

The Beauty of God's Word

Psalms 19

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Introduction: Two Questions That Change Everything

If you open your Bible in half, you will probably land in the book of Psalms. It is the longest book in the Bible, with 150 chapters, and these psalms were collected over a period of a thousand years. They represent the prayers, the laments, the praises, the songs, and the theology of God's people — a people to whom we, in Christ, also belong. Each psalm is unique, differing in historical context, structure, style, and theme. And some psalms have in them what I would call a *gotcha* moment.

By a gotcha moment, I mean the psalm starts the reader off in one direction of thinking, and then all of a sudden something is said that turns everything around, and the psalm opens up to a whole new way of seeing. The most famous gotcha moment in movie history is probably when Darth Vader looks at Luke Skywalker and says, *I am your father*. That one line changed the entire arc of the Star Wars narrative. Well, there are psalms that work something like that — a single thought, a single verse, changes everything. We will find this in Psalm 19.

But before we get there, I want to put two questions before you, because these are among the most important questions any person can answer in their lifetime. *How do you know that there is a God?* And if there is a God, *how do you know him?* Not merely how do you know him personally, but how do you know what kind of God he is — what he is like, what he wants, what he is doing?

We live in what has been called the secular age, and part of what that means is that there is intense pressure upon people — upon you — to believe that there is no God. The belief that there is no God is called atheism. Or, if there is a god, he is distant or absent, and one cannot know him or anything about him — that belief is called agnosticism. A key way the secular age applies this pressure is through what might be called a *demystification* of life: the removal of any spiritual explanation for events, for things, and for creation itself. The message of the secular age is that all of life is simply an accident, with no meaning, no boundaries, and no moral truth beyond what we choose to give it. The famed atheist Richard Dawkins describes the universe as possessing “no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.”

And yet — and yet — despite the weight of that pressure, churches continue to grow and thrive. Genuine people of faith continue to multiply. Fresh movements of God’s Spirit continue to appear. The death of Christianity promised by the New Atheists of the 1990s has not happened. One of the reasons for this — just one — is that secularism cannot account for a certain experience that every single human being has, even those who claim there is no God.

That universal experience is captured by the word *wonder*. By wonder, I mean the experience a person has when he or she encounters something so beautiful, so vast, so mysterious, or so extraordinary that it arrests the attention, awakens a sense of awe, and makes a person say, *Wow*. Wonder is the language of the universe, declaring that there is a transcendent meaning, purpose, and design beyond us. And even the most committed atheist has stood somewhere — under a night sky, at the edge of an ocean, in a hospital room holding a newborn — and felt something that their worldview cannot fully explain.

Psalm 19 begins with the psalmist, David, looking at creation and saying exactly that. *Wow*.

Part One: The Witness of Creation

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

When was the last time you were captured by wonder? When was the last time you said *Wow*? Maybe it was driving home and catching sight of the full moon rising on the horizon. Or pausing during a morning walk to hear the birds sing. Or being present at the birth of a child. Or that first snowfall of winter. There is a beauty in this world that provokes the soul to wonder.

I love the image David uses here: the sun rising in the morning like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. Even though we are separated from David by some three thousand years, we understand the wonder of that image. At my oldest son Jacob’s wedding, when the doors opened and his bride stepped into the sanctuary, Jacob broke down in tears. He could hardly stand. He was overwhelmed by the beauty, the goodness, and the glory of that moment. And

David says creation is like that. If we will only pause long enough to look and listen, every sunrise carries something of that same wonder.

Notice also that this witness is not reserved for a few enlightened souls or those educated enough to appreciate it. The heavens speak to everyone. Day after day, night after night, creation pours forth its testimony in a voice that fills the whole earth. It is everywhere, and it is for everyone.

So how do we know that there is a God? We know not merely because *something* exists, but because that which exists is beautiful, glorious, and full of wonder. If you ever find yourself pressed upon by this secular age to doubt God — his existence, his goodness, his glory — I encourage you to put down the phone, turn off the news, stop scrolling, and step outside. Gaze up into the stars. Go for a walk early in the morning when the grass is still wet and the sun shines through the mist. Take time to watch a sunset. Allow the wonder and beauty of this world to speak to your soul, proclaiming the glory of God.

Part Two: The Gotcha — The Even Greater Beauty of God's Word

Now we come to the gotcha moment of Psalm 19.

As beautiful and majestic as creation is in proclaiming the glory of God, there is something even greater. If you think sunrises and sunsets, the stars in the night sky, and the West Virginia hills in October are beautiful, let me show you something even more beautiful. If you think the first winter snow is peaceful, let me show you something that is even more so. If you think sunlight is pure and radiant, let me show you something grander. It is this: *God's Word*.

