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Bread of Life Baptist Church
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Psalm 19

The God Who Speaks

Francis Schaeffer was an evangelical theologian, pastor, and apologist in the 1900s. He spoke and wrote much about sharing and defending the Christian faith, and was known for being very persuasive in speaking with non-Christians. He would patiently listen to them explain their beliefs and worldview and then would gently push until it became clear that in their non-Christian worldview, the world is, ultimately, *meaningless*. He wanted to show that either the universe is a cold, meaningless place, *or* that the universe is a wondrous place, that our lives are full of significance and meaning, precisely because the God of the Bible exists, created all things, and has *revealed Himself to us*. As Schaeffer famously put it : “God is there . . . He is not silent; that changes the whole world.”¹

I think Francis Schaeffer is absolutely right; that simple, yet profound truth - that God is there and is not silent - *changes everything*; that fundamental belief, that God exists and has *spoken and revealed Himself*, this changes the way we view *everything, all of life, and the universe itself*. The fact that God exists is, on its own, wondrously glorious, and charges the world with meaning! But if we didn't know that, and if we couldn't communicate with this GOD, then we would be *completely ignorant and unaware* of the meaning of life and the universe; we would just be stumbling about the world completely blind and unaware of the GOD who made it. But the wonderful reality is that God not only exists, but He has *spoken* - He has revealed Himself to us, that we might know Him! And this changes everything! In fact, when we come to understand and believe this reality, it *transforms our entire lives!* THAT's why we are here today - Christians, GOD's covenant people, who personally know God as Father!

This glorious truth of God's revelation and self-disclosure to us is perfectly captured in this beautiful Psalm that we just read - **Psalm 19**. C. S. Lewis, in reflecting on the beautiful language and poetry of this Psalm, wrote, “I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.”² The language of the Psalm is, without question, poetically beautiful and exultant; it celebrates the beautiful truth of GOD's revelation. And it does

¹ Francis Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* in Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy (Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 1990), 275.

² C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, p.63.

so by focusing on the two forms of GOD's revelation: *general revelation* and *special revelation*. The first 6 verses of this Psalm focus on *general revelation*, in which GOD reveals Himself, His existence, and glorious nature, in Creation itself, the works of His hands. Then, in verses 7-11, David turns to focus on the wondrous glory of GOD's *special revelation*, in which GOD has *directly spoken to us*, namely, in His written Word, the Bible. These are the two books of God's revelation: Creation, and the Bible; and Psalm 19 focuses our attention on these wondrous realities. But then the Psalm closes, in the final verses of 12-14, by making it very clear that God's revelation of Himself, God's Word, demands that we *respond* to Him. That's the message of Psalm 19: God has spoken, and we must listen and respond to Him.

So first, we see that...

I. God Has Spoken Through His Works of Creation (vv.1-6)

David begins this psalm with a celebration of the fact that God has revealed his glory in creation; he begins by saying, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (v. 1) God created all things, this world, the heavens above, and the entire universe - everything that exists! It is all His "handiwork" - the works of His hands. And God's works in creation reveal things about God to us - they reveal objective truths to us about God's existence, power, glory, and majesty. That's what this verse is saying. We saw this in Psalm 8 a couple weeks ago; there, David turned to contemplate mankind; here, he takes a bit of a different turn, emphasizing how creation doesn't just display GOD's glory - it does so to actually *communicate truths about God to us!*

Verse 2 says, "Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." Day after day, the sunlit sky "pours out speech" - that is, it's *communicating something* to us. Night after night, the starry night sky "reveals knowledge." All of Creation is meant to proclaim to us (even *preach* to us) the grandeur of GOD - His existence, His power, His majesty, His eternity, His glory! In other words, God *communicates to us*, even *speaks to us*, through the works of Creation.

