

The Perfect “Power Tool” in the Struggle

Psalm 19:7-14 (Lent 3)

The law of the Lord is perfect. It revives the soul. The testimony of the Lord is trustworthy. It gives wisdom to the inexperienced. The precepts of the Lord are right. They give joy to the heart. The commandment of the Lord is bright. It gives light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure. It stands forever. The just decrees of the Lord are truth. They are altogether righteous. They are more desirable than gold, even better than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the honeycomb. Yes, by them your servant is warned. In keeping them there is great reward. Who can recognize his own errors? Declare me innocent of hidden sins. Restrain your servant also from deliberate sins. Do not let them rule over me. Then I will be blameless. Then I will be innocent of great rebellion. May the speech from my mouth and the thoughts in my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Whenever you are starting a project you need to have the proper tools to do the job. Yet sometimes while working on that project I realize that I didn't have the right tool for the job. I have all the materials but for some reason I'm missing a tool I need that to complete the task. For some reason I either can't find the one I need or I just don't own it. So I have to either get in my car to go to Lowe's or Fleet Farm to buy what is needed since I'll probably need it again some other time, or I end up calling someone who I think might have that tool. Has that ever happened to you? You looked for the proper tool to do a project whether it's home improvement or something else all together and realized you don't have what you need. It's frustrating isn't it? You want to get the job done. You want it to go smoothly, but without the proper tool for the job, that project becomes a real struggle, maybe even impossible.

We are locked in a very real struggle. It is a struggle with a sinful nature that loves to take God's Ten Commandments, his Law, and toss them aside as mere suggestions desiring to do just the opposite. We heard the Apostle Paul talk about how that nature thinks. **“For the mind-set of the sinful nature is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God's law, and in fact, it cannot. Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the sinful flesh but in the spirit, if indeed God's Spirit lives in you.” (Romans 8:7-9a)** Even though we want to obey God's commands and live in harmony with God's will, we will continue to struggle with our sinful nature which wants nothing to do with obedience. In that daily struggle we need the perfect “power tool”. No, I don't mean a drill or a saw, but a tool to empower us in that struggle. That perfect “power tool” is God's Word of both Law and Gospel.

The Law, as we see in the Ten Commandments, clearly shows us what God wants us to do or not to do. It also causes us to realize that we so often haven't kept them in thought, word, and action. The Gospel shows us Jesus, our Savior, who obeyed perfectly in our place and died on the cross so that we would have forgiveness for every time we break those commands. When God's Word is held on to, read, and applied to our lives then we are empowered by the Holy Spirit through that perfect “power tool”. Daily we are given both the confidence that we are not condemned for our sins and the desire to obey God's commands.

In that struggle, we may be holding on to the Word, but too often it is seen as just one of many tools which could empower us as we struggle daily with our sinful nature. So one hand is taken off the perfect tool and reaches for other tools which seem to be just as empowering. Perhaps we even rely on them more than the Word. We like to depend more on our own reason, the advice given in “self-help” type books, the memes and other content we see posted on social media pages that we follow, or just what other people think or feel in general. Unless those sources are using that perfect tool themselves and using it correctly, they don't really help us in our struggle against our sinful nature. Instead of being empowered, we are misled, deceived, and weakened.

As we consider a portion of Psalm 19 today, written by King David, David helps us to see what makes God's Word of both Law and Gospel in our hands today the perfect "power tool" that empowers us in our struggle. **"The law of the Lord is perfect. It revives the soul. The testimony of the Lord is trustworthy. It gives wisdom to the inexperienced. The precepts of the Lord are right. They give joy to the heart. The commandment of the Lord is bright. It gives light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure. It stands forever. The just decrees of the Lord are truth. They are altogether righteous."** (vs. 7-9)

In these verses David lists six different names for God's Word - the Law, the testimony, the precepts, the commandments, the fear of the Lord (which sounds really unusual but seems to be a figure of speech using one of the results the Word produces as a name), and then finally the just decrees of the Lord. Attached to each one of those six names, David lists an attribute of the Word: perfect, trustworthy, right, bright, pure, and truth. Those attributes are characteristics which also describe the giver of that Word. If God is perfect, the Word he gives is perfect. If he is trustworthy, the Word must be trustworthy, and so on. Since the Word is perfect it completely supplies all the spiritual knowledge we need. In its brightness, the Word shows us the right way. Because it is right, pure, true, and righteous, it can never mislead us. Any other tool we might pick up unless it is using God's Word (and applying it correctly) cannot supply the spiritual knowledge we need. Those other tools don't always show us the right way and can mislead us. Only the powerful Word of God is that perfect tool to empower us in our spiritual struggle. Through his Word the user of that tool is blessed.

