

Introduction: All of Scripture is the personal way that God reveals Himself to us. Our response is specified or implied by the Scripture. There is one distinctive book in which God gives us the very transcript of the words and thoughts that He wants to receive from us. This is the Book of Psalms, the collection of 150 poems that record not only what God reveals to us, but also what God requires of us in response.

Book of Psalms is organized into five books. The first book, Psalms 1-41, has a remarkable collection in the center of this book. Psalm 19 is the beginning of eight psalms that seem peculiarly related to the history of redemption in Christ. They remind us in a special way that the Psalter points beyond David to Christ, the great King. In this way, the Psalter is more for the church today that it ever was for the Israel of old. We can see in Psalms 19-26 a marvelous display of God's redeeming work in Christ. [Godfrey]

Psalm 19: Creation and sin

Psalm 20: Advent of Christ

Psalm 21: Triumphal entry

Psalm 22: Crucifixion

Psalm 23: Resurrection

Psalm 24: Ascension

Psalm 25: Pentecost

Psalm 26: Final judgment

Psalm 19 begins with a shout of praise, moves to a murmur of study, and ends with a whisper of prayer. Psalm 19 is a trifocal of praise -- a long distance gaze, a reading distance study, an inner distance focus. This psalm develops three sources of God's praise:

- a. The Declaration of the Sky (19:1-6) -- Revelation of God's greatness and glory
- b. The Description of the Scripture (19:7-11) -- Revelation of God's holiness and justice
- c. The Detection of the Sinner (19:12-14) -- Revelation of God's grace, mercy, and peace

A. THE DECLARATION OF THE SKY (19:1-6) -- Revelation of God's greatness and glory

1. God displays His glory in space (19:1) The declaration is clear

- a. Heavens declare how great He is
- b. Firmament (heavens) declare how wonderful He is

God reveals Himself in all of creation, in everything He has made, down to the shape of a leaf or the structure of an atom. In this psalm David is looking upwards. As a boy he spent many nights under the stars with his sheep, watching over them, protecting them. As he lay in the dark he would look up to the sky. He would wait for the dawn and would see the fiery eastern sun burst over the horizon and bring a fresh day.

In these verses he talks about the heavens and the skies, the day and the night, and the sun. These are loaded terms. All the nations around Israel worshipped these things. They bowed down to the sun and the moon. They prayed to them. They thought they were gods. In this psalm David is attacking the false belief of all the surrounding nations. The heavens are not to be worshipped. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies (or firmament) are His handiwork. David looks up and sees a revelation of God.

Today in our civilized world with our artificial light we don't look up very much. We ignore the heavens or we try to explain them. Too often we fail to see God. David looks at the sky and sees God.

God is to be seen in the spacing and the regular, ordered movement of the planets. God is to be seen in the invariable alteration of day and night. We need the day and we need the night. They are utterly predictable. Their predictability speaks to us not of chaos or blind chance, but a Designer of supreme intelligence. When you see an intricately crafted machine you know it did not fall together by accident. We know that someone made it. When we look at the complexity of the universe with the heavenly bodies that conviction of a Creator is presented. A commentator wrote, “Not all the evolutionary speculations about the origin of the universe can shake loose the profound, immediate perception of the mind and heart: Someone made this.” God displays His glory in space. It is clear.

- 2. God displays His glory in time (19:2)** The declaration is continuous
- a. Regular cycles of day and night
 - b. Regular cycles of seasons

David says, “Night to night reveals knowledge” (19:2). If we only had daytime we wouldn’t know there was anything out there except the sun. The skies appear to be empty. But night reveals knowledge. When the night comes we see immense vistas of twinkling stars.

In our century we have an enormous advantage over David in one sense. People with the naked eye from anywhere on earth can see only about 2,000 stars. We are beginning to learn how many more there are. With the incredible power of modern telescopes astronomers tell us that if someone were to strike a match on the moon they could photograph the flare. They tell us that in the Milky Way there are between 100 and 400 billion stars. The Milky Way itself is only one of a 140 billion galaxies.