We see this in verses 3-4: "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 earth." What David is saying is: no, of course the heavens and skies above, the Sun, moon, and stars, do not audibly speak actual spoken words to us; and yet, they speak to us and communicate to us all the same; everyone in all the earth beholds the works of GOD's hands, everyone looks up and see the

heavens above, and everyone *hears the message they shout and proclaim*. We look up and behold GOD's glory being displayed! That's the message the heavens declare through the earth, for all to hear!

God created the world through *speaking*. IN the very beginning, when there wasd nothing, God said "Let there be light." He simply spoke it into being, and there was the Sun, the moon, the stars, and all the universe! He simply *spoke*, and GOD's powerful Word brings forth all that is into being. That's what we see in the very first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1. But let's think for a second: why do you think the Bible paints the picture that way? Why describe God's creative act as Him *speaking*? Well, for one, it certainly displays just how powerful God is, and that everything comes from Him, out of nothing. But it's also because of the purpose of words themselves; the purpose of words, language, and speech is to *communicate*. And that's what God's Creation does; God spoke in Creation, and God still indirectly speaks to us all, communicating and revealing Himself to us all, as Creation reverberates and echoes with His voice. The natural world that God created objectively reveals general truths to us.

Every day, I drive about 15 minutes from my house to come to my office at the church; about halfway through the drive, I always look up to my right to see the mountains suddenly visible between the trees, and it never gets old. On lucky days, when it's timed just right, and I'm driving back home around sunset, I go over the bridge on Military Turnpike, crossing over the Saranac river at the dam, and I look to my left, and bam: there's the bright red sun going down in the sky, painting it beautiful golds and reds, oranges and yellows, leaving streaks of pink and purple and dark blues at the far edges; and below the sun I see the beautiful outline of mountains soaring over the treetops, and the glimmering sliver of the river stretching towards it; and right at the forefront of the scene, the beautiful light of the sunset just *drenches* the mouth of the river with color. It's enough to take the breath away (and almost enough to make me wreck, if I'm not careful!). And *that* is Creation proclaiming - speaking, communicating, *preaching* - to us the glory and majesty of our great God, compelling us to worship and praise Him, as He deserves! It is proclaiming loud and clear that GOD is there, and He is not silent! He exists! He created everything! He is all powerful, majestic, and glorious!

What we see in the day with the sunrise and sunset, and what we see at night with the moon and stars appearing, are different. Each reveals something a bit different, but each reveals and proclaims to us how glorious our God is.

When preaching on Psalm 8, I talked about how gazing at the night sky fills us with awe and wonder, and it makes us feel small, even insignificant, as we realize just how big and grand the universe is. In Psalm 8, that led David to consider the nature of humanity. But here, David turns to focus on the daytime skies, to contemplate the glory of God revealed by His creation of the Sun. Verses 4-6 say, “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.” David is using the Sun as another specific example of how the created world reveals things about God to us. The Sun demonstrates (in part) a glimpse of GOD’s *glory, power, and wisdom*. It soars through the heavens as its home, radiant as a newly married man radiating with joy on his wedding day; or a strong man radiating with power and joy as he runs and wins a race (v.5). The sun soars across the sky so that “nothing is hidden from its heat” - and so it is that the Sun itself, along with the heavens, naturally display God’s glory, power, and wisdom, so that it is not hidden to anyone, in all the earth. The Sun sees all, and nothing is hidden from it; so it is with God. And yet, at the same time, we all see the Sun, all of us are aware of its presence, and we all know it’s heat - it is hidden from no one. And so God’s existence is hidden from no one either. That’s what verse 6 is telling us.

