

AM Psalm 19

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- [0 : 0 0] It is a psalm that every poet would have wanted to write and it's a song that every songwriter would have wanted to compose.
- It is a truly magnificent and majestic poem and song of praise to God. It is a declaration and a celebration of God himself.
- A God who takes great delight and pleasure in revealing himself to us so that we might know him, trust him and follow him.
- C.S. Lewis said this of Psalm 19, This is perhaps the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.
- I wonder what music was written to such a great psalm in the times of David. I wonder what it sounded like when it was sung in his day.
- [1 : 0 0] A challenge indeed for any director of music to take such eloquent, truth-filled words and give them a worthy tune.
- We're told it's a psalm of David. And like all David's psalms, Psalm 19 is born and written out of his experience under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- A bit like Psalm 3, when he fled his son Absalom. Or Psalm 7, when he sang to the Lord concerning Cush, a Benjamite.
- Or Psalm 18, when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. Or Psalm 23, out in the fields, doing his daily work, caring for sheep.
- Or Psalm 51, when Nathan the prophet came to him, exposing his adultery with Bathsheba. Or Psalms 52 and 54, when the Edomites and the Ziphites are giving David a very hard time and giving false reports to Saul about him.
- [2 : 1 4] Or Psalm 56, when the Philistines have seized David in Gath. Or 57, when David is hiding in a cave from Saul and his 3,000 men.
- Like these psalms and more, David wrote out of experience. There is no experience in our lives that is wasted by God when we surrender our hearts and lives to him.
- John Calvin well said about the book of Psalms, It is like an anatomy of the soul. Because so much of human experience is found within the Psalms.
- I'm sure you read the Psalms as well as sing them on a regular basis. It was something that I remember my father doing every single day, apart from other types of reading and books that he had.
- He said he would always read a psalm. And when he got to Psalm 150, he went straight back to Psalm 1 and started to read them again. Athanasius said this, Scripture speaks to us, and the Psalms speak to us.
- [3 : 3 4] But the Psalms also speak for us. And I trust that will be our experience today as we study this great psalm. David is speaking from experience here at this psalm.
- Not because he's a great scientist seeking to fathom cause and effect. Not because he's a gifted and knowledgeable astronomer, able to name the stars and the planets and the constellations and the sky.

David speaks as a shepherd out in the field at night time, looking after his sheep.

In other words, going about his daily work. Perhaps lying on the ground, pondering. Perhaps even dozing.

Perhaps even sleeping at times on the hillside. And in between his work as a shepherd, tending and caring and guarding the sheep under his care.

[4 : 40] In between catching sheep and rescuing sheep, he lies awake, looking up into the heavens, the sky.

It would appear as you read through the psalm, that he's awake to view the sky at night and also awake to see the sunrise in the morning.

Verses 4 and 5. Shepherding, I'm sure, must have been a lonely job. It was certainly an outdoor life, wasn't it? Creation was all around David.

But as he looks up into the skies around him, as he looks up into the skies on a clear night, it simply takes his breath away.

The darkness, instead of hiding things from David, reveals things to him. Truths about God and about his creation.

[5 : 40] So the first point I want to make from this psalm is from verses 1 to 6. God reveals himself through the panorama of the skies.

Look at verse 1. The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Perhaps like me, when I was preparing to preach God's word today, there were other psalms that immediately came to mind when I read Psalm 19, verse 1.

What about Psalm 8? When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?

O Lord, O Lord, how majestic is your name. And all the earth. Or Psalm 121. I lift up my eyes to the hills.

[6 : 43] Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. You know, there were those who could have laid alongside David on that very same hillside, looking up on the very same sky, who would have heard and seen nothing but darkness and silence.

Although magnificent and majestic and amazing, it would not speak to them. It would not pour forth speech to them because their minds and their hearts were darkened.

The star-filled heavens by night and the sun-filled heavens by day declare a clear message to David.

There is a God. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim his handiwork.

The message that David gets is that what he is seeing is no accident. It's no cosmic fluke. It's no big bang.

[8 : 05] Notice verse 2. Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge.

What David is seeing is displaying knowledge. What he is seeing has been thoughtfully and purposefully and creatively put in place.

Verse 1. It is his handiwork. And it declares his glory. It declares something of the person and nature and character of God.

It is not God. God is not actually in the sky or in the stuff that makes the stars and the sun and the moon. He's not in the grass or the flowers or the mountains or the hills.

He is the creator. What David is seeing is the creator. But oh how it speaks to him. Oh how it pours forth speech about the glory and power of its creator.

