

# PSALMS

## Chapter 19

**The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup>Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. <sup>3</sup>There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup>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,<sup>5</sup> which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup>the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup>the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. <sup>10</sup>More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. <sup>11</sup>Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. <sup>12</sup>Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.**

**Ps 19†** A hymn extolling “the glory of God” (v. 1) as revealed to all by the starry heavens (see vv. 1–6) and “the law of the LORD” (v. 7), which has been given to Israel (see vv. 7–13). Placed next to Ps 18, it completes the cycle of praise—for the Lord’s saving acts, for his glory reflected in creation and for his law, in the sense of his whole revelation. (CSB)

Luther: “A prophecy. It speaks of how the Gospel would spread to all the world, as far as the heavens extend. Day and night it would be spread, not only in Hebrew but in all languages” (*PIML*, p 27). (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–6, the heavens declare God’s glory; vv 7–11, the Lord’s Word is rewarding; vv 12–13, deliverance from error; v 14, prayer of meditation. (TLSB)

Most of the psalms surrounding Psalm 19 are prayers for deliverance or thanksgiving for deliverance. Psalm 19 is an interlude of praise which momentarily sets aside David’s concern with his enemies and directs attention to the glory of God. The Lord deserves our praise, not only for delivering us from enemies, but simply because of the majesty and glory which are his by his very nature. This glory is revealed by creation, by God’s word and by his power in the believer’s life. (PBC)

**19:1–4a** The silent heavens speak, declaring the glory of their Maker to all who are on the earth (see 148:3). The heavenly lights are not divine (see Dt 4:19; 17:3), nor do they control or disclose man’s destiny (see Isa 47:13; Jer 10:2; Da 4:7). Their glory testifies to the righteousness and faithfulness of the Lord who created them (see 50:6; 89:5–8; 97:6; see also Ro 1:19–20). (CSB)

The first few verses of the psalm describe God’s wordless revelation in the universe: creation clearly reveals the glory of God. For many the observations of the sun, moon, stars and planets is a scientific study; for others it might serve the purpose of divination, but the believer will be failed with praise and adoration for such a God who created all things. In fact, the poetry of this

psalm is so elegant and the theme so lofty that it has inspired some of the greatest musical praise in the history of the faith. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**19:1** *the heavens declare the glory of God* – Theme of first major portion (vv 1–6): creation bears witness to God and, in its own way, sets forth His praise. (TLSB)

The pagan who worships the stars instead of their creator, the astrologer who seeks wisdom from the stars instead of from their creator, and the atheistic evolutionist who worships the order of the cosmos instead of the creator who established that order are all condemned by the silent testimony of the universe and left without excuse (Romans 1:18-24). (PBC)

In this verse we read that everything that exists in the heavens reveals the work of a creator and that all creation tells us that there is no one as important as he. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**19:2** *each day pours out speech* – It is as though their eloquent testimony bubbled forth at every crack and cranny of the universe. (Leupold)

Each new day effectively bears witness to God’s creative power and providential care. (TLSB)

This is an out-pouring or overflowing of praise, wisdom, and knowledge. What is ever pouring forth constantly is the evidence of the majesty and power of God. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**19:3-4** Difficult poetry. The testimony and praise borne by the heavens are both unmistakable and universal. (TLSB)

**9:3** *whose voice is not heard* – The heavenly witnesses may seem to be silent, but their testimony is heard continuously. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**19:4** Interpreting this heavenly proclamation eschatologically in the light of Christ, Paul applies this verse to the proclamation of the gospel in his own day (see Ro 10:18). He thus associates these two universal proclamations. (CSB)

**19:4b–6** The heavens are the divinely pitched “tent” for the lordly sun—widely worshiped in the ancient Near East (cf. Dt 4:19; 17:3; 2Ki 23:5, 11; Jer 8:2; Eze 8:16), but here, as in 136:7–8; Ge 1:16, a mere creature of God. Of the created realm, the sun is the supreme metaphor of the glory of God (see 84:11; Isa 60:19–20), as it makes its daily triumphant sweep across the whole extent of the heavens and pours out its heat (felt presence) on every creature. (CSB)