We see this same point made in Romans 1. There, Paul tells us more about the message that Creation communicates, telling us some specific things about God that Creation reveals to everyone in all the world. Paul writes, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:19-20). Everyone in all the world, no matter whether or not they’ve ever been to church, met a Christian, or read a Bible, is without excuse, because Creation itself is sufficient to reveal to us that God exists - that God is there, and is not silent! Creation proclaims to us, it generally reveals to all, that God exists, that He created all things, that He has all power and majesty, and that He is worthy for all glory, honor, worship, and praise! And yet, because every single person is born a sinner, the general revelation of nature is not enough; natural, sinful mankind sees God’s glory and rejects it. Paul continues on in Rom. 1, saying, “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be

wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.” God reveals Himself, in part, through Creation but because of our sin, we’re all born spiritually blind to it!

Therefore, we need something else - we need special revelation, God’s direct speech and communication to us! And thankfully, God has given us that very revelation we need:

II. God Has Spoken Through His Word - the Bible (vv.7-11)

It’s one thing to say that creation “speaks” and communicates to us. Creation pours forth “speech” and “knowledge” and tells us of God’s glory. But God has spoken in an even clearer, more direct way; He has even more clearly revealed Himself and His message to us with *words* that we can hear and understand; even a written Word that we can see, read, memorize, and proclaim, saying, “This is the very Word of God!” That’s what GOD has done in giving us the Scriptures; the Bible is GOD’s very own Word. God has *spoken directly to us* in inspiring men to write the Bible; this means when we read the Bible, we’re listening to God speak! THAT’s an incredible, wondrous truth! And that’s what David turns to in verses 7-11.

In verses 7-9, David writes 6 lines that are all saying basically the same thing, but in slightly different ways. THE first line he gives us says, “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.” Now, when we see the word “law” here, it’s helpful to understand what exactly is being referred to; when we hear law, we think all of those different rules and regulations the big wigs make in D.C. and Albany, with all the paperwork, bureaucracy, and lawyers that follow. But that’s not what’s envisioned here. The word “law” here is “Torah” - the same word used as the name for the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy); the same word means “instruction” or “statues,” and represents the fact that God personally revealed Himself to His people, through Moses, as “Yahweh,” to be their personal, covenant God, to make them His own covenant people, through giving them the “Law of God” at Mount Sinai. When Moses wrote the “Torah,” the Law of GOD” (Genesis through Deuteronomy), it was the first part of the Bible to be written, and the only part for a while, so that “the Law of the Lord” became a shorthand way of referring to God’s Word, written in the Bible. In the New Testament, we see writers still use this shorthand, or even add, “the Law and the Prophets” to refer to the Old Testament.

In other Words, when David says “Law of the LORD” here, he’s saying what we would call “the Bible.” In each of these 6 phrases, he uses a different but very similar noun to describe the written Word of God: the “testimony,” “precepts,” “commandment,” “fear,” and “rules” “of the LORD.” The Bible is God’s Word, revealing His truth, will, character, commands, and glory to us! Then, after each noun, follows a slightly different adjective, piling up all these wonderful descriptions of how glorious the Bible is: God’s Word is “perfect,” “sure,” “right,” “pure,” “clean,” and “true.” Everytime I come up and publicly read the Bible, I start by calling us to hear “GOD’s Holy, Inspired, and Inerrant Word.” And all that word “inerrant” means is “without error.” Basically, I want us to hear and be reminded, week after week, that when we read and listen to the Bible, we are hearing God speak, and GOD’s Word *contains no error; it is never wrong, and completely true, trustworthy, and authoritative in all it says!* And just in case we ever wonder, “DOes the Bible really say that about itself, and truly claim to be without error?” All we have to do is turn to a passage like this, in Psalm 19, and say, emphatically, “Yes! It does!” In fact, I don’t know any other way to read verses 7-9! God’s Word is *perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true!* It is never wrong.

