

God Speaks

Psalm 19

We live in a world where God speaks. Creation bursts with His beauty and splendor. The inspired Scriptures preach the gospel and the whole counsel of God. And the Spirit applies these words to our hearts and minds. Psalm 19 has been called the greatest poem in the Psalter, a fitting psalm to describe the Lord's revelation.

Summary of the Text

David expounds on three ways the Lord speaks. First, through creation He declares His glory from the heavens that stretch over all the earth (vv. 1-6). Second, He speaks in Scripture, described as law, testimony, statutes, commandments, fear, and judgements (vv. 7-11). And third, He speaks through the impact of the first two revelations upon the human heart, the conscience (vv. 7-14). His revelation makes us aware of our sin, and so David prays that he would be cleansed from secret faults, not dominated by presumptuous sin, and thus innocent of great transgression (vv. 12-13). He concludes relying on God, his rock and redeemer, to receive and answer his prayer (v. 14).

The Skies

When the heavens declare the glory of God (v. 1), it's not an indistinct message. The glory of God is the sum of His revealed perfections, and glory has connotations of honor and weight. The skies speak and the firmament where the stars dwell (Gen. 1:17) display His handiwork. This speech is not whispered or spoken momentarily, but continues day after day, and when the sun goes down knowledge continually pours out night unto night (v. 2). Nowhere on the earth is this language not heard (vv. 3-4). God placed the sun so that it rises like a bridegroom headed to his wedding, like a strong man joyfully running a race (vv. 4-5). He dashes across the sky and everything receives his heat (v. 6).

We live in a materialistic age where people are confused by bad philosophy parading as science, as Carl Sagan was when he said, "The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be." It's impossible to truly deny what God reveals in creation. If someone is awestruck by the beauty of the Crab Nebula, for example, but denies God's design, they'll say it is "Beautiful meaningfulness." But to call something beautiful assumes a standard of beauty which is no less objective and metaphysical than a standard of morality. He doesn't say "The frog welcomes nine, go pajamas", which would be a meaningless statement to go with a meaningless cosmos. And if he did so in order to try to be consistent, he would make the nonsensical statement intentionally, wanting it to be meaningless for a reason. He would also assume that you would use your reason meaningfully to understand his point. One could ask, "So your point is that everything is pointless? Your meaning that there is no meaning?" It's impossible to live in the world God created and not assume and act like it at a fundamental level. We can't be here and not witness the glory of God displayed by the beaming sun and shining stars, not to mention everything else: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

G.K. Chesterton points out that unlike children, adults grow bored with glorious repetition: "Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, 'Do it again'; and the grown-up person does it again until he is

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nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, 'Do it again' to the sun; and every evening, 'Do it again' to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we."

The Scriptures

David shifts seamlessly from what God says in nature to what He says in His word. He sees the searing sun and the searching Scriptures (Heb. 4:13) all coming from the same source. The apostle Paul quotes verse 4 in Romans 10:18 in an argument describing necessity of the preached word: "But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.'" We observe the way God proclaims to everyone with the sun and therefore imitate Him in proclaiming the gospel. Christian missions, evangelism, worship, and personal piety are to be Scripture-focused. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul (v. 7). The law brings death to the unconverted (Rom. 7:10), convicting us sin, and then points us to life, the savior Jesus Christ. Psalm 19 has been called Psalm 119 in miniature: "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). God's testimony is sure, giving solid wisdom to the simple (v. 7). His right statutes bring joy to the heart, teaching us justice and wisdom, and His commandment is pure, enlightening our eyes so we can live and thrive in hope (v. 8). David mentions the fear of the Lord in this context, referring to the commands to fear Him (e.g. Eccles. 12:13). This fear is clean; it cleanses you and endures forever (v. 9). His judgements are true and completely righteous, and thus to be desired more than gold, a lot of gold. Unlike gold which you can't taste, the words of God are sweeter than honey (v. 10). By them He warns us and by keeping them we are rewarded (v. 11). Reading and learning Scripture rightly is a delightful, blessed, and fruitful endeavor. Don't let anything stand in the way of doing it.

The Sins of Men

We've already seen many effects of God's word on human hearts and lives (vv. 7-11). David now expresses how he wants the Lord to deal with his sin, beginning with a rhetorical question in verse 12: "Who can understand his errors?" No one but God can reveal our secret faults. Blameless and faithful believers have these faults and are in need of cleansing. David then prays to be kept back from presumptuous sins, sins that he knows about and ought not to commit (v. 13). If these have no dominion over him, he'll be blameless and innocent of great transgression. See the progression: secret sin, presumptuous sin, great transgression. He concludes by asking God to make acceptable the words of his mouth and meditation of his heart. He depends on the Lord completely and demonstrates it in sure faith by calling God his rock and redeemer (v. 14). This psalm is a summons to hear God speak through creation, through His word, and by His Spirit so as to free you from the sins that war against your soul. Jesus Christ was born, died, and rose from the dead to give you this gift.