

Listen, God Is Speaking

Psalm 19

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No one less than the great C.S. Lewis said of Psalm 19, “It is the greatest poem in the psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.” Coming from C.S. Lewis, that is quite a statement.

Psalm 19 is one of my favorite psalms, because the theme is the self-revelation of God. Psalm 19 contains a profound statement on the doctrine of revelation. God is transcendent; He is above us and beyond us and God is spirit. We can’t know God apart from revelation. What that simply means is that you cannot, by searching, find God. You can’t find God by your own religious works or righteous deeds or by introspection or by the philosophies of our day. God must reveal Himself to us. God must condescend to come to us and reveal Himself. This is what we call “the doctrine of revelation”; the unknown God becomes known, as He reveals Himself to us.

There are many means by which God reveals Himself, but we will limit them to what the psalmist tells us in Psalm 19. David, the psalmist, puts the self-revelation of God into three categories. Number one, God reveals Himself in creation. He reveals Himself in the world around us as God the Creator, verses 1-6. Number two, God reveals Himself in the Word before us; we have God the instructor. God is revealed in the Bible, in the Holy Scriptures, verses 7-11. Number three, God reveals Himself in the witness within us; we have God the Redeemer, verses 12-14.

Let’s take the first division, verses 1-6. God is revealed to us in creation or in the world around us. David said, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle...”—or “a tent”—“...for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat.”

This is what theologians call “the general revelation of God in nature.” It’s the basis that Paul used in Romans 1 to describe that mankind is without excuse. God revealed Himself in His creation. But mankind, in their sinful heart, “suppress the truth” and “worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.” That starts the downward trend where man ends up with “a reprobate mind,” and he cannot discern good from evil.

Verse 1 sets the pace or background. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” In one verse, David says that if you look into the heavens and see the stars in the night sky, they are speaking. And what are they saying? They are saying that God is glorious, God is powerful and that God has created all these things. Then in verse 4, David mentions the sun. So we have the stars and moon by night and the sun by day. The

sun is shown as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber showing his power and glory, and it is shown as a strong man running a race showing all its splendor.

David didn't worship the sun. David didn't worship the moon, as many pagan cultures do, who don't have the revelation of God's Word. David realized that it is God who created the sun, the moon and the stars.

Can you imagine the night sky that David would have seen? Back in those days, out in the hills of Bethlehem, out in the fields watching his sheep by night, the sun would set, the sky would get dark and the light show would begin.

Years ago, I had the privilege of spending almost a week on a small, Fijian island. We had the boat way out in the Pacific Ocean off the main island. There was no electricity, and at night, the stars were so amazing. I would go out every night for the light show; it was just incredible. I would pray, worship and give thanks to God.

So "The heavens declare the glory of God," and they also show the power of God. "And the firmament shows His handiwork." In them, God is speaking, witnessing or testifying of His glory, His power and His majesty.

In Romans 1:20, Paul says, "Since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes..."—that is, "His eternal power and divine nature"—"...are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." So Romans 1 is the basis by which Paul says that all cultures, all tribes, all peoples, all language groups are without excuse—there is a God.

Let me break it down for you and point out three characteristics of the nature of this general revelation. First, it is continuous. Verse 2 says, "Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge." All day long they're speaking, and all night long they're revealing knowledge. There is no intermission; it's continuous.

The second characteristic about this revelation in nature is that it is abundant. This really blesses my heart, verse 2. The phrase "utters speech" means "to pour forth speech." It was used of a waterfall gushing forth, so it speaks of the amount or the abundance pouring forth. So it is continuous and abundant, indicating that every individual part of nature is testifying of its Creator.

One of the greatest verses in the Bible is Genesis 1:1, the very first verse of the Bible. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." So I know right away from God's revelation in the Word that the world we live in was a product of creation.

There is a movement today to say, "Well, how can you really believe in creation when science has proven it wrong?" That's not true. Actually, as we learn more scientifically, we come to the conclusion that God exists. There are so many scientists today who are coming to the realization that God exists.