What about distance? The moon is about 238,857 miles from earth. The nearest star to earth (not counting the sun), Proxima Centauri, is 100 million times further. As we look at the stars we do not see them as they are. Proxima Centauri is 4.2 light years away. There are a dozen stars 11 to 12 light years away. Some of the stars we see may have been extinct for centuries. Psalm 147:4-5 says, “He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.” The stars are the work of His hand. God displays His glory in space and time. It is clear and continuous.

- 3. God displays His glory in things (19:3-6)** The declaration is comprehensive
- a. Declaring knowledge without words (19:3)
 - b. Declaring power without end (19:4a)
 - c. Declaring might with an example (19:4b-6)
 - 1) Sun within an orderly universe (19:4b)
 - 2) Sun with splendor [as bridegroom, runner] (19:5)
 - 3) Sun with encompassing glory (19:6)
 - a) Its extent -- all the earth
 - b) Its effect -- all under heat

The psalmist tells us that this is a visual revelation (19:3). There is no speech. There are no words, yet this revelation is given to every person on earth. Every second since creation

there has been a revelation of God to everyone. God shows Himself and communicates to every person on earth. There is no reason for atheism. It is irrational. It is illogical. It is deliberate blindness. Creation in every part displays, “There is a Creator.” Every person in the depths of their being knows God but is suppressing that truth. In Romans 1, Paul says that inside everybody is a little voice agreeing that God reveals Himself in the skies.

This revelation is immensely valuable not only to unbelievers but also to believers. We sometimes neglect the first six verses. Creation reveals our God in unforgettable, vivid ways. One scholar says, “In its light and color, in its content and shape, in its proportion and design, in its motion and magnitude, it shows us the greatness and the beauty, the radiance and the wisdom of God.” C.S. Lewis said, “Nature gave the word glory a meaning for me. I do not know where else I could have found it.”

David talks about the sun retiring every night into the tent of darkness, and bursting out every dawn like a radiant bridegroom leaving the honeymoon suite, or like a refreshed champion athlete rejoicing in the race (19:5). The sun circles the whole earth. Nothing is hidden from its heat. If we were a few miles further from the sun we would be frozen. If we were a few miles closer we would be roasted. We are at the precise and exact distance where life is possible. Someone made this. God displays His glory in space, time, and things. It is clear, continuous, and comprehensive.

In our fast-paced culture we need to take time to stand still and stare at the world and see His glory in it. God reveals Himself in the skies.

Application: David attacks the idolatry of the worship of sun, moon, and stars. [The Declaration of the Sky: Praise God for the revelation of His greatness and glory.]

B. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SCRIPTURE (19:7-11) -- Revelation of God’s holiness and justice

1. The LORD displays His clear will (19:7-9) -- Six triplets [from “God” to LORD”]

<u>Caption</u>	<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Consequence</u>
a. Law (as comprehensive)	perfect	restoring the soul (19:7a)
b. Testimony (as divinely attested)	sure	making wise the simple (19:7b)
c. Statutes (as precise)	right	rejoicing the heart (19:8a)
d. Commandment (as authoritative)	pure	enlightening the eyes (19:8b)
e. Fear (as responsive)	clean	enduring forever (19:9a)
f. Judgments (as applications)	true	righteous altogether (19:9b)

His revelation in nature is impressive, but it is incomplete. His revelation in nature shows us a Being who is great and wise, good and powerful, but not much more. Nature does not explain our sin. Nature doesn’t explain us. It doesn’t tell us how we can be saved from our sin. We need a fuller revelation. God has given this to us in the Scriptures.

It is significant that at this point David starts using a different name for God. In the first six verses of the psalm he uses the Hebrew name lae {ale}, which is the general name for

God. But now at verse 7 he uses a different name for God, hw'hoi> {yeh-ho-vaw'}. We sometimes pronounce it Jehovah, the covenant God, the LORD. He uses it 7 times. He loves to use it. He moves from the God of nature to the LORD who has chosen a people to be His and has given them His law.

