

# The Wisdom and Delight of God's Word

## Psalm 19

BI: "Your testimonies are my delight. They are my counselors" (Psa. 119:24)

LTS: Psa. 119:1-24 ?

Intro:

I suspect that if we were to have a conversation with each of the congressional, senatorial and parliamentary leaders of the western world and asked them if they believe in God, most of them would readily affirm, "Yes, of course, I believe there is a God." There would be a good deal of unanimity on that point. But if you were to ask the corresponding question, "Does God speak?" the atmosphere of the room may become rather uncomfortable. You see, it is one thing to say that you believe in God. It is quite another to affirm the notion that God speaks.

It's safe to believe in a God who doesn't say anything. We are comfortable with the idea that God created the universes, wound it up like a watch, and now observes it from a distance. That kind of God doesn't poke around in anyone's life, or thrust his nose into anyone's personal business. But if the God who exists actually has something to say, we can be sure that he will say things to us that we do not want to hear. Better then, to simply believe in a God who is powerful but reserves the right to remain silent.

The problem, of course, is that the God who created the universe and upholds it with his powerful word has much to say to the people who live in His world. As Francis Scheffer said, "There is a God and He is not silent." Psalm 19 is about the communication of God to man, or the revelation of God to man

There are other Psalms that speak about God's word. Psalm 1, for example, talks about the man who is blessed and fruitful because he meditates on God's word day and night. And of course Psal 119 – the longest chapter in the Bible – is a Psalm penned exclusively to extol the written word of God.

Psalm 19, then, is also about God speaking. It is about God speaking about Himself and God speaking about us. In a sense, Psalm 19 is God speaking about how He communicates; How he reveals Himself to us and how He leads us by His words. It is God telling us that He is not a silent God and why that is good for us.

How does God speak? The Psalmist will say that there are two ways God speaks to man; first, through His created world and second, through his written word. Charles

Spurgeon once said: “God has written two books for us to read – the volume of the Creation and the volume of the Sacred Scriptures – and these two are in complete harmony. Happy are they who can read both these books, and see the same vein of teaching running through every page.”

If you want to be truly educated in the things that matter for life and eternity, master these two books: The book of creation and the Book of Scripture.

Read Psalm 19

There are actually three natural divisions to this Psalm. We might identify them as follows:

- I. God’s Word in Creation (1-6)
- II. God’s Word in Scripture (7-11)
- III. God’s Word in the Worshiper (12-14)

## **I. God’s Word in Creation: (1-6)**

1. In the first six verses David tells us that God speaks through what he has made. NOT in some kind of animistic way where material objects are possessed of spiritual personality, but rather in the sense that the creation offers irrefutable evidence that God exists.

2. “The heavens” (1) refers to the sun, moon, and stars. “The Sky above” refers to the lower atmosphere of clouds, and weather (thunder, lightning, rain, hail storms, hurricanes, tornados, etc). Through all of these features of God’s creation He speaks to mankind. He reveals Himself by the skillful, powerful, and sometimes frightening work of his hands. In the creation God is giving sworn testimony about Himself.

3. We might say that God’s witness to Himself has three characteristics. First, it is continuous. Notice (2), “Day after day. “night after night the testimony is given without intermission. Secondly, it is abundant. The verb in verse 2 is expressive: “they (the heavens) pour forth speech. Thirdly it is universal. Although “there are no words (3), yet by sight rather than sound their message penetrates to the end of the world” (v. 4).

4. It was evident in David’s day and “even more today, through the cosmology of modern astrophysics, the heavens, their vastness, splendor, order, and mystery, reveal God’s glory and greatness.<sup>1</sup> Even though the creation does not speak with words, its message is heard all over the planet by all men. As Steve Lawson says, “No person anywhere on earth is without God’s self-revelation through creation” (Lawson, 100).

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<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Psalm 19*)

5. Theologians refer to this a General Revelation. It is “general” in the sense that all men can see it and all men have the responsibility to interpret it correctly. What is the proper interpretation of creation? Simply this, that there is a God and we are accountable to Him.

A. Of course, you are aware of the fact that Paul made this very argument in his letter to the Romans (1:18–21)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made; So, they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him...

B. Sometimes people ask why I respond so strongly when Christians reveal their scepticism about the creation account in the book of Genesis. One of the reasons is found here. Once man suppresses the truth that all creation is the handiwork of God designed to reveal the glory of God, he casts aside God’s precepts about moral realities and begins living according to his appetites rather than by revelation.