I would encourage you to go on YouTube and look at The Signature of the Cell, Stephen Meyer Faces His Critics or Does Science Point to God? also by Professor Stephen Meyer. It has amazing scientific information that indicates design and purpose; that God is the God who created all things and that the universe is the work of His hand.

When you look into the heavens, there is an abundance of revelation. When you look into the smallest thing of creation—when you look at a flower, when you look at an ant, when you look at a bee or a hummingbird, you see His hand. It's amazing to see the beauty and the design of a hummingbird. And when you hold a little baby in your arms, it's amazing. Who can hold a baby, a newborn, in their arms and not believe that there's a God in heaven? There is a God in heaven.

The third characteristic of God's revelation in nature is that it is universal, verses 3-6. David says, "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." That's another way of saying that everyone hears God speaking in nature. You have to suppress and reject that truth if you want to reject God. "Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun..." It's probably a metaphorical way of saying a "tent," where the sun is hidden from our view at night. The sun, "...which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat."

So God is speaking of His revelation in nature being continual, abundant and universal. Are you listening and hearing the voice of God in nature?

Now the second section of this psalm speaks of God's special revelation in Scripture, verses 7-11. It says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward."

This is where we will spend most of our time in this psalm. This is called "the special revelation of God." In nature, it's called "the general revelation of God." In "the special revelation of God," He speaks to us in His Word. So David moves from the general revelation to the special or specific, Scriptural revelation.

This is perhaps, along with Psalm 119, one of the greatest summations of Scripture in the Bible, in either the Old Testament or the New Testament. It speaks of Scripture's inspiration, inerrancy, authority, clarity and sufficiency. God's greatest revelation is found in the Scriptures, the Bible, God's Holy Word.

Satan attacks the Bible, and it was something he began very long ago in the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 3:1, it was the first time that the Bible records something that the devil said. We need to know what the devil said so we will know his tactics. So the first thing recorded in the Bible coming out of the mouth of Satan is, "Has God indeed said...?" And Satan hasn't stopped asking that question of us since. If he can destroy God's revelation in Scripture, he can keep people from a knowledge of God.

Creation tells us there is a God and that He is powerful and glorious, but it doesn't tell us that He is loving, merciful, kind and compassionate. So the greatest revelation of God is in His Word. God revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ; He is "the Word made flesh." We learn about Jesus in the written Word, in the Bible, in the Holy Scriptures.

I believe the Word is God's greatest revelation, but take note that Satan is going to do all he can to weaken your faith in the Bible, your commitment to the Bible and your belief that the Bible is the Word of God.

Thomas Watson, one of the great Puritan preachers, said that "The devil is always trying to blow out the light of Scripture."

I want you to note in this section, verses 7-11, that David makes six statements about the Scriptures. Each statement contains three things. First of all, it contains titles for the Scriptures or what the Scriptures are called. We see them in verses 7-9: the Bible is called "the law of the Lord...the testimony of the Lord," verse 7; "the statutes of the Lord...the commandment of the Lord," verse 8; and "the fear of the Lord...the judgments of the Lord," verse 9. Secondly, the text has the nature of the Scriptures or what the Scriptures are: it is "perfect...sure," verse 7; "right...pure," verse 8; and "clean...true," verse 9. Thirdly, notice its power and benefits or what the Scriptures will do: it is "converting the soul...making wise the simple," verse 7; "rejoicing the heart...enlightening the eyes," verse 8; and "enduring forever...righteous altogether," or "will transform your life," verse 9, and "great reward" comes to you from the Scriptures, verse 11. So we have its titles, its nature and its power.

I want you to notice the phrase "of the Lord" six times: "the law of the Lord," "the testimony of the Lord," "the statutes of the Lord," "the commandment of the Lord," "the fear of the Lord," and "the judgment of the Lord." Why does the psalmist repeat that? It is written as L-O-R-D; all in capital letters. It means "Yahweh" or "Jehovah," the great covenant God. The psalmist wants us to know that this is the Word of the Lord. The Bible is not the Word of man; it is the Word of God.

