Forever established, Forever remembered

Text: Psalm 119:89-96

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**Scriptures:** Psalm 119:89-96; Colossians 1:13-20

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 9, 119:89-96, 461, 439

Series: Psalm 119

Theme: The Enduring Stability of the Lord’s Word

Proposition: Always remember God’s delightful Word by which He gives life.

**Introduction**

We all know that time is always progressing. You can’t stop it! Everything around us constantly changes, seasons, circumstances, ourselves. We are so temporary on this earth. James describes it this way*“You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away”* (James 4:14b). In contrast to God who is not bound by time in any way. *“Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting You are God”* (Psalm 90:2). The Hebrew word here translated ‘everlasting’ speaks of a very long duration of time which never ends.

Our text this evening is from the Lamedh section (L) of Psalm 119. Lamedh is the 12th letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Hebrew L can be stuck at the front of a word with meaning ‘for’. In this section of Psalm 119 that is what occurs both in verses 89 and 93 when the letter ‘L’ is attached to the Hebrew word ‘everlasting’. For + everlasting = forever. The result is translated in verse 89 as: ‘*Forever your word is firmly fixed in the heavens*’ and in 93 as ‘*I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life*’.

The title of this sermon comes from these two verses: Forever established, forever remembered. Our two points match the two ‘forevers’.

1. Your Word is Fixed Forever
2. Your Child is Saved Forever
3. **The Lord’s Word is Fixed Forever**

Time passes, moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day. We get out of bed at the start of each day. Our feet anchored are to the ground. Gravity works again! WOW! Our lungs breath in air…the atmosphere still there! WOW! The sun rises/about to rise/ will rise. WOW! Why are night and day so regular? How does the earth keep rotating at a constant rate? Why does the universe continue to function the way it does? Why do the laws of physics apply just as much today as they did yesterday?

Because God carefully and faithfully governs His Creation. His Word controls His Work from beginning to end. From the vast galaxies in outer space ‘the work of His fingers’ Psalm 8:3 “*The moon and the stars which you have ordained*”, to the smallest creature. Not even one sparrow falling to the ground apart from God’s will (Matt 10:29)

Our psalmist got out of bed and sometime afterward wrote about the enduring reality of God’s World sustained by His Word: “*Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands. They stand this day according to Your ordinances, for all things are Your servants”* (Psalm 119:89-91). For Him the Word of God was an anchor. It was firmly fixed.

For us this is true too. The Word of God is firmly fixed. But we know more than he did back then. We know that it was through and for Christ, the Living Word, that all things came into existence. We know that Christ, the Living Word of God is eternal. He is more lasting than this creation which God has made through His Word: Jesus, Word of God in flesh, confirmed the enduring quality of His commandments: *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Matt 24:35).* Christ the Word incarnate (John 1:14) is fixed forever. He is Himself is the everlasting God ‘He is before all things’ (Col 1:17). Our Living, Risen Saviour will never die. Brothers and Sisters, He has gone to prepare a place for us. He will be there when we go; after our days in this vapour-of-a-life are over.

But now, in this life, we experience the fragile, troublesome nature of this creation of which we are a part. We age, weaken, decay and we return to dust. We suffer pains of body and of soul. The psalmist, like us, knew of trouble. Remember he had experienced the ‘sharp end’ of this groaning creation, as recorded earlier in this psalm: In verse 42 He is being taunted by others. The pressure on him escalates from the proud and insolent: v51 *“The arrogant utterly deride me”.* He is mocked: v69 “*The arrogant have forged a lie against me*”. He is slandered: v78 “*May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie*”. He is deeply wronged with falsehood. His name trashed. Now the persecution against him has reached a critical point: v85 *“The arrogant have dug pits for me, Men who are not in accord with Your law”.* The ungodly seek to trap him like an animal is captured in a carefully concealed pit in the ground.

v86b *“They have persecuted me with a lie”.* The attacks against him were not physically violent; much worse they were verbal. The truth about him was being challenged with falsehood v87 “They almost destroyed me on earth”. They are very close to bringing me to an end. I have been persecuted to the limit of my endurance. I am ‘at the end of my tether’. Remember it is the Word of God in this psalm which shows us that he was not at the end, just in the middle! Verse 88 of 176.

What brought him up from the feeling of being like a wineskin in smoke was the enduring, stable, fixed Word of God: v92 “*If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.”* He knows that he has been delivered by the Word of God, but notice that this rescue has not changed his situation: v95 *“The wicked wait for me to destroy me”.* His enemies haven’t disappeared; they are still there!

