

GOD REVEALED THROUGH THE HEAVENS AND THE WORD

Psalm 19

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. God has never left himself without witness, Ac.14:17; Rom.1:19,20.
2. The heavens testify to the existence, the power and the glory of God.
3. His law or the written revelation of his will reveals his grace with reference to his saving power in the spiritual world.
4. The 19th Psalm treats both of these in a simple, direct, powerful manner.
5. Thus we turn our attention to a study of Psalm 19.

II. DISCUSSION

A. IN PSA.19:1-6 WE HAVE NATURE OR THE HEAVENS PROCLAIMED AS DECLARING THE GLORY OF GOD, OR GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF, THAT IS, HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD, BY THINGS THAT ARE MADE.

V.1a: "The heavens declare the glory of God"

1. "The book of nature had three leaves, heaven, earth, and sea, of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the beauties of the other two.
2. "Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust.
3. "Every moment God's existence, power, and wisdom, are being sounded abroad by the heavenly heralds which shine upon us from above.
4. "He who would guess at divine sublimity should gaze upward into the starry vault; he who would imagine infinity must peer into the boundless expanse; he who desires to see divine wisdom should consider the balancing of the orbs; he who would know divine fidelity in power and wisdom must mark the regularity of the planetary motions; and he who would attain some conceptions of divine power, greatness, and majesty, must estimate the forces of attraction, the magnitude of the fixed stars, and the brightness of the whole celestial train.
5. "It is not merely glory that the heavens declare, but the 'glory of God,' for they deliver to us such unanswerable arguments for a

conscious, intelligent, planning, controlling, and presiding Creator, that no unprejudiced person can remain unconvinced by them.

6. “The testimony given by the heavens is no mere hint, but a plain, unmistakable declaration; and it is a declaration of the most constant and abiding kind.” – *The Treasure of David*, Vol.1, pp. 304,305, Charles H. Spurgeon
7. Yet for all of this, there are things about God we need to know, but cannot learn from the heavens. For instance:
 - a. The mind and the will of God for man.
 - b. The grace and the love of God.
 - c. God’s scheme of human redemption.
 - d. The justice and wrath of God.
8. That must come to us through the Holy Spirit revealed, preached and written will of God in the book we call the Bible, or the Book; in fact, the Book of Books!

V.1b: “And the firmament showeth his handywork”

1. “Not handy in the vulgar use of that term, but hand-work.
2. “The expanse is full of the works of the Lord’s skilful, creating hands.
3. “In the expanse above as God flies, as it were, his starry flag to show that the king is at home, and hangs out his escutcheon (a shield or emblem) that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him.
4. “He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar (a fool or foolish one, Psa.14:1).
5. “The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace; only the foolish have any fears lest the honest study of the one should injure our faith in the other.
6. “Dr. M’Cosh has well said, ‘We have often mourned over the attempts made to set the works of God against the Word of God, and thereby excite, propagate, and perpetuate jealousies fitted to separate parties that ought to live in closest union...Let not science and religion be reckoned as opposing citadels...’ (Ibid, p.305)

V.2: “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.”

1. “As if one day took up the story where the other left it, and each night passed over the wondrous tale to the next.
2. “The original has in it the thought of pouring out, or welling over, with speech; as though days and nights were but as a fountain flowing evermore with Jehovah’s praise.
3. “The witnesses above cannot be slain or silenced; from their elevated seats they constantly preach the knowledge of God, unawed and unbiased by the judgments of men.” (Ibid. pp.305f)

V.3: “There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”