Yes, God used human authors, but the Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16 that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." That means that God breathed out in the human authors, using their own styles and personalities, but the very words they wrote were the very words of God.

In 2 Peter 1:20-21, Peter says, "...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." So they didn't write out of their own head or their own

ideas, but they were actually born along. The word we use is “superintended.” God superintended the human authors so that the very words they wrote were the very words of God.

This is what theologians call “the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture”; that the words—verbal, plenary—all of them, were given by inspiration of God, or they are breathed out by God. So six times you read the phrase “of the Lord.”

We are going to look at all six statements, each containing the three categories. In verse 7, we read “the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” The title “the law of the Lord” indicates that the Bible is God’s laws, which means that it is a manual for life. It tells us how to be a husband, how to be a wife, how to be a parent, how to be a child obeying your parents, how to be a citizen, how to be a Christian, how to resist temptation, how to walk in victory—it’s God’s laws for life.

When you buy a product, often there is a manual that goes with it. Guys don’t like to read manuals. But I do look at the picture on the box when I have to assemble it. But the older I get, I’ve learned that I have to read the instructions and follow them step by step. But I sometimes think, Who wrote this?! Whoever wrote them is laughing at me, because I can’t put the product together.

And, in verse 7, notice that its nature is perfect. The word “perfect” doesn’t mean the opposite of sin, that it doesn’t have any mistakes. That is true, but the word “perfect” here in the Hebrew means “complete” or “all sided” or “comprehensive.” If I were paraphrasing this, I would say “The law of the Lord is comprehensive.” This speaks of the sufficiency of Scripture.

You want to know how to have a better marriage? It’s in the Bible. Do you want to know how to resist temptation? It’s in the Bible. Do you want to know how to think? It’s in the Bible. Do you want to know how to feel? It’s in the Bible. Everything we need “for life and godliness” is in the Bible. It’s comprehensive.

Then notice its power, verse 7: it’s “converting the soul.” It means “restoring the soul,” or the total transformation of the soul. In the Hebrew, the word “soul” means the entire person, including your personality. It speaks of regeneration, the second birth or being born again.

In 1 Peter 1:23, Peter says you have been “born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.” The Bible is instrumental in you being born again. The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and brings new life into you and makes you a child of God. So that’s what the Bible does: converts the soul.

The greatest need in the world today is for the Bible. It’s that simple. It reveals God to us, it shows us how to live, it’s comprehensive and by it, He renews the inner man. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart, and only God’s Word can change the heart of mankind.

The second statement, in verse 7, is “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the

simple.” The descriptive title for the Scriptures is “the testimony of the Lord.” It is God’s testimony or witness of self-revelation. God is testifying. Notice also its nature: it is “sure.” The word means “reliable” or “trustworthy.” So it is inerrant and infallible. It is dependable; it can’t be wrong. Its power is “making wise the simple.” “Simple” means “ignorant” or “does not know.” The root idea in the Hebrew literally means “open door.” What does that mean?

Have you ever heard anyone say, “You Christians are so close-minded, dogmatic and so narrow. You need to open the door”? That’s what “simple” means. The reason it’s used is because their minds are so open, nothing stays there. They just let anyone come and dump their stuff in their minds, and then it goes out of their minds.

When the right thing comes in the door, you need to shut the door. Once you find the truth, you hang on to the truth. Many of you have a front door with a little peep hole. You look through the peep hole, because you don’t want anything bad to come into the house. Once the good comes in, you shut the door to keep the good in. So if you open the door of your mind and let everyone dump their lies into it, you become simple-minded.

But God’s Word will make a simple man a wise man. It’s wisdom for all manner of living. And wisdom is not just intellectual knowledge, but it is knowing how to live.