Creation can tell us that there is a God. But it is by God's Word that we know him — who he is, what he is like, what he has done, and what he is doing. Listen to what David says about this Word:

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Notice the attributes David heaps upon the Word of God. It is *perfect* — whole and complete, not in need of improvement or revision for a new age. It is *trustworthy* — like bedrock, it never shifts and never leads us astray; you can put the full weight of your life upon it and find that it

holds. It is *right* — think of a key that fits its lock perfectly, or a puzzle piece sliding into place; God's precepts aren't right in some cold, technical sense, but right the way home feels after a long journey. It is *radiant* — picture walking into a dark room and someone flips on the light; suddenly you can see the furniture you almost tripped over. That is what God's Word does to the soul: it reveals what was hidden, brings clarity where there was confusion, and allows us to see both God and ourselves more clearly. It is *pure* — unpolluted by deceit, selfishness, or corruption. Everything else eventually fades or loses its beauty, but God's Word never diminishes. And it is *true and righteous altogether* — its judgments are never distorted by ignorance, prejudice, or selfish interest.

And it is *valuable and sweet*. How valuable is gold? Extraordinarily valuable — but the Bible is more so. How sweet is honey? Very sweet — but the Bible is sweeter still.

Look at what God's Word actually does. It revives the soul. It makes the simple wise. It gives joy to the heart. It brings light to the eyes. It warns us of danger and leads us into great reward. What else can you point to that does all of that? Netflix can entertain you. Instagram can distract you. The news can inform you. A good book can challenge you. But what can revive your soul, make you wise, fill your heart with joy, open your eyes, warn you from danger, and lead you into life? There is nothing else like the Word of God.

Part Three: The Light That Reveals What We Cannot See

But if all of that is not enough, we are now told that God's Word does something we cannot do for ourselves.

| *Who can discern his errors?*

The answer is: no one can, not completely. We are remarkably skilled at seeing the faults of others and remarkably blind to our own. There are sins we excuse, attitudes we defend, and faults buried so deeply within us that we simply cannot see them by ourselves. But God's Word does the impossible — it sees what we cannot see. It is radiant; it turns on the light. And it reveals not only the beauty of God, but also the truth about us.

If we are honest, that is not always welcome news. We do not naturally want the light turned on. But David recognizes the exposure of sin as something beautiful — an act of grace. It is better to have God lovingly show us what is wrong than to remain imprisoned by something we cannot see. And so David prays:

Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

God's Word does not expose sin in order to condemn, but to warn, to protect, and to lead us into freedom and holiness. The conviction that Scripture brings is not meant to drive you away from God, but to draw you toward him. When the Word puts its finger on something in your life, it is because he loves you too much to leave you bound by what is hurting you. The light shines into the darkness so that you can be forgiven, healed, strengthened, and free.

Part Four: Make Something Beautiful in Me

And now we come to the end of David's prayer:

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Pause here and take in what has happened in this psalm. David began by looking at the beauty and glory of creation. Then he turned to the even greater beauty of God's Word — perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, and true. And now, having contemplated both, David turns the prayer upon himself: *Lord, make something beautiful in me*. Let the hidden thoughts of my heart, and the words that come from my mouth, become pleasing in your sight. David is not merely asking God to forgive him. He is asking God, through his Word, to transform him — to make his life beautiful before the Lord.

How about you? Do you share this desire? Not simply, *Lord, forgive me*, but *Lord, change me*. Make my thoughts, my words, my desires, my life pleasing to you. Is there something in you today that needs the light of God's Word — not so you can be shamed, but so you can be made whole, free, and beautiful before the Lord?

If so, the psalm ends by pointing us to exactly where to go: *O LORD, my rock and my redeemer*. The word *redeemer* describes the action of God to deliver us out of the things that hold us in bondage — things like sin and death. And that word brings us to the psalm's final gotcha.

Conclusion: The Word Made Flesh

The heavens declare the glory of God. The Scriptures reveal the heart of God. But then, in the fullness of time, God's glory and God's Word came to us in a person — our redeemer.

The Gospel of John opens with these words: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* And then, a few verses later: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."* Everything this psalm says about the written Word of God is true of, and fulfilled in, the living Word of God — Jesus Christ.

Jesus is perfect, trustworthy, righteous, pure, and everlasting.

Jesus is the treasure greater than gold and the gift sweeter than honey.

Jesus is our rock and our redeemer.

And by him — the living Word of God made flesh — our souls are revived; the simple are made wise; joy is given to the heart; light comes to our eyes; and what is hidden is revealed, not to destroy us, but to forgive, to heal, and to set free.

This morning I invite you to be captured by the beauty of the Word — not only the written Word, but the living Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ.

May his righteousness become yours. May his perfect life bring you eternal life. May his trustworthiness lead you to trust him. May his radiance shine in your life, transforming hidden sins of the heart into pleasing meditations. And may his love — sweeter than honey, more precious than gold — become the treasure your soul was always searching for.

He is our rock. He is our redeemer.