Psalmist gets specific about how the heavens declare God’s glory. The sun daily runs its course through the firmament, giving life and heat to the entire world. In contrast to the surrounding pagan religions, which worshiped the sun as a deity, the Israelite faith understood it to be a creation that fulfilled its Creator’s bidding. (TLSB)

**19:5** *like a bridegroom leaving his chamber* – A wedding took place under a special canopy. God, like a father, sets up such a canopy for the sun. The sun emerges each day as joyful as a new husband. (TLSB)

The sky is called the sun's tent or pavilion, because to us it looks like a blue canopy over our heads. The sun is compared to a groom after his wedding night or to a racer crossing the finish line, in order to emphasize the happiness that attends the sun's life-sustaining reappearance. (PBC)

The point being the fresh, lusty strength of the young man, happy in youthful love. (Leupold)

**19:6-7** God already appears glorious in the realm of nature, especially when one observes the heavens. His glory in the Kingdom of Grace is far greater, however. The sermon of the heavens is but a mild prelude to the praise of His glory sung to Him in His Word. In other places of Scripture the blessings of nature are also associated with the spiritual blessings manifested in the word of God. (Stoeckhardt)

**19:7-9** Stately, rhythmic celebration of the life-nurturing effects of the Lord's revealed law (see Ps 119). (CSB)

Synonymous terms and parallel thoughts. The psalmist repeatedly echoes his praise of God's perfect Word. (TLSB)

The psalmist lists six names of God's Word, (law, statutes, precepts, commands, fear and ordinances) six attributes of that word, (perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure and sure) and six blessings that Word (righteous, endure forever, give light and guidance, give joy to the heart, give wisdom, reviving the soul) gives to believers. (PBC)

These attributes describe both God's Law and His Gospel, since His whole Word is holy and perfect. The six blessings from the word listed in these verses may come from both the Law and the Gospel insofar as the believer is concerned. (PBC)

However, these terms apply primarily to the Gospel, through which forgiveness and life are offered and delivered to the believer. This is especially true of the first blessing, "reviving the soul." Only the Gospel can make a soul dead in sin alive again. (PBC)

**19:7 LORD** – We note particularly that the Psalmist speaks here of the Law of "the Lord" (Jehovah). He uses a different designation for God that He did in the preceding verses, where he designated God by the name of "El." El is God as He appears in His strength, as our Creator and Preserver, while "Jehovah" is the covenant God, inasmuch as He reveals His grace in the sphere of redemption. (Stoeckhardt)

*The law of the Lord is perfect*– His Law completely recounts what the Lord has done to redeem His people. God's Word is the opposite of what the wicked utter. Whereas the evil use words to deceive and destroy, God's Holy Word delivers life and salvation. (TLSB)

This means that the Word of God is without error, without fault. This Word of God ever looks to the salvation of men. It revives and refreshes the soul ("Meshibath," turning back to.) The Word of God turns the soul back to consciousness of life, refreshes, and revives it. ("Heduth" is another expression for God's Word.) What is written in the Word is reliable, "neamanah." God's Word is worthy of our confidence. Its promises are sure. (Stoeckhardt)

*the simple.* Because God's Word is of such a dependable nature, it makes the simple wise. (Pethi" means simplicity, and then the simple.) Men who otherwise are not wise are made wise by the Word of God. Reliable truths make men wise. (Stoeckhardt)

**19:8** *commandment of the Lord is pure* – The “ordinances” (piqudim) of God, that which God has laid down in the form of commandments as well as promises. The Ordinances of the Lord are the correct norm for faith and life, pointing men the right way which leads to their desired destination. (Stoeckhardt)

*heart.* In Biblical language the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action—“the wellspring of life.” (CSB)

As these ordinances accomplish this, they cause the heart to rejoice. (Stoeckhardt)

