

# How the Bible Keeps Us out of Various Pits and Traps

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[ 0 : 00 ] But we're going to turn now to our Bible and to our reading this morning, which is in Psalm 119. The long psalm, the longest psalm in the Psalter.

And Edward is taking us through a little series in this psalm. And we're going to read this morning the section beginning at verse 25, headed Dalet. Each of these sections headed by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

And cleverly beginning each line with that letter. It's a real work of art. But it has so much to teach us about the Lord, his ways, and in particular his word, his word of life.

So let's read together Psalm 119 then at verse 25. The psalmist says, My soul clings to the dust. Give me life according to your word.

When I told him my ways, you answered me. Teach me your statutes. Make me understand the way of your precepts. And I will meditate on all your wondrous works.

[ 1 : 05 ] My soul melts away for sorrow. Strengthen me according to your word. Put false ways far from me. And graciously teach me your law.

I've chosen the way of faithfulness. I set your rules before me. I cling to your testimonies, O Lord. Let me not be put to shame. I will run in the way of your commandments.

When you enlarge my heart. Amen. And may God bless us. His word. Well, let's turn, friends, in our Bibles to Psalm 119.

Am I on? Am I visible? Audible? Incomprehensible. Okay, Psalm 119. On page 512. 512.

In our big Bibles. And as you know, our passage for today is verses 25 to 32. Now, I wonder if this might be a familiar experience for anybody here.

[ 2 : 16 ] You come into a church congregation for the first time. The very first time. For a Sunday service like this service. And being brand new, you feel a bit small and shy and nervous.

And as you look around the rest of the congregation, they all look rather well sorted out. Smiling and happy. Well organized people. The younger people look clean and presentable.

Mostly clean. The older people look as if they've survived the rigors of life successfully. The preacher appears to be confident and of sound mind. And even the musicians don't look wildly eccentric.

Everybody looks sane and balanced and coping well with life. Whereas you, as a newcomer, don't feel too sane or too balanced. And you may suspect that you're not coping too well with life.

But everybody else seems to be strong and in some kind of a good place. Now, appearances can be deceptive. Most of us, I suspect, are a bit like the duck swimming across the pond.

[ 3 : 20 ] Looking serene and calm above the water line. But below the water line, paddling furiously so as to keep going at all. Now, our section here in Psalm 119 shows us something of what's going on below the water line.

The writer of this psalm is a remarkably honest human being. He is a mature believer. But he's finding life a real struggle. And one of the glories of this psalm is that the writer tells us about his struggles.

But he doesn't only tell us about his struggles. He also shows us why he is not overcome by his struggles. And the answer at every point lies in the written words of God.

It's his Bible that enables our psalmist to persevere. And he's teaching us here in verses 25 to 32 that the Bible does not lift us out of the struggles of life.

But it does give us grace and strength to persevere as believers in the midst of our struggles. Now, my title for this morning is how the Bible keeps us out of various pits and traps.

[ 4 : 31 ] Or if you like, how the Bible protects us and preserves us when we're surrounded by temptations and quagmires and sinking sands. Our friend, the psalmist, this lovely and honest teacher, shows us how to turn and where to turn when the quagmires of life are threatening to suck us down and overwhelm us.

Well, I've got four pits or traps or temptations which are described or outlined in these verses. So we'll look at these traps and then we'll see how our psalmist shows us how to avoid them or how to avoid getting sucked down by them.

First of all, there's the temptation to despair. Despair. Let's look at verse 25 and verse 28. And you'll see that both of those verses begin with the words, my soul.

Verse 25, my soul clings to the dust. Verse 28, my soul melts away for sorrow. Those are very poignant phrases.

And remember, our writer here is a grown-up believer. He's not an infant. He's a leader. He's a teacher of the faith. And yet there are times when his soul feels just about as low and wretched as a soul can feel.

[ 5 : 49 ] My soul clings to the dust. My soul melts away for sorrow. Well, what can he mean by these two phrases? First, my soul clings to the dust.

In the Bible, dust is symbolic of death and disintegration. As the author of Ecclesiastes writes, all are from the dust and to dust all shall return.

He's echoing, of course, the words of God to rebellious Adam in Genesis chapter 3, where the Lord says to the man, dust you are and to dust you will return. Moses repeats this idea in Psalm 90.

He says to God, you return man to dust. The apostle Paul writes of Adam in 1 Corinthians 15. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust.

