your sin will no longer Lord over you. That's right, because now I'm truly free.

So there is a great delivering power of the simple scriptures by just a willfulness to just believe and follow what God has to say. Pay attention, you can be freed; ignore it and you're just asking to be dominated. And no one likes that. God help us to allow His word to deliver us this morning.