*Enlightening the eyes* – The Ordinances of God, insomuch as they make known the promises of God, are clear and clean as the sun, as described before. This clearness bears testimony of purity of God’s grace. It brightens the eyes of those who trustingly turn to it, as they it manifested in the Word of God. A bright eye reveals a good conscience. God’s Word of grace instills a new confidence to the soul. (Stoeckhardt)

**19:9** *fear of the LORD.* The sum of what the law requires. Those who honor God and order their lives in accordance with his will because of their reverence for him.). (CSB)

It is adoration of God as taught in the Word. The fear of the Lord embraces both faith and obedience. The Word of God teaches and instills the true fear of God. There is no wrong or blemish in this fear. (Stoeckhardt)

**19:10-11** The culmination of this psalm’s second major section. (TLSB)

**19:10** *more to be desired are they than gold* – Gold can buy things which sustain and enrich earthly life. The Word of God has power to offer and deliver the gift of eternal life. (PBC)

The Word of God is not only clean, pure, and trustful, but it has the power to bring about the same quality in those who receive. For that reason it is so desirable. The Word of God is a gem more precious than all the treasure and glories of the earth. This is the confession of who has experienced the regenerating power of the Word. (Stoeckhardt)

The psalmist knew that the laws of the Lord were more to be desired than fine gold, and they were sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. God’s word is sweet in the enrichment and satisfaction of life that it brings to the faithful believer, and its sweetness increases its desirability day by day. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*sweeter than honey.* By contrast, those who abandon the law turn justice into bitterness (see Am 5:7; 6:12). (CSB)

A delicacy. (TLSB)

However, the pleasure it gives is nothing compared to the sweetness of forgiveness and peace with God. (PBC)

The Word is sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. God’s Word is also pleasant and comforting to the heart. It refreshes and proves a recreating power to the soul. It renews the whole man. God’s Word is the greatest treasure on earth and works joy and delight in those that receive it. (Stoeckhardt)

**19:11–13**† God’s revelation marks the way that leads to life (see Dt 5:33). But man’s moral consciousness remains flawed and imperfect; hence he errs without realizing it and has reason to seek pardon for hidden faults (v. 12; see Lev 5:2–4). Willful sins (v. 13), however, are open rebellion; they are the great transgression (v. 13) that leads to being cut off from God’s people (see Nu 15:30–31). (CSB)

**19:11** Verse 11 is a transitional verse which could just as easily be placed in the previous section. It looks back to the blessings for the believer which were described in the preceding section, but it also points ahead to the impact of the word in the spiritual life of the believer, which is emphasized in this final section of the psalm. (PBC)

*Warned* – Hbr *zahab*, “shining.” Light could guide or warn the viewer away from danger. God’s Word instructs us and reminds us of the promised rewards for faithfulness. (TLSB)

The words of God’s law warn the believer against sin and its terrible consequences. (PBC)

One need only read the Book of Proverbs to see how the application of the law of the Lord provided warning after warning for the choices one make in life. The law not only told people what they should not do, but also warned them of the consequences if they violated the law. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*Great reward* – Or, “consequence.” (TLSB)

The words of the gospel give the rewards which Christ has won to everyone who believes them. God’s Word also promises that the works of believers will be rewarded, even though these works deserve nothing. (PBC)

**19:11, 13** *your servant*. The psalmist himself. (CSB)

**19:12-14** After rehearsing natural revelation, the revelation that all the heavenly host provides about the majesty and glory of God, and after delineating the different aspects of the word of the Lord, the specific revelation that transforms and enhances the lives of believers, David responds with an acknowledgment of his waywardness and a prayer for cleansing from sins and preservation from sinfulness so that he might lead a life that is acceptable to God. In this all who believe in divine revelation must share this concluding prayer. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

