

## A Lamp and a Light

For: Voice of the Church

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Every one of us is on a journey through life. Step by step we make our way through life. As we do that, we need to be able to see our way. Just imagine yourself on a camping trip deep in the woods and you can't see the path. Then you can only move very hesitantly. But when you see clearly, you are able to walk in a sure-footed manner through the woods. So it is in life too.

That's why the Bible says in Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (ESV). The Psalmist is talking about the journey through life, and he is using the imagery of walking through life.

On that journey through life, we need light! We always do. That's why the Psalmist speaks about both a "lamp" and a "light." During the day we see by the light from the sun, and during the night we see by a lamp. Day and night we need light! The lamp and light of which the Psalmist speaks is the Word of God.

The sad thing is that if left to ourselves each one of us stumbles through life. By nature, life is dark for us. Each one of us is a sinner by nature, and we can't see. Our fall into sin at the beginning of the world's history has caused our lives to be shrouded in darkness. We make a mess of our lives. It's like on that camping trip through the woods: we bang our feet against rock outcroppings on the path, and we walk into trees. We hurt ourselves in life because we are walking through life in darkness due to our fall into sin, and we are walking toward our eternal ruin.

But God has given us his Word. The Bible tells us that when mankind fell into sin at the beginning of this world's history, God came with the Word of promise – the gospel of salvation. God promised a Saviour who would redeem fallen people from the darkness of sin and lead people into the light of salvation.

The Word is filled with *promises*. This is about comfort and hope for sinners living in a fallen world. This is about the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. This is about fellowship with God the Father in the covenant of grace through his Son Jesus Christ. This is about the hope of eternal life. It's because of God's promises revealed in God's Word that just after saying that God's Word is a lamp and a light to him, the Psalmist calls out to God in Psalm 119:107, "I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, *according to your word.*"

You hear the Psalmist calling out in faith. Indeed, God's promises require *faith* on our part. The very fact that the Psalmist says that God's Word is a lamp and a light for him is a statement of his faith.

The Word is not only filled with promises, the Word is also filled with *instructions*. These are the commandments which give direction to our lives and instruct us how to live well. This is instruction for wholesome living. If we live God's way, we won't hurt ourselves. That's why the Psalmist also says in Psalm 119:106, "I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, *to keep your righteous rules.*"

The Psalmist's decision to live according to God's commandments is a faith decision. God's commandments require *obedience* on our part. And obedience is the result of faith. Faith in God's promises and obedience toward God's commandments go hand-in-hand.

Faith and obedience are very personal. The personal character is indicated by the fact that the Psalmist says, "Your word is a lamp to *my* feet and a light to *my* path" (Ps. 119:105). *My* feet, *my* path. That is a personal confession of faith on the part of the Psalmist. He is saying what the Word of God means to him personally. Do you say it with the Psalmist? Do you have that faith and obedience? If not, pray that God the Holy Spirit may work it in your heart. And if you do have that faith and obedience, pray that God the Holy Spirit may cause you to persevere in it.

At every time of day, at every season of life, we need the Word of God to comfort us with its promises and to guide us with its instructions. For that reason, it's so important that we read and study the Bible and that we attend church to hear the preaching of God's Word. Are those activities your practice? Only if we are reading and studying the Word and attending church faithfully can the Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

So what is the purpose of God's Word? It's intended to transform lives! That is clearly implied by the description of the Word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. The Word of God is intended to illuminate our path through life with the result that it determines *how* we walk through life. It isn't good enough to gather some facts from the Bible and store them away as information. Biblical facts must determine how we live. The Bible isn't about *information*, but about *transformation*! When we read and study the Bible, when we listen to a sermon, when we listen to this radio message, it isn't just about gathering some facts. The comfort of God's Word and the instruction of God's Word ought to guide us. It should be life-changing!

That doesn't mean that the Bible gives us detailed instructions for all situations of life. Don't think that you will find a chapter and verse with a specific instruction for every aspect of life. The Bible doesn't tell us what career to choose, where to live, and who to marry. But the Bible does tell us what should govern our thinking and what priorities we should have in all those things (J.M. Boice, *Psalms*, vol. 3, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998, p. 1026). In all those things, we should ask how we can best serve God and our neighbor. That's the overall focus in all our decision-making.

That transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit, who works through the Word. The Holy Spirit causes us to walk in *faith* and *obedience*. Pray for the Spirit's working in your life.

Christians only live imperfectly in this way. Christians still have to deal with the reality of sin in their lives. Christians stumble often on the journey through life. But Jesus Christ lived perfectly as the One who confessed perfectly that God's Word was a lamp to his feet and a light to his path. Christ clung in perfect *faith* to God's *promises* that his suffering and death would lead to eternal life for God's people, and that the cross would be the way to glory for himself. Christ clung in perfect *obedience* to God's *instructions* as given in the commandments, and he walked according to God's law. The message of the gospel is that Christ's righteousness is our righteousness by grace through faith.

What the Psalmist says about the Word of God being a lamp to our feet and a light to our path is the Old Testament way of saying what the Apostle Paul also says in one of his letters in the New Testament. In 2 Timothy 3:16,17, Paul writes: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for

teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Are the words of the Psalmist – “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105) – a living reality in your life?

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