

Six Good Reasons for Delighting in the Bible

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 119, which at 176 verses is the longest Psalm in the Bible.

But I'm only going to read eight verses, beginning at verse 89. Now you'll find this on page 514 if you have one of our hardback Bibles.

Psalm 119, beginning at verse 89. The whole Psalm is about the law of God, the written word of God. It's written in praise of it, and it's written to encourage believers to read it and to delight in it.

So verse 89. Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations.

You have established the earth, and it stands fast. By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

[1 : 1 9] I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. I am yours. Save me, for I have sought your precepts.

The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies. I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

Amen. Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may he bless it to us today. Well, do let's turn in our Bibles again to that section of Psalm 119, page 514, and verses 89 to 96.

My title for this morning is Six Good Reasons for Delighting in the Bible. And I want to take as my text, or really my focus verse, verse number 92, where the psalmist says to God, If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

Now, just look at that verse and think about it for a moment. Notice that the author here is not just talking about reading the law of God or reading the Bible. He's not even just talking about understanding the Bible.

[2 : 4 2] He's taking the whole thing up to a higher level. He's talking about delighting in the law of God. And for our purposes, the law of God really means the whole Bible. And he's saying here in verse 92 that if God's law had not been his delight, he would have perished.

That means he would have gone under. He would have come to ruin in his affliction, in his hard and difficult times. I'd like to read you a quotation now from a 19th century book.

The writer was a man called Alexander Wallace. I'm not sure who he was. I guess he was a minister in Scotland. And this book that I'm quoting from was published in 1853.

And it was called The Bible and the Working Classes. And he's writing at a time of great economic poverty and difficulty. And although he doesn't actually name the town that he's writing about, I suspect from a reference here to weaving that it must have been Paisley.

So here we go. I happened, he writes, to be standing in a grocer's shop one day in a large manufacturing town in the west of Scotland, when a poor, old, frail widow came in to make a few purchases.

[3 : 57] There never was, perhaps, in that town a more severe time of distress. Nearly every loom was stopped. Decent and respectable tradesmen who had seen better days were obliged to subsist on public charity.

So much money per day, but a trifle at most, was allowed to the really poor and deserving. This poor widow had received her daily pittance, and she had now come into the grocer's shop to lay it out to the best advantage.

She had but a few coppers in her withered hands. Carefully did she expend her little stock. A penny worth of this and the other necessity of life nearly exhausted all she had.

She came to the last penny, and with a singular expression of heroic contentment and cheerful resignation on her wrinkled face, she said, Now I must buy oil with this, that I may see to read my Bible during these long dark nights, for it is my only comfort now when every other comfort has gone away.

Now think of it, that little old widow. She had virtually nothing, but she knew where to find comfort in her affliction and her poverty. Can you imagine that, living on about sixpence a day in old money?

[5 : 22] No television to watch in the evening, no husband to provide her with socks to darn and other inconveniences, but the joy of opening her tatty old authorized version of the Bible and reading it night after night in the light of one little oil lamp.

She had discovered what was important and delightful. Now we today, seems to me, are in danger of lacking what that little widow possessed.

Because there are pressures at work on us today, which she didn't have in 1853. Let me mention two of them, because it's good to recognize the forces that are at work to damage us.

First, there's the atheistic atmosphere of the 21st century Western world. Most of our contemporaries, who are not Christians, regard the Bible as a book that was once upon a time influential, but is now obviously outdated.

There's a feeling in the atmosphere today that science and technology have replaced the Bible as the true source of knowledge and understanding. But scientists who are Christians realize what a false thing it is to oppose science and Christianity, as if the two were incompatible.

[6 : 37] The truth is that it's the Bible that impels men and women to study the way the world works. The early scientists, those at the beginning of the modern scientific movement, were almost all people of Christian faith.

The great astronomers like Galileo and Kepler, the great physicists like Sir Isaac Newton. Newton wrote theological works as well as scientific works, and he considered his theology the more important study of the two.

Scientific study has always been a matter of thinking God's thoughts after him, to use Kepler's famous phrase. But the atheistic atmosphere in which we live today is a pressure against taking the Bible seriously and believing it to be truly the word of God.