So when our psalmist says, my soul clings to the dust, he means I feel like a dying man. I'm moribund. I feel as if I'm only a step from death.

[ 6 : 54 ] In fact, it's almost worse than that. Because look at the verb he uses in verse 25. My soul clings to the dust as though I'm so embedded in the dust of death that I have no power to stand up and shake the dust off me.

Then verse 28. My soul melts away for sorrow. So full of sorrow am I that I feel as if my soul, my solid self, is somehow melting away, running away from me down the gutters of life.

I used to feel strong and solid and firm, but there's nothing left of me. I'm little more than a stain on the pavement. Now those two lines are images of great desolation.

I wonder if you've ever felt like that. Most people surely feel like that sooner or later in life. Those feelings may come because of some sharp, desolating trauma.

Or it may be simply a long, drawn-out sequence of pressure. But it reduces you to a feeling that you're just half an inch from death. Or that your life has almost disappeared.

[ 8 : 04 ] What, then, does our psalmist do about it? How does he react to his experience of deep sorrow? Well, it's the second line of each of those two verses which supplies us with a shaft of light from heaven.

Verse 25. My soul clings to the dust. Give me life according to your word. Verse 28.

My soul melts away for sorrow. Strengthen me according to your word. So do you see what he's appealing to in each case? He's appealing to God's promise.

God's word. You've given me your word, Lord. That's what he's saying. Your word of promise, verse 25, is that you will give me life, not death. And verse 28.

You've given me your word of promise that you will give me strength. Strength to endure. So, Lord, give me what you've promised me. Strengthen me according to your word.

[ 9 : 03 ] So he's relying on God's promise. Well, when will this particularly help us? It will help us at our times of greatest weakness.

For example, think of yourself during the last 24 hours of your life. That'll be a time of weakness, won't it? There you are lying in bed, feeling tired and weaker than you have ever felt before.

You know you're dying. You feel the last ounces of strength ebbing away from you. So you say to the Lord in the words of verse 25, give me life according to your word.

You're not asking at that stage for more life on earth. You know that that's just about to finish. But you are asking the Lord to fulfill his promise to you of eternal life.

Give me life. You've promised it according to your word. Now, the Bible is full of the promise of eternal life. Full of it. For example, Jesus says in John's gospel, for this is the will of my father.

[ 10 : 06 ] Isn't that a great way to begin a verse? This is what my father purposes and desires and wants. The will of my father is that everyone who looks on the son of God and believes in him should have eternal life.

And I will raise him up on the last day. That's his promise. We can rely upon it because it's God who makes it. The trustworthiness of a promise depends upon the person who makes it.

We don't believe every promise, do we, that we hear. I don't really believe the promise that is written on every 20 pound note that I possess. I took a 20 pound note out of my wallet the other day and I read the promise and it read this.

The Royal Bank of Scotland, PLC, promise to pay the bearer on demand 20 pounds sterling at their head office here in Edinburgh.

Here in Edinburgh. Not Glasgow. You wouldn't get it in Glasgow, would you? But here in Edinburgh, you would get it. Dated 31st of January 2018. Now, I don't really believe that promise.

[ 11 : 09 ] Do you? It's not that the bank are exactly insincere, but we all know that the global financial situation can go up in flames in a moment. So we don't really believe that promise entirely.

But God, God promises us eternal life in verse 25. And in verse 28, he's promising us strength for this life. So our psalmist is teaching us to turn in our worst moments, even in our dying moments, our moments of the worst sorrow, to the Lord's promises.

And those promises, because of the trustworthiness of the one who makes them, will steady our souls. And we can trust God to keep them because he's God.

So there's something to keep us out of the quagmire of despair. Then secondly, there's the pitfall of ignorance of the scriptures.

Now, we all, of course, start off as ignorant of the scriptures. But when we come to Christ, we then begin to read the Bible. And gradually, over time, the Bible reconstructs the whole way in which we view life.

[ 12 : 20 ] All of us have sudden moments of progress in Bible understanding. When some aspect of the Bible's teaching comes home to us forcefully. And it's at moments like that that we long to know the Bible better.

We long to have our ignorance replaced by understanding. And this is what our psalmist longs for. He says to the Lord in verse 26, When I told you of my ways, you answered me.

Now, please teach me your ways. Please teach me your statutes! Teach me. But he doesn't stop at verse 26. He presses his request further in verse 27.

