

“God’s Light”

Text: Psalm 19:1-14

Series: Psalms [#7]

Date: June 6, 2010

Theme: **God’s Word Enables Us to Be Acceptable To Him.**

Introduction

One of the most fundamental questions is “What is really true?” “What is true, what is false?” “What is right, what is wrong?” And, of course, “How can we know what is really true?”

Physicist Stephen Hawking made the headlines in April for his television series “Into the Universe With Stephen Hawking.” The subject that caught people’s attention was not a new theory or model but his statement that extraterrestrial beings are almost certain to exist but, instead of trying to find and make contact with them, we should be doing all we can to avoid any contact. He speculates that there could be life forms out there that could pose a threat for humanity. So, trying to make contact with aliens in his view is “a little too risky.”¹

There has been no shortage of responses to his ideas—some agreeing and others disagreeing. Is he right? How can we determine if his view is true or not?

Before you dismiss this as something that is neither vital nor knowable, take it a step farther. How can we, how do we know if *anything* is true? And, in terms of a question that is vital and which we as Christians say is knowable, what is true about God, ourselves and our relationship to Him? How do we please Him, become acceptable to Him? And how do we know that?

Psalm 19 helps us. God, who created and sustains all that exists, tells us in this Psalm that He has given us two lights that shine brightly into the darkness of uncertainty. There is the bright light of His creation. Then there is the brighter light of His word, the Scriptures. As Psalm 118 tells us, “The LORD is God, and He has given us light” (27). While King David writes of both lights in this Psalm, the focus clearly is on the brighter light of God’s word. To sum it up, He tells us that *God’s word enables us to be acceptable to Him.*

The Bright Light Through Creation.

God’s creation is a bright light that displays His glory and power. One of the most enjoyable and refreshing experiences is taking in the beauty of God’s creation. The prairies have the vast expanse of plains, the winter white and spring colors, the summer crops and fall colors. The mountains have a rugged and majestic beauty. Lakes and oceans have a quiet serenity on peaceful days and an awesome power on stormy days. Then we look up to the skies, the vast expanse of blue and the light display of countless stars at night.

The vast heavens above, the king reminds us, tell us about the glory and power of God. Even though there is no speech, no words, the heavens tell us about God. We know about nonverbal communication. Mom or Dad giving *the look* to a misbehaving child (or, perhaps,

a spouse!). A young couple in love. Proud parents at their son or daughter's graduation. No words are needed to get the message. All of creation speaks volumes about its Creator.

This bright light shines *continually*. Verse 1.

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.”

The words *telling* and *declaring* in verse 1 picture an ongoing, continual message. Then the second verse adds that their light goes out from one day to next, from one night to another—continual, uninterrupted, unending testimony to God the Creator. We are always to be witnesses, sharing God's light. Even if we were completely faithful, our message cannot go out 24-7, 365 days a year. After all, we do have to sleep. But the heavens are continually, always declaring God's glory and power. The hymn “The Spacious Firmament” (number 62 in our hymnal) closes with the heavens “Forever singing as they shine, ‘The hand that made us is divine.’”

This bright light also shines everywhere to everyone, its witness is universal. Look at verse 4. “Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world.” There is no place or person on earth that is excluded from this light of God's general revelation.

When Paul and Barnabas were at Lystra they told the crowds, some of whom thought they were gods after God healed a man through them,

“We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; *and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.*” (Acts 14:15-17)

The heaven's testimony to God shines continually, universally and also brightly. The brightest light in the heavens from our perspective on earth, of course, is the sun. This was more than obvious to David living in Jerusalem. Jerusalem enjoys plenty of sunshine and warmth. The average year round temperature now is 75F/24C, with July and August averaging above 90F/30C. In the spring and fall hot winds often blow in from the desert. And so David's analogy of the sun beginning in verse 4 was instantly clear to the people of Israel.

“In them [the heavens] He [God] has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of

the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat.” (4c-6)

What a strong and bright light! Yes, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.” (1-2)

How do we evaluate this bright light? What’s the bottom line? First, this witness is sufficient to point people to God and also make everyone responsible before Him. There is a suggestion of that in verse 4 that tells us this light has gone out to everyone, everywhere and in every age. Paul fills in the blanks in the first chapter of Romans, starting at verse 18.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.” (18-23)

While this bright light is sufficient to point us to God and make us responsible, it is not sufficient for leading us to be acceptable to God, for salvation. We need more. We need words. We need the words God graciously has given us, words such as,

- “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
- The words of Jesus telling us “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)
- God’s word through the apostle Paul, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16-17)
- And words such as the apostle John’s, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” (1 John 5:11-12)

The heavens are a bright light. But the brighter light we need is God's word, the Bible. *God's word enables us to be acceptable to Him.* So now we turn our attention to this brighter light.

