

Psalm 19

Three forms of revelation

Introduction

This is another Psalm dealing with the ways God reveals Himself, makes Himself known to us. He does so through nature, His Word, and our experience. General, special and personal revelation. In simple terms, we come face to face with God when we look at the skies, the Scripture, and into our souls. The skies reveal His glory, Scriptures tell of His greatness, and our souls witness to His grace.

God's revelation in nature (19:1-6)

This was also the subject of Psalm 8. We do not see God so clearly and distinctly in Nature as in His Word and especially as we do in His Son Jesus Christ. Yet nature reveals His eternal power and deity. So men are without excuse when they fail to glorify and thank Him (Romans 1:20).

After his failed attempt to conquer Egypt, Napoleon was on board a ship in the Mediterranean. He heard one of his officers avow atheism. Napoleon pointed to the stars and said, "Who made all these?" There was no answer.

Yes, the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day and night keep telling us about God. With the recurrence of things associated with them over 365 days, as four seasons come round, they all point to the creator of power, wisdom and glory. They do not speak a word. Dumb heralds, but they give us a message which the entire world can hear.

The sun in the heavens is as splendid as the bridegroom going to his wedding, or the athlete running in his race. Animal and vegetable life are dependent on the heat of the sun. Possibly the Psalmist wrote these words at the first flush of the Eastern sunrise, or contemplating a glorious sunset. The sun, moon and stars are God's travelling preachers, apostles strengthening the faith of believers, and circuit judges condemning unbelievers and idolaters.

The natural world points to intelligent planning by the presiding creator. The idea that it all happened by chance is laughable. As someone once put it, it is more likely that an explosion in a printing factory could produce a dictionary or the works of Shakespeare, than that this amazing complex world was the result of sheer accident.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955), famous physicist, German Jew, who later moved to the USA, said, "My religion consists of human adoration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in slight details we are able to perceive with frail and feeble minds."

Everywhere in nature God flies His flag to show that the king is at home.

*"Yes, God is good – in earth or sky
From ocean depths and spreading wood,*

*Ten thousand voices ever cry
God made us all and God is good.”*

God’s revelation in His Word (19:7-11)

Beyond nature, and more clearly than in nature, God has made Himself known in His Word. So we go from general to special revelation. Described here using six terms. *Law* (19:7) is God’s revealed will. *Statutes*, or testimonies, refers to the truth which God attests. *Precepts* and *commands* are the way God addresses us with authority and precision. The *fear of the Lord* is our response to the Word. *Ordinances* are God’s decisions about human situations.

God has spoken to men and made His character, will and purposes known. The Psalmist refers only to parts of the Old Testament. We do not know how much was written down then. But we have the greater advantage – we have the complete Old Testament, the preliminary revelation, and the complete New Testament, the completed revelation. So we can appreciate God’s revelation in Scripture far more than the Psalmist could.

Note the terms used to describe the Word. *Perfect* – all-sided, complete, covering every area of life. *Sure* – can build on this foundation without hesitation, it will not fail or let us down, in the midst of a world of uncertainties. *Right* – maps out right course for any who would be guided by it. *Pure* – unadulterated, not defiled, nothing unwholesome.

God’s Word is sure and righteous, utterly dependable, trustworthy, and will not lead us astray. In God’s Word we will not find the compromises, insincerities, half-truths or equivocations of men. Now, if the Psalmist could say this about only part of the Old Testament which he had, how much more can we say that about the whole Bible. Summed up in some doctrinal bases of faith: “The entire trustworthiness of Scripture and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.”

Then notice the effect the Word has on people’s lives. It revives the souls, makes the simple wise, gives joy to the heart, illuminates the eyes, and helps us endure forever. It is more precious than gold, sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. It warns us, and leads us to be rewarded when we keep to His words. Have we got this enthusiasm for His Word? Can we testify to its power? This should be the testimony of every Christian, family and church who build life on Scriptures, and rest on its promises.

The rewards are enormous. The means of communion with God, secret of effective service, stable character, quiet mind, holiness of life, glory to God. John Wesley said, “I want to know one thing – the way to heaven. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. He has written it down in a book. O give me that book. At any price, give me the book of God. What I learn from the Bible, I teach.”

W.E.Gladstone spoke of the “impregnable rock of Holy Scripture.” At the Coronation service of an English sovereign, the Bible is described as “The most valuable thing this world affords.” Yet the modern generation – despite all the emphasis on education – is quite ignorant of it.

Revelation of God in the experience of the soul (19:12-14)

God in nature, God in the Word, and now in our personal experience – which is peculiar to us. We may be redeemed children of God, but we are beset by sin. Two kinds – hidden faults, things of which we are unaware, and then the opposite, wilful deliberate sin.

Forgive my hidden faults (Psalm 19:12). Sins are not just the things we know are wrong. We do and think many things which are wrong but we do not always realize are wrong, at least at the moment. Often others can see things which are wrong and we do not see them. Certainly God, from His standpoint of perfect holiness, sees many imperfections in us.

We constantly deceive ourselves and get a shock when we have to face the truth. See photos of selves from certain angles – “I never knew I looked like that from that angle”. Or hear ourselves on tape – “I didn’t know my voice sounded like that.” Preachers, unless they have wives or teenage daughters who usually tell them the truth, can go on for years committing howlers. A few faithful friends are worth infinitely more than a thousand flatterers. Things that others see and hear, but we are blind to, are hidden faults. We condemn in others what we allow in ourselves. We protest about “compromise” in others, but call it “prudence” when we do the same thing.

Ask God to forgive your hidden faults. Ask God to open eyes and educate conscience. C.f. it took a Christian church to realize slavery was wrong. We are naturally biased in our own favour. Need to ask God to examine us. Need to be transparently honest before God. Grateful to those who put us right. Greek proverb, “Know thyself”. Help us to face truth about selves. The nearer we get to Christ and the more we live by the Scriptures, the more we learn the truth. **By them is your servant warned** (Psalm 19:11).

Especially important because we are brainwashed by TV and secular press. Result – we meekly accept nowadays what ten years ago would have revolted and shocked us. Churches can also be deluded, like the Laodiceans. We need to face up to the Word and its demands, whether we like it or not.

Keep your servant also from wilful sins (Psalm 19:13). This is sin that we are fully conscious of and commit deliberately. Sort of sin whose root is arrogance and deliberate defiance of God. Psalmist asks that such sins do not have mastery over him. Sometimes we learn the lesson and get our fingers burnt, and the matter does not arise again. But sometime sin recurs with devastating results. Secret sin leads to open sin. We could start to secretly drift and backslide years before it is obvious to others.

How does God answer this prayer? He acts by His Spirit on the heart, through the Word. He chastises us and strengthens our will. He gives us different tastes so that we lose interest in particular sin. He distracts us, and takes away the opportunity to commit sin. Causes evil to be crowded out. Our responsibility is to live in lowly dependence on God, conscious of our weakness. At same time, clasp the hand which holds us up. Putting ourselves into His hand to cleanse and restrain, gives us new powers and new resolution.

At the end of the Psalm there is a final prayer which deserves to be prayed daily. The Psalmist ends with positive note. He speaks of God, not as accuser or judge, but as Rock and Redeemer. And we belong to Him and He belongs to us.

Previously “your servant” (19:11, 13), now He is “**my Rock and my Redeemer**”. **May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight** (Psalm 19:14). Prayer which can be extended in its application and not least when we gather in the church.