

The Glory of the Redeemer

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- [0 : 0 0] Heavenly Father, we have gathered in your presence because you call us to worship. You call us to pray. You call us to seek you. So we are here. So now please speak to us, address us, and meet with us as we cry out to you and listen to your voice.
- And by your grace, out of your kindness, help us to experience your presence this evening. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. We're in Psalm 19. It's one of my favorite psalms.
- The title says, To the Choir Master, Psalm of David.
- And like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them. And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- [1 : 3 9] The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts 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 rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned.
- In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins.
- Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
- [2 : 4 6] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. In his book, Reflections on the Psalms, C.S. Lewis writes about Psalm 19.
- He says that, I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world. And one of the grandeurs of this psalm is its structure.
- And it takes us from extolling first the glory of God revealed in nature, verses 1 to 6, to the glory of God revealed in Scripture from verses 7 to 10 or 7 to 12.
- And then finally it turns to the glory of God revealed in redemption in the last few verses. So first it tells us about the glory of God revealed in nature.
- So read verses 1 to 4 with me. It focuses on how the heavens, right, which is where the biblical authors refer to the skies and the space above, praise God.
- [3 : 4 5] So it reads, The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard.
- Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. So it talks about how the praise that the heavens is giving to God is ceaseless. So it's day to day and night to night, as it says in verse 2.

And their praise forth out in two directions. So there's two purposes for this praise. First is toward God, of course, right, because it's praising God. So the heavens declare the glory of God and proclaim his handiwork.

But secondly, the praise also is directed to man because it reveals knowledge about God. It reveals knowledge. And since, of course, God's all-knowing, and he's not the one that's receiving knowledge, he's not the one that's recipient of this revelation, it's man.

And heavens reveal knowledge about God in the sense that it shows forth his glory and power. So that's, for example, what Paul talks about in Romans 1, 19 to 20, when he says, What can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them.

[4 : 59] 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. So after, you know, millennia of astronomical studies, we're still only barely scratching the surface of the heavens, right, the space out there.

And so by reflecting on the vastness of creation of the heavens, the beauty and the order of the heavens, we can learn of God's infinite knowledge, beauty, and power, which far exceeds our comprehension.

And so this revelation of God in creation is what we call general revelation because it's made available to all.

It's a general revelation. And this general revelation is paradoxical in nature because if you read verses 3 and 4, it says, There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard.

[6 : 02] So the praise of the heavens, of course, on the one hand, is inaudible. You can't hear it. There's no sound coming actually from them. Yet, on the other hand, it says, Their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.

Even though it's inaudible, there's no place where this praise is not reaching. It's reaching the remotest corners of the earth. And so it's beautiful poetry, right? It conveys both the plainness of God's praise that reveals him, as well as the subtlety of God's glory seen in creation.

So that we have to have eyes to see and ears to hear in order to be able to hear this praise and see this glory. And in verses 4 to 6, the psalmist, who is David here, he goes on to more specific aspects of the heavens, namely the sun because that's the primary thing that reveals God's glory in the heavens.

And he writes about it in this way. He says, In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them. There's nothing hidden from its heat. And it's not an exaggeration, right, for us to say that there's nothing more physically important to life on earth than the sun, right?

[7 : 24] Because in the absence of light and heat, the earth will be cold, hard, and lifeless. Because it's the sun that warms our seas and sustains life on earth by providing plants, giving energy to plants that provide food and oxygen for people and animals and such.

So it's God who set the sun in the heavens. And the sun comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber. It's a simile referring to a newly wedded husband emerging kind of from his nuptial chamber for the first time.

So he's radiant with the honeymoon glow, and he's rejoicing over his wife. The sun also is like a strong man running its course with joy, going from one end of the heavens to the other end.

So this is comparing the sun to like a warrior or an athlete that's vigorous and is able to run his course with joy. And the last clause of verse 6 serves as kind of a pivot point between the glory of God revealed in nature and the glory of God revealed in scripture.

Because it says there is nothing hidden from its heat. It's just a pivot point because just as the sun dominates the physical life on earth and nothing escapes its life-giving influence.

[8 : 39] So then scripture dominates the spiritual life of man, and there is no spiritual life apart from its life-giving power. And it's interesting that there are a lot of ancient hymns from other cultures that write similarly about the sun, as Psalm 19 does.

And some scholars make the connection to that and say that Psalm 19 is indebted to those hymns and such. But the fact that there's thematic parallels doesn't mean that the content can be equated because Babylonian hymns to Shamash and the Egyptian hymns to the sun god Aten, they all deify the sun.

So the sun becomes god in those hymns, which is a crucial difference between that and Psalm 19, because in Psalm 19, the bodies in the heavens are personified, the sun's personified, but it's never deified.