The Brighter Light Through God's Word.

Starting in verse 7 King David gives us a beautiful description of God's word. This is poetry. Most of our English versions try to put the psalm in poetic form. David's poetry here piles up a number of descriptions so that when we step back and look at the whole, we see a picture of the beauty, quality and value of Scripture. Let's break these descriptions down into two parts—what God's word is and what it does.

The brighter light is, verse 7 tells us, *perfect*. "The law of the LORD is perfect." It is free from any blemish. It never gives the wrong directions. It will always lead you in the right direction and to the correct destination.

Verse 7 also says that "The testimony of the LORD is *sure*." Experiments and real life situations prove that even eye witness testimony is not always accurate. But God's testimony in His word is *sure*, it is accurate and reliable. As Psalm 93:5 says, "Your testimonies [God] are fully confirmed."

Verse 8. "The precepts of the LORD are *right*." This is similar to the law being perfect in verse 7, but this focuses more on the application of God's truth. God's word, His commands and directions are always right for us, they are always right for our situations, they are always right for our choices. The writer of Psalm 119 recognized this as he wrote, "I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything" (128).

Next we read in verse 8 "The commandment of the LORD is *pure*." God speaks authoritatively as the Sovereign over all that exists and He does not speak with partiality or favoritism. Nor does He ask for the impossible, sit back and laugh at people trying and failing to fulfill His commands. His words to us are pure. As David wrote in Psalm 12:6, "The words of the LORD are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times."

Then, moving into verse 9, God's word is *everlasting*. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." Just as "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"² so God's word is the same forever. Our insights and ideas do not last forever. Often it only takes a few days, weeks or months to demonstrate how time-bound and temporary they are. Psalm 117:2 proclaims "the truth of the LORD is everlasting" and Psalm 119:160 joins in, "everyone of [God's] righteous ordinances is everlasting."

Still in verse 9, "The judgments of the LORD are *true*; they are righteous altogether." Do judges make mistakes? The records of the appeal courts show without doubt that, yes, they do. Not so with God. All of His word to us is righteous and true.

Finally, God's word is *desirable*, highly desirable. Look at verse 10.

“They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.”

This is the summation of the value of all the preceding qualities. In David's day nothing was more valuable than pure gold and nothing was sweeter than honey. The writer of Psalm 119 uses the same pictures. “The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (72). And, “How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (103).

Down through the years many things from circuses to candy bars have made the claim to be *the greatest on earth*. Advertisers continually tells us that their products are what we need and will met our needs. None of those things, nor all of them together begin to compare with the value of God's word. God's word is perfect, sure, right, pure, everlasting, true and so then is desirable.

Now we turn to what the brighter light of God's word does. It *restores the soul*. Go back up to verse 7. “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.” The word *restore* comes from a term meaning to return or turn back. One of its metaphorical meanings is to *restore, refresh* or *repair*.

God's word restores or repairs a person spiritually and his or her relationship with God in that it leads salvation. In Psalm 51:12-13 we read,

“Restore to me [the word *restore* here is a different word] the
joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then
I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be *con-
verted* to You.”

That word *converted* is our word *restore* from Psalm 19. Sinners will be *restored* to God. And we already noted, Romans 1:16 tells us the gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” Yes, *God's word enables us to be acceptable to Him*.

God's word also restores, refreshes, repairs the believer. In Psalm 23:3 King David testified that the LORD “restores my soul.” This spiritual restoration, we find here in Psalm 19, comes through God's word. You see, God uses His word to restore, refresh, repair and renew our spirit and our relationship with Him. So, on the one hand it is dangerous to neglect or to think and act against God's word. We will not experience renewal, reviving, freshness and closeness with God apart from His word. If you want to sense and know God's presence more than you do now, you will never experience that apart from the Scriptures He has given us. On the other hand this is a powerful encouragement to spend time in the Bible reading and thinking on it and then living its truth.

Then, still in verse 7, “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making *wise* the simple.” The word *simple* may throw us at first. It can sound almost offensive. The word refers to simplicity or naivete in contrast to complexity or sophistication. It also can refer to being

foolish. The point here is that God gives wisdom, the ability to see things as they really are, through His word to those who need it. And every one of us need God's wisdom. Along the same lines, Psalm 119 tells us,

“Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.” (98-100)

and again, “The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (130).

The first chapter of James tells us God gives wisdom generously to believers who ask in faith. This Psalms help us understand the *how* of that gracious gift. God gives it as the Holy Spirit uses the truth of Scripture to help us see things as they really are.

Moving on to verse 8, God's word *rejoices the heart*. Listen to the testimony of the writer of Psalm 119. “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches” (14). And, “I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart” (111).