C. I would submit to you that this is why our world is in such chaos today. Having rejected God as Creator, We have bought the lie that it’s better to be guided by our appetites and urges than by God.

6. The voice of creation speaks against such thinking, and it speaks with authority. It says, “There is a God and we are accountable to Him.” That message alone is not enough to reconcile sinners to God, but it does prompt us to ask the right question; namely, how can sinful men be made right with the God who created him?

7. So creation speaks. Though it is silent, it speaks boldly. In the morning the sun comes into the sky (5) like a bridegroom beaming with delight as he bursts out of his pavilion on to the path that leads to where he will take and marry his Bride. The whole world rejoices at the sight of the face of the sun” (Spurgeon 1/59)

8. It is like an Olympic athlete (6) tirelessly running his course with strength; always moving forward; always pressing toward the finish line. Its heat touches everything in its path, and nothing is hidden from it.

A. Again, this speaks to the universality of the knowledge of God. Don’t let the so-called “atheist” fool you. Everyone sees the evidence. Everyone has eternity written in his heart; everyone has sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a

God, that He is the source of life and breath and all things. The reason the atheist rejects God isn't because there isn't enough evidence. Rather, it's because he doesn't want God poking around in his ethical and moral life!

B. To God, all men should give thanks for creation and how we benefit from it as common grace from God, and before Him all men will one day stand to give an account. Only the fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

9. This is the word of God in creation

## **II. God's Word in Scripture (7-11)**

1. This passage is all about the Sufficiency of Scripture. When we say the Scriptures are sufficient we mean that God's word provides all necessary truth to teach people everything they need to please the Lord in every circumstance.

2. In verses 7-9 there are six very specific statements about Scripture.

A. There are six titles for Scripture: Law, Testimony, Precepts, Commandments, Fear, and Judgments.

B. There are also six characteristics: It is Perfect, Sure, Right, Pure, Clean, and True.

C. Notice how many times the phrase "of the Lord" is here in the text (v. 7-9). Six times we are reminded that this book is from the Lord. It is God's own revelation about His own written word.

3. But what I want to focus on for the next few minutes is what the word of God accomplishes in people's lives:

A. (v. 7) "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul."

1) The word for "Perfect" means "complete" (It is perfect as opposed to incomplete). What does the "perfect" word do?

2) "Restores the soul." "Soul" (nephesh) means the "inner person," "the heart," the real you. The Spiritual you. By the power of the word of God our souls are changed, transformed, regenerated. As we already observed, the word of God through creation is NOT enough to save anyone from God's judgment. But the word of God in Scripture is. By the truth of Scripture alone our inner person is transformed.

3) "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). No sinner can be reconciled to God on their own. The Spirit of God must implant the Word of God in one's heart resulting in joyful faith in Christ.

B. (v. 7) “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

- 1) “Sure” means firm, reliable,
- 2) It makes the simple wise. The word simple means “an open door.” It means to lack discernment. People naturally have minds like a door and they don’t know when to open the door and when to shut the door.
- 3) It is not wise to always be open-minded. We need to know what is good and what is bad, what is helpful and what is dangerous; what is right and what is wrong.
- 4) The word of God is what makes a simple person wise. That is, it teaches him how to live wisely according to the wisdom of God.

C. (v. 8) “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.”

- 1) Right means they set a right path. God’s word is a light to our path. This is the same thought presented in Psalm 23 when the author speaks of the “paths of righteousness.” It is literally “the right path.” How do you navigate through life, in marriage, with your employer, your neighbors, your children? Your boss? Your government? The precepts of the Lord lay out a clear path. And because of that...
- 2) It rejoices the heart. Obedience to Scripture brings joy. True joy comes from following God’s word. Jesus said (John 15:11), “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”
- 3) You can maintain joy and lead others into joy by learning and obeying the word of God. Scripture is God’s fountain of Joy.

D. (v. 8) “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

- 1) “Pure” means clear. the word of God gives clarity.
- 2) It enlightens our eyes. That is, it enables us to see and evaluate clearly. When we face difficult trials in life we need clarity. When false teaching comes knocking at our door, we need clarity. When your emotions get out of control and it’s hard to think right, you need clarity. And God gives it to us by His word. By Scripture we learn that even death cannot kill us. We know that God is causing all things to work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Unbelievers don’t know that. They don’t have that kind of clarity because they reject the commandments of the Lord.