1. “Every honest, unbiased man may hear the voices of the stars.
2. “Many are the languages of terrestrials, to celestials there is but one, and that one may be understood by every willing mind. Cf. Rom.1:19,20.
3. “The lowest heathen are without excuse, if they do not discover the invisible things of God in the works which he has made. Cf. Gen.1.
4. “Sun, moon, and stars are God’s traveling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey confirming those who regard the Lord, and judges on circuit condemning those who worship idols.
5. “The margin gives us another rendering, which is more literal, and involves less repetition; ‘no speech, no works, their voice is not heard; that is to say, their teaching is not addressed to the ear, and is not uttered in articulate sounds; it is pictorial, and directed to the eye and heart; it touches not the sense by which faith comes, for faith cometh by hearing.
6. Jesus Christ is called the Word, for he is a far more distinct display of Godhead than all the heavens can afford; they are, after all, but dumb instructors (though powerful, ejd); neither star nor sun can arrive at a word, but Jesus is the express image of Jehovah’s person...” (Ibid, p.306)

V.4a: “Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world...”

1. “Although the heavenly bodies move in solemn silence, yet in reason’s ear they utter precious teachings. They give forth no literal words, but their instruction is clear enough to be so described.

2. “Horne says that the phrase employed indicates a language of signs, and thus we are told that the heavens speak by their significant actions and operations.
3. “By ‘their line’ is probably meant the *measure* of their domain which, together with their testimony, has gone out to the utmost end of the habitable earth.”

V.4b: “In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun”

1. “In the midst of the heavens the sun encamps, and marches like a mighty monarch on his glorious way.
2. “As the royal pavilion stood in the center of the host, so the sun in his place appears like a king in the midst of attendant stars.” (Ibid, p.306)

V.5a: “Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber...”

1. “A bridegroom comes forth sumptuously appareled, his face beaming with a joy which he imparts to all around; such, but with a mighty emphasis, is the rising Sun.

V.5b: “And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.”

1. “As a champion girt for running cheerfully addresses himself to the race, so does the sun speed onward with matchless regularity and un-wearying swiftness in his appointed orbit.
2. “It is but mere play to him; there are no signs of effort, flagging, or exhaustion. No other creature yields such joy to the earth as her bridegroom the sun.
3. “But all his glory is but the glory of God; even the sun shines in light borrowed from the Great Father of Lights.” (Ibid. pp.306f)

V.6a: “His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it.”

1. “He bears his light to the boundaries of the solar heavens, traversing the zodiac with steady motion, denying his light to none who dwell within his range.

V.6b: “And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

1. “Above, beneath, around, the heat of the sun exercises an influence.
2. “Where light is shut out, yet heat and other more subtle influences find their way.” (Ibid. p.307)

Transition thoughts from Vv.1-6 to Vv.7-11. Psa.19 turns from Nature to Law, or from the heaven of nature to the heaven of grace, or from the revelation of his eternal power and Godhead to the revelation of God's saving grace through the function of his Spirit revealed law or written word.

From Vv.1-6 the Psalm turns from a discussion of the heavens and their power to declare the glory of God to man to a discussion of the grace of God through the law of the Lord and its power to convert the soul of man, make wise the simple, rejoice the heart, and enlighten the eyes.

There is no doubt a parallel intended to be drawn between the two parts in this Psalm. Each is great in its own way and serves its purpose well. While there are things we learn about God from the first part, there are things we need to know about God that can be learned only from the second part.

B. IN PSALM 19:7-11 WE HAVE THE PERFECT LAW OF THE LORD PROCLAIMED AS THE GLORIOUS, GRACIOUS POWER OF GOD IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM.

1. In Vv.7-9 we have six brief but instructive titles of the word, six characteristic qualities, mentioned, and six divine effects declared.

V.7a: "The law of the Lord is perfect"

- (1) The law of the Lord under which we live "is a complete scheme or law of gracious salvation, presenting to the needy sinner everything that his terrible necessities can possibly demand.
- (2) "There are no redundancies and no omissions in the Word of God, and in the plan of grace; why then do men try to paint this lily and gild this refined gold?
- (3) "The gospel is perfect in all its parts, and perfect as a whole; it is a crime to add to it, treason to alter it, and felony to take from it.