- [9 : 19] David is not a pantheist. He doesn't see God in the things around him. Not in them. But it reveals something to him of who God is.
- Perhaps even he was thinking of what we know as Genesis 1 verse 1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- in verse 8 of Genesis 1. And he called the expanse sky. What he sees displays knowledge.
- What he sees is real and revealing. It's thoughtful and measured. It's designed and delivered. is created and made.
- And creation to David is acting like a megaphone. Loudly announcing and declaring that God is not silent.
- [10 : 24] That he exists. That he is not far removed or out of sight. But that he is knowable and can be trusted.
- And that David can have a relationship with him. David turns from the sky at night to the sun by day. Look at verses 5 to 6.
- He describes the power, the brightness, the light and heat of the sun. Like the sky at night, the stars that he could see, the sun also speaks.
- in a powerful way of God as creator. Now I doubt whether David would have in mind a picture of a spinning globe like we have and know today.
- All around the globe, the sky and the stars at night and equally the sun and light of the day are shared with all humanity.
- [11 : 31] God called the light day and darkness night. Even the very cycle of the day and night David is telling us is testimony to the trustworthiness of God's words, of what he said in the beginning.
- God has made the cosmos in this way. and you know, this is more than poetry here in Psalm 19.
- This is theology and it is about God and the whole of scripture testifies to the truths that David reveals to us here.
- Just think about it for a moment. We don't have time to read all these verses. As we think of scripture, we think of what it reveals to us in regards to creation that God made the heavens and earth.
- God's creation order is so critical to our daily living and relationships, no more so than in Scotland in 2023.
- [12 : 51] A confused and broken country that no longer honours the word of God. We can think particularly of the binaries that are mentioned here in Genesis.
- And I think it's worth noting before we move on. Heaven and earth, light and darkness, land and water, plants, and animals, man and woman.
- Identity seems to be a huge issue within our culture today. But it's not just a cultural and a social or a psychological issue, it is a theological issue as well.
- And this psalm encourages us to honour the creation order of God. The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaim his handiwork.
- Then we see it in the historical writings of scripture. We've mentioned one, Psalm 8. We're studying one, Psalm 19, Psalm 121.
- [14 : 04] Think of those wonderful verses in Job 37 and 38. Also, we can think of the prophetic side of scripture.
- Think of how creation is spoken about in Isaiah 40. It's also Christological of how Jesus spoke about creation in Mark 13.

It is apostolic. Think of what Paul taught us about creation, particularly in Romans chapter 1. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power.

Paul reminds us that God reveals himself through creation. An eschatological teaching as well, such as Revelation 21, that speaks of the new heavens and the new earth.

In Romans 8, that wonderful picture of how creation itself groans and it wakes an eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

[15 : 10] God reveals himself through the panorama of the skies, David tells us here. He reveals himself through creation.

The second thing I want to draw from this psalm is that, for verses 7 to 11, is that God reveals himself through the power of scripture.

Through the Bible that we were thinking about just a few moments ago with the children. David, if you look at these verses, David enthuses about the qualities and the excellencies of God's truth revealed in his word.

The power of God's work and its effect upon his life. Again and again, David emphasizes whose word it is.

And we've already thought about that, I think it's at least six times. Notice God's name is used. The law, the statutes, the precepts, the commands, the ordinances of the rules of the Lord, of Yahweh, which is the very personal name of God.

[16 : 27] His very name reveals to us that we can know him and put our trust in him. David is quite clear that he attributes the scriptures to the one true Lord and God, Yahweh.

This is hugely significant, isn't it? The scriptures are God's word. It is God's word to us.

There's no point in reading the Bible as 66 separate books or two testaments. It is one book with one message about one person, the Lord Jesus Christ, written over thousands of years and reveals God to us.

Notice in Psalm 19 that there are five synonyms used to describe the word of God. In Psalm 119, there's eight, but here we find five testimonies.

Verse 7, this Hebrew word speaks about how this particular word testimonies is used synonymously with the Ten Commandments.

[17 : 44] It is a word meaning to bear witness. And there's a good example of this. Israel was told to place the law next to the ark so it would be a witness against them.

Deuteronomy 31, 26. If you look at verse 9, the synonym used there is rules. This means and it talks about the divine judgment of God, that he rules rightly.

It refers to any divine legal issues. It thinks about the judicial side of God's word. It sees truth as something that is legally binding upon each one of us.

Verse 8, commandments. This Hebrew word refers to teaching. The title means what God has taught us to observe.

A commandment refers to truth as something taught to each one of us. We don't have time to go through them all. But God's word is powerful.

[18 : 49] And I know here at the Free Church that you have a high view of Scripture. In 2 Peter chapter 1 it says, Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, no human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

All Scripture it tells us in 2 Timothy 3, 16-17 is God breathed. It tells us what is right and that it teaches us.