And this inerrant Word of GOD is necessary and sufficient for us. David underscores this by then including 6 descriptions of what God’s Word does, showing us why it is so great and glorious. The Bible “revives the soul” and “rejoices the heart.” It gives life, joy, and peace to us, edifying our souls in a way that nothing else can! It “makes wise the simple” and “enlightens the eyes,” giving us understanding of God, salvation, and the Christian life that nothing else can! Because of this, GOD’s revelation of Himself in the Bible must be our foundation for understanding all of truth; the Bible is the standard and judge, not us! It “endures forever” and is “righteous altogether;” the holy Word of God endures forever, will never be proven wrong, will never fail, and even after this world passes away, God’s enduring Word will prove true and be completed! God has spoken and His Word is perfect, perfectly good for us, and perfectly necessary, sufficient, and enduring!

And when we truly believe, understand, and experience the goodness of GOD’s word, it gives us incredible joy; it leaves us hungering for it, craving it, depending upon it, and valuing it above all else! As wersed 10-11 says, “More to be desired are they than gold, even much find gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” If the Bible really is *God Himself*

speaking to us, then of course this makes it utterly priceless and invaluable, far more valuable than the riches of this world or all of the physical comforts it has to offer, even the sweetest, richest delicacies and pleasures! As Christians, we believe the Bible is GOD's Word, and that through it comes the gospel, the word of eternal life, that Christ came and lived, died, and was raised in our place, so that if we trust in Him alone, He saves and redeems us! His Word tells us this, and teaches us how to live with our GOD! It revives our soul and fills our hertz with joy! Therefore, God's Word should be our highest-regarded priority and most valued, treasured possession in this world!

And yet, that leads us to hold up a mirror and turn to our own hearts and lives, and ask some probing, convicting questions, doesn't it? Do you resonate with David's words here; do you really desire to know and understand God's Word, the Bible, more than you desire "gold" and to be rich? Is the Bible a greater priority to you than your career, bank account, your house, your car, all of your earthly treasures? Do you find the Bible to be more delightful, sweeter, and joyful than honey, cheesecake, or a delicious apple pie from Rulf's orchard? I think we all know that the right, Christian response is to say that we value God's Word more - but does the way we prioritize and time and schedule really reflect this? Do we delight in and carve out time for reading the Bible over watching Netflix and entertainment? Over money, careers, worldly comforts, honey, apple pie?

Now, my purpose in asking those questions isn't to make us feel guilty for not reading the Bible as much as we know we should; I don't want to shame anyone for not delighting in the Bible as much as someone else. But I *do* want us to realize that, were our hearts working properly, the right response *would be* that we value and delight in God's Word far more than any amount of money or earthly comfort and pleasure in this life! In fact, I'm sure it's probably true for all of us that none of us read the Bible as much as we would like. But that's just the point: we should all *desire* to read and understand the Bible more, and make it a priority to attempt to do so! So my hope is that this *does* encourage all of us to desire and value the Bible more; to *delight in it* more! TO carve out time for reading, understanding, knowing, studying, applying, and obeying the Word of God every day, to every area of our lives!

But let me make a note of practical application here: perhaps you're saying, "Yes, I know I should read, prioritize, and delight in the Bible more, but I still struggle with motivation to do it; so what am I to do?" First, you start by prayin: "God, I confess that I don't desire or value

your Word as much as I should; but I *want* to want to read it more; please change my desires to give me greater delight and joy in your Word!” I remember very clearly when I was in high school, and I was convicted of the fact that I wasn’t reading the Bible; so I began trying to, but I just didn’t want to; I ended up falling asleep every night while I started to read. But finally, I started praying that pray: “God, I don’t want to read the Bible; but I *want* to *want* to read the Bible! Please help me want it more!” And thankfully, over time, God answered that prayer! And he did so *as I kept reading and understanding the Bible more*.

