

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 19

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 19

Overview

Psalm 19 teaches us that both God's creation and God's Word reveal His greatness. John Calvin is attributed as saying, "*From nature we know only the hands and feet of God, but from Scripture we know His heart.*" Psalm 19 reminds us that we know that God exists because of the existence of the world, but we also know that God's Word comes that we might be "blameless" and "acquitted of great transgression". (Psalm 19:13)

Outline/Structure of the Psalm

Psalm 19 divides neatly into two halves or strophes, each focused on a particular way we know God. The first half of the psalm focuses on our *natural knowledge of God* through creation. The second half focuses on the *revealed knowledge of God* that comes through His Word. We typically talk about three ways we know of God's existence:

1. The creation of the world – natural knowledge of God
2. The law written upon the heart – natural knowledge of God
3. The Written Word of God – revealed knowledge of God

A basic outline of the psalm would look like this:

- I. Creation's Silent Proclamation of God's Voice (19:1-6)
- II. Torah's Oral Proclamation of God's Word (19:7-11)
- III. The Psalmist's Reflection and Prayer (19:12-14)

Creation's Silent Proclamation of God's Voice – 19:1-6

:1 - Written into the observable universe we live in is the existence of the divine Creator. In Lutheran theology we call this the natural knowledge of God. ***Read Romans 1:20***

What according to Paul is clearly seen in creation?

What is the result for all mankind?

- There are many hymns and songs that celebrate how God is revealed in the creation of the world. Perhaps the best known of these is “How Great Thou Art”. This was originally a poem by Carl Boberg from 1885. However, an English missionary to Russia, took the poem which had been set to music and modified the words based on his own experiences in the Carpathian Mountains just before WWII. S.K. Hine is credited with the lyrics that we know in this hymn. The first three verses of the hymn were composed while Hine was still in Russia and the last verse was composed after the outbreak of war had driven his family back to England. The first two verses of this hymn deal with the *natural knowledge of God* in creation, while the last two verses deal specifically with the *revealed knowledge of God*.

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds
Thy hands have made; I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy
pow’r throughout the universe displayed,

Refrain: *Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee, How great
Thou art, How great Thou art.*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee, How great Thou art,
How great Thou art.*

When thru the woods and forest glades I wander, and hear the birds sing
sweetly in the trees; when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and
hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze.

Refrain

And when I think that God his Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce
can take it in; that on the cross my burden gladly bearing, He bled and
died to take away my sin.

Refrain

When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation and take me home,
what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration and
there proclaim, “My God, how great Thou art!”

Refrain

- :2-4 - The implication of these verses is that the created universe tells about God but not with words or speech. Verse 2 talks about how speech goes forward but then immediately verse 3 makes it clear that it isn’t literal speech or words, but rather the knowledge of God sewn into the very fabric of

creation. Imagine it like a silent movie that needs no subtitles. We can tell what is going on from the expression on the faces of the actors and their movements. So creation tells us about the glory and power of God without words.

What is the greatness of the natural knowledge of God?

What are the limitations of the natural knowledge of God?

- :5-6 - This verse deals specifically with the sun and its running of its due course. The comparison with the bridegroom is in terms of the joy. Just as a bridegroom rejoices at emerging from being united to his bride, so the sun rejoices to run the course set for it by God. As we see the sun run its course daily, we are reminded of the creating power of God who has begun this pattern and continued it all these years following creation.

Torah's Oral Proclamation of God's Word – 19:7-11

- :7-8 - There is a poetic pattern to verses 7-8. Each line is focused on the revelation of God's Word but there seems to be a move from a more broad understanding to more specific understanding. So we are brought from Torah(the whole law) eventually to commandment(specific instruction). In each of these things there is an adjective describing the object and then a statement of its effect on the believer. (See the following chart)

<u>Object</u>	<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Effect on believer</u>
Torah	Perfect/complete	restoring the soul
Testimony	Sure	making wise the simple
Precepts	Right	rejoicing the heart
Commandment	Pure	enlightening the eyes

- :9 - This verse deals with the proper response to the revealed Word of God. It is fear. **Read Proverbs 1:7**

What do we mean by fear? See also Matthew 10:28

- There is also the acknowledgment that the Lord who has given this Word is best equipped to judge its keeping.
- :10-11 – These verses are an assessment of the Word of God from the psalmist's perspective. His evaluation is not just that the Word of God is "gold" but "refined gold"; not just "honey" but "the drippings of the

honeycomb”. So then both the Word of God and His judging of its keeping are divinely good things.

Why do we often think of the law of God negatively?

How does verse 11 demonstrate the inherent goodness of the law?

The Psalmist’s Reflection and Prayer – 19:12-14

:12-13 – David makes a confession and asks God for forgiveness and strength against temptation.

- “hidden faults” – There are sins we aren’t consciously aware of.

What might be a sin that we are unaware of or that is hidden from us?

- “presumptuous sins” – These are sins that run our lives. They enslave us.

o ***Read John 8:31-36; Romans 6:20-23***

What does it mean to be a slave to sin?

What is the result of that slavery according to Romans 6?

:14 - David’s concluding words are a prayer for his life going forward. Having confessed his sins, he prays that the path forward would be marked by a greater sanctification. This reflects a true pattern of repentance. Repentance has three parts:

1. Confess our sins

2. Receive forgiveness

3. Resolve, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live according to God’s Word.

- The order of this pattern of forgiveness is important, because forgiveness feeds our living a life that reflects God’s Word. Forgiveness must come before sanctification. Nor should we believe that if we slip and commit a sin again that means that we were not truly sorry and therefore not truly forgiven. Forgiveness is a gift of God given without reliance on our future better behavior. It is given because of Christ’s sacrifice not because we deserve it!

Summary

Psalm 19 brings us to encounter God by understanding Him as the author of creation, but gives us a deeper understanding of Him by showing us that He is the author of His Word. It is in His Word that forgiveness, life, and salvation are found.

Closing Prayer