It tells us what is not right and that it rebukes us. It tells us how to get right and that it corrects us. and it tells us how to stay right because it trains us in all righteousness, it says in 2 Timothy chapter 3.

Now here David is thinking about the book of Moses and the books of Moses and this is why he uses the word law and statutes and precepts and commands and ordinances etc.

[20 : 10] God's word, he says, reveals God's will. It is practical in its purpose and the response of David to the word of God is reverence, trust and obedience.

Look what he says, God's word is perfect. That's the same adjective tammon used to refer to the sacrificial animals that were taken to the temple.

They were to be without blemish. God's word is without blemish. Trustworthy and sure verse 7.

That means that God's word is firm. It is reliable. It tells us that it is right which in verse 8 which means that it's morally right, that the word of God is straight, it's not crooked in any way.

It tells us that it's radiant, clean, pure, which means verse 8, that it gives light. It is true.

[21 : 20] It is altogether righteous, more precious than gold, more delicious than choice honey. Its effect upon David's life, as he reads it, studies it, and meditates upon it, and follows it, is that he experiences it as that light and lamp that he needs.

It revives the soul, makes wise the simple, gives joy to the heart, gives light to the eyes, warns us, helps us to discern error, reveals hidden faults, keeps us from willful sin, and brings us great reward, David tells us, thank God for the scriptures, thank God for his word, and of the fact that God reveals himself to us through his word.

The third thing I want us to focus on is from verses 12 to 14, God's revelation of himself draws a personal prayer of response from his servant.

What's our response this morning to this great psalm? This God of creation and of scripture, this God of the sky and the stars and the sun, this God of the Bible is a personal God.

David's person-to-person response as a servant of God is a challenging one to each one of us, surely, as you look at those verses. We see in verse 12, the convicting of sin, verse 12, the confessing of sin, deliberate acts and non-deliberate acts of sin, those that we know about and those that we don't know about, sins of commission and omission, look what it says, who can discern his errors, declare me innocent from hidden faults.

[23 : 33] we see thirdly, the calling for forgiveness, we see the concern that he has for God's word in verse 13, keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me, then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression.

And in verse 14, we see a picture of cleansing as well, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you.

Without God and his word, David is hopeless and helpless. David is concerned to live his life in the light of God's revelation to him.

Sin, of course, is to be avoided, but when he does sin, either knowingly or unknowingly he can rely upon God to forgive.

Look at verse 14. He wants his life to be acceptable. That's the language of Old Testament sacrifice.

[24 : 45] Leviticus 22, verse 20. He wants his life to be an acceptable sacrifice and offering to God to be pleasing in his sight.

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. The term redeemer here, Goel, in Bible times was applied to the nearest kinsman.

He was the one who was to help and look after the interests of the members of the family who had fallen into difficult times. here, God is seen as the kinsman redeemer.

And what a place to end our study this morning. This psalm reveals that God reveals himself through the sky and the stars, through creation, through the scriptures.

But surely verse 14 in particular is pointing us to one very final point which I think is so important.

[25 : 56] That God ultimately reveals himself through his perfect son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, God reveals himself through creation and through scripture, but his fullest and complete revelation to us is through his son.

God, the one that John speaks about, as he thinks of Genesis 1 and John's gospel chapter 1. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, and he was with God.

In the beginning, through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made, and that very word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the father full of grace and truth. God's ultimate and greatest revelation of his glory is through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's wonderful, isn't it? That God himself came to live and to dwell among us. And as he came, he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfil it, to fulfil it for the lawbreakers, that's you and me, that we might be brought to God.

[27 : 30] As Paul said to the Corinthian church, God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

In order for our lives to be redeemed, in order for us to be brought back to God and to be in a relationship with him, we need his son, the redeemer.

God's righteousness revealed to each one of us. In Ephesians 1 verse 7, it says, in him, that's Christ, we have redemption through his blood.

Colossians chapter 1, in him we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 9 verse 12, and this redemption has been obtained eternally, permanently, forever.

Christ's sacrifice of his life and of his body and of his body only needed to be given once for sin.

[28 : 48] In John chapter 1 verses 12 to 13, we're told that we are accepted by God through Christ.

I wonder this morning if you have recognised your sin and your need of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you are willing to acknowledge that to him, to repent, which means to turn from your sin and to confess your sin and to receive Christ, he is the Redeemer, he is the one who brings us to God, no one and nothing else.

So what a wonderful psalm, brothers and sisters, I hope it's encouraged your heart this morning. We rejoice in a God who reveals himself through creation, through scripture, his words, and ultimately, finally and completely, through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, we're going to stand and sing our final song. And