When we meditate (v. 12) on God’s Word, it acts like a mirror. It shows us our sins, sins which we then (v. 12) confess before a merciful God, a God who forgives for Jesus’ sake. Having seen the destructive nature of sin, David prays (v. 13) that God watch over him, protecting him from willful disobedience. We pray similarly in the Lord’s Prayer as we say, “Lead us not into temptation.” David (v. 14) closes the psalm with a prayer that will recreate him so that his life will reflect what the Lord has taught him in the Word. (LL)

**19:12-13** Confession of unworthiness and plea for God’s grace. “Our churches teach that private Absolution should be retained in the churches, although listing all sins is not necessary for Confession. For, according to the Psalm, it is impossible. ‘Who can discern his errors?’ ” (AC XI 1–2). “Original sin is not a minor corruption. It is so deep a corruption of human nature that nothing healthy or uncorrupt remains in man’s body or soul, in his inward or outward powers [Romans 3:10–12]. As the Church sings: Through Adam’s fall is all corrupt, Nature and essence

human. This damage cannot be fully described. It cannot be understood by reason, but only from God's Word" (FC Ep I 8–9). (TLSB)

**19:12** *who can discern his errors* – So that he will not lose these blessings, David prays that the Lord will preserve him from sins of every sort. He recognizes that sin is so deeply ingrained in his nature that he often sins without realizing it. He asks God to forgive even those sins which he fails to confess because of his ignorance. (PBC)

“Who can discern his rashness?” “Rashness” (*shegiah*), has reference to unintentional sins, sins which occur through one's carelessness and impulsiveness. At the time when they are committed they may not even be recognized as sins by the person who commits them. In addition there are secret sins, sins of which the sinner never becomes aware. (Stoeckhardt)

**19:13** *presumptuous sins* – Because of our weakness we too sometimes sin even when we know better and even when we don't want to do it. For these sins too we need forgiveness. David prays especially for God to preserve him from deliberate, malicious sins which could destroy his faith and thus rob him of forgiveness. David was guilty of such sins when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and was responsible for the murder of Uriah. Even then the Lord graciously led David back to repentance and faith. We pray that the Lord will preserve us from such sin and that he will graciously restore us if we ever fall victim to them. (PBC)

Sins that result from unbridled pride. In keeping with his plea for grace, the psalmist also asks for humility. (TLSB)

**19:14** The psalmist presents this hymn as a praise offering to the Lord. (CSB)

*heart*. In Biblical language the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action—“the wellspring of life.” (CSB)

*acceptable in your sight* – Connected to the foregoing confession and pleas for God's grace. Apart from God's grace, nothing can find favor with Him. (TLSB)

Delitzsch says, “Prayer is a sacrifice offered by the inner man. The heart meditates and fashions it; and the mouth presents it, by uttering that which is put into the form of words.”

*Rock* – The figure of the rock was used in Psalm 18:2 in the context of describing the sovereign God of creation as the one who delivers and protects from the enemies. Modern versions tend to translate it as “my strength” alone, but the significance of the figure is broader than that because it represents God as the solid foundation of his life, his place of security and safety, and his strength. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

*Redeemer*. The verbs stress the true significance of the name Yahweh—“the LORD”—who is the Redeemer of his people. (CSB)

It is also multifaceted. On the human level the word refers to the kinsman redeemer who protects and provides for the family, as in paying off debts or marrying a widow; but on the divine level the word refers to God's protection and deliverance of his covenant people, usually requiring his taking vengeance on the enemies. Calling God his redeemer means God is loyal protector; the one who will make things right. The combination of “my rock” and “my redeemer” provides a powerful summary of the nature and provision of God. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

**Ps 19** The heavens continually declare God's praise, and the forces of nature daily show forth His glory as they faithfully carry out the duties He has assigned them. Too bad we so often fail in the fulfillment of our divinely appointed tasks. Marvelous as the heavens are, and eloquent as nature's testimony to the greatness of the Creator, God's forgiveness and grace as revealed in His Word are even more glorious. • "O LORD, my rock and my redeemer: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight" (v 14); through Christ Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)