Then secondly, there's the pressure of modern electronic communication. Now, I don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater here, because there's a lot of real baby. The internet and the World Wide Web are wonderful sources of information.

For example, if you need to know in a hurry how much maize is grown annually in the state of Kansas, or how high the highest mountain in New Zealand is, you can find out that sort of thing in seconds, can't you?

[7 : 54] And think of Skype. We use Skype at home. It's a wonderful way of keeping in touch with loved ones who are far away. But I think we all know that many people, including many Christians, are becoming almost addicted to looking at their small screens.

Now, the small screen can be very useful. You can read the news on it without having to buy a paper. You can keep in touch with your friends. You can send and receive all sorts of messages. But when a person is spending two or three or four hours a day at the small screen, you can't help thinking that the little widow in Paisley in 1853 had a much wiser grasp of how to use her spare time.

Well, let's turn now to our psalmist here in Psalm 119. And let's allow him to persuade us that God's word is not simply to be read, not simply to be understood, but delighted in.

We'll come to the real thrust of verse 92 a little bit later on. But I want first to see how the verses before it and after it help to give it its real force.

So from verses 89 through to 96, let's have a look at six good reasons for delighting in the Bible. First, we delight in the Bible because it is immovable.

[9 : 10] Look at verse 89. Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. So the word of God, that is his verbal message, which has been revealed to us on earth in the shape of the Bible, it is firmly fixed in the heavens, in the heavenly places.

Now that's immensely heartening for Christians. We know that God's character is fixed. As the Apostle James puts it, God is the father of lights with whom there is no variation.

So if his character is fixed and unchanging, it's no surprise to read that his word also is firmly fixed in the heavens. And it's good for us to know this because our words are anything but firmly fixed.

The truth is that most of the words that we utter are insubstantial and trivial and they float away like dust on the wind. Most people, I guess, speak several thousand words per day.

Some speak more than others. But most of those words, I guess, are not memorable and not really important. For example, did you book your appointment with the doctor, Janice?

[10 : 19] Well, that's important at one level, isn't it? Or how about this? Here's one from our own kitchen. I have fed the dogs despite their body language. It's not a very important thing. It's the kind of thing that gets said.

Even most of the published books in the world very soon drift out of people's consciousness. I just happened a couple of weeks ago to be in the library at the university library in Edinburgh and I was in the English literature section.

I'm not often there. It's the first time I've been there but I happen to be there. And as I looked around this great display, this great array of books, I noticed quite a number of big fat novels. There must have been six or eight of them written about a hundred years ago by a novelist called Mrs. Humphrey Ward.

Does anybody read Mrs. Humphrey Ward today? I must confess I'd never heard of her. That may say more about me than about her. But I thought of Mrs. Humphrey Ward.

I thought of the decades of hard work. I thought of her sitting at her little desk writing it all out by hand in those days. All that hard work. And yet today, a hundred years later, almost entirely unread, I guess.

[11 : 29] Our words have very little power of endurance. And then it's good to know that God's word is firmly fixed because our lives are not firmly fixed. They're constantly changing.

The one thing you can predict about human life is that it's unpredictable. And we don't like that, do we? There's something in us that wants to keep everything static and nice and unchanging.

Comfortable home, pleasant surroundings, good health, sufficient income to keep going, happy friends and family, cozy church that doesn't ever have to face challenge and difficulty. But it's never like that.

Our personal circumstances are always shifting. And shifting circumstances bring challenges. We're constantly having to adapt to new circumstances. and the adapting brings difficulty and sometimes bewilderment.

You've only got to look at a photograph of yourself taken 20 years ago to remind you that unstoppable forces of change are at work. But in the midst of our life, this life of ours, where human words are mostly insubstantial and human circumstances are constantly changing, there is one thing that is firmly fixed in the heavens, the word of God.

[12 : 43] Jesus said something very similar and he put it even more strikingly. Heaven and earth will pass away, he said, but my words will never pass away. So there's our first reason for delighting in the Bible.

It's immovable. It's firmly fixed. Nothing can unsettle or undermine the word of God. Our lives can totter and sway and they will, but the truth of the Bible remains.

Now a second reason for delighting in the Bible is given in verse 93 and that is that it's life-giving. Here's verse 93.