E. (v. 9) “The fear of the Lord is clean; enduring forever.”

- 1) It's noteworthy to observe that the author now speaks of the Scriptures as "the fear of the Lord." We know from Proverbs that the "fear of the Lord" (or deep reverence and respect for God) is the beginning of wisdom. The Scriptures teach us this wholesome, wisdom-imparting fear.
- 2) Usually, when the O.T. talks about Fearing God it is a reference to worship. We come to God in reverence and awe. The word of God is our worship manual.
- 3) "Clean" means without corruption or error, or evil. "Every word of God is pure." It is without deficiency, error, fault, or inadequacy. It, along with the God who spoke it, is the most during thing in the universe. .
- 4) And it endures forever. That is, it is timeless. The Psalms were written thousands of years ago and yet they still speak forth the pure, unchanging truth of God. And Jesus said, "until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of the pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished (Matt. 5:18). Later He declared, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35). In other words, His words endure forever.

F. "The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether."

- 1) "Judgments" are divine verdicts by the God who is the judge of all men. God renders the final verdict on every man, and every nation.
- 2) His judgments are "True." He never misses it. His verdict is always perfect, always complete, and always righteous altogether.

4. Do you remember those T-shirts a few years back that read "When I was a kid Pluto was a planet"? I read an article by Russell Baker the other day. It was kind of a tongue-in-cheek critique on the culture's ever-changing declarations about what is true. At the end of the piece he writes,

Many people become as irked as I do about the incessant need to keep up with today's wisdom by abandoning or revising yesterday's. And of course, today's wisdom will just as inevitably have to be abandoned or revised as the future bears down upon us.

You can bet the world has not faced the last revisions of knowledge about Pluto, or about what constitutes a good breakfast. The revision of what we think of as knowledge goes on forever, and always has.

The truth about knowledge seems to be that its truth is only a sometimes thing, that what we accept as truth this year will have to be abandoned as the world turns. This endless abandonment and revision is usually said to result from progress. But suppose progress is also an idea doomed to be abandoned. What if there is no such thing as progress but only change?

5. Of course Baker is right. The wisdom of the world and what it calls truth is always changing. That's because it is always failing. The word of God, however, is permanent; fixed, perfect, and enduring. As the prophet Isaiah declared (Isa. 40:8) "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

6. Do you wonder why we call ourselves a Bible church? Do you wonder why we preach the Bible, counsel the Bible, and even pray the Bible? It is because God has taught us that the Bible is sufficient to teach us everything we need to know, believe, and do in order to please the Lord in every circumstance.

7. And that brings us to the final theme of this passage. We've seen God's Word in Creation; God's word in Scripture; and finally...

### **III. God's Word in the Worshiper (12-14)**

1. First, the true worshiper of God, the man or woman who truly loves God, finds His word delightful and precious Read v. 10

2. Why are they so precious to us? Because they provide the warnings and promises necessary to navigate life in a manner that glorifies God and fills us with much joy.

Read 11 (warnings and promises).

Hudson Taylor (Missionary to China) famously said, "There is a living God. He has spoken in the Bible He means what He says and will do all that He has promised."

3. Furthermore, the word of God exposes any cancer of the heart that needs to be addressed before it causes us great harm. (Read 12-13)

4. Finally, David ends with a prayer that every believer should memorize and regularly use in his own relationship with God. (Read 14)

5. So you see, everything that you want for yourself and those whom you serve comes from the word of God.

- A. Do you want to see people's lives truly transformed? Give them the Law of the Lord.
- B. Do you want to teach people how to live wisely in the midst of a crooked world? Teach them the Testimony of the Lord.
- C. Do you want to help suffering people experience true and lasting joy? Serve them the precepts of the Lord.
- D. Do you want your children to have clarity in their thinking about God, life, their own hearts, and the world around them? Feed them the commandments of the Lord.
- E. Do you want them to know how to worship and be grounded in truth that is always reliable and never changes? Preach to them the fear of the Lord.
- F. Do you want sinners to turn from their sins and find the righteousness they desperately need in the Lord Jesus Christ? Declare to them the judgments of the Lord.

6. You see, beloved, there is a God and He is not silent. He speaks to us generally through creation and specifically through His word. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate; equipped for every good work." No wonder Paul exhorts us to "Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly!"

7. Are you rich in the word of God? Do you cherish and delight in its warnings and promises? Do you devour it like honey (or whatever your favorite desert is)? Do you ask God to use it like a spiritual X-ray machine to identify anything in your heart that may be toxic and harmful to your soul?

8. The word of God has the power to do all of that and more. To those who love God it is both wisdom and delight.

BI: May God give us the grace to say, "Your testimonies are my delight . They are my counsels."