

God's Unveiled Glory

CAN YOU SEE AND HEAR IT?

Psalm 19

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Main point: God has made Himself known to man through the creation of the world and the revelation of the Scriptures.

Introduction:

Did you know that the only way that we could ever know *anything* about God is if God reveals Himself? God is completely unknowable, and unless He chooses to make Himself known to us, we are in the dark. Come up close and listen. God is invisible—and we cannot see Him (*1 Tim.1:17*). God is spirit without a corporal body—and we cannot touch Him or see Him and know that He is here (*John 4:24*). God is infinite—which means beyond our comprehension—and He has chosen to remain inaudible, so we cannot hear Him talk to us.

If we are to know this invisible, infinite God, He must take the steps to make Himself known to us as finite creatures. The *Greater* must make Himself known to the *lesser*. The *Creator* must take the initiative to disclose Himself to His *creation*. So, the great question that this Psalm answers for us is: **how will this occur?**

How will God disclose Himself to us— who have never seen Him, heard Him, nor touched Him? Psalm 19 is about two kinds of revelation. First, let me define revelation. By revelation, we mean *a disclosure*.

Picture, if you will, a statue with a large cloth draped over it. Brother Kinsale commissioned a sculptor from Trinidad and Tobago to create a statue of one of the Reformers. We have set a date when there will be a public display of the statue. No one has ever seen it except the one who has created it. Then as we gather on a Sunday like this, at the grand moment, the canvas is removed! Suddenly we can see the statue! It is a revelation. Divine revelation is God's gracious *self-disclosure*.

God has removed the canvas so that He might make Himself known to us in two ways: **general revelation** and **special revelation**. Matthew Henry once wrote that general and special revelation are like "...two excellent books which the great God has published for the instruction and edification of the children of men."

General revelation is called *general* because it gives us *general knowledge of God*. It is found in *creation*, *conscience*, and *providence* (history). It is general revelation because it gives us the general knowledge that *God exists*. Romans 1:19-20 tells us that through general revelation, we can deduce certain things about God—namely, that He has unseeable qualities ("*His invisible attributes*"), He has unlimited ability ("*His eternal power*") and He is the uncreated Creator ("*...and His divine nature*"). Paul says these things have been "*clearly seen being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse*" (*Rom.1:19-20*). But we need more. Why? Because no one is ever saved or sanctified by general revelation. This is why we desperately need...

Special revelation. In special revelation, God has made Himself known in two ways: Jesus Christ—the incarnate Word—and the Bible—the written Word (*John.1:1, 14, 18; 14:8-9; 2 Pet.1:16-21*). The reason that special revelation is special is because it goes beyond the elementary truths of general revelation, and it testifies to *how a person may know this great God in a saving way and live in a manner pleasing to Him*.

General revelation is not enough to save you, but it is enough to condemn you. It tells you that *God is*, but it does not tell you *where this God can be found* and *how one can be reconciled to Him*. General revelation lets us know that *God is there*. Special revelation tells us *the way this great God can be found* and how one might enter into a status of acceptance with God through Christ!

That's the front porch. David is the author of Psalm 19. In the first six verses of Psalm 19, David describes the ministry of God through the *skies*, and in verses 7-11, he described the ministry of God through the *Scriptures*. The net result of considering both general and special revelation is heart-searching examination and encouragement to value God's Word above all else!

In this Psalm, both general revelation and special revelation are placed on the stage before us like two dancers that complement one another with seamless rhythm. Using Hebrew poetry (which structures thoughts that rhyme rather than words that rhyme), David (the sweet singer of Israel) masterfully employs this rhetorical device to illuminate *God's unveiled glory*.

Let's briefly look at God's glory in the world and then spend a little more time in God's glory in the Word. The order is important. General revelation says, "God is there," special revelation takes it further and brings us into a right relationship with God.

Exposition:

A. GENERAL REVELATION IN THE WORLD (vv.1-6)

How do we come to know the God we have never seen nor heard? What does David teach us about the glory of God in general revelation? What do we see when we look around and listen? How does God minister to us? And how should it influence or impact our lives every day?