I will never forget your precepts for by them you have given me life. Now you'll see that the word precepts is used there and as you run your eye around Psalm 119, you'll see that the psalmist uses quite a number of different words to describe God's book, God's written revelation.

He uses precepts, rules, law, laws, promise, testimony, statutes, ordinances, judgments, word, words, and commandments.

[13 : 52] Now he varies his language, I think partly to keep our interest alive and well and partly to remind us that God's written word does have many different aspects to it. It does contain promise as well as law and testimony as well as commandments.

But to all intents and purposes these different words are interchangeable. So when he says in verse 93, I will never forget your precepts for by them you have given me life.

He really means the totality of God's written word. So what is the force of this verse? It's about the power that brings life, that creates life, that sustains life.

Not so much on the physical level but on the level of what goes on inside ourselves, inside our hearts and minds. The Bible is the life-sustaining food of the soul.

Now we know this, don't we? If we've been Christians any length of time we know it because it's what will often happen to us on a Sunday in a place like this. Let me describe what often happens to you and me when we come to church on a Sunday.

[15 : 00] I'm thinking of myself sitting down there rather than being up here. You come into church and you pray, don't you, before the service. You probably pray something like this. Lord, encourage us, teach us, build us up in loving fellowship, bless those who are struggling, help me to encourage somebody before I leave church, teach us and feed us from the Bible, amen.

Something like that. Then the service starts. We sing a hymn or two. Then the service leader prays. Then we have announcements. Tea and coffee, prayer meeting on Wednesday, release the word on Thursday, music special event on Saturday, come early next Sunday, there's a marathon on.

That kind of thing. We have to say that it's all part of our housekeeping, isn't it? Then the Bible is read. Now we're beginning to strike oil. Only a spurt or two of oil at this point because a lot of it, we had a short reading this morning, but often it's a pretty long one, isn't it?

And our consciousness, I speak for myself, tends to flicker in and out as the reading goes on. So a lot of it passes over our heads, but we just begin to get the idea of one or two things and our heart begins to be warmed and our appetite begins to be whetted.

It's the canopy that wakes up the taste buds and makes us look forward to the main course. Then we have some further singing and prayer. Then the preacher clears his throat and off we go.

[16 : 24] Now often it seems to start quite slowly, doesn't it? Because the preacher is engaging first gear and the engine hasn't quite warmed up, his engine and our engine. But I find that when I'm listening to a sermon, after a few minutes, takes a few minutes, but then the forcefulness of the Bible passage begins to press in on me.

And I find that inside myself I'm saying, yes, yes, that's true. That is undeniable. That is inescapable. It's the very thing that we need to hear. Sometimes, of course, the passage is very challenging and it makes us feel very uncomfortable.

And that needs to happen to us sometimes. Very often, the passage is immensely encouraging. We feel fortified. We feel strengthened at some point deep inside our systems.

And we're given courage not merely to persevere in the Christian life, but to persevere with real enthusiasm and joy. Now, it's the Bible that has that effect on us.

It's not the personality or the cleverness of the preacher. It's the word of God that has this immense power to fortify us at some place deep inside and to make us sometimes want to shout out for joy that our God should be so astonishingly gracious.

[17 : 40] We don't tend to shout out in this congregation, do we? We're very reserved. But we feel like it inside. Now, what is happening when this Bible power begins to grip our hearts?

The answer, surely, is that verse 93 is happening. Our life is being restored and renewed and sustained. The life of God within us is being reinvigorated.

Now, of course, the Sunday sermons are not the only channel of the word of God into our hearts. They're often the best meal of the week, but we need plenty of substantial snacks between Monday and Saturday as well.

Remember Jesus' words as he quotes from Deuteronomy. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. Now, he's saying there what our verse 93 is saying.

It's the words that come forth from the mouth of God that enable us to live. So it's a life and death matter. If we're not being regularly fed by the words of God, our souls will begin to starve.

[18 : 43] You wouldn't dream of going 24 hours without eating, would you? And you wouldn't dream of going 24 hours without breathing, because our physical life depends upon a regular intake of food and air.

And in the same way, the inner life of our hearts and our souls depends upon a regular hearing of the word of God and feasting upon it. Now, here's a third reason for delighting in the Bible.