V.7b: "Converting the soul"

- (1) "Making the man to be returned or restored to the place from which sin had cast him.
- (2) "The practical effect of the Word of God is to turn a man to himself, to his God, and to holiness; and the turn or

conversion is not outward alone, 'the soul' is moved and renewed.

- (3) "The great means (and I might add the only means, ejd) of the conversion of sinners is the Word of God.
- (4) "It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's word which is made mighty with souls

V.7c: "The testimony of the Lord is sure"

- (1) "God bears his testimony against sin, and on behalf or righteousness; he testifies of our fall and of our restoration; this testimony is plain, decided, infallible, and is to be accepted as sure.
- (2) "God's witness in his word is so sure that we may draw solid comfort from it both for time and eternity, and so sure that no attacks made upon it however fierce or subtle can ever weaken its force.
- (3) "What a blessing that in a world of uncertainties we have its surety to rest upon!
- (4) "We hasten for the quick-sands of human speculations to the *terra firma* of Divine Revelation."

V.7d: "Making wise the simple."

- (1) "Humble, candid, teachable minds receive the word, and are made wise unto salvation. Cf. 2Tim.3:14,15.
- (2) "The persuadable grow wise, but the cavilers continue fools.
- (3) "As a law or plan the Word of God converts, and then as a testimony it instructs; it is not enough for us to be converts, we must continue to be disciples." (Ibid. pp.307,308)

V.8a: "The statutes of the Lord are right"

- (1) "His precepts and decrees are founded in righteousness, and are right or fitted to the right reason of man.
- (2) "As a physician gives the right medicine, and a counselor gives the right advice, so does the Book of God.

V.8b: "Rejoicing the heart"

- (1) "Mark the progress; he who was converted was next made wise and is now made happy; that truth which makes the heart right then gives joy to the right heart.
- (2) "Free grace brings heart-joy.
- (3) "Earthborn mirth dwells on the lip, and flushes the bodily powers; but heavenly delights satisfy the inner nature, and fill the mental faculties to the brim.

- (4) “There is no cordial (stimulating preparation) of comfort like that which is poured from the bottle of Scriptures.

V.8c: “The commandment of the Lord is pure”

- (1) “No mixture of error defiles it; no stain of sin pollutes it; it is the unadulterated milk, the undiluted wine.

V.8d: “Enlightening the eyes”

- (1) “Purging away by its own purity the earthly grossness which mars the intellectual discernment: Whether the eye be dim with sorrow or with sin, the Scripture is a skilful oculist (a specialist in diseases of the eye), and makes the eye clear and bright.
- (2) “Look at the sun and it puts out your eyes, look at the more than sunlight of Revelation and it enlightens them.
- (3) “The purity of snow causes snow-blindness to the Alpine traveler, but the purity of God’s truth has the contrary effect, and cures the ... blindness of the soul.
- (4) “It is well again to observe the gradation; the convert becomes a disciple and next a rejoicing soul, he now obtains a discerning eye, and as a spiritual man discerneth all things.” Cf. Heb.5:13,14. (Ibid. p.308)

V.9a: “The fear of the Lord is clean”

- (1) “The doctrine of truth is here described by its spiritual effect, viz., inward piety, or the fear of the Lord.
- (2) “This is clean in itself, and cleanses out the love of sin, sanctifying the heart in which it reigns.

V.9b: “Enduring forever”

- (1) “Filth brings decay, but cleanness is the great foe of corruption.
- (2) “The revealed will of God is never changed; even Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfill.
- (3) “When the governments of nations are shaken with revolution, and ancient constitutions are being repealed, it is comforting to know that the throne of God is unshaken, and his law unaltered. Cf. Heb.12:28.

V.9c: “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

- (1) “Jointly and severely the words of the Lord are true; that which is good in detail is excellent in the mass; no exception may be taken to a single clause separately, or to the book as a whole.

