

The God Who Has Revealed Himself

Psalm 19

Main Idea:

When we see how God has revealed His holiness through nature and His Word, we see our need for His cleansing and His power to live guiltlessly before Him.

When I was still just a kid living on a Bible Institute campus in the mountains of Venezuela, I used to love my job of turning off the big Caterpillar diesel generator late at night. We were three miles from the closest little town which was hidden down in a deep valley with a tall hill also between us and the town. With no lights visible on nights with no moon, the night would be inky black with the focused light of every star piercing the darkness. It was almost as if someone had spread a black canopy over the whole world and opened little holes to let you see a million little laser lights. Orion and the Pleiades were easy to see. In fact, even without a telescope, I discovered a whole other galaxy in Orion's sword. The Milky Way was absolutely spectacular with its expanse reaching from horizon to horizon!

Since we had memorized it as a family, Psalm 19 would invariably come to my mind. "*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.*" What must God be like if He could create this beautiful night sky? Often the radiant beauty of David's expression of praise to God also came to my mind when a colorful sunrise would contrast to the gloom of the cloudy predawn, or when a flamboyant sunset would crown a beautiful day!

Psalm 19 is a poem King David gave to the music leader in Israel for congregational worship. Jewish poetry is a series of related concepts, a parallelism of thoughts. In this beautiful psalm, that parallelism is mostly expressed in couplets. We don't have a specific historical setting for this psalm of David, but one can easily see how a shepherd who spent time outdoors and who loved God's Word would be the perfect person to put together such a beautiful song worshiping God.

The old English preacher, Spurgeon says, "In his earliest days the psalmist, while keeping his father's flock, had devoted himself to the study of God's two great books -- nature and Scripture; and he had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of these two only volumes in his library that he was able with a devout criticism to compare and contrast them, magnifying the excellency of the Author as seen in both."

Remember the righteous and the wicked Stan spoke about in Psalm 1? I find it interesting that the righteous are able with David, to enter into the comparison of nature and the Word of God, and "magnify the excellency of the Author as seen in both." But the wicked try to find discrepancies between nature and the Word in order to tear down faith in the Author of both volumes.

Now as we read this Psalm together, notice how verses 1-6 speak of God revealing Himself in nature, verses 7-11 speak of God revealing Himself in His Word, and the remaining verses speak to an appropriate response to God's self-revelation.

Let's pray and then take a closer look at this wonderful Psalm.

Remember that the Psalms were the hymnbook of Israel. The Israelites sang all the verses and got the message of the whole song in one dose. In its singing, there was not time to over-analyze the words of these inspired Psalms, as we in the western world tend to do. But when one either sang the whole song or reflected on the individual phrases, they pointed the worshiper to God Himself, and that's Who we want to see this morning!

"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." The more you study the heavens, the more you explore the universe, the more you see God revealed. As a shepherd who was out under the heavens day and night probably for months at a time, you'd think that David would have become a callused observer, but instead he marveled at the handiwork of the Creator of the universe!

Even to the unaided eye, the universe reveals God's infinite power. Job gave glory to God saying that it is God who *"sets a seal on the stars, who alone stretches out the heavens...who makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south, who does great things, unfathomable, and wondrous works without number."* (Job 9:7-10)

The heavens reveal the immensity, the wisdom, the creativity, and the glory of God. They tell us that He is a God of order and beauty, and because we aren't able to map the extent of the universe, the heavens invite us to explore what it means that our God is infinite.

Verses 2 and 3 say that *"Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor are there words. Their voice is not heard."* In the heavenly creation, there is no audible voice speaking words that inform our intellects.

Yet (V 4a) *"Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world."* Even without communicating in words, God's universe clearly gives the same eloquent message to every tribe, tongue, and nation. None are excluded!

Verse 4b says, *"In them (in these voiceless utterances) He has placed a tent for the sun (the sun sits under or inside this covering), which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat."* This image of a tent covering the sun reveals the immensity of God's revelation through His universe. It is above, that is, it even covers the sun in its orbit and it has a greater effect than does the sun which warms the whole earth.

It is as if God were saying to the shepherd, "Is there anything you see that appears bigger than the sun? Now look at the sun going from sunrise to sunset. Is there anything that appears bigger to you than the arc the sun takes across the sky every day? The revelation I've given of Myself reveals that I'm even more immense! It is my finger that moves the sun across the sky! Do you get a glimpse of my power?"

When people look up at the heavens, there can be two different responses. Some people, though thoroughly awed by the universe, choose to reject the revelation of its Creator. But that which is

created speaks so eloquently of the Creator that those who reject Him as He is revealed are without excuse. Listen to Romans 1:18-25.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen." And in that passage, Paul continues speaking of the degeneration into which those who reject God's revelation descend.

