

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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**Broadcast Date:** 28 July 2013

**No.** T0791

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## Meditations in the Psalms: Psalm 19:1-14 - God's creation and God's Word

"I can't hear what you are saying because what you are doing is shouting so loud." What a sad indictment of a person's actions! However, this is never a charge that could be laid at the feet of God. Everything that He says is fully in keeping with what He does, and all that He does confirms that which He says. We find this to be the case particularly in Psalm 19, where we have His actions and His words in mind.

Let us begin, then, by reading the Psalm together: *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer"* (Psalm 19:1-14).

This morning we shall look at this Psalm in three ways:

1. A meditation on the glory of God's work in creation (Psalm 19:1-6);
2. A meditation on the wonder of the word of God (Psalm 19:7-11); and
3. The effect that this should have upon us (Psalm 19:12-14).

It is worth just pointing out that Hebrew poetry and English poetry are quite different. In English poetry, emphasis is made by a repetition of sound, hence rhyme. However, in Hebrew poetry the emphasis is made by a repetition of thought, so they would say the same thing but use different words. Hopefully, this will stop us from trying to find a hair's breadth of difference between two statements that are really just saying the same thing.

### 1. A meditation on the glory of God's work in creation (Psalm 19:1-6)

Particularly in modern western society we have almost completely disassociated ourselves from the natural world, and have therefore lost the ability to understand the language of creation. More rural communities, however, would still retain the ability to hear creation's voice. And undoubtedly it does have a voice. Unfortunately, one of the catastrophic consequences of the fall and mankind's disobedience (see Genesis 3:1-24) is that we have lost our sense of perspective, particularly so far as God is concerned. We have over inflated our own sense of importance and ability and downsized God until, if we acknowledge Him at all, we think of Him as being not much bigger than ourselves.

The first thing that creation teaches us is that God is big, I mean really, really big. No, I mean so much bigger than we have ever thought; we would fall over backwards if we tried to look up to Him. We know this because creation is smaller than He is, and yet we still do not know how big it is! Man speaks about the known universe, implicitly accepting that there is so much more that we have just not discovered yet. It is as if God is a patient school teacher encouraging us to build a telescope, and then each time we do, He says "Well yes, that's all very well, but build a bigger one, because you will never see everything with that one!"

In the Genesis account of creation (Genesis 1:1-2:3), almost as a throwaway line, we find out that "[God] made the stars 'also'" (Genesis 1:16). As we will see later, Isaiah tells us that God knows each one by name (see Psalm 147:4), which is more than we do, as we refer to many of them by a series of letters or numbers! And yet there are so many

of them that we have discovered, and we don't even know yet what percentage that is, that if we were to count them all, one per second, it would take us 2,500 years!

Light travels at 186,000 miles per second and there are  $60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365$  seconds per year. Work it out later, but you will get a very big number for the distance light can travel in a year. And yet it would take 100,000 light years to travel from one side of our galaxy to the other, it is so huge.

Louie Giglio has a useful means of comparing the size of our planet earth to some of the other stars that God has made. Imagine the earth as the size of a golf ball, then the sun, our nearest star, would be about 15 feet across, for you could fit about 960,000 earths inside the sun. However, the sun is pretty insignificant in terms of star size. So, if the earth is the size of a golf ball, then the star Betelgeuse is the size of six empire state buildings stacked on top of each other, or, to put it another way, it's diameter is approximately twice the size of the earth's orbit around the sun. But then we go deeper into space, to the star known as Mu Cephei. Now if the earth is the size of a golf ball, Mu Cephei is the size of two Golden Gate bridges end to end! But let us make one more stop, at Canus Majoris, which if the earth was the size of a golf ball, would be the height of Mount Everest.

This tiny, tiny planet that we live on was made by God to suit His purposes, not ours. Neil Armstrong, on his famous Apollo 11 mission to the moon was returning to earth. He happened to look at the earth through a window, and when he held up his thumb, it disappeared. "However, it did not make me feel big", he said, "but very, very small. All of human history - the Pharaohs, Romans, Empires of the world, all of human history, had taken place on that tiny ball suspended on nothing that we call planet earth."