In verse 94, the psalmist writes of seeking out, verse 94, seeking out or searching out the words of God. I am yours, he says.

Save me, for I have sought out your precepts. Now, this verse, especially the first three words, is hinting very strongly at the covenant which God has made with his people.

Do you know how in the Old Testament, in many places, God states and explains the covenant that he's made with Israel? But the very heart of the covenant is expressed when God says to Israel, I will be your God and you will be my people.

[19 : 52] It's a question of mutual possession. That's what the covenant is all about. I'm yours and you are mine. That is marital, isn't it?

It's what husbands and wives say to each other on their wedding day and hopefully live out for the rest of their lives. I'm yours, you are mine. And here it is in verse 94.

It comes into the psalmist's thinking because it's somehow written deep into his DNA. He knows this covenant so well. That's why he says in verse 94, I am yours. And what is this going to mean?

It means that he has a claim upon God. Save me, he's saying. It's because I'm yours, because you've also promised to be mine, that I'm counting on you to be my rescuer.

And I've demonstrated that I am yours by seeking out your precepts. And in that second half of verse 94, the writer is describing one of the primary features of his life.

[20 : 50] His life is characterized by a continual seeking out of the words of God. There's a hunger in his life, there's a quest, he's a searcher. Now many lives have prominent characteristics, don't they?

Lewis Hamilton drives Formula One cars, for example. It's what he does. Andy Murray plays tennis very well. He's been playing it in Glasgow, hasn't he, the last day or two? It's what he does.

J.K. Rowling writes novels and fantasies. The England rugby team win matches. Sometimes. And in the same way, the one who belongs to God, the one who says to God, because it's deep in his system, I am yours, that is the person who seeks out God's words.

It's what he or she does. It's one of the great characteristics of the believer's life. We become searchers. We're on a quest. Now we've already found out many great truths, especially when we've been Christians some time, but we're continually hungry for more.

So let me ask this, friends. Are you a searcher like our psalmist? Is there at the heart of your life a quest, not simply to know the Bible better, but to know the Lord better?

[22 : 07] We don't just stop with the Bible. It leads us to him. I wonder if you have some kind of a bucket list in your life. Like, for example, I want to climb all the Munro's in Scotland.

Or, I want at least once in my life to win first prize at the Gifnick and District Flower Show with my incomparable sweet peas. Now, aims like that are okay, as long as we don't take them too seriously.

But to be a lifelong searcher out of God's words is to be a Psalm 119 person. That is the great quest to have at the heart of our lives, the searching out of God's precepts.

Now, here's a fourth reason for delighting in the Bible, and that is that its teaching is to be carefully considered. If verse 94 says that God's words are to be sought, verse 95 says that they are to be considered, in other words, pondered, and weighed carefully.

Do you remember how in the second chapter of Luke's Gospel there are two moments when Mary, the mother of Jesus, Luke tells us, lays up certain things, certain extraordinary things that the angel has revealed to her about Jesus, and she ponders them in her heart.

[23 : 28] She dwells on them, she turns over them again and again in her mind. She looks at them from all angles. Now, that's what our psalmist is doing here in verse 95. In fact, verse 95 is a very dramatic verse.

The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies. Now, the psalmists always seem to have enemies. There will always be fierce opposition to those who stick by the Lord and stick by the Bible, but our psalmist here is not cowed.

He's not over-concerned by the threats of his enemies. He doesn't allow their plans and their schemes to deflect him from considering the Lord's testimonies. He goes on considering his testimonies.

Bullets may be flying around his head, malice may be snapping at his heels, but nothing puts him off his steady, lifelong habit of considering the Lord's testimonies.

Now, to consider something takes time and space. It can't be hurried. That's of the very nature of considering something. Imagine, for example, you're visiting a friend and your friend says to you, I've just baked a cake to a new recipe.

[24 : 41] It might be an award-winning recipe. Would you like a slice? Of course you want a slice. What a silly question to ask. So you sit down, don't you, at the table and you take your first mouthful of this great cake.

But you ponder it, don't you? Especially if you know it's baked to a new recipe. You don't bolt it down as if you were a spaniel. You savor it. You consider it.

You consider the subtle blending of the flavors. You assess its texture. And you probably say, like Mary Berry, it's absolutely delicious.