Make me understand the way of your precepts. I am an ignoramus, Lord. So take hold of me by the shoulders and make me understand. There's a strong desire here to understand the Bible.

Let me give you a simple human parallel. If you were a young but promising tennis player, you might approach Andy Murray and ask him to take you on as a kind of project to teach you how to play tennis really well.

[ 13 : 30 ] And if he liked the look of you and thought that you were serious and thought that you had a bit of talent, he might just say yes. And then you would say to him, Oh, thank you, Sir Andy, so much.

Thank you. And will you please, please teach me everything you know? All right, kid, he might say. I will teach you everything. Now, what that young tennis player has is a strong desire to learn.

And that's what our psalmist is revealing about himself in verses 26 and 27. Teach me your statutes. Make me understand. I love that word make. Make me understand the way of your precepts.

And he repeats just the same request in verses 33 and 4. Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes. Give me understanding that I may keep your law. Now, in life, generally, it's natural for us to want to understand things, to want to make sense of the things that we see around us.

We try to make sense of life, make sense of everything. So, for example, you might be walking through the park one day, and you see a little dog running along on three legs. You ever seen that?

[ 14 : 40 ] I have. It's an interesting sight. There's a little dog running along, carrying the fourth leg up in the air. Well, you're curious about that. You want to make sense of it, don't you? You say to yourself, I wonder why that leg is not working.

Could it be a congenital abnormality in the dog? It's never been able to use its leg. Or maybe the dog had an accident and met a car, and that injured the leg. Or maybe the dog is a kind of comedian of a dog, and perhaps he's hoisting his leg so as to pull my leg.

We want to understand things, don't we? There's a natural curiosity in us. But the desire to understand the Bible is the best desire that any human being can have, because it is about the most important things that any person can ever think about.

It's about God. It's about the meaning of human life. It's about eternal salvation. It's about heaven and hell. Well, the three-legged dog in the park, that's a trivial matter.

But the Bible teaches us the lessons that the human soul really needs to learn above all things. Our psalmist is teaching us, by example, to hunger to understand the Bible.

[ 15 : 52 ] Now, just think a bit more broadly. Our whole society surely needs to cry out in the words of verse 26, to cry out to God, teach me your statutes. Because the Bible is so little known these days.

In English literature, English writing over the years, the Bible is quoted or alluded to endlessly over the last three or four or five hundred years, not only by Christian authors, but even by non-believing novelists like Charles Dickens.

The Bible was somehow woven deeply into the thought life of the nation in novels written up to roughly the period between the First and Second World War.

But much less so since then. Or visit a cemetery. Have a look at the inscriptions on the gravestones. You'll find the Bible being quoted on almost every gravestone up to about the first part of the 20th century.

But on gravestones set up later, in the last 80 to 100 years, the inscriptions read very differently. The best dad in the world. Or gone but not forgotten.

[ 17 : 00 ] Or you'll never walk alone. In allowing the Bible to drain out of our national life, we've impoverished ourselves. The nation has lost sight of its soul.

Has lost sight of eternity. But it's not impossible that the church, by the grace of God, could be used to bring the Bible back into our national life. Could old Scotland, tired old Scotland, tired old England, raise their heads up again to heaven and cry out to God, teach me your statutes?

It's not impossible, is it? Let's pray for it and let's keep on preaching the gospel. But on the individual level, and that's what this psalm is really all about, let's ask ourselves if we long for the truth of the Bible.

If we long for it and pine for it and hunger for it. Could we reverently go to the Lord Jesus? Like the young tennis player going to Andy Murray. And could we ask him, Lord, please teach us everything that our hearts and minds are able to absorb.

Teach me, Lord. Teach me to understand the Bible. Teach me about heaven and hell. I need to know. Teach me what it means to be saved. Teach me how to love you.

[ 18 : 15 ] Teach me how to love the church. Teach me how to lead a godly and self-disciplined life which attracts other people to you. The pitfall, the trap that verses 26 and 7 show us, is the trap of complacently remaining ignorant of the Bible.

Or perhaps being satisfied with just a very small portion of Bible understanding. Now it is not a question of academic ability or intelligence.

There are plenty of university professors up and down the country who don't care a fig for the Bible. It's a question of whether our hearts are hungry to know the Lord better. So let's not fall into the trap of Bible apathy or willful ignorance.