Now let us just consider the sun, once more, before we see where we have got to. The surface of the sun is about 10,000°F, which makes me kind of glad, even on a snowy day, that we are no closer. Yet, if we were to take the entire Gross Domestic Product of the richest nation on earth, the USA, for the next seven million years and put that money into the electricity meter, we would only be able to power the Sun for one second! Imagine the ferocity of the heat of that star, and yet the Bible tells us that by the word of His mouth, all things were created (Psalm 33:6-9), and that God measures all things, not by stretching His arms out wide, but in the span of His hand (Isaiah 40:12).

As man, we are tiny, small, nothing compared to the universe that we live in, which is just about the right size for God. And yet that just highlights the wonder of the fact that we are of great significance to God, who "loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). So great a God wants a relationship with me!

But God is not just a huge being living outside of time and space. He is a master craftsman. With just four nucleotides He has created the human genome, whose three billion characters if stretched end to end would come to six feet, and yet exists in each cell, telling a unique story that is our almost unique personality.

It was Augustine who said, "Men go abroad to wonder at the height of mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the long courses of rivers, the vast compass of the ocean, the circular motion of the stars, but they pass by themselves and they don't even notice." The miracle of life that is you and me, the complexity of reactions and engineering that we are unable to replicate, ought to make us understand that God is a God of ultimate power and skill.

So the vastness of creation and its infinite complexity tells us in the clearest sense that God is great. But the stars themselves may also tell a story. It is generally thought that the constellations that are visible to the naked eye were first described around 2700 BC. In his book, *The Astronomy of the Bible: an elementary commentary of the astronomical references of the Bible*, E Walter, outlines how, for example, "Ophiuchus, the serpent holder, the man treading on the scorpion, whose tail turns and stings his heel, is clearly seen around midnight in the spring sky." Or that in the northern sky "the kneeler was trampling upon the great dragon" (Walter, E: *The Astronomy of the Bible: an elementary commentary of the astronomical references of the Bible*, ISBN: 9781177658102). These have clear parallels to Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Other references to the early chapters of Genesis could be made. It is almost as if God put the stars into place, like spots of light on a dark canvas to tell a story. Did the constellations first get their descriptions as godly parents told their children of spiritual truths, and reinforced the message by painting pictures in the sky, pictures we now recognise as constellations?

We will close this section by making reference to Isaiah 40:25-31: "*To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?*" says the Holy One. *Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and my just claim is passed over by my God'? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall*

*utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."*

## 2. A meditation on the wonder of the word of God (Psalm 19:7-11)

What a great God we have, not only in what He has done, but now we turn to what He says. We live in a world today where there is a general lack of trust. Do you believe everything you read in the papers, for example? If a politician recites some statistics to make a point, do you accept them at face value? Just because somebody says something, does it make it true? Well, I guess I would be hard pressed to find anyone who would answer "yes" to any of these questions, let alone all of them. However, when we come to the Word of God, we come to something that is absolutely believable.

Look at the adjectives that David uses to describe God's word: "*perfect*", "*sure*", "*right*", "*pure*", "*enduring*", "*true*", "*righteous*" (Psalm 19:7-9). How refreshing compared to the half truths and lies, the temporary and changing opinions that pass for words today. It is no wonder at all then that the Devil is so busy today trying to pour scorn on the Bible, casting it as some random collection of thoughts from antiquity, with no relevance to today. The very opposite is true. Let us be quite unambiguous. The Bible is the wholly inspired word of God (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17), unchanging and vital at all times and in all situations. Its teachings are without fault, and can form the only basis for an individual relationship with God, and for a society to prosper. It is not without reason that David has established the credentials of the God, whose word he now praises.

Logically, it can be no difficulty at all, for the One who holds the stars of the Pleiades in their relative positions, even though they are hundreds of light years apart from one another, to create a big fish to swallow Jonah! (see Jonah 1:17). You see, once we right size God, our lives make a whole lot more sense. There can be no doubt whatsoever, that so big a God has ensured that the message He wants to communicate to mankind has been preserved for us, in the way that He wants, containing no mistakes of substance.