Now in the same way, God's words, the Bible, they can't be hurried. They need to be considered at leisure.

They need to be savored. This takes time. Now it doesn't all have to happen in your armchair, in your sitting room at home with your Bible open on your knees. It can happen at other times.

[25 : 38] Why not consider a Bible verse while you're out for a walk in the park? It's not difficult just to learn one verse off by heart, is it? Look at your verse, learn it off by heart, and take it out into the park with you.

Or perhaps while you're on the bus for ten minutes. Stick a verse in your mind and ponder it and chew it. Get the flavor of it. Ask yourself, what on earth does this verse really mean?

Why did its human author express it like this? What are the implications of it? Not just for me, there will be personal implications, but think of it the implications for our church.

Much of the Bible is written to the corporate body of the people of God, not just for individuals. What are the implications for our church? How might it alter our thinking about God and about the Christian life?

Where is the forcefulness of this verse? Where is the electricity in it? Now here in verse 95, the wicked can lie in wait to destroy me. Well let them, says the psalmist, but I will go on unhurriedly considering your testimonies.

[26 : 42] Now verse 96 gives us a fifth reason for delighting in the word of God. And this is that God's commandment is inexhaustible. I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

In other words, what he's saying is that everything we see and experience on earth has its limits, but there is no limit to the breadth and power of the Bible.

Just think about the first half of this verse. I've seen a limit to all perfection. Let me illustrate what I think he means by this. Take athletics. Hussein Bolt is the fastest man ever to have been clocked over 100 meters as far as I know.

I think his world record is about 9.69 seconds for 100 meters. Now it's conceivable that somebody one day might run that distance in 9.5 seconds, isn't it?

But nobody's ever going to run it in five seconds. Take singing. Luciano Pavarotti, the great tenor, could sing a top C with enormous and thrilling power.

[27 : 52] Remember Nessun Dorma? But no tenor could ever sing a C one octave higher than that top C. It's beyond the scope of the human voice.

And so you could go on. It's possible to swim the English Channel, but nobody's ever going to swim the Atlantic. It's possible to endure a temperature of minus 50 degrees if you're well wrapped up.

But nobody could survive in minus 500. Everything in this world has its limits, even the most perfect and lovely things in art and architecture and engineering, things in the animal world and the vegetable world, as well as in the world of human beings.

Everything has its boundaries, which in the end cannot be surpassed. But the commandment of God, says our psalmist, is exceedingly broad.

Every Christian is called to be a student of the Bible. I don't mean a scholar in the academic sense, but a serious reader and thinker about the Bible, like that little widow in Paisley, who made sure to have oil in her lamp for the winter evenings.

[28 : 57] And as we grow serious in our reading of the Bible, as we get to know our Bibles better, we understand what the psalmist meant when he said, your commandment is exceedingly broad.

We come to realize that it's so broad, it's like a huge tract of land, which we're never going to get to the end of exploring. Now this is a great encouragement, I think, to the younger people here, people who are, let's say, under the age of about 25.

When you're under that sort of age, you may look at the older ones, especially the really old ones, those over about 40. And when you're young, you may well wonder to yourself if the human mind seizes up like a rusty old gearbox after a certain time.

Well, let me tell you, this is encouraging, it doesn't. The body certainly starts to seize up, that cannot be denied, but the mind continues to be able to take in the word of God.

And the conviction, the level of conviction, a real deep grasping that something is true, that grows too. The conviction that the Bible is true, that the gospel is true, and can take questions that come from any part of the universe, that grows stronger and stronger as long as you keep reading your Bible and taking an active part in the life of the church.

[30 : 21] Inexhaustible. So here are five good reasons for delighting in the Bible. First, because it is immovable in a fast-changing world. Second, because it is life-giving.

Third, because it is worth seeking and searching out. Fourth, because it is wonderful to consider and to ponder. And fifth, because it is inexhaustible.

It is exceedingly broad. Which brings us finally to verse 92. And to the sixth reason, perhaps the most powerful reason, for delighting in God's word.

And that is, that it sustains us in times of affliction. Let me read that verse again. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

You sense that there's something deeply personal about the psalmist's troubles. He calls them my affliction. The particular tribulations that he was having to endure at that time.

