

God's Special Revelation

Psalm 19:7-14

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Main point: God most fully reveals Himself to man through the written Word and ultimately in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

A new research study arm of LifeWay called *Transformational Discipleship* revealed the following alarming statistics.

- Only **19%** of churchgoers personally (not as a part of a worship service) read the Bible every day.
- **18%** confessed that they *never/rarely read it*.
- **25%** indicated that they read the Bible *a few times a week*.
- **14%** said they only read it *once a week*.
- **22%** responded by saying that they read the Bible *once or a few times a month*.¹

There is something deeply troublesome about how we are more prone to watch television or do a thousand other things more than discipline ourselves to have a morning watch or quiet time by reading the Bible. If we truly believe what this Psalm teaches about the Word of God, our Bible reading ought to increase ten-fold!

Why was Psalm 19 written? The task of a bible student and the expositor is to discover authorial intent. I believe the Psalm itself reveals that the Holy Spirit's intention for placing these words before us through David is two-fold:

- 1) *To deepen our fear of God in light of His glory in creation and*
- 2) *To increase our desire and delight for God in light of His glory in Scripture.*

Recap:

We began last week with some assertions. Namely, since God is **invisible**—meaning *we cannot see Him (1 Tim.1:17)*—and **spirit**—meaning *we cannot touch Him (John 4:24)*—and **infinite**—meaning *we cannot comprehend Him (Rom.11:33)*—then if He is to be known, *He must reveal Himself to us*. He must provide a *self-disclosure* of His being, nature, character, ways, and His will. The Good News is that God has revealed Himself in two ways: Theologians call them **general revelation** (*God's self-disclosure through creation, conscience, and providence/history*), and **special revelation** (*God's self-disclosure in Christ and the written Word of God*).

¹ Russ Rankin, January 1, 2014, LifeWay Post

In the first six verses of Psalm 19, David revealed that God's glory (*that is, His intrinsic glory*) has been revealed to us in creation. And His glory in creation is...

- Unmistakable (v.1)
- Unceasing (v.2)
- Unspoken (v.3)
- Universal (v.4a)

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.

Analogy #2: David compares the sun to a bridegroom. ⁵Which 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. What are we meant to learn? God's glory is immensely happy.

Analogy #3: David compares the sun to a strong runner running his course. 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. 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.

David shifts now from **the glory of God in creation** to **the glory of God revealed in His Word**. As powerful as *natural* or *general* revelation is, it is not *saving*. It reveals something to us about *God's existence* and *His excellencies*, but it does not and cannot bring us into *a personal relationship with God*. Scripture and Scripture alone is God's divine means to reveal the only way to know Him personally.

Special revelation is *special* because it gives us *a special, saving knowledge of God*. In order to know God, you must have the special revelation of God or all you will know is that there is a God out there somewhere, but you will have no true knowledge of how He may be known, pleased, or worshiped. This is why Paul said,

- **Romans 10:17**—So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

This is why Jesus Himself said,

- **John 17:3**—This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Special revelation is God speaking to us so that we might know Him in a saving way by faith. In one of the most compact, tightly worded, concise expressions in the Bible, God has given us the most remarkable statement of special revelation.

There are **six descriptions** of God's Word, **six characteristics** of God's Word, and **six effects** of God's Word. In setting these terse yet powerful statements before us, David tells us three things about God's Word.

- A. God's Word is perfect (so we can trust it) (vv.7-9),
- B. God's Word is precious (so we should value it) (v.10), and
- C. God's Word is powerful (so we must employ it) (vv.11-14).

Exposition:

A. God's Word is perfect. (vv.7-9)

SIX DESCRIPTIONS of God's Word

Here we discover that each name or title for Scripture emphasizes a different nuance of its ability to execute God's purpose.

1. The law of the Lord (v.7a)

The "**law**" (*tora*) refers to the *didactic* portion of Scripture. The root meaning of the word "*law*" is "to teach" and refers to any direction or instruction flowing from the Bible which unfolds to us essential truths concerning God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, sin, salvation, and a number of other topics. It refers not only to the moral, civil, or ceremonial law, but also to the whole teaching or doctrine of Scripture. In other words, what the sun is to creation, the law is to God's people. It brings light, warmth, life, and growth.