Rather, all creation, including the sun, is subjected to, submitted to the only god. And so there's a crucial difference, the creator, the only true god. And so it's natural for the psalmist to go from singing about the glory of God revealed in nature than to the glory of God revealed in scripture.

So notice how also, if you just kind of scan verses 7 to 10, the way David refers to God changes. Because in verses 1 to 6, he refers to God exclusively as God, which is the generic Hebrew word for God.

[10 : 23] But from verse 7 and onward, he refers to God exclusively as Lord, which is the specific covenant name of God, Yahweh, that God revealed to his people.

And so anyone can call God, God, just the generic God, the creator, but only his people who know him personally and have experienced his salvation can call him Lord.

So there is then an important theological distinction here between what we call general revelation, that I talked about earlier, because it's given to all in creation, and special revelation, which is a special knowledge of God that God imparts to his people through his redemptive acts, and through the record of his redemptive acts, which is scripture.

So this is insightful, because that means the most brilliant and groundbreaking physicist or astronomer, they might be able to plumb the depth of the knowledge of God revealed in creation, but they still can't hold a candle to the least knowledgeable child of God, who personally knows God, and his saving works through scripture.

So this reminds me of what Albert Einstein said one time, he said, it is certain that a conviction akin to religious feeling of the rationality or intelligibility of the world lies behind all scientific work of a higher order.

[11 : 44] This firm belief, a belief bound up with deep feeling in a superior mind that reveals itself in the world of experience, represents my conception of God. So this shows the power of general revelation, and even from his studies, and from his study of physics, and examining the world, he was able to come to the conclusion that there's a superior mind, a higher order of some kind.

But even Einstein, for all his genius, could not come to know God personally as the Christian child who sings, Jesus loves me, yes I know, for the Bible tells me so.

And that's the beauty and power of God's word, that we can know God personally as his covenant people. That's the special revelation that allows us to call him Lord by his name.

So the psalmist, that's why he transitions naturally from the glory of God revealed in nature to the glory of God revealed in scripture. And then he goes on to wax poetically about the virtues of scripture.

He gives six different attributes in the course of three verses. So he writes in verse 7, The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. So it's perfect, meaning it's unblemished.

[12 : 58] It revives the soul, gives life and vitality to us, spiritual life. And so if we want to have spiritual life, abundant life, then we need to turn to his perfect law.

And then he continues, The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. So then, if we ever want to hear what God would say about an issue or a question we have, then we need to turn to his testimony, which is sure, his witness.

That will make us wise. That's what's going to help us to navigate the complexities of life, avoid the pitfalls of folly. And then verse 8 says, The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. So the scriptures are right and pure, and consequently they rejoice the heart and enlighten the eyes.

So if we want to live joyfully, and if we want to live enlightened by God's truth, rather than being ignorant, then we need to turn to God's word. And then finally, verse 9, The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

[14 : 07] The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. So to live according to God's word is to fear God, not to be terrified of God, but to live in awe and reverence as if we are ever before the presence of God.

And such a life endures forever, because it's not founded on the ever-changing world, but in the unchanging word of God. And then the final clause sums it all up.

The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. So there's not one rule or precept in the entirety of God's word that is false or evil. The whole of it is righteous.

It's a wonderful psalm about the word. And because David is so compelled by the virtues of God's word that he sees here, he says in verse 10, It is more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

So gold and honey are two of the most precious commodities found in nature, especially for people living in this time in antiquity. Because the gold, I mean, we still value it, right?

[15 : 22] It's for its beautiful color and luster. And it's been prized since 4th millennia BC. And also because gold is malleable, it was particularly useful in luxury art.

So it became synonymous with value and prestige, right? So we talk about the gold standard or the gold medal is the most prestigious award. And honey similarly was precious back then, right?

Because people back then couldn't just walk into a grocery store and buy a bottle of honey for cheap, right? Because people, and people didn't discover how to crystallize sugar from sugar canes until the 4th century AD.

So honey was a coveted and rare sweetener that can be added to all kinds of foods and drinks. And not only that, honey was used for medicinal purposes, because it contains just the right amount of hydrogen peroxide and it lacks moisture.

So it kind of sucks out moisture if you apply it to a wound and the hydrogen peroxide sanitizes it. And so even today, you can actually buy honey-related medicines.

[16 : 27] So like a company called MediHoney, it sells honey ointments and Band-Aids that have honey in them. And so not only that, gold and honey were both prized for their durability, right?

So gold is one of the least reactive chemical elements in the periodic table. So it doesn't technically ever tarnish or rust because it doesn't react with oxygen, nitrogen, or really any of the gases present in the atmosphere.