Teach me, Lord, to understand your words. Whet my appetite. Give me a fresh hunger to know you. Now the third pitfall is the temptation to be untruthful.

To live a life where deceitfulness, deceitfulness at some level, is woven into the very fabric of one's life. Look at our psalmist's prayer in verse 29.

[ 19 : 28 ] Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law. Now the first half of the verse is very closely connected with the second half.

It's as the Lord teaches me his law that he will enable me to put false ways far from me. If his law, his truth, is increasingly filling my mind, it must make me into a more truthful person.

When I was preparing this sermon just a few days ago, this verse, verse 29, exercised me more than any other verse in this passage.

I even found myself thinking about it in the wee small hours of the morning one night. I think the reason why it exercised me so much was that it forced me to think again about the deceitfulness which is somehow deeply written into our DNA.

Just look back, if you will, a page or two. A page. To Psalm 116, verse 11. Psalm 116, verse 11.

[ 20 : 33 ] And you'll see that the author of that psalm cries out, I said in my alarm, all mankind are liars. Paul the Apostle cries out in Romans chapter 3.

No need to look this one up. Romans 3, let God be true, he says, though everyone were a liar. By which he means, even if the whole of humanity tells lies, which it probably does, God himself will never lie.

So coming back to our verse 29 here in the psalm, our psalmist is acknowledging that false ways are ways that he is constantly in danger of following.

And he begs the Lord to put a great distance between false ways and himself. Now, you might bristle a bit at this.

You might want to say to me, but I am not a liar. In fact, the last lie I told was when I was 10 years old. I kicked the football through my father's greenhouse window and he asked me who'd done it and I said it was my brother.

[ 21 : 32 ] But I haven't told a lie since then. Well, friend, not so fast. Are you not deeply conscious of the tendency within yourself to be less than fully truthful?

I'm certainly conscious of that tendency within myself. Why are we tempted to be less than fully truthful? Well, there are several reasons. One reason might be greed for money.

We don't tell the whole truth, mostly the truth, but not the whole truth to Her Majesty's revenue and customs because we want to pay a smaller tax bill. Another reason for being less than fully truthful is that we want to get out of trouble.

For example, think of the workplace, your place of work. You might be tempted to falsify a report that you're having to submit to your employers, just to falsify it in one or two ways.

You've perhaps made a bit of a mess of the job that you've been given to do, and you want to conceal in your report the full extent of the mess from your employer so as to avoid a reprimand or a penalty or even losing your job.

[ 22 : 41 ] Another version of this is that we try to make ourselves look more competent or skillful than we really are. We're aware that we are really a goose, but we're trying to make out and tell the world that we're a swan.

Jesus called this hypocrisy, and his particular target was religious hypocrisy. When a person makes out that he's very pious and prayerful and generous, whereas the reality is that he's greedy and selfish and proud, there's a gap between what he professes to be and what he really is.

Let's trace this back to its original source. The deceitfulness of human nature owes its origin to the power and influence of the devil, as the Bible teaches it.

The devil first appears in Genesis chapter 3, and as soon as he begins to speak, he begins to speak deception. He deceives Eve by calling God a liar.

Do you remember how the conversation goes? Eve says to the serpent, God has told us not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, because if we eat of it, we will die. And the serpent replies, but you won't die.

[ 23 : 53 ] So he denies God's words. Deceit, in essence, is a denial of truth. Well, the devil gains his grip on Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the effect of his gaining power over them was to introduce his own fundamental characteristic, which is untruthfulness, into their nature, and therefore into human nature.

Jesus, in John's Gospel chapter 8, calls the devil the father of lies. All lies stem from him. And he says to his human antagonists, in John chapter 8, you are the children of the devil.

You share his characteristic nature, which is to deny truth. You deny truth, because you're denying me. You won't acknowledge the truth about my identity.

Later in the New Testament, the Apostle John says that the whole world is in the power of the evil one, which means that all men and women by nature are inclined to believe lies, and are inclined to tell lies.

Now, it's easy for us to criticize the kind of lies that get told out there in the big, wide world. We might sometimes point critically at a politician who doesn't perform what he's promised.

[ 25 : 13 ] Or we look aghast at a famous company like Volkswagen, who was shown up two or three years ago as telling a huge corporate lie about the carbon emissions from their car engines.

It's easy enough to express horror and disapproval at public untruthfulness. But this psalm is about the personal life of the believer. It's about the thinking and conduct of a man who is a committed believer in the God of Israel.