Warren Wiersbe rightly said, "the heavens declare God's glory, but the Scriptures tell us what God did so that we might share that glory."

As His people, we are schooled by the law of the Lord. The "*law of the Lord*" does not refer to *the authority of Scripture*—that reference is made later when David speaks of "*the commandment of the Lord*" in verse 8. But here, "*law*" refers to our instructor. The Law of the Lord is teaching us everything we need to know to enter the kingdom and to advance in the kingdom. We need no other books. We have it all here.

- **Isaiah 8:20**—To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.
- **2 Timothy 3:16**—All the Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
 - a. The Word of God is profitable to teach us *what is right* ("teaching").
 - b. The Word of God is profitable to teach us *what is not right* ("reproof").
 - c. The Word of God is profitable to teach us *how to be right* ("correction").
 - d. The Word of God is profitable to teach us *how to stay right* ("training in righteousness").

2. The testimony of the Lord (v.7b)

The “**testimony**” (*edut*) of the Lord means this is God’s own testimony of Himself. The Ark of the Covenant was referred to as the Ark of the Testimony (*Ex.25:10-22*), because it bore witness of what is true. This is not someone’s testimony of God, but God’s own infallible, inerrant, inspired witness of Himself. It is a solemn attestation—a declaration of the will of God—and as such, His testimony bore witness to His holy character and His standard of conduct.

In *believer’s baptism*, the Christian bears testimony of his or her faith in Christ. In *evangelism*, the Christian bears witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. In *the Lord’s Supper*, the elements bear witness of His broken body and shed blood for the remission of our sins. But in *the Bible itself*, God bears witness of Himself! The Bible is God’s personal testimony from God about God. Jesus said, “*It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’ (Matt.4:4)*.” In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul describes the Word of God as “*...inspired by God,*” or God-breathed.

The word “*testimony*” also indicates how outspoken God is about Himself. He is a tell-it-like-it-is God. There are no riddles, enigmas, or mysteries about *who He is* and *what is necessary for salvation and sanctification*. Admittedly, there are portions of Scripture that are hard to understand (*2 Pet.3:16*), but these passages have absolutely nothing to do with salvation or how to walk in a manner that is pleasing to God. God does not stutter or stammer as He speaks through His written Word.

Through His Word, He testifies *directly, frankly, and powerfully* to us. God speaks to man through His Word. This is why Luther believed preaching is the primary way in which God speaks to and transforms His church.

3. The precepts of the Lord (v.8a)

The “**precepts**” (*piqqudim*) of the Lord refers to *the divine guidelines on how to live*. The Word of God gives us principles to practice for life. It is relevant. The Word of God is not *theoretical* or *philosophical* as if it is only related to high-church academicians who read from the original manuscripts. We thank God for scholars, but the Bible is the most *relevant* and *practical* book in the world! No generation, no nation, no culture, no group is outside of its clear, searching, and life-changing precepts. The writer to the Hebrews declares,

- **Hebrews 4:12**—For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The Word of God is a living book—which means it speaks to us! It works in us! It does not matter how many other *books you read*; the Bible is the only *book that reads you*.

4. The commandment of the Lord (v.8b)

This is the authoritative Word that dictates to us how we must live to please God. The “**commandment**” (*miswa*) of the Lord is not *advice, suggestions, nor options*. It has supreme authority to bind our conscience and to speak to us about *how we must be saved* and *how we must live* in order to honor God. His commandments are obligatory. It is what we must do.

5. The fear of the Lord (v.9a)

This is a title for Scripture because it is the Word of God that *instills the fear of God within us*. Why bring your children to church? Why come to Bible study and worship? Why small groups? Why have a daily quiet time? Because *"the fear of the is a fountain of life that one may avoid the snares of death"* (Prov.14:27). The **"fear"** (*yira*) of the Lord simply means that you take God very seriously. It means that there are reverence and awe in your heart at the thought of God. It also means there is a holy trembling at the idea of offending or disobeying Him. The fear of God causes you to sit up straight in your chair or pew and pay attention whenever His Word is being taught or preached! One of the purposes of the law of God was to place the fear of God into human hearts (Prov.28:14; 13:13).