You may have heard the saying, "there are only two things in life that are certain: death and taxes!" Well, if you are a large multinational company the latter may not be true, and if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, nor might the former. However, the Bible is truly a certain bedrock for our lives. I am not for one minute saying that there are not parts that are difficult to understand - Peter says as much! (see 2 Peter 3:15-16). Nor are there not parts that seem strange, or apparently contradict other parts. However, our lack of understanding in no way diminishes the inherent reliability of all we find in the Bible - from Genesis to Revelation. There can be no surer way to living a life that is useful, God honouring and personally satisfying, than in simple obedience to the Bible. There can be no greater investment in a day than in setting aside time to read for ourselves what the Bible has to say - to allow God to communicate with us directly. Too often we may settle for what others may say on God's behalf. We need to get back to the Bible and allow God to speak for Himself!

Perhaps at the start of this year you made a resolution, or two. Maybe you read a self help book or diet plan. Has it worked? Are you still going strong? Well, sometimes we can change ourselves a little, but when we come to the Bible, and start to put into practice what we learn from that, particularly in the New Testament letters, we find a sure way to change ourselves for the better. Look at the results that David lists that arise from keeping God's word: "*converting the soul*", "*making wise*", "*rejoicing the heart*", "*enlightening the eyes*" (Psalm 19:7-9).

You may be able to see a progression in these things.

- a. God saves us, giving us a new life that is able to respond to Him.
- b. Then He shows us what He would have us to do.
- c. When we simply obey Him, then we find pleasure in doing so, and
- d. As we increasingly live out what we learn in the Bible, then we begin to understand more and more the ways of God and why He says what He does.

Christianity is a beautiful, growing, living relationship to a great God who passionately loves us, insignificant though we are, and who delights to reveal Himself to us so that we might praise Him. No wonder, at all, that David concludes the section by stating that God's word is more precious than gold, and sweeter than honey.

## 3. The effect that this should have upon us (Psalm 19:12-14)

However, finally this morning, I want to look at the effects that all this should have upon us. I remember many Christmases ago, our son came down the stairs the morning after we had put the tree up. The lights were on, and it was his first Christmas, when he was old enough to be aware of what was going on. Well, he just went and lay under the tree, and looking up at the lights and wiggling his legs went "Wow!" That has coloured my appreciation of Christmas ever since.

Firstly then, perhaps, as we look up at the stars at night, or look along the valley by Llyn Ogwen, or look down from just below the summit of Ben Nevis, we ought just to say, "Wow". Perhaps as we get up in the morning, rather than groaning at the aches and pains, or the failing memory, we should marvel at the incredible complexity that allows us sight or hearing, or movement. Thousands upon thousands of chemical reactions going on with no thought on our part that allow us to enjoy the creation of a great God.

Secondly, as we understand how vast, how eternal, how awesome God is, then we must come to realise that He must be obeyed. It is utterly ridiculous to believe that we can act independently of such a God without consequence. God is so God that whatever He does is right, just because He does it. What we think about it is utterly inconsequential! So we need to get our relationship right with Him. This can only be done by accepting His forgiveness for our sins, based upon the completed work of Jesus on the cross. If such a great God has said, and He has, that this is what we must do, then it is unreasonable for us to believe that there is some other way that we can be saved (see Acts 4:12).

Thirdly, our appreciation of the greatness of God ought to affect the way that we behave. No wonder David could desire to be kept from secret faults or presumptuous sins. If my children do something wrong they know they will have to deal with me. That may or may not overly worry them. However, to offend such a great God, as all self-will does, is no light matter. We were designed in the image of God, to live in such a way that reflects His character. Not to do so is grossly offensive to God.

Lastly, do we ever doubt God? Are we ever left wondering if God is unable to work His will out in our particular circumstances. "My church is so small that it will never grow." "My health is so bad that I do not have the strength to live any longer." "My family relationships are so broken that all I can do is walk away." Probably we have all thought along such lines at some time or another. And whilst it may be natural, it is also utterly ridiculous to think that the God who made and sustains all the creatorial world, from the human genome to Canus Majoris, is unable to work in my piffling circumstances. If nothing else, let us leave Psalm 19 with a renewed sense of confidence in our God, for He will perform all that He has intended, for He truly is a great God!

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