The testing thing about verse 29 is that it forces us to look at our own hearts. We need to ask ourselves how we might be tempted to be economical with the truth.

Are we tempted to some course of action which involves some kind of ongoing deceitfulness at some level or another? Now, deceiving other people, that's one of the major traps that life in this world throws at us.

But we can also deceive ourselves. We can think of ourselves as swans when we're really geese. There's a telling moment in Romans chapter 12 when Paul says to the Roman Christians, I say to everyone amongst you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment.

[ 26 : 35 ] In other words, he's saying, take a cool, dispassionate look at yourself in the mirror. What do you see there? Swan or goose? Don't kid yourself. It's mostly goose.

So, what hope is there for us? We have these frequent temptations, not usually to tell outright lies, but to present things in a certain light, to massage the facts a little bit, to make out that we are finer and better people than we really are.

Well, our psalmist teaches us how we can make real progress in this area of life. Look again at verse 29. He cries out to God, put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law.

So it's God teaching us his law, teaching us his truth that will push the ways and habits of falsehood further and further from us. God is willing to teach us the truth in such a way as to reduce and choke our tendency to speak and think falsely.

But while God teaches us his law, there's also something for us to do and that's what verse 30 holds out before us. I have chosen the way of faithfulness.

[ 27 : 54 ] I set your rules before me. Faithfulness is the antidote to falsehood or the opposite of false ways. Faithfulness means faithfulness to God and loyalty to the truth.

And what does our teacher tell us in verse 30? I have chosen the way of faithfulness. It's as though I've come to a fork in the road and I've chosen the right way, the way of faithfulness.

And how do I, how do you and I establish that kind of choice? How do we reaffirm it and re-endorse it? Well, the second half of the verse tells us, I set your rules before me.

In other words, I read the Bible with the determination to practice it. Now friends, we all know people whose lives are deeply marked by truthfulness and sincerity and integrity.

And such people are delightful people to be with. When we're with them, we want to be like them. These two verses, 29 and 30, are all about integrity. How to speak truthfully.

[ 28 : 57 ] How to live truthfully. How does it happen then? Well, first of all, by God's grace. God graciously teaches us his law.

But secondly, by our choice in response to his grace. We choose the way of faithfulness. We reaffirm our choice daily. And we do it by setting God's rules before us.

Well, now one last pitfall for us to think about. And it comes in verse 31. It's the pitfall of being put to shame. Here's verse 31. I cling to your testimonies, O Lord.

Let me not be put to shame. Now this theme of the fear of being put to shame appears a number of times in Psalm 119. And the fact that it appears several times should make us realize that it's an important concern of our psalmist.

Look back, for example, to verse 6. Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. And there are other examples later in the psalm.

[ 30 : 06 ] Now in verse 31, there is a clear link between the first half of the verse and the second half. There is in most of these verses. The two halves are linked. But in verse 31, the protection against being put to shame lies in clinging to God's testimonies or teaching.

If I cling to your teaching, O Lord, I shall not be put to shame. That's the logic of the verse. Now it's not clear whether the shame of verse 31 is shame before men in this world or shame before God on the last day.

The Bible, of course, speaks of shame at the final judgment. For example, we read this in Daniel chapter 12. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Well, that's the great division at the end. Some to everlasting life, others to everlasting shame. Now our psalmist here may have both in mind.

He may have both shame in this world and shame eternally. Let's think first of being put to shame in this world, being shamed in the eyes of the world.

[ 31 : 23 ] What's involved here is the revelation of something shameful which was previously covered up and hidden from view. I think, for example, of a former schoolmaster of mine who taught me at school when I was a young boy of about 9 or 10 years old.

An energetic, talented, popular young school teacher who was then in his early 20s, about 12 years older than me. I remember he taught me how to swim, he taught me rugby, he taught me French verbs with joy.

We had a lot of fun together. We boys at the school, we all liked him. In his old age now, almost 80 years old, this man is in prison. Two or three years ago, a number of ex-pupils of the school came forward to the authorities at the school saying that they'd been abused and assaulted by this man.

The police were called in, he was arrested, prosecuted, tried, convicted, and then sent to prison. It's an all-too-familiar story, isn't it?

When he retired some 15 years or more ago, he was fated and praised, applauded as a fine teacher and an honor to the life of the school. And now he's in prison, put to shame.