- **Deuteronomy 4:10**—Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children."

Imagine the holy fear that would race through your body if God's divine, authoritative, life-giving, cosmos-creating voice came audibly, busting through the sanctuary this morning! We would be terrified as Moses and the people of Israel were at Mount Sinai (Heb.12:18-29)! Yet, David tells us here that God speaks to us with the same power and awe-inspiring fear in His written Word.

6. The judgments of the Lord (v.9b)

God's written Word is called **"judgments"** (*mishpat*) because here we have *God's divine verdicts on man's behavior*. If we obey God, He promises *reward* (v.11). If we disobey God and choose to go our own way, the Bible *specifically* points out what will be waiting for us—for believers, *chastisement* and *discipline* (Heb.12:4-17); for unbelievers, *condemnation* and *damnation* (Prov.14:12). The judgments of God are contained in the written Word to affirm to us that God *not only backs up what He says by putting it writing*, but He also *means what He says by putting it in a book*. Reward if we follow, retribution if we refuse to follow.

The simple point from the six-fold description of God's special revelation is this: *nothing has the ability to execute God's purposes in our lives like the Word of God*. It is perfect. If we never had a PowerPoint, a library, or the internet, the Word of God all by itself would be sufficient to bring about God's purposes. Not drama, not radio, not illustrations, not television, not conferences, not retreats, fellowships, nor camps—nothing can affect your life like the Word of the living God!

SIX CHARACTERISTICS of God's Word

Now, these characteristics *explain* not only *why we should trust the Word of God*, but also *why we must value or prize, esteem or highly regard* the special revelation of God.

1. **It is perfect** (v.7a)—The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;

The word **"perfect"** (*tamim*) means *whole, complete, without blemish, sufficient, lacking nothing, or comprehensive*. Nothing that we need to know about God, man, sin, Christ or salvation is missing. It is all found in the book. We do not need to read *blogs, commentaries, articles, or any other book* to find out what we need to know about God and ourselves. The book of God has it all! It is the treasure of treasures! There are no gaps in it; nothing needs to be amended, edited, nor supplemented. It is perfect as it is.

So, for those who claim that they need a dream, a vision, or a sign to tell them what God desires is to reject the Scripture's own clear teaching about the sufficiency of special revelation.

2. **It is sure (v.7b)**—The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The word "**sure**" (*aman*) means that it is a *reliable witness—a faithful guide*. It will always give a sure revelation to us. It is not like a broken clock that is right twice a day. The Word of God is right all the time. And this is why Paul charged Timothy and every preacher to "*preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke and exhort with great patience and instruction*" (2 Tim.4:2). Be ready when it is *welcomed and unwelcomed, well-received and not received*. Why? Because it is a sure word every time, all day, and every day. The "**sure**" Word of the Lord means it is trustworthy or to be trusted. It is unwavering and immovable. Jesus said in John 10:35, "*...the Scripture cannot be broken.*"

3. **It is right (v.8a)**—The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The precepts of the Lord are "**right**" (*yasar*)—that is, they show us *the right path* and lead us down the right way. To listen to others whose words are not in harmony with the Scriptures will lead you down a wrong path. This is why false doctrine is so dangerous. This Word is right. It is the standard. Everything that does not line up with this book is wrong. The Word "**right**" means *straight—God's Word lays out the proper path to lead us through the complexities of life*. It directs us in a way that may not please people, but it leads us in the right, holy, biblical way that pleases God (*Is.2:3; Jer.6:16*). Now when we displease God, it does not matter who we please, but when we please God, it does not matter who we displease.

4. **It is pure (v.8b)**—The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The word "**pure**" (*bar*) means there is nothing dark or murky about God's Word, but rather, it is clear, lucid, and revealing in its truth. It enables *blind eyes to see* (*Ps.36:9*). It is a lamp to our feet and light to our path (*Ps.119:105*). The Reformers referred to this as "*the perspicuity of the Scriptures,*" which simply means, *the Bible is understandable and brings clarity to the issues of life*. Its contents are not mystifying. The Bible is not hard to understand; it's just hard to swallow.