[31 : 26] In fact, there's a sense of these tribulations that runs right the way through the 176 verses of this psalm. The heart of this man's trouble is undoubtedly the opposition of enemies.

We've noticed them already in verse 95. The wicked lie in wait to destroy me. They seem to be rulers, people in positions of real authority. Look on to verse 161, 161, where he says, princes persecute me without cause.

And these enemies are numerous. Look at verse 157. Many are my persecutors and my adversaries. Our writer seems to be having his reputation tarnished.

If you turn back to verse 69, you'll see he says, 69, the insolent smear me with lies. I guess we'd call that a smear campaign these days.

There are many other verses throughout the psalm that speak of his affliction and it causes him very great pain. Look at verse 28. My soul melts away for sorrow.

[32 : 40] Melts away. Or look at verse 83. I've become like a wineskin in the smoke. A picture of being dried out and hung up and useless.

And yet, despite all that, throughout this psalm, there's also a great sense of real joy and irrepressible hope. Look towards the end of the psalm.

Look at verse 162. 162. I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. Or 165. Great peace have those who love your law.

Nothing can make them stumble. Or verse 171. My lips will pour forth praise. He's able to pour forth praise even in the midst of his afflictions.

And verse 174. Your law is my delight. So he's expressing delight and praise and peace and joy in the midst of affliction.

[33 : 40] Now friends, what I want to say now is really very important. This psalm is about the believer's life. Whether in Old Testament days or in our day. It's a psalm for Christians as well as for Old Testament Israel.

And one of the great lessons this psalm teaches is that it's normal for believers to experience joy and affliction simultaneously.

Simultaneously. In some places you'll hear Christians say that when you become a Christian life will be joy, praise and excitement all the way. Don't believe it.

That kind of thing has always been a lie. The Bible teaches that in the new creation in the world to come there will be no more death or pain or mourning or tears. All joy then but not yet.

In John's gospel chapter 16 Jesus says to his disciples in this world you will have tribulation. It's part of the package. The New Testament teaches that to grow as a Christian is to be refashioned according to the pattern of Jesus himself conformed to the image of God's son as Paul puts it in Romans chapter 8.

[34 : 54] Now what is his life Jesus' life like? What are his characteristics if we're to be conformed to his image? Well great joy great joy joy that we've never yet plumbed but also a deep understanding of affliction.

He is a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. Jesus combined simultaneously in his own person the greatest joy and the most profound experience of pain and our lives will be to some degree a reflection of that combination joy and praise and exaltation but also grief and difficulty at times.

So returning to our verse 92 here there's a great lesson in it for us. The psalmist realizes that his affliction his suffering is so great that it has the power has the potential to bring his faith to ruin but there is one thing which will prevent the collapse of his life as a believer and that is God's law.

If your law had not been my delight I would have perished in my affliction but because your law was and is my delight I'm able to stand firm.

And as we learn not simply to read the Bible not simply to understand it but to delight in God's words our life as Christians will hold firm even under the most severe afflictions.

[36 : 25] I think of a Christian couple that I knew many years ago down in England a minister and his wife who suffered a very sudden and very painful bereavement and after they got through the worst of the first months of it the father said at that terrible time I had nothing to hold on to but the Bible every other source of comfort and strength simply vanished it was the Bible that brought me through and enabled me not to go under and we will all have to face afflictions why some Christian people are more severely afflicted than others is a mystery to us we shall never understand that but when the time of affliction comes it's the Bible that will hold us firm and lead us to keep on trusting in the Lord it's the Bible and only the Bible that will teach us the truth about God about the Lord Jesus about life about death and about the world to come if your law had not been my delight

I would have perished in my affliction but it can be our delight because it is the words of our father to his children let's pray together we do thank you heavenly father for the power of your words your words that come from your own wonderful loving heart their power to keep us to keep us surviving in our times of great trouble have mercy upon us we pray and help us to discover more and more of the joy and delight of treasuring and considering and pondering and searching for your words and our prayer is that not only our individual lives but the life of our church may increasingly be built around the things that you have said the things that are fixed forever the things that give us joy and a great and deep assurance and we ask this through our Lord

Jesus Christ Amen