That's why even when people want like a silver hue in their wedding rings or wedding bands, they typically get white gold as opposed to getting silver. Because silver tarnishes easily, but gold doesn't.

And similarly, honey, like I mentioned before, because of its lack of moisture, lack of water, and high acidity, and the presence of hydrogen peroxide, it basically lasts forever.

It never expires. It doesn't go bad as long as it's stored properly. And so then the psalmist, by comparing the scriptures to two of these most precious and valuable things and lasting things, he's really conveying beautiful and powerful truths about God's word.

[17 : 34] It's more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold. It's sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. So then it's a tragedy that such a precious gift of God collects dust on some of our bookshelves.

If this is really true of God's word, then we should treasure it. We should search it daily and meditate on it and memorize it so that we can let the word of God dwell in us and minister to us, even when we don't have the physical Bible open in front of us.

And when we read it, we should read it reverently as the word of God, with fear of God, and believing that whatever it approves is right and whatever it condemns is wrong.

And we should submit ourselves to God's word and conform our lives to its rule and practice and regard other opinions and books only to the degree that they conform to God's word.

Because the glory of God is revealed in nature, but also particularly in scripture. And if the psalm ended here in verse 10, it would already be a magnificent psalm, but it gets better still in verses 11 to 14.

[18 : 45] David goes from extolling the glory of God in nature and scripture to the glory of God revealed in redemption. So he writes in verses 11 to 12, Moreover, by them is your servant warned.

In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors, declare me innocent from hidden faults? And the reason for this transition to reflecting on his errors and the warning that comes from scripture is that David becomes keenly aware of his own insignificance and sinfulness and unworthiness as he reflects on the wonder and the perfection of God's word and the glory of God revealed in nature.

So in the end he recognizes that even though there is great reward in keeping God's word, he doesn't do so perfectly. And so he says to God in verse 12, he prays, Who can discern his errors?

Declare me innocent from hidden faults. David recognizes sin's tendency to blind people. So we're often the victim of sin's blinding effect.

Don't recognize it. So he confesses that. He said, Who can discern his errors? And then having acknowledged his hidden faults, he pleads with God to declare him innocent. And the word hidden here connects back to verse 6, which I said is the pivot point.

[20 : 09] Because where it said, There's nothing hidden from the sun's heat. So in the same way the sun's heat reaches all the nooks and crannies of the earth, so the law of God searches the nooks and crannies of our hearts.

There's nothing hidden from the Lord. And so having prayed therefore to God for forgiveness for sins that David is not aware of, he then prays to God in verse 13, Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins.

Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. So, of course, all sin is bad from God's perspective, right?

Because no sin is trivial. And they're equally indicting because any degree of sinfulness falls infinitely short of God's standard because God's perfectly and eternally holy.

But from our perspective, there are some sins that are greater than others. And presumptuous sins, sins that we commit while fully knowing what ought to be done or what ought not to be done are worse than hidden faults.

[21 : 14] So that's what David's talking about here, contrasting. And then David concludes in verse 14, Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

So unlike the inaudible words of creation that uniformly and consistently declare the glory of God, David is uncertain of the merits of the words of his mouth.

So he prays, Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. And the word acceptable is the language of sacrifice.

And David's unsure that his praise of God, his words and his thoughts would be acceptable to God. So that's why he prays this. And for us also, we're brought to a similar place that David is.

After seeing the glory of God in nature and scripture, we're brought to that place of confession and repentance. And this place of confession and repentance points ultimately to the glory of God revealed in redemption of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 23] Because David calls God his rock, and Jesus taught his followers in Matthew 7, 24, Everyone then who hears these words of mine, these words of his, and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Right? So his words are the rock upon which his followers are to build their lives. And Jesus speaks in that passage as if he's speaking the very words of God.

So he says to build your life on his words. And not only that David calls God his redeemer, and scripture repeatedly calls Jesus the redeemer, that he's the ransom paid for the redemption of sinners.

And they both come from the same word, ransom, redemption. And so it says in 1 Peter 1, 17-19, And if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you are ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

So Christ is the acceptable sacrifice offered on our behalf. David wonders if his words and his meditations, his heart are acceptable, but Christ is the ultimate sacrifice that is acceptable.

[23 : 45] And Christ is the ultimate rock and redeemer. And Christ is the ransom price paid to free us from the futile ways of sin so that we can be declared innocent even by God, the Lord, the impartial judge.

And so that's why we ought to seek the glory of God in nature. And still more, we ought to seek the glory of God in Scripture.

But all of those are both, neither of those amount to anything if they don't drive us to our need for the Redeemer. Because that's what Scripture and nature all ultimately point to, the Lord of creation, the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

So let's meditate on that truth and pray.