In verses 7 through 9 we have a beautiful piece of Hebrew poetry. It is a lovely structured series of six triplets, six items of three ideas, telling us much about God. There is a caption for Scripture. There is a characteristic describing it. There is a consequence what Scripture can do. We have six names, six descriptions, and six effects of Scripture. Scripture is the law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandment, the fear, and the judgments of the Lord. The adjectives he uses are perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true. Then we have what Scripture can do: converting (restoring) the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes, enduring forever, and righteous altogether. It would be profitable to explore these.

It all comes from inspiration. Note the phrase used six times, “of the LORD.” Why is this book so important? Because it is God’s Word. Why is it so effective? Because it is God’s Word. We see here the completeness of the Bible. It does everything for us. It revives us, makes us wise, makes us glad, and gives us knowledge. It endures forever. It gives righteousness. The Bible will never fail you. We see the practical orientation of Scripture. These nouns all require a response. They are dynamic. It’s the law and the commandment and the rules. You have to obey them. The LORD displays His clear will.

- 2. The LORD displays His necessary will (19:10)**
 - a. More important than abundance (gold)
 - b. More desirable than pleasure (honey)

In case we might think that God’s Word is cold, or abstract, in verse 10 David opens his heart to share with us how precious God’s Word is. How lovely it is. How delightful. He uses two images. First, they are more to be desired than gold. He underlines the statement twice by saying, then much gold, then fine gold.

In January, 1848, a piece of gold was found in California. The news leaked out. An epidemic of madness seized the world. Thousands of people traveled to California from all over the world. They lost common sense altogether. A plot of land was sold in San Francisco in 1847 for \$16. Eighteen months later it was sold for \$45,000. People thought there was gold in it. People were paying \$100 for a glass of water all because of gold. David says that the Word of God is more precious than gold, than much fine gold.

David’s second image is honey. David may have known about 8 or 9 books of the Bible. There were the first five books of Moses (Gen.-Deut.), Job, Joshua, and Judges, and the 74 psalms he wrote. There was no more Scripture. There was no more Old Testament. Yet of that little part of Scripture David delighted in it. How much more should we value the Bible? How much more should we enjoy it and read it and delight in it like honey? The LORD displays His clear and necessary will.

3. The LORD displays His sufficient will (19:11)

- a. All you need for guidance
- b. All you need for blessing

The Word of God keeps the wise on the narrow path by forewarning of possible pitfalls and by guiding to the rewards of godliness: life, God-given joy, wisdom, and contentment. The repetition of “your servant” (v. 11, 13) speaks of willingness to do God’s will by one who is committed to the covenant LORD. The LORD displays His clear, necessary and sufficient will.

Application: David lays the foundation for worship, work, and witness. [The Description of the Scripture: Praise God for the revelation of His holiness and justice.]

C. THE DETECTION OF THE SINNER (19:12-14) -- Revelation of God’s grace, mercy, and peace

This is every one of us. This is where it becomes very personal. God reveals Himself to the sinner. We don’t appreciate the Bible because we cannot. We are spiritually dead. Even as believers it rebukes us and troubles us and condemns us. David said in verse 11 that in keeping the commandments there is great reward. Then he admits that he doesn’t keep them. He has broken God’s law.

1. The LORD displays justification in salvation (19:12)

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| a. Expression of the depths of sin (19:12a) | Simple errors of ignorance |
| b. Expression of the depths of salvation (19:12b) | Hidden faults of weakness |

David starts analyzing our sin. He goes deeper and deeper. It’s more and more serious in verse 12. He starts off with **simple errors**. The Hebrew word means things that we do wrong without meaning to and without wanting to. They are mistakes we make. We fall short. We don’t come up to the standard. These are our errors.

David says that there are more than errors. He brings up **hidden faults**. One writer says, “These are not which are too small to see but sins that are too characteristic to register.” They are so much part of us. They are so common. We do them every day. We don’t even see them anymore. The LORD displays justification in salvation for simple errors and hidden faults.

