

# PSALM 19

There are two excellent books which the great God has published for the instruction and edification of the children of men; this psalm treats of them both, and recommends them both to our diligent study.

**I.** The book of the creatures, in which we may easily read the power and godhead of the Creator (v. 1-6).

**II.** The book of the scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God concerning our duty. He shows the excellency and usefulness of that book (v. 7-11) and then teaches us how to improve it (v. 12-14).

## PSALM 19:1-6

### GOD'S GLORY SEEN IN THE CREATION

*To the chief musician. A psalm of David.*

From the things that are seen every day by all the world the psalmist, in these verses, leads us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears incontestably evident and whose glory shines transcendently bright in the visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them, and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies. This instance of the divine power serves not only to show the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven and yet say, "There is no God," who see the effect and yet say, "There is no cause," but to show the folly of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imagination, who, though the heavens declare the glory of God, yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,

**I.** What that is which the creatures notify to us. They are in many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare the glory of God, by showing his handy-works, v. 1. They plainly speak themselves to be God's handy-works; for they could not exist from eternity; all succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction; they could not be produced

by a casual hit of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be bantered than reasoned with: therefore they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus it appears they are God's works, the *works of his fingers* (<sup>48B</sup>Psalm 8:3), and therefore they declare his glory. From the excellency of the work we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great author. From the brightness of the heavens we may collect that the Creator is light; their vastness of extent bespeaks his immensity; their height his transcendency and sovereignty, their influence upon this earth his dominion, and providence, and universal beneficence: and all declare his almighty power, by which they were at first made, and continue to this day according to the ordinances that were then settled.

## II. What are some of those things which notify this?

1. The heavens and the firmament — the vast expanse of air and ether, and the spheres of the planets and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts, in the structure of his body, that whereas they are made to look downwards, as their spirits must go, he is made erect, to look upwards, because upwards his spirit must shortly go and his thoughts should now rise.

2. The constant and regular succession of day and night (v. 2): *Day unto day, and night unto night*, speak the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has, from the beginning to this day, preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah (<sup>48D</sup>Genesis 8:22), that, *while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease*, to which covenant of providence the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, <sup>28D</sup>Jeremiah 33:20; 31:35. The counterchanging of day and night, in so exact a method, is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, *he forms the light and creates the darkness* (<sup>28D</sup>Isaiah 45:7), and sets the one over-against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man; for he *makes the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice*, <sup>48B</sup>Psalm 65:8. He not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us, by this constant revolution; for as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; every day and every night speak the goodness of God, and, when they have finished their testimony, leave it to the next day, to the next night, to stay the same.

**3.** The light and influence of the sun do, in a special manner, declare the glory of God; for of all the heavenly bodies that is the most conspicuous in itself and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon, and all desert, without it. It is not an improbable conjecture that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun observe here,

**(1.)** The place appointed him. In the heavens God has *set a tabernacle for the sun*. The heavenly bodies are called *hosts of heaven*, and therefore are fitly said to  *dwell in tents*, as soldiers in their encampments. The sun is said to have a tabernacle set him, no only because he is in continual motion and never has a fixed residence, but because the mansion he has will, at the end of time, be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll and the sun shall be turned to darkness.

**(2.)** The course assigned him. That glorious creature was not made to be idle, but *his going forth* (at least as it appears to our eye) *is from one point of the heavens, and his circuit* thence to the opposite point, and thence (to complete his diurnal revolution) to the same point again; and this with such steadiness and constancy that we can certainly foretel the hour and the minute at which the sun will rise at such a place, any day to come.

**(3.)** The brightness wherein he appears. He is *as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*, richly dressed and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself and making all about him pleasant; for *the friend of the bridegroom rejoices greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice*,  
☞ John 3:29.

**(4.)** The cheerfulness wherewith he makes this tour. Though it seems a vast round which he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet in obedience to the law of this creation, and for the service of man, he not only does it, but does it with a great deal of pleasure and *rejoices as a strong man to run a race*. With such satisfaction did Christ, the Sun of righteousness, finish the work that was given him to do.

**(5.)** His universal influence on this earth: *There is nothing hidden from the heart thereof*, no, not metals in the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

**III.** To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God. It is made to all parts of the world (v. 3, 4): *There is no speech nor language* (no nation, for the nations were divided *after their tongues*, ~~GEN~~Genesis 10:31, 32) *where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone through all the earth* (the equinoctial line, suppose) *and with it their words to the end of the world*, proclaiming the eternal power of God of nature, v. 4. The apostle uses this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them (~~ROM~~Romans 10:18), so that they were without excuse if they were idolaters, ~~ROM~~Romans 1:20, 21. And those were without blame, who, by preaching the gospel to them, endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry. If God used these means to prevent their apostasy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. *They have no speech or language* (so some read it) *and yet their voice is heard*. All people may hear these natural immortal preachers speak to them in their own tongue the wonderful works of God.

In singing these verses we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of the heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the Sun of righteousness.

## ~~PSA~~PSALM 19:7-14

### THE EXCELLENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES

God's glory, (that is, his goodness to man) appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by divine revelation. The holy scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God and of our expectation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works might have served if man had retained his integrity; but, to recover him out of his fallen state, another course must be taken; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

**1.** The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences (v. 7-9), in each of which the name *Jehovah* is repeated, and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its

excellency from the law-maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of divine revelation, precepts and promises, and especially the gospel. Here are several good properties of it, which proves its divine original, which recommend it to our affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever. Here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which show what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of divine grace is, going along with it, and working by it.

