

Intro

We have been taking a look at the fact that God's story and God's word go hand in hand with our ability to rule well. God has created this world and made humanity His co-heir. Mankind has not been great in the co-heir category, because we have tried to rule without the real king, God Himself. We have also seen that we flourish as a people when we worship as a subordinate. God created us to worship Him, and we are made whole (Shalom) when we are connected to Him and His word.

From the Head...

Our passage brings us into the revelatory world of God. God is a creator, thus He is creative. As a creator He stands outside of His creation, but as one who is creative He found ways to communicate Himself to His subjects. According to Hebrews 1:1-3, there are a numerous ways He has chosen to communicate to us. Our problem is not that God has failed to communicate, but that we have failed to listen and obey. And when we fail to listen and obey, literally all hell breaks loose. This passage seems to break into three different parts:

Part 1 God Speaks to Us through Nature (Psalms 19:1-6)

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork." This statement is congruent with Paul's statement in Romans 1:20. God's creation is His canvas, showing His majesty, power and immensity as well as His beauty and creativity. Creation screams at us that there is a creator and He is powerful, but it doesn't necessarily give us many other attributes of God. The book of Romans reminds us that we reject this knowledge for our own thinking (which is the real problem, not lack of information), and choose to worship the idols we select as our own gods. Nature (known as "general" revelation) teaches us there is a God, and His natural revelation touches everyone everywhere. It is a "measuring rod" that goes to all the ends of the earth. Paul uses this verse to describe the breadth of the gospel's reach in the world (**Romans 10:18**).

David uses the symbol of the sun as a metaphor that connects verses 1-6 with verses 7-14 (some people think that this was originally two separate Psalms). There are some commentators who feel that David used existing poetry regarding a sun-god to describe the sun as one that returns each night to the ocean and his bride; however, a cursory look at this Psalm shows that David repudiates the idea that the sun is something to be worshipped even if he did borrow the imagery.

What is also interesting, in regard to God revealing Himself through nature, is that it is impersonal. Verse one uses the term "Elohim" for God, which is the impersonal, generic term for God; whereas verses 7-10 uses the personal name of God (Yahweh). God's "general" revelation is wide in scope, but limited in nature. Romans tells us that "general" revelation is enough in regards to the knowledge of God, so that no human has an excuse. However, that knowledge often ends in a pantheistic, creation-worship idolatry. As believers in Christ we should be able to enjoy the creation and see its beauty, but worship its creator! We should be able to see the artist behind the work of art.

Verse six is a transition, because like the sun the word of God is penetrating (See **Hebrews 4:12**). While the sun (and general revelation) is wider, reaching everyone, God's "special" revelation (His word) is localized and given to those who will hear (See **Matthew 13:10-15**).

Part 2 God Speaks to Us through His Word (Psalm 19:7-11)

In the past two weeks we have seen that God's word is imperative to a healthy, prosperous and thriving spiritual life; the same truth is communicated in our Psalm today (See **v.11**). What began in an impersonal, "general" revelation (represented by the use of the generic name for God, "Elohim") now turns to the more personal name of God (Yahweh) six times in three verses.

The assumption here is not that we are righteous and able to keep the law, but that the law would lead to life *if* we were able to keep it. **2 Corinthians 3:6** reminds us that the "letter" of the law "kills" when it is not kept in the Spirit of God (mainly because it leads to either guilt and rebellion or self-righteousness in our sinful state). Here we see some truths about God's word (the Law) that benefit us in at least four ways:

1. God's Word Gives Us Life (Psalms 19:7a)

"The law of the Yahweh is perfect, reviving the soul." The idea of perfection here is that of being "complete" or comprehensive. **2 Peter 1:3** reminds us that God has left us with everything we need *"that pertain to life and godliness."* In other words, we are equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit to live the life God has called us to live. God's word is designed to keep us from sin by showing us where we are going wrong, and directing us to a path that is righteous (See

Psalms 139:23-24). Ultimately the law, which brings forth death in our fallen condition, gives us life as it points us to Jesus (**Galatians 3:21-26**).

2. God's Word Encourages Wisdom (**Psalm 19:7b+8b**)

"The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple...the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Wisdom is practical knowledge; living the truth of God's will in our everyday decisions. Keeping in step with the word of God brings wisdom in murky water. We live in a time when we can find much information, but little wisdom. Navigating through clouds can be very discouraging unless you stick dogmatically to the compass. The Bible is our compass, and in the midst of a morally pluralistic world it is imperative that we follow that compass closely. It is clear that the wisdom we find in the world is often at odds with the gospel of Jesus Christ (See **Romans 1:25; 1 Corinthians 19-21**). Godly wisdom moves us away from the world's idea of success (money, sex, fame, power) toward a life of selfless sacrifice; knowing that all of our rewards are ultimately with Him here, and for eternity with Him in Heaven.

3. God's Word Gives Us Joy (**Psalm 19:8a+10**)

"The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart...more to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb." Being "right" here means "straight" as opposed to crooked. The idea is that God's word helps us walk in a manner worthy of the calling by which we are called. His word describes the path, and that path gladdens our heart. We live our lives apart from God's will, making decisions on our own, and wonder why we are so depressed. Walking in God's will is the greatest thing we can do. We are better off living in danger while in God's will, than in comfort while outside of His will.

4. God's Word Promises Enduring Justice (**Psalm 19:9+11**)

"The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever...the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether...by them is your servant warned, in keeping them there is great reward." Psalm 9 is interrupted by David's commentary of verse 10, and then picks up with two benefits. First we are "warned." Warned of what? Sin and its harmful effects in our life? Second, there is a great reward for keeping God's law. What is that reward? Augustine once quipped that, *"Sin is its own punishment."* One commentator wonders if *"Virtue is its own reward."* Are we blessed just by doing His will? The world shuns this idea and tries hard to make us think that in sin we can prosper, and find joy and life. If that is true, then why do those who engage in this lifestyle seem so miserable in their "real" lives?

Part 3 There Are Great Consequences to Our Response to God (Psalm 19:12-14)

We often think that there were two ways to salvation. The Jews followed the OT law, while we are saved by grace through Jesus Christ. This is not true. God has always saved people by His grace. The OT saints offered sacrifices as a symbol of their need for a sacrifice, which was fulfilled in Christ, who was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Here in these last few verses we realize that the OT saint has the same reaction to his sins, and recognizes where his salvation comes from. First, we see him repenting and asking forgiveness for his sin. In verse 12 he asks God to *"Declare me innocent from hidden faults,"* while verse 13 asks God to *"Keep back your servant also from presumptuous (arrogant) sins."* Verse thirteen continues by asking God to make him "blameless." Then, secondly we see the author acknowledging God as his *"Lord, my rock and redeemer,"* which is true of Jesus, our "Rock and Redeemer."

...to the Heart

God's law drives us to the only one who can save us: Jesus! Our life, joy and happiness are found in Him and His will for our life. That life isn't found in keeping His law, but living it as a result of a transformed life in Christ, by the power of the Spirit of God in our lives. The law points us to Jesus, who is the one who reveals God to us more perfectly (**John 14; Hebrews 1:1-3**).

Books for Further Study: Baker Commentary on the Old testament, Wisdom and Psalms, *Psalms Vol. 1-2, John Goldingay*; *Answering God: The Psalms As Tools For Prayer, Eugene Peterson*; *The Message of the Psalms: A theological Commentary, Walter Brueggemann*, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, Dietrich Bonhoeffer*; *Praying the Psalms, Thomas Merton*; *Bread in the Wilderness, Thomas Merton*

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