Can we, can you, can I truly say this? When I line up, add up all the things of this world that have value to me, that bring me joy, is God's word really of the joy of my heart? We will experience this only when we treasure God's word at the core of our being and in all our thinking and actions. One way to develop in this is to focus on a statement or truth in the Bible that God draws to your attention. Focus on it for a number of days or weeks. Test it and live it in all situations. Do this and you *will* find that truth is the joy of your heart.

Still in verse 8, we find God's pure word *enlightens our eyes*. It can be confusing to try to sort out all the conflicting messages, claims and paths to pleasing God and having true fulfillment and peace. The light of God's word dispels the darkness of confusion and uncertainty. *How we need this!* Whatever our age or stage of life—whether we are young in age or young in the faith, or older or older in the faith—we need God's word to enlighten our eyes so we can escape the dark cloud of confusion. David stated this same truth in Psalm 36:9, “In Your light [God's light] we see light.”

Next is another practical benefit—God's word *warns us of sin*. Verse 11. “Moreover, by them [God's words] Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” This reminds me of Paul's defense of the law being good in Romans 7. There he wrote, “...I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’” (7). God's word is one of our greatest resources to holiness and happiness. It does that in part by warning us of sin.

Continuing along this line, God's word also *acquits us of hidden faults*. As verse 12 tells us, seeing our hidden faults is a daunting task. How can we see what we don't see? As we read God's word, the Holy Spirit uses that truth to bring assurance and joy, but also to shine light on things that are not as they should be. That leads us then to confessing those sins and being cleansed from them.³

And then, progressing one more step, God's word *leads to being blameless*. Look at verse 13. "Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me; then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression." David is not talking about perfection on earth. He is speaking of the condition where there is, in the words of the old hymn, "nothing between my soul and my Savior." The writer of Psalm 119 prayed for this. "Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me" (133). In Psalm 17 David testified that he had experienced this. "My steps have held fast to Your paths. My feet have not slipped" (5). Yes, we know there were times when his feet did slip. But when He meditated on and lived God's word he knew the joy of nothing between him and his Savior.

God's word enables us to be acceptable to Him. It does this as it restores our souls, makes us wise, gives joy to our hearts, enlightens our eyes, warns us of sin, acquits us of hidden faults and leads us to being blameless.

How did David respond to all this? How should *we* respond? Drop down to the last verse, verse 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." King David stepped back, surveyed the great nature and benefits of God's word and prayed, implored God that he would continually realize this in his life.

How are we going to respond to this magnificent, gracious truth? The scope of this last verse extends to all believers in all our time and situations. "Let the words of *my* mouth and the meditation of *my* heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, *my* rock and *my* Redeemer."

Conclusion.

When I read this Psalm I am reminded of C.S. Lewis' words, "I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world."⁴ That comment had to do with the poetry of this Psalm, but not just that. For he was writing there about the grand statements about God's word in Psalm 19.

This Psalm is 3,000 years old, but it is up to date. *Spiritual, but not religious* is the title of an article that appeared in the Edmonton Journal yesterday. The writer dealt with a trend, a reality that we have known and watched, sadly, for quite some time. An increasing number of people see themselves as spiritual but not religious. That is, they don't belong to a church or any one faith group. They pick and choose bits and pieces from various religions that they feel fit them. Part of the force behind this is the individualism that says "No one can tell me what is right for me but me." The postmodern rejection of certain or absolute truth also plays a part.

What does this have to do with us? After all, we are here in church! We are not isolated from this kind of thinking. We are not isolated from its influence. We need to be aware of what people around us are thinking and promoting, and of what we ourselves are thinking. We need to remember, and live by the certain, unchanging, wonderful truth of *God's word, that enables us to be acceptable to Him*.

I am sure that the exciting truth in this Psalm is part of the reason Don Harbridge has had a passion to see all of us spending more time in God's word through Scripture Union materials and other means. It should be our passion.

Take the next few moments with God to thank Him for the gracious gift of His word. Evaluate what place and importance you have been giving God's word. Ask God to open your eyes to the value, beauty and power of His Word. Consider, and then respond to God from your heart, "Let the words of *my* mouth and the meditation of *my* heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, *my* rock and *my* Redeemer."

¹ Jonathan Leake. "Don't talk to aliens, warns Stephen Hawking." *TIMESONLINE*. April 25, 2010.

<<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/science/space/article7017207.ece?>>. Accessed 2 June 2010.

² Hebrews 13:8.

³ cf. 1 John 1:9.

⁴ C.S. Lewis. *Reflections on the Psalms*. Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., 1961, p. 56.

⁵ Joshunda Sanders. "Spiritual, but not religious." *Edmonton Journal*. June 5, 2010, p. B13.

© 2010 Lyle L. Wahl

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995
by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.