After giving us an attribute of God's Word, David lists six blessings which that Word gives to God's people through Law or Gospel. Both work together in tandem. The Law shows us our need for a Savior and the Gospel by showing us our Savior through whom we have forgiveness and life. Without the Law we see no need for the Gospel. Without the Gospel we would be hopelessly lost in our sins. When both Law and Gospel are employed in the Word we are blessed. Our souls are revived. The Word gives wisdom. The Gospel makes us wise for salvation while the law shows us how to live wisely. The Word gives joy to the believer as they delight in both Law and Gospel. The Word gives light or guidance through the Gospel showing us Jesus and the law by showing us how he wants us to live. The Word endures forever and so we have confidence that just as it never changes, there never will be a time in this world it will cease to exist. The Word is altogether righteous as the Law justly condemns our sins and the Gospel justly declares us innocent for the sake of Jesus who endured the punishment our sins deserved on the cross. That's what makes God's Word the perfect "power tool" that empowers us in the struggle, a tool that, as we hold it in our hands, gives us joy recognizing just how eternally valuable it is.

David writes, **"They are more desirable than gold, even better than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the honeycomb."** (vs. 10) Gold can buy many things which sustain and even enrich earthly life. Yet the Word of God has the power to offer and deliver the gift of eternal life by showing us God's love and undeserved mercy. The sweetness of honey gives pleasure, as those of us who have a sweet tooth know all too well. Who doesn't love the sweet taste of anything that is sweet like a chocolate bar, bowl of ice cream, piece of cake, or a warm chocolate chip cookie? However, the pleasure that sweetness gives is nothing compared to the joy and eternally satisfying sweetness of forgiveness and peace with God through Jesus brought to us through that Word. God's Word is indeed the perfect "power tool" to empower us in the struggle.

Yet like every other tool that is used on a project, you have to know how to handle that tool. If one doesn't know how to use a tool properly, what good is it even if it is the perfect tool for the task? The words of God's law warns believers against sin and its terrible consequences. The words of the gospel deliver the reward of forgiveness that Christ himself has won to everyone who believes them. Keeping that Word in our life, there certainly is great reward and blessing. Empowered by that Word, we are led to handle that Word in our life with the care of humble

prayer. We go before the giver of that Word who alone can help us to not only apply it to our life and keep it in our life but also to create in us hearts that love him as our solid Rock and our Redeemer from sin. That's exactly what David does in this psalm. **“Yes, by them your servant is warned. In keeping them there is great reward. Who can recognize his own errors? Declare me innocent of hidden sins. Restrain your servant also from deliberate sins. Do not let them rule over me. Then I will be blameless. Then I will be innocent of great rebellion. May the speech from my mouth and the thoughts in my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” (vs. 11-14)**

In humbleness, David prays that the Lord will preserve him from sins of every sort - ignorance where he did not know what he did was wrong or careless sins that he didn't even notice he committed. Because of our weakness, we sometimes sin even when we know better and even when we don't want to. Yet David especially prays that God would preserve him from committing deliberate, malicious sins which could destroy his faith and rob him of forgiveness. In conclusion, he prays that God would not only forgive his sin when he falls but would create a clean heart in him so that both the words coming out of his mouth and the thoughts remaining in his heart would be pure and pleasing to God his Rock and Redeemer..

My friends, empowered by God's Word, the perfect “power tool”, in the real and daily struggle against our sinful nature, David's prayer is our prayer too as we handle it with the care of humble prayer. “Show me my sins when I have done wrong - the hidden ones in ignorance, the careless ones I didn't even notice I have done, the ones done out of my own weakness. Keep me from deliberately sinning so that those sins do not rule my life. Forgive all my sins when I fall so that I would be blameless in your sight and declared innocent through the blood of Jesus. Every day guided by your Word, may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen”



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