But when David looked at the heavens, He saw the Creator they revealed and so he responded, glorifying God. Let's stand together as redeemed people and respond with David, singing together, "How Great Thou Art!" But as we sing, notice that the last two verses take us beyond God's self-revelation in nature to the revelation of God in Christ and His great work. Still the response remains the same, "How Great Thou Art!"

Borrowing from Spurgeon's metaphor, in verses 7-11 we see David speaking about the second volume of God's revelation, His Word. Notice that these verses are written from the perspective of one who loves the Lord and trusts what He has said. You can tell right away that David loves God's Word.

In verses 7-8, David says, "*The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul* (TANAKH "renewing life"); *the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.* "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." God's Law is a joy to David because it reveals the very character of God. Above all, it reveals God's holiness, both in the sense of His moral excellence but also in the sense that He is alone in His excellence...no one else measures up to Him. Comparison can only come through contrast. David finds that to be life renewing.

The wicked don't find renewed life in the Law of God. The Law only brings death to them because apart from the work of Christ, the commandment of God can bring only condemnation. But the Law has lost all power to condemn the Christian. *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. What the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."* (Rom. 8:2)

David lived before Christ came to earth so he didn't understand everything about the work of Christ that has been revealed to us. But in verses 9-11 of Psalm 19, David could still say "*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.*"

A wicked man could never consider God's commandments and His judgements to be sweeter than honey. Rather God's demands are repulsive to him. But the redeemed resonate with the justice and righteousness of God's judgments because they reverence the Lord. In David's words, they fear Him. So we who fear God, who approach Him only because we have put our faith in Jesus, also find God's commandments and His judgements to be sweet.

In Psalm 119:97, it almost sounds as if David is consumed by the intensity of His love for God's Law! Let's stand and respond to the author of this second volume, the Law of God, through some of David's words from Psalm 119:

Leader

V 97 "*O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

Congregation

V 102-104 "I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, for You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! From Your precepts I get understanding. Therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Leader

V 45, 47-48 "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts. ...I shall delight in Your commandments which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on Your statutes.

Congregation

V 89 "Forever O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations."

As David considered these two great volumes of God's self-revelation, nature and the Law of God, he could see that he was not God. In his response in verses 12-14, we see that he realized that he couldn't even discern how short he fell from the glory of God

In verses 12-13a he said, "*Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me.*" The revelation of God's holiness made David see that he was decidedly unholy. And so he confessed his need for forgiveness of sin. "*Lord, I need to be cleared of even unperceived guilt, and I need to be kept in Your power from willful sin. God, I obviously need both your forgiveness and Your care to keep me from stepping in it again!"*

In the second part of verse 13, David claims forgiveness and restoration as a result of God's work on His behalf. "*Then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted* (cleared) *of great transgression.*" He recognized that God's forgiveness extended to him was enough for even grave offenses. David's words assume his guilt but also acknowledge that God clears him of that guilt.

At that time David wrote this Psalm, he didn't understand how a righteous and just God could clear him of guilt, but he had to take it by faith. God has revealed in the New Testament (Rom. 3:21-26) that this forgiveness only comes by God's grace, through the person and work of His Son Jesus. So Jesus is the third volume of self-revelation that God has written, the volume in which He reveals how he can be both just and the justifier of those who come to Him in faith! David didn't have that volume in full form, but praise God, that volume is fully published for us today!

Colossians 2:9 affirms that in Christ, "...*all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.*" John 1:14 speaks of Jesus who was in the beginning with God and Who was indeed God, becoming flesh and dwelling among us, so that we could see His glory, "...*glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!*" So indeed Jesus is the full expression of all that God is. Because He reveals God's grace and truth, Jesus is the One who revealed God's glory as no other person or thing could.

Grace, mercy, and God's loving forgiveness is a side of God only seen in shadow form in creation and in God's Law. It is a side of God that the prophets and even the angels didn't understand (I Pet. 1:12) before Christ died for David and for you and for me! It was only through Jesus' death and resurrection that God could forgive David's sins, and it is through the life and work of Jesus that we also can have forgiveness of sin!

But since we do have that full revelation in the third volume God has given to reveal Himself, we can respond in joy as we worship Him, standing together to sing, "Fairest Lord Jesus".

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Introduction:

A poem of King David

"David's two only volumes" (Spurgeon)

Volume 1: Nature

What does this book reveal about God?

Two responses:

Volume 2: God's Law

What does this book reveal about God?

Two responses:

David's and Our Response

The need for Volume 3

Family Life Groups

Sermon Discussion Questions

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- 1) How can you interest your kids and/or grandkids to take an active interest in exploring natural creation? How can you help them to look beyond natural creation to the Creator and worship Him alone?
- 2) What is the purpose of God's commands? Do you find joy in God's commands? In what way?
- 3) What are some practical ways to live before God in such a way that you continually lay your life open for His examination?
- 4) How can you help your kids and/or grandkids to look beyond God's commands to His holy person, and through the work of Christ, worship Him alone?