1. His glory in creation is unmistakable. (v.1)

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Now let's start by making sure that we are clear about what *the glory of God* means. What is the glory of God? The Hebrew word for "**glory**" (*kabod*) speaks of a *heaviness*, a *weightiness*, or the *importance of one's reputation or honor*. Sometimes it referred to *the wealth of a person* or *what is valued or distinct about a person*. When we think of Bill Gates, we think about how rich he is. When we think of Michael Jordan, we think about how gifted he was with basketball talent. When we think about Frank Sinatra or Aretha Franklin, we think of the distinctive voices that made them two of the greatest singers of all time. Their money, their ability, and their voices set them apart. It was their glory. But when you think of God, what testifies of His glory and His importance?

R.C. Sproul once said that "Theologians make careful distinctions." So, a distinction must be made between God's *intrinsic* glory and His *ascribed* glory. Intrinsic glory describes what a person is by nature. Glory is the sum total of God's personal perfections. It is the fulness of His holy character. When Scripture speaks about God's holiness, goodness, righteousness, justice, love, faithfulness, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternality, and His immutability, these attributes describe *what God is* in His essential nature.

You remember on Mount Sinai, Moses asked God, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" And God said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you..." (Ex.33:18-19a). Goodness is what God is, and glory is what God is. It is the splendor of His manifested being (Ex.24:16-18). It is the bright outshining of His person (Ps.26:8; 63:2; 85:9). We cannot *add* to nor *take away* from who God is; it is never *increasing* nor *decreasing*. In Exodus 3:14, "I AM WHO I AM." In Psalm 90:2, Moses said, "from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." That's intrinsic glory. David said, the heavens are telling of the infinite greatness and awesome nature of God! Look up! Look around! Creation is hung like a painting to show us how great He is! The outer limits of the universe cannot be measured by man. The dimension and proportion of the solar system are so vast, and it all is meant to tell us something about God. Calvin called creation, "a theatre of glory." Can you not see it? Can you not hear it?

When Scripture speaks of *ascribing glory* to God, it is explaining man's rightful response to God's intrinsic glory. When we witness the glory of God, then we are to respond by *ascribing* glory to God. This is seen in our *praise*, our *adoration*, our *obedience*, and our *worship* (1 Cor.10:31; Col.3:17; 1 Pet.4:11).

David begins this Psalm by saying that the created order is testifying about the intrinsic glory of its Creator who made it. The "**heavens**" refer to the sun, stars, and planets or the solar system. Their "**expanse**" refers to the lower atmosphere, skies, the clouds, and the weather which surround the earth. Together the first heaven and the second heaven are "**telling**" (*caphar*) of Someone who carries great weight! The heavens are the most telling evidence which announces the glory of God, and it does so *effectively* and *authoritatively*. How does creation do this effectively and authoritatively? By "**declaring**" it *emphatically*.

- The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

What does creation testify or bear witness of? It is God's own self-disclosure of His *existence* and His *excellencies*. It declares His genius craftsmanship or the handiwork of His hands (Ps.8:3, 6).

Well someone asks, how often does creation make this declaration about God? And the Psalmist answers...

2. His glory in creation is unceasing. (v.2)

² Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.

The expressions "**Day to day**" and "**night to night**" make it clear that God's witness of Himself *never stops*. 24 hours a day. 7 days a week. It never ceases its testimony. From sunrise to sunset this declaration is being made. God's creation is a *soundless sermon* continually communicated. The expression "**pours forth**" suggests the irrepressible bubbling up of a spring. It is a word for gushing or spewing out. It never fails to reflect the multi-colored grace and singular glory of God. It is persistent in revelation. Can you not see it? Can you not hear it? God means for us to hear what He has to say!

But someone says, "I have not heard God speak in creation, so maybe this is just a figment of Christian or religious imagination." David explains... His glory in creation is *unmistakable, unceasing, and...*

3. His glory in creation is unspoken. (v.3)

³There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.

Although God's creation is *speechless* ("**no speech, nor are there words**") and *soundless* ("**their voice is not heard**"), it speaks louder than words ever could. How can this be the case? Because there is a convincing medium that is greater than words. Paul says in Romans 1:20—"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." What is seen? What is clearly understood?

John Piper helps us with this illustration:

Two things come home to our minds immediately when someone shows us a painting...these two things are *intuitive* and *immediate*. They happen almost simultaneously...first, [we know] this is a painting. It is not alive. It is not a real flower or a real person or a real landscape. It's a portrait...a painting. It is a work of a human hand. Second...we [make] some assessment of the painting; it is beautiful or ugly, lewd or frightening or just blah...there is an immediate communication to our hearts without words.¹

The same is true we as behold creation. We know that this is not the work of human hands, but a divine Creator.