We ask God for help; but we don’t just sitting around waiting for our hearts to magically change; we start *reading and studying the Bible*, making time for it because we know that we need it! And over time, as we consume more of GOD’s Word, we’ll start to experience it’s glorious goodness for ourselves - and we will start to delight in it more and more! Picture a boy who’s lived on meat, bread, and cheese his whole life eating green vegetables for the first time; at first, it will taste bitter and unpleasant; but if he sticks to it, his body will start to feel revived and energized, having nutrients it desperately needs; his body will crave it, and this will cause his taste buds to change; and eventually, if he sticks to the habit long enough, he will start to enjoy, even *desire*, those green vegetables he once disliked! And so it is when Christians read the Bible. I know it can be hard sometimes; but our souls *need and crave it*; and as you continue to read and meditate on it more, it *will* revive and rejoice your soul! So let us make a habit of regularly studying the Bible. Let us prioritize doing this together, at church on Sundays and Wednesday nights, in community; but let each of us carve out time and make a plan to read and study the Bible for ourselves, day to day, week after week, so that we will know it more.

Because....

III. We Must Respond to God’s Word (vv.12-14)

What we see in verses 12-14 is David’s response to this meditation on God’s revealing of himself to us - and his response is *prayer*. What it provokes in him is a desire for holiness. He ends up asking the Lord to reveal his sin, keep him from sin, and make his words and heart acceptable to God. He first asks, “Who can discern his errors?” (v.12a). David knows that we are so sinful that we’re even *blind* to all the sin in our hearts; we sin more than we’re even aware of. As we read the Bible, it shows us how good, righteous, and blameless God is, how holy and just His judgments are, and how utterly sinful, wicked, and rebellious we are. The right response to God’s revelation leaves us *convicted of our sin*, even of the reality that we are far more sinful

than we're aware! It leads us to want to discover our sins, confess and repent of them, and then turn to obey!

David continues praying, "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" (vv. 12-13). He asks God to reveal his hidden and unknown sins. He also asks God to keep him from *intentionally sinning*, so that he will live a "blameless" life, one increasingly characterized by righteousness. This should be our desire as Christians; this should be our response to God's Word; to want to repent of our sin, turn from it, and obey God!

But we know that we can't do this on our own - we need God's grace for this. And I think this is exactly why David ends his prayer the way he does in v.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." God's Word reveals our sinfulness and need to be reconciled to God, spared His just wrath and judgment, and live a life pleasing and acceptable to Him! But the standard is God's own perfect righteousness itself - and we can't live up to that standard. But thankfully, God's Word reveals God's glorious plan of *redemption!* God has spoken in His Word so that we would know Him as our own *rock and redeemer* - our Lord and Savior!

In fact, this is what the whole storyline of the Bible does: it reveals God's unfolding plan of redemption, culminating in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God has spoken, and the Word of God is Jesus Christ, who took on flesh, becoming the invisible image of the invisible God, perfectly communicating to us God's glory and grace through His plan of redemption. Christ came to redeem helpless sinners like us by living the perfect life we never could, dying on the cross in our place to satisfy God's wrath against our sin, and was raised so that we will be raised to eternal life with Him! That's the glorious grace of God revealed in the Bible - the glorious redemption of Christ Jesus, our rock and our redeemer! That's the glorious message of the Bible! God is there, He has spoken, and He has revealed His *glorious grace and redemption for sinners like us in the gospel of Christ!*

Brothers and Sisters, let us respond to God's revelation of Himself through faith. Let us worship Him as He deserves and Creation displays! Let us worship Him by treasuring, delighting in, and meditating on His Word, day and night. Let us believe the gospel of Christ, that we are

truly forgiven; and let us respond to it by repenting of our sins, trusting in Christ's grace, and turing to obey God's Word with out whole hearts, minds, and lives.

And if you're not a believer this morning, I call for your to respond to GOd's Word by simply believing this gospel; trust in Christ's life, death, and resurrection as sufficient to save you, and He will forgive you completely of all your sins as your Rock and Redeemer! Then, profess your faith publicly by being baptized and joining the church to begin your life of obeying Him, being accepted by God in Christ. If you have any questions about this gospel, about becoming a Christian, about baptism, or even about church membership, I would love for you to come and speak with me. Let us pray.