[ 32 : 40 ] I grieve for those that he abused and I grieve for him. He wasn't a man who ever made a profession of Christian faith as far as I know, but I pray for him that he may yet come to Christ so that he's not put to shame eternally.



To be shamed in the eyes of the world, it is something to be feared. But don't forget that it's wonderfully possible to be forgiven and restored after such a thing.

Think of a man like Jonathan Aitken, who was a senior political figure in Mrs. Thatcher's government, sent to prison years ago and who was then wonderfully brought to Christ and is now a real ambassador for the gospel.

Being shamed in this world is not necessarily the end of a person's life and usefulness. In fact, it can be the beginning of real usefulness. But to be shamed eternally there's no way back from what Jesus calls the outer darkness.

This verse 31 is making two points. First, let's share the psalmist's healthy fear lest he be put to shame for deserting the Lord.

[ 33 : 50 ] Another example is King Solomon. Think of Solomon. Early in his life and reign, he loved the Lord. He was faithful to the Lord. He used his great wisdom to write most of the book of Proverbs, which is an endless store of wonderful instruction for us.

But as he grew older, he abandoned his faithfulness to the Lord. He married many non-Jewish women, but the worst thing was that he welcomed their gods, false gods, into the kingdom of Israel.

A good beginning does not guarantee a good ending. Verse 31 teaches us a healthy fear of being put to shame.

But secondly, verse 31 teaches us how to be protected against being put to shame. And it's there in the first half of the verse. I cling to your testimonies, O Lord.

That's the protection. It's the Bible that will protect us. I don't mean owning a copy of the Bible, but reading it and then living by it. If Solomon, King Solomon, had studied every chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, he would never have come unstuck in the way that he did.

[ 34 : 59 ] But he abandoned his Bible and he embraced a multitude of false gods. Well, friends, we're nearly finished. How are you feeling?

It is daunting, isn't it? Daunting, this challenge of living by the Bible as it were steering the right course with all these pits and traps on either side. Just think again of these four pitfalls or temptations.

The temptation to despair. the temptation of not wanting to be taught the Bible. The temptation to live a life of falsehood, half-truths, massaging the truth.

And lastly, the pitfall of being put to shame. Yes, in this life, but much more importantly, on the day of judgment. In the light of all these temptations, is it possible to live the Christian life at all with integrity?

Well, you know the answer to that question. Of course, it is gloriously possible by the grace of God. It's his word, the scriptures, that keeps us afloat.

[ 36 : 04 ] It's the Bible that makes all the difference. Every one of these verses is telling us that the words of God are the answer to the testings and temptations of human life.

And there's one final thing to encourage us greatly. Look at verse 32. I will run, not walk slowly or limp, but I will run with vigor in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart.

Our psalmist is showing us that God is in the business of opening up our hearts so that we genuinely love him more and genuinely love the Lord Jesus more. Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

It's inevitable. If you love me, that's the way you will live. And our verse 32 is saying the same thing. When our hearts are opened up, when our cardiac capacity for loving the Lord is enlarged, we will inevitably run in the way of his commandments.

H.G. Wells was a famous science fiction writer, but he was a bitter opponent of Christianity. On his 71st birthday, he held a party for his old friends and he gathered his guests together and he said to them, gentlemen, I'm 71 years old today and I've never found peace.

[ 37 : 32 ] The trouble with people like me is that the man from Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth, was too big for my small heart. An honest admission, but a sad one.

But friends, we need not be like H.G. Wells. Look at verse 32. In that verse, who does the enlarging of the psalmist's heart? It's not the psalmist.

He can't do that, but he knows that God can and that's why he prays. The Lord God loves to take hold of our small hearts and open them up.

He's in the business of opening up our narrow, self-centered hearts and filling them with love for him and love for the Lord Jesus and love for other people and love for the Bible.

So let's pray with our teacher, Lord, enlarge my heart. Because when he does so, we will want more and more to run in the way of his commandments.

[ 38 : 32 ] let's bow our heads and we'll pray. Dear God, our Father, we do long to run more truly in the way of your commandments and we confess to you our weakness.

We confess to you these many temptations that surround us because of the frailty and deceitfulness of our own hearts. so we pray that you will enlarge our hearts and strengthen our will, strengthen our desire to love you, to love each other, to love the Lord Jesus, to love the Bible.

And we pray that these wonderful words of yours will increasingly protect us and help us and bring us in the end wonderfully and truly to everlasting life.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.