I’ve known many individuals who have a high IQ, but they don’t know how to live their life. They don’t know how to relate to other people. But God’s Word makes wise the simple.

The third statement, in verse 8, is “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.” The title is “the statutes of the Lord.” Its nature is “right,” and its power is that it is “rejoicing the heart.” This title means “precepts” or “prepositions.” It’s principles to guide our lives. Its nature is that it is “right” or “true.” It sets us on a righteous path. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

I remember when I had just graduated from high school. At 19 years old, I had just come to the Lord. I was raised in a Christian home, but I had never picked up the Bible on my own. But I picked up the Bible and I began to read it. That was a long time ago. And I haven’t put it down since. It has transformed my life. I don’t know where I would be today, if it weren’t for God’s Word. It has been “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” It’s helped me with my marriage, it’s helped me raise my children, it’s helped me with my ministry, it’s helped me how to think and act—it’s help me with my life. God’s Word is a lamp and a light to our paths. It’s right.

Its power brings “rejoicing [to] the heart.” It’s a path to joy.

In Colossians 3:16, Paul says, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

In Jeremiah 15:16, the prophet Jeremiah said, “Your words were found, and I ate them. Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”

Look at this fourth statement of three things in verse 8. “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” The Scriptures are called “the commandment.” Why? Because they are not suggestions. God is not saying that “You can do whatever you want and live however you want, but let Me make a few suggestions. This might help you out.” No. He says that He is commanding us.

We do have the Ten Commandments in the Bible. Those are God’s rules for living. Now you can’t get to heaven by keeping them, but if you are saved, they should be manifested in your life. Nothing comes before you and God; you don’t make anything an idol, but you should worship God in spirit and in truth. You honor your father and your mother. You don’t commit adultery. You don’t lie or steal. You don’t murder. All of God’s Commandments are laid out for how we should live.

This is why it is so tragic what is happening in our culture, because we can’t put the Ten Commandments in the public schools. Why not? Don’t we want students to learn, “Thou shalt not lie,” “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not kill”? They don’t want those Commandments in the schools?! We have taken God’s Word out of our culture, and we are reaping what we have sown. You take God out, you take His Word out, and the natural result is anarchy and chaos. So we need God’s commandments.

Notice the nature of the Scriptures: they are “pure.” That means that the Scriptures are “clear.” This is what’s called “the clarity of Scripture.” God’s Word can be understood; it’s not hard. A lot of people say, “Well, no one can understand the Bible.” That’s not true. God said what He meant and meant what He said. You read it and God made it clear.

The clarity of Scripture is an area that Satan is attacking today. There are preachers who feel the Bible isn’t clear, so we can’t be dogmatic about it. They reject dogmatic preaching. But this is what the Bible says, this is what we must do, because this is God’s Word. They feel that’s too narrow minded; that’s too dogmatic. The Bible is clear, and we must obey it.

Now notice its power: “enlightening the eyes.” I like that. That means that it helps you see in the darkest places of life. When someone you love dies—you lose your husband or your wife, your parents, a child, a friend—and life is dark and difficult, you pick up the Bible, and it gives you hope, light and direction. Where do you turn, when all around is dark? You turn to the light of God’s Word. It is “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” There is nothing more important than your relationship to the Bible, because God is revealing Himself to you in His Word. It’s so very important. It enlightens the eyes, so you can see and understand life clearly.

Statement number five is in verse 9. “The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.” Here the Bible is called “the fear of the Lord” or “of Jehovah.” It’s how we are to worship or reverence Him. The Bible tells us that we should worship God “in spirit and in truth.” We wouldn’t even know how to worship God correctly, if it weren’t for God’s Word.

Notice the nature of the Scriptures here: it is “clean.” It has no spot; it is holy and without

blemish.

Then, thirdly, its power is that it is “enduring forever.” The Bible is unchanging and enduring. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” You can try to ban the Bible, burn the Bible, destroy the Bible, but God’s Word will prevail. God will see to it that we have His Word.