2. The LORD displays sanctification in salvation (19:13) Willful sins of defiance

- a. Conquering of dominant sin
- b. Confession of growing righteousness

David goes on more seriously in verse 13 to speak of presumptuous sins, **willful sins**. He is talking about deliberate, conscious disobedience. “I know this is what God says I must do, but I don’t want to do it and I’m not going to do it.” Or, “I know that God says not to do this, but I am going to do it. I don’t care what God says. I am going to disobey Him.”

All three of these types of sins are in us all. Errors -- we don’t mean to fall short. We just

do. Hidden faults -- the sins that we don't notice because they are so much a part of us. Presumptuous sin -- we deliberately determine to disobey God. As we read Scripture, as the light of the Bible shines into our heart we find that this is who we are. We are not good people. We are not perfect people. We commit errors. We have hidden faults. We sin openly. What are we to do?

If this is the only revelation of God it is terrible. He is a great God and a holy God. He has given us His Word. He has told us how we are to live. We read the Bible and find that we have broken every commandment. What are we to do? In verse 13 David asks for power to keep from sin. If you are a Christian the Holy Spirit will help you, but that is not enough.

What about our past sins? What about our guilt before God? What about the person I really am? How can I know this God? How can I love this God? How can I have this God as my Father if He is holy and I am sinful? The LORD displays sanctification in salvation.

3. The LORD displays submission in salvation (19:14)

- a. Standard of submission -- His law
 - 1) Thoughts (internal)
 - 2) Words (external)
- b. Stance of submission -- His presence
 - 1) Not merely animal sacrifice
 - 2) But surely personal sacrifice
- c. Source of submission -- Himself
 - 1) Rock as refuge
 - 2) Redeemer as champion

As David wrestles with this his mind goes to the offering of sacrifice. There was a key word that was used. It was the word "acceptable."

^{NKJ} Leviticus 1:3-4, "If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."

David wants to be acceptable. This is the word he uses in verse 14. Could he be like that sacrifice? Could he have a righteousness that would clothe him so that he could stand in God's presence? Could something happen that would make him acceptable? He wouldn't be afraid but would love and trust the LORD. He wants to be acceptable in God's sight. How is that possible?

We know the answer. We are acceptable through Christ Jesus, God's Son. Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." We know the answer and so did David.

With the last great words of this psalm he casts himself on the mercy of the Son of God. He casts himself on his Rock and his Redeemer. He comes to the Redeemer. The sky shows us the greatness, wisdom, power, and glory of God. The Scriptures show us the holiness of God, who He is and what He want of us. These are wonderful but they are not enough because we are sinners. We need the Redeemer. It is only through the Redeemer that we can

be acceptable. The LORD displays submission in salvation.

David, at the end of the psalm, seeks and finds the Redeemer in the LORD, the covenant God. This is the question for each one of us. Do I have the Redeemer? Is the LORD my Rock and my Redeemer? Jesus Christ was sent to be the Savior, the Redeemer of men and women who are aware of their failure and their need, and who want God to be their God.

Application: David confesses the wonder of acceptance by his Redeemer. [The Detection of the Sinner: Praise God for the revelation of His grace, mercy, and peace.]

Christology: David, the king of Israel, was conditioned and inspired to compose this poem so that it would express the thoughts and desires of his greater Son, Jesus, the King of kings. What is Jesus revealing when He sings this song to His Father and with His people? He reveals to us from above; He reaches us here below; He restores us within.

Conclusion: The first focus is the sky. The second focus is the Scripture. The third focus is the sinner. The psalm begins with God's glory in the heavens. It ends with the One whose glory fills the heavens and the earth. If you can sing these words and mean them in your heart you can know that your worship is acceptable in His sight and enjoy the trifocals of praise.

Resource: Edward Donnelly, **He Is Not Silent**, Psalm 19, 07/27/2009, Trinity RP Church, NI, www.sermonaudio.com [edited]

W. Robert Godfrey, *Learning to Love the Psalms* (Reformation Trust, 2017), p. 51-52
Psalter Selection: 33A, 78A, 19A, 19B [*The Book of Psalms for Singing*]