**1.** *The law of the Lord is perfect.* It is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end for which it is designed; and it will make the man of God perfect, <sup><STR></sup>2 Timothy 3:17. Nothing is to be added to it nor taken from it. It is of use to *convert the soul*, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty; for it shows us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God and the indispensable necessity of our return to him.

**2.** *The testimony of the Lord* (which witnesses for him to us) *is sure*, incontestably and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of the divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure foundation of living comforts and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, <sup><STR></sup>2 Timothy 3:15. It will give us an insight into things divine and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work and secure to us our true interests. It will make even *the simple* (poor contrivers as they may be for the present world) wise for their souls and eternity. Those that are humbly simple, sensible of their own folly and willing to be taught, shall be made wise by the word of God, <sup><STR></sup>Psalm 25:9.

**3.** *The statutes of the Lord* (enacted by his authority, and binding on all wherever they come) *are right*, exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil, that is, with the right reason of man and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts, concerning all things, are right (<sup><STR></sup>Psalm 119:128), just as they should be; and they will set us to rights if we receive them and submit to them; and, because they are right, they *rejoice the heart*. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy; and, when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for everlasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind.

**4.** *The commandment of the Lord is pure*; it is clear, without darkness; it is clean, without dross and defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those that receive and embrace it. It is the ordinary means which the Spirit uses in *enlightening the eyes*; it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

**5.** *The fear of the Lord* (true religion and godliness prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life) *is clean*, clean itself, and will make us clean (<sup>485B</sup>John 15:3); it will cleanse our way, (<sup>486B</sup>Psalm 119:9. And it *endureth for ever*; it is of perpetual obligation and can never be repealed. The ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

**6.** *The judgments of the Lord* (all his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom) *are true*; they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are *righteous*, all consonant to natural equity; and they are so *altogether*: there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

**II.** He expresses the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had, and hoped to have, from it, v. 10, 11.

**1.** See how highly he prized the commandments of God. It is the character of all good people that they prefer their religion and the word of God,

**(1.)** Far before all the wealth of the world. It is *more desirable than gold*, than fine gold, *than much fine gold*. Gold is of the earth, earthly; but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul and the concerns of eternity.

**(2.)** Far before all pleasures and delights of sense. The word of God, received by faith, is sweet to the soul, *sweeter than honey and the honey comb*. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the great soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

**2.** See what use he made of the precepts of God's word: *By them is thy servant warned*. The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the duty we are to do, the dangers we are to avoid, and

the deluge we are to prepare for, ~~3087~~ Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7. It warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. All that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

**3.** See what advantage he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts: *In keeping them there is great reward.* Those who make conscience of their duty will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward, not only after keeping, but in keeping, God's commandments, a present great reward of obedience. Religion is health and honour; it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet and our crosses easy, life truly valuable and death itself truly desirable.

**III.** He draws some good inferences from this pious meditation upon the excellency of the word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and they are to good purpose.

**1.** He takes occasion hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for *by the law is the knowledge of sin.* "Is the commandment thus holy, just, and good? Then *who can understand his errors?* I cannot, whoever can." From the rectitude of the divine law he learns to call his sins his *errors*. If the commandment be true and righteous, every transgression of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle; it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in. From the extent, the strictness, and spiritual nature, of the divine law he learns that his sins are so many that he cannot understand the number of them, and so exceedingly sinful that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. We are guilty of many sins which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of; many we have been guilty of which we have forgotten; so that, when we have been ever so particular in the confession of sin, we must conclude with an *et cetera* — *and such like*; for God knows a great deal more evil of us than we do of ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well that we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

**2.** He takes occasion hence to pray against sin. All the discoveries of sin made to us by the law should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray, as David does here,

(1.) For mercy to pardon. Finding himself unable to specify all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, *Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults*; not secret to God, so none are, nor only such as were secret to the world, but such as were hidden from his own observation of himself. The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults, and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even secret faults are defiling, and render us unfit for communion with God; but, when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them, ~~1~~ 1 John 1:7.

(2.) For grace to help in time of need. Having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be prevented, v. 13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers, which concur with David's here, where observe,

[1.] His petition: "Keep me from ever being guilty of a wilful presumptuous sin." We ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of infirmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God and wound conscience, which wither our comforts and shock our hopes. "However, let none such *have dominion over me*, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be enslaved by it."

[2.] His plea: "*So shall I be upright*; I shall appear upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness; and I *shall be innocent from the great transgression*;" so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, ~~1~~ Numbers 15:28-30. Note, *First*, Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dangerous. those that sin against the habitual convictions and actual admonitions of their consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression. *Secondly*, Even good men ought to be jealous of themselves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded, but fear. *Thirdly*, Being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God, when we are pushing forward towards a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation or by his grace giving us victory over it.



**3.** He takes occasion humbly to beg the divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, v. 14. Observe the connexion of this with what goes before. He prays to God to keep him from sin, and then begs he would accept his performances; for, if we favour our sins, we cannot expect God should favour us or our services, ~~168~~ Psalm 66:18. Observe,

**(1.)** What his services were — the *words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart*, his holy affections offered up to God. The pious meditations of the heart must not be smothered, but expressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory and the edification of others; and the words of our mouth in prayer and praise must not be formal, but arising from the meditation of the heart, ~~168~~ Psalm 45:1.

**(2.)** What was his care concerning these services — that they might be acceptable with God; for, if our services be not acceptable to God, what do they avail us? Gracious souls must have all they aim at if they be accepted of God, for that is their bliss.

**(3.)** What encouragement he had to hope for this, because God was his strength and his redeemer. If we seek assistance from God as our strength in our religious duties, we may hope to find acceptance with God in the discharge of our duties; for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the word of God and delivered into it, we should be much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it and the danger we are in by it, and we should fetch in help from heaven against it.