- (2) “God’s judgments, all of them together, or each of them apart, are manifestly just, and need no laborious excuses to justify them.
- (3) “The judicial decisions of Jehovah, as revealed in his law, or illustrated in the history of his providence, are truth itself, and commend themselves to every truthful mind; not only is their power invincible, but their justice is unimpeachable.” (Ibid. p.309)

2. In Vv.10,11 we are advised of the value and the sweetness of the Word, as well as its timely warnings and the great reward in keeping it; i.e., even its eternal benefits.

V.10a: “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold”

- (1) “Bible truth is enriching to the soul in the highest degree; the metaphor is one which gathers force as it is brought out; -- gold – fine gold – much fine gold.
- (2) “It is good, better, best, and therefore it is not only to be desired with the miser’s avidity (extreme eagerness), but with more than that.
- (3) “As spiritual treasure is more noble than mere material wealth, so should it be desired and sought after with greater eagerness.
- (4) “Men speak of solid gold, but what is so solid as solid truth?
- (5) “For love of gold pleasure is forsworn, ease renounced, and life endangered; shall we not be ready to do as much for love of truth?

V.10b: “Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb”

- (1) “The pleasures arising from a right understanding of the divine testimonies are of the most delightful order; earthly enjoyments are utterly contemptible if compared with them. Cf. Rom.8:16-18; 2Cor.4:17,18.
- (2) “The sweetest joys, yea, the sweetest of the sweetest falls to his portion who has God’s truth to be his heritage.” (Ibid. p.309)

V.11a: “Moreover by them is thy servant warned”

- (1) “We are warned by the Word both of our duty, our danger, and our remedy.

- (2) “On the sea of life there would be many more wrecks, if it were not for the divine storm-signals, which give to the watchful eye a timely warning.
- (3) “The Bible should be our Mentor, our Monitor...our Remembrancer, and the Keeper of our Conscience.
- (4) “Alas (pity), that so few men will take the warning so graciously given; none but servants of God will do so, for they alone regard their Maker’s will.

V.11b: “And in keeping of them there is great reward”

- (1) “Servants of God not only find his service delightful in itself, but they receive good recompense; even eternal reward. Cf. Psa.1.
- (2) “There is a wage, and a great one; though we earn no wages of debt, we win great wages of grace.
- (3) “Saints may be losers for a time, but they shall be glorious gainers in the long run, and even now a quiet conscience is in itself no slender reward for obedience.
- (4) “Oh the glory yet to be revealed! It is enough to make a man faint for joy at the prospect of it.” (Ibid. p.309)

C. IN VV.12-14 THERE IS THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THE PLEA OR PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST IN VIEW OF HIS PREVIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE LAW OF THE LORD.

V.12a: The question: “Who can understand his errors?”

- 1. The answer:
 - a. The one who considers what is taught in Vv.7-11 can.
 - b. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and in the presence of divine truth one is made to marvel at the number and the heinousness of his sins for which there is no excuse. See Rom.3:20b; Rom.1:18-20.
 - c. He best knows himself who best knows the word.
- 2. Thus it’s an acknowledgment that only through the law can one understand his errors!

V.12b: His plea or prayer: “Cleanse thou me from secret faults”

- 1. This could not mean that he is asking to be cleansed of sins he did not know about and or sins he could not know about in view of Vv.7-11.