5. **It is clean (v.9a)**—the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever

The word "**clean**" (*tahor*) means it has no impurity, filthiness, defilement, nor imperfections. This word affirms its *inerrancy*. Scripture is flawless, unadulterated truth without any errors. And what this produces in those who believe is *ethically* and *morally* clean lives. The Bible contains no contamination of human ideologies or secular philosophies. It is clean—unpolluted by man's ideas.

6. **It is true (v.9b)**—The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether

The word "**true**" means accurate; certain; something that will stand the test of time. God knows us perfectly. God made us sovereignly. God sustains us daily. Why would we not want to hear what He has to say to us every day?

SIX EFFECTS of God's Word

Here is what God's Word produces. This is what the Word of God does. It targets the life, the simple, the heart (control center), the eye (window to the soul), the mind, and the will.

1. Restores the soul (v.7a)—The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;

It is so complete that it can "**restore**" or *revive, convert, transform, and refresh* the entire inner person. The Word of God is like a seed that is planted in the heart, and when God chooses to sovereignly regenerate that seed, it brings life to the soul (1 Pet.1:23-25). God's Word has converting power. It can totally and radically convert a person's life. The picture here is of a man on his way to hell, and the Word of God comes and re-routes the person and leads them toward heaven.

- Augustine—that North African playboy—was living a life of promiscuity and Romans 13:14 was sovereignly used by God to bring life to his soul.
- Luther—that German monk—was pursuing a life of monasticism and even scholasticism, and then Romans 1:16-17 dawned in his soul, and he felt as if the gates of paradise were opened and he was born again.

The testimony could go on. It not only converts, but it also preserves the life and restores the saint when he wanders. David said it plainly, "*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake*" (Ps.23:1, 3).

- What aspect of your life needs reviving?

2. Makes wise the simple (v.7b)—The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The "**simple**" person is the person who is *gullible* because their mind is open where it should be shut. A simpleton is a person who is *naïve* and who has *no discernment*. They will buy anything. The Word of God can take a simple person and make them *wise*. Wise in what way? In *education*? No! But wise in skillful application of divine truth for the glory of God. The Word of God makes one able to see what some of the greatest men of our age are unable to see (Heb.11:1ff).

- What issues in daily living do you face where you need the wisdom of God?

3. Rejoices the heart (v.8a)—The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

God's Word brings joy into the heart. "**Rejoicing**" (*samach*) refers to one internal emotion that expresses itself in some visible or external manner. This is what the Word of God produces regardless of the circumstances the believer finds himself in. Regardless of the dysfunction around you, or the sorrow that you have encountered in life, God's Word is able to make the heart *rejoice*. It is able to *frame your mind* in such a way so as to give you God's perspective (Rom.8:28; Gen.50:20). The more we learn the Scriptures, the happier we will be. Dr. Steven Lawson once said, "Only people who have deep, profound thoughts about the truth know real joy."

4. **Enlightens the eyes** (v.8b)—The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

We live in a dark world, and it is the Word of God that enlightens the path toward heaven and hell. Who are you? Who made you? Why are you here? Where are you going? How can you know for sure? Only the Word of God "**enlightens**" the eyes, that is, it turns the spiritual light on so that we are able to see spiritual realities (*Prov.6:23; Acts 26:18, Ps.119:130*). It answers these questions with authority, clarity, and complete, trustworthy accuracy (*Ps.119:105*).

5. **Endures forever** (v.9a)—The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

"**Enduring forever**" means that *the Word of God is permanent*. You can stake your life on His truth.

- **Matthew 5:18**—Jesus said, "*for truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*"
- **Isaiah 40:8**—The grass withers, the flowers fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

Society is changing. Culture is changing. Morals are changing. Everything is changing. But NOT GOD'S WORD.

God's Word not only *endures forever*, but it also produces enduring results. It does not leave an imprint that lasts for a weekend. It brings true change at the depth of our being. Lasting change that will take us all the way to glory.