Our commitment as a church and as individuals is that we need to proclaim His Word. And we need to publish His Word and share His Word. The greatest need in our dark world around us is for the light of God’s Word, so people can know His law, His testimonies, His statutes, His commandments, His judgments and can worship Him properly.

Now notice the sixth statement: “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” This indicates that God is the judge of all the earth. It indicates that His verdicts are given on all matters. He is adjudicating, as judge, from His divine throne. God is the final authority. The final authority is not the Supreme Court of the United States. There is a supreme God who reigns in heaven. He determines what is right and wrong. And what is legal is not necessarily right, in God’s commandments. He is the final judge and authority.

If you want to know what’s right and what’s wrong, turn to God’s Word. He’s the judge.

Then the nature of the Scriptures is that it is “true.” It says in John 17:17, “Your Word is truth.”

Its power is that it is “righteous altogether,” which indicates that it will totally, comprehensively, completely transform your life, so that you can live righteously. This is tied in with verse 11, which says, “In keeping them...”—that is, “the Scriptures”—“...there is great reward.” So God’s Word completely transforms our lives.

Now I want you to look at verses 10-11. “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” So number one, we should desire God’s Word. Number two, we should feed on God’s Word. God is enduring and priceless, and gold is the standard by which other currency is judged. God’s Word is the gold standard; it is priceless. God’s Word is like honey; it’s sweet.

Verse 11, “Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.” We must obey the Word. The Bible warns us, and it also rewards us. So listen to the warnings, the commandments, the precepts, the laws.

As a father, when I think about my children, my number one passion for all my children and all my grandchildren—and I’m already anticipating great grandchildren—is that they pick up The Book, the Bible; that they read it, they live it, they believe it and they apply it in their lives. Why? I know it’s going to do all those things for them; it’s going to enlighten their eyes, it’s going to make them wise, it’s going to bring them great joy and it’s going to guide their paths. What a blessing that is!

It has made nations great. It had made people great. The Bible has transformed our world. God has transformed our world, in and through the Bible. It is the most precious treasure in the world today: the Word of God, the Scriptures.

How often do you read it? How often do you study it? How often do you meditate on it? It is God's powerful, transforming Word. Desire it. Feed on it. Obey it.

There is one last section, verses 12-14, the witness of God within us. God the Redeemer is revealed. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

I want you to notice some important truths in these verses. Who is he referring to when he says, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults"? The answer is the man or woman who obeys, desires and feeds on God's Word. In verse 13, he says, "Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression." How do we do that? By keeping God's statutes, laws, testimonies, precepts and the fear of the Lord.

Then notice verse 14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart..." He is referring to the Scriptures. He just finished talking about the Bible, the Word of God, the Scriptures. He was saying, "Let the words of my mouth be Your words, and let the meditation of my heart be Your words." Then he continues that he will "be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

So all he is talking about in verses 12-14 is that "The Word of God comes into my life and transforms me, because I've discovered that the Lord is now my Redeemer."

This whole psalm is pictured in the story of the birth of Jesus in the New Testament. It's pictured in the magi, the three wise men. We assume there were three; there could have been more. But three fits the kid's story a little better. They brought three gifts, so we assume there were three, but there may have been more.

What's the first thing the magi saw? A star. What did they do? They followed the star. The Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God." A star led them to Israel. What is the second thing that happened? They went to see the religious leaders, and they opened the Bible or the Scriptures. The star led them to the Scriptures. And the Scriptures say that the Messiah is going to be born in Bethlehem. So they obeyed the Scriptures, went to Bethlehem and found the Savior. It started with a star, it led to the Scriptures and then they were kneeling at the feet of the Savior and worshiping Him.

God reveals Himself in creation and in the Word of God, the Scriptures. Then "the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

It's one thing to believe that there is a God who created the whole world; it's another thing to find out about Him in the Bible. And it's still another thing to bow down and worship Him and commit your life to Him.

Let's pray.