So is he busy mounting a ‘counter-offensive’? Aiming to “get them before they get him”? Has he descended into a permanent despair and depression? No. *v95 “The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Your testimonies”.* “Trouble swirls around me, but I’m anchored in your Word which is fixed forever”. He has found firm solid ground on which to secure His life. He is like the wise man who built his house on a rock “*And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock*” (Matt 7:25). God has answered His prayer and He can carry on living.

How about you? Your life is changing, your circumstances ebb and flow. You are like a ship at sea. Prone to being tossed about by waves of life, to be driven against a harsh coast by strong currents. You can throw out the anchor but that will not help you unless that anchor grips onto some solid ground. The only anchor, the only ground which will hold you fixed when all else is changing is the Living Word, Christ. Edward Mote (1834) put it this way in a hymn “*On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand*”.

You cannot physically touch Christ nor see Him with your eyes. Your connection, your communion, your union with Him is by the ‘instrument’ or means of saving faith. It was the same for our psalmist. Brother and sister in Christ, you like him are a child of God.

1. **The Lord’s Child is Saved Forever**

What’s on the inside comes out especially under pressure – just like when you hit a sausage with a hammer. That’s what we see in this psalm. We see what is going on inside the psalmist. The 2nd ‘forever’ in this psalm is in v93: *“I will never forget your precepts”.* Literally “forever I will not forget” or simpler “I will always remember”. This follows/parallels/flows from the constant faithfulness of the Lord. **Because** Your word is fixed forever. The word which keeps this creation functioning and which has been my deliverance…**So**, I will forever remember you word which has brought back my life.

But wait how can God’s words alone make any difference to the psalmist?? Isn’t he still being hounded by his enemies? Yes, he is. How can the Word of God make any difference to you or me, whether we are fully at the end of our tether or only part way there? The answer is found in v94: it is the gospel in a ‘nutshell’. v94 “*I am Yours, save me; For I have sought Your precepts”.* This is the boldest of claims! I, a persecuted human being living on this world which only keeps on functioning because it turns on the instruction of your Word, I belong to you!

Where in the world would the psalmist get that idea? The answer is from God’s Word upon which he has delighted. This Word tells him that God has made covenant promises. *“Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God”* (Ex 6:7). His personal experience of the reality of God’s Word in His own life **confirms** that he himself is one of God’s chosen covenant people. He has found the anchor of God’s true Word that has held him fast in the storm of lies which surround him. By faith he has found Christ v94 “*I am Yours, save me; For I have sought Your precepts”.*

It is not that He belongs to His God **because** he has “sought the precepts” of God’s work. But rather that the desire to seek out and live out the ways of the Lord **confirms** that He is who He is in God. Works of righteousness demonstrate saving faith.Here is the cry of the child of God who is saved, but knows the need to continue in that state of deliverance: “Save Me!” He knows that God has saved Him and trusts that God will keep Him saved forever! He finds assurance of salvation through God’s Word. God-given faith enables him to believe God’s covenant promises are true promises to him and not lies.

Now you and I may not be pursued almost to destruction by those who would persecute us with falsehood, yet like the psalmist we are prone to be “subverted with a lie’ and caught in carefully concealed pits have been dug for us to fall into. Who would seek to trap us? Who is our enemy? Satan, the Father of Lies, the Great Deceiver. There in the garden “Indeed, has God said…”. Doubting the sure word of God. He is there behind the liars who hound the psalmist. Our psalmist’s battle is not against flesh and blood opponents, but against the dark spiritual forces of wickedness (Eph 6:12).

So is ours today. The psalmist knew with certainty that he had been revived by God’s word. His covenant promises to His child were not forgotten. He had observed that even the best, truest, most secure things in this world have their limits. Our closest friends and family are not there for us forever. We cannot hang onto our wealth, our status, or our skills forever. Our psalmist understood this reality & observed: *v96 “I have seen a limit to all perfection; Your commandment is exceedingly broad”.* God is without limits and His Word is infinitely full of riches which can never be exhausted. The salvation of my God has no bounds. So likewise, salvation is not of a limited duration “Once saved, always saved” - saved forever.

Brothers and sisters, we know the same truth with so much more revelation because we have the complete Scripture from beginning to end. So when the psalmist writes in faith: v93’ *I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have revived me’,* that is to say, “by your Word you have given me life”, we know how this forever lasting life comes. We know how we belong to God as children of His fixed promises. We know that we too are to “forever not forget”

We know that when Christ at the last supper instituted the first Lord’s Supper, He said *"This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (*1 Cor 11:25b), faith in Christ says: v94 “*I am Yours, save me; For I have sought Your precepts”,* v93 *“I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have revived me”.*

Forever is a very long time. A time without end. Our forever future begins at this moment. Forever continues without end. Be assured that God’s children are saved forever by faith alone in Christ alone. God has said it. His Word is fixed forever. It is so and will always be.

AMEN