6. **Is righteous altogether** (v.9b)—The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

What this means is that God's Word produces comprehensive righteousness. God's Word not only reveals to us what makes a man right, or "**righteous**" (*tsadaq*) with God, but it also gathers up every aspect pertaining to life and godliness as a unit and delivers it to us as a gift of God's divine grace.

RECAP

- God's Word is perfect (vv.7-9). We can trust it.

But why should we value it? How much? Verses 10-14 are really the application points. The Puritans often wrote their sermons with two divisions: doctrine and uses. This is the "uses" portion of the Psalm.

APPLICATION

We should value God's Word because...

B. God's Word is precious. (v.10)

How precious?

1. More valuable than gold (v.10a)

- They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;

If you saw one of those money trucks that transport money from one location to another turned over on the side of the road and gold bars spread all over the sidewalk, and on the other side of the street, there was a Bible, David is saying, "Leave the gold alone and go for the Bible!"

Why? Why is the Word of God more valuable than gold? *Because gold cannot tell you where to find God.* Gold can ruin your life; only God can redeem your life. Gold can be stolen, but God can secure your soul in life and for eternity. What David means here is that God's Word is infinitely more valuable than anything this world has to offer. Can you see it?

It is not only more desirable than gold, but it is also it is,

2. Sweeter than honey (v.10b)

- Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Honey was the sweetest thing that David could think of in his world. But he was not just thinking of sweetness, but what was pleasurable. Now think of your favorite dessert. What is that sweet indulgence that you enjoy from time to time that just makes you...HAPPY!

David is saying in plain language: *God's Word supernaturally counteracts the bitterness of our lives and makes it sweet.* Not *easy*, but more *enjoyable*. When a person is sick, Thomas Watson said, "sickness takes away the taste...but the Word of God is bread to strengthen, and wine to comfort."

These are two arguments for loving God's Word because they bring profit and pleasure.

God's Word is not only **perfect** (*which is why we should trust it*), and **precious** (*which is why we should value it*), it is also...

C. **God's Word is powerful.** (vv.11-14)

Which is *why we must employ it*. Just how powerful is Scripture?

1. It rebukes sin. (v.11)

- Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.

If I am on the wrong path, warning is good. It is the Scriptures which reveal to us that there are negative consequences for choices and decisions that are out of line with God's will (*Prov.14:12*). But there is also a reward to come. God will crown His own works in and through us (*1 Cor.3:11-15; Col.3:23-25*).

2. It reveals sin. (v.12)

- Who can discern *his* errors? Acquit me of hidden *faults*.

This is a rhetorical question which anticipates a negative answer. No one can see all of their own mistakes nor the sin that lurks within their heart. "Errors" here speak of voluntary or involuntary

deviations from the truth. But in the Bible, God has given us the perfect mirror. No man can discern all his errors, and no man can cleanse himself of his hidden faults.

His secret sins, secret imaginations, secret pride, secret hypocrisies, secret filthiness, secret unbelief—these are the things that we cannot see. God's Word not only exposes them, but points us to the One in whom we may find the forgiveness of sins.

3. It restrains sin. (*vv.13-14*)

- Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*;

What are those willful sins that you have confidence you have what it takes to conquer?

The truth of the matter is, "*whatever is not from faith is sin*" (*Rom.14:23*). There is nothing that we can do without Christ (*John 15:5*).

Presumptuous sins are peculiarly dangerous. Spurgeon said,

All sins are great sins, but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion...but there are some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion, and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High...the presumptuous sins of our text are just the chief and worse of all sins: they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities.

David is examining himself and praying...

- Let them not rule over me;
Then I will be blameless,
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.
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.

Our prayer must conclude as David's does. He prays for strength in view of God being our Rock and our Redeemer. Our *Kinsman Redeemer* has come, and it is only in Him that grace is found to be acceptable to God and to live a life that honors His name.

Conclusion:

- Can you hear the heavens? (*vv.1-6*)
- Can you taste the Word? (*vv.7-11*)
- Can you see your sin? (*vv.12-14*)
- Have you come to the Redeemer?

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