2. It refers to sins done in secret or hidden from others; sinful things done covertly. Cf. 2Sam.12:12.
3. Gensenius' Hebrew-Chaldea Lexicon defines this word "secret" here at Psa.19:12 as "hidden sins, committed ignorantly"
4. But in Lev.4:2,13,22,27; 5:15, which speaks of a soul, or anyone, and also of a whole congregation, committing "sin through ignorance," where the word "ignorance" is defined by Strong (7684) as "a mistake or inadvertent transgression: error, ignorance, at unawares, *unwittingly*." So does Wilson, O.T. Word Studies. (See the context of Lev.4 and Lev.5)
5. O.T. Word Studies, by William Wilson defines "secret" in both Psa.19:12 and 2Sam.12:12 as "to hide"
6. This is not something of which man is guilty though he does not know it and or something he cannot know he is guilty of.
 - a. Where did or does God ever demand that man repent of and confess sins he doesn't even know he has committed?
 - b. Moreover, how can man repent of and confess sins he doesn't even know he has committed or cannot even know he has committed?
7. Moreover, there is no promise of forgiveness without repentance and confession of sins when praying for forgiveness, and the very definition of repentance and confession rules out the possibility of praying for forgiveness of sins we don't know about and can't know we have committed.
8. Repentance: "A change of mind produced by godly sorrow, resulting in a reformation of life." See mt.21:28-31; 2Cor.7:10,11; Mt.3:1-8.
9. Confession: "to confess by way of admitting oneself guilty of what one is accused of, the result of inward conviction; to declare openly by way of speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of deep conviction of faults."

V.13: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

- a. Presumptuous sins are peculiarly dangerous because of the attitude with which they are committed. We might say such sins are the vestibule of “sin which is unto death” of 1Jno.5:16,17.
- b. This is seen in the definition of the word presumptuous.
 - (1) Strong (2086) “arrogant, proud from 2102 to be insolent, deal proudly.”
 - (2) Gensenious’ Hebrew-Chaldea Lexicon: “proud (properly swelling up, inflated), with the connected idea of insolence and impiety.”
 - (3) O.T. Word Studies, by William Wilson: “to act proudly, rashly,...applied to the person who sins not ignorantly or inadvertently but willingly, knowingly, of set purpose; haughtiness.”
 - (4) See 2Pet.2:10, Strong describes it here as “a daring (audacious man.”
 - (5) See also Num.15:30,31 (marg. “with a high hand”); Exo.21:14; Deut.17:12; 18:22; Heb.10:26-31.
- c. The Psalmist recognized the possibility and the danger of sinning with a high hand and offered his prayer to God that he be kept back from it and “be innocent from the great transgression.”

V.14: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”

- a. “The one cannot be acceptable without the other; they stand or fall together.
- b. “Words of the mouth are mockery if the heart does not meditate and its meditations be meditations that are acceptable in the sight of God.
- c. “The shell is nothing without the kernel; but both together are useless unless accepted; and even if accepted by man, it is all vanity if not acceptable in the sight of God.
- d. “We must in prayer view Jehovah as our *strength* enabling, and our *Redeemer* saving, or we shall not pray aright, and it is well to feel our personal interest so as to use the word *my*, or our prayers will be hindered.” (Ibid. p.311)

Vv.12-14 make a blessed ending to this 19th Psalm; it begins with the heavens that declare the glory of God depicting the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, moving then to his Word, revealing his power in the spiritual

realm to convert and save sinners, finally with the servant of God having access to the throne of God in prayer and hope of being heard by a prayer-hearing God.

D. SUMMING UP THE PSALM IN OUTLINE FORM.

1. In this Psalm we have **NATURE**, Vv.1-6, where the Psalmist stresses what is revealed of God in nature as the unmistakable, untiring, understandable witness of God.
 - a. The heavens are telling the glory of God;
 - b. The firmament proclaims His handiwork;
 - c. Day to day pours forth speech;
 - d. Night to night declares knowledge;
 - e. There is no articulation, i.e., their voice is not heard;
 - f. Yet, their message is declared through all the earth and to the end of the world;
 - g. In them He has set the sun –
 - (1) It comes forth like a bridegroom;
 - (2) Like a strong man, it runs its course with joy;
 - (3) Its rising is from the end of the heavens;
 - (4) Its circuit is to the end of the heavens;
 - (5) Nothing is hid from its heat.