*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 power throughout the universe displayed.*

*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!*²

God's glory in creation is *unmistakable*. God's glory in creation is *unceasing*. God's glory in creation is *unspoken*. Fourth,

4. His glory in creation is universal. (vv.4-6)

⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.

The word "**line**" here can be "sound." Even though creation does not speak audible words that can be heard, its voice reaches all the nations and is equally accessible wherever human speech and language is spoken. There is a universality of His revelation. No person is without God's self-disclosure in revelation. It reaches to the four corners of the earth. There is no nation, no city, no country, no island, no place on this entire globe where this clear revelation is not given. Indiscriminately, creation is a pulpit from which God preaches loud and clear.

¹ John Piper, Article, *Do You See the Joy of God in the Sun?*, August 26, 1990

² Carl Gustave Bober, *How Great Thou Art*

Wherever anyone goes, there God is, speaking and bearing witness of His person. "I'm here. I'm real. I'm great." Can you not see Him? Can you not hear Him?

Now in the middle of verse 4, David grabs three illustrations from God's theater of glory. Read verses 4-6 and see if you can identify the objects he uses to drive home the truth.

- In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
⁵ Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
⁶ Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

He refers to a tent, a bridegroom, and a strong man. Each of these is intended to be an analogy that represents the sun in the universe. David isolates one element in the created order, namely the sun, to masterfully and vividly convey to us the greatness of God's glory.

Analogy #1: David compares *outer space* to a tent and the sun to a light in the tent to explain to us that God is awesome. God is so infinite, so immense, so high and lifted up, so exalted that the universe is like a tiny, little, movable tent in the back yard of your house that you set up with your kids to sleep in. And the sun is like that lantern or battery light you hang up at the top of it. Now let that picture linger in your mind.

What David is seeking to communicate to us is this: The entire created order—light years in distance, immeasurable by man—is like the tiny, little camping tent that you set up compared to GOD! That immense sun which is heating up the entire solar system is just a little candle or battery light when compared to GOD!

What are we meant to learn? God is awesome. God is so far beyond us that it is indescribable.

- **Isaiah 55:8-8**—"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Analogy #2: David compares the sun to a bridegroom.

⁵ Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;

The picture is vivid. A bridegroom in this scene is not coming to the wedding, but he is coming out of his chamber, which means he has already been married and he is on the honeymoon. He has been with his wife in an intimate, biblical, and loving way, and now he comes out of the chamber (honeymoon suite), and his face is lit up with joy, his countenance is radiant with satisfaction and full of happiness.

David is saying the universe is like a little honeymoon suite, and the sun—that immense ball of fire—is like a bridegroom coming out of the suite with light, beaming from his countenance. Happy. Immense. Radiant.

What are we meant to learn? God's glory is immensely happy.

- **Psalm 16:11**—You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Analogy #3: David compares the sun to a strong runner running his course. These three metaphors or analogies vividly display his point, but this last one is amazing.

It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.

⁶ Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The sun in the sky is like a champion runner. This strong athlete begins at sunrise and does not stop until sunset—and he runs this course day after day after day. And he never becomes weary or slows down. He never drops out of the race. And even when there is cloud cover, he (the sun) still is running his race. Look up in your mind's eye and see how it presses on. He begins at sunrise, "***its rising is from one end of the heavens...***" and he is running every day toward the finish line of sunset, "***...and its circuit to the other end of them.***" He seems to go down for a while at nightfall. But then there he is again, running the race—all over again at the beginning of each day. It comes into the stadium of our view and runs its laps all over again, and it (the sun) has been doing so since the beginning of time.

All of this is God speaking to us! Can you not hear Him? Can you not see Him?

What is David seeking to teach us about the glory of God in creation?

- God's glory in creation is unmistakable, unceasing, unspoken, and universal.
- God's glory in creation is indescribable like a tent.
- God's glory in creation is uplifting like a bridegroom.
- God's glory in creation is unresting and unwearied like a champion.

And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

- God's glory in creation is universal in its touch, pouring out its heat on every creature. The light of general revelation pierces everywhere. But is that piercing enough to save and sanctify you? Next week, Lord willing, we will discover why we desperately need special revelation.

Conclusion:

How do we apply this truth about general revelation?

Is there a *promise* to claim? Is there an *error* to avoid? Is there a *sin* to forsake? Is there a *command* to obey? Is there a *supplication* to make? Is there an example to follow? Is there a *doctrine* to embrace? Is there a principle to practice?

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