2. Also, in this Psalm we have **Law**, Vv.7-11, where the Psalmist stresses the function and power of the law of the Lord in the spiritual realm to convert, sanctify and bless sinners, God's revelation of himself and his saving power in the Scriptures.
 - a. The law of the Lord is **perfect** – reviving the soul;
 - b. The testimony of the Lord is **sure** – making wise the simple;
 - c. The precepts of the Lord are **right** – rejoicing the heart;
 - d. The commandment of the Lord is **pure** – enlightening the eyes;
 - e. The fear of the Lord is **clean** – enduring forever;
 - f. The ordinances of the Lord are **true** – and righteous altogether;
 - g. This law is to be desired more than gold – even fine gold;
 - h. It is sweeter than honey and drippings of the honeycomb;
 - i. It provides warnings;
 - j. In keeping this law there is great reward.

3. Finally in Vv.12-14 there is the resultant plea and prayer of the Psalmist in view of his previous discussion of Law of Lord praying that he might be **RIGHT** in his relationship to God and this Divine law.

- a. His question which acknowledges the function of the law: Who can understand his errors?
- b. His plea and prayer:
 - (1) Cleanse me from secret faults; i.e., sins done covertly;
 - (2) Keep back thy servant from presumptuous (high handed) sins – let them not have dominion over me!
 - (3) Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression;
 - (4) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

III. CONCLUSION

1. The FUNDAMENTAL MESSAGE of the Psalm: God has clearly and forcefully revealed Himself to man – both by His world of nature, and by His Word. Paul declares in Rom.1:19,20 that this leaves man without excuse for his sins.
2. Some SPECIAL LESSONS to be learned from the Psalm.
 - a. The Law of God.
 - (1) It called: law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear of the Lord, ordinances.
 - (2) Is described as: perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, righteous.
 - b. The Psalm speaks of –
 - (1) Creation – God is powerfully revealed in His creation;
 - (2) Revelation – He is powerfully revealed in His written message;
 - (3) Preservation – We, like the Psalmist, must fervently pray that we will be in harmony with the divine law that we might have preservation.
3. GENERAL LESSONS learned from the Psalm:
 - a. As the heavens declare the glory of God, they are declaring the very existence of God.
 - b. It is incredible that one could seriously consider the known marvels of our universe, and fail to reason to an omnipotent, omniscient, omni-benevolent, eternal Being.
 - c. There is speech which does not come in syllables and words.
 - d. God reveals Himself: (1) In His marvelous creation, (2) in His marvelous Word.

- e. It is wonderful, delightful, inspirational to listen to the beautiful “sound of silence.”
 - f. The Law of God is perfect, and thoroughly furnishes the man of God completely unto every good work (2Tim.3:16,17).
 - g. The Law of God is: (1) perfect, (2) sure, (3) right, (4) pure, (5) clean, (6) enduring, (7) true, (8) the producer of righteousness, (9) to be desired, (10) of a warning nature, (11) such as to provide great reward.
 - h. With the Psalmist, let us ever fervently pray:
 - (1) Clear thou me from hidden, secret, covert, faults;
 - (2) Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins;
 - (3) Let not sin have dominion over me;
 - (4) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
4. The Psalm divides rather naturally into three sections:
- a. The **abstract** revelation of God in nature, Vv.1-6.
 - b. The **concrete** revelation of Jehovah and the power of his grace through “word” communication, Vv.7-9.
 - c. The **great value of and eternal benefits** available to the servant of God, Vv.10-14.
5. The first division is a prelude to the second.
- a. God has revealed his great his great power and wisdom in the intricacy of the Universe that declares his glory and shows his handiwork.
 - b. Any rational person, no matter how primitive, is capable of drawing reasonable conclusions regarding the origin of the Universe, if he will but use his common sense.
 - c. This is one of the reasons why Paul declared that a rejection of God as Creator and the commission of their sins is without excuse in Rom.1:18-21.
6. Since such is true, how much greater attention should one give to the “Word” message from Heaven, a set forth in Vv.7-11 in terms which should instill in us a profound sense of respect for the Sovereign of the Universe!

Credit to:

The Treasure of David, Vol. I, by C. H. Spurgeon
 Psalms, Vol. I, by Roy C. Deaver