

Psalm 19¹ *The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands.*

² *Day after day they pour out speech;
night after night they communicate knowledge.*

³ *There is no speech; there are no words;
their voice is not heard.*

⁴ *Their message has gone out to the whole earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.*

In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵ *It is like a bridegroom coming from his home;
it rejoices like an athlete running a course.*

⁶ *It rises from one end of the heavens
and circles to their other end;
nothing is hidden from its heat.*

⁷ *The instruction of the LORD is perfect,
renewing one's life;
the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy,
making the inexperienced wise.*

⁸ *The precepts of the LORD are right,
making the heart glad;
the command of the LORD is radiant,
making the eyes light up.*

⁹ *The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are reliable
and altogether righteous.*

¹⁰ *They are more desirable than gold—
than an abundance of pure gold;
and sweeter than honey
dripping from a honeycomb.*

¹¹ *In addition, your servant is warned by them,
and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.*

¹² *Who perceives his unintentional sins?
Cleanse me from my hidden faults.*

¹³ *Moreover, keep your servant from willful sins;
do not let them rule me.
Then I will be blameless
and cleansed from blatant rebellion.*

¹⁴ *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you, LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.*

There are so many layers in such a short Psalm, and each layer could be a sermon in and of itself. It starts with a proclamation of general revelation. “The heavens declare the glory of God... There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard...” yet “Their message has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”

God created the universe in such a way that every aspect of it is constantly declaring His glory. Think about the expanse of space and all the stars and galaxies contained within the universe. The grandness of it all declares the greatness of God. What about the way He positioned the sun, earth, and moon in just the right positions to provide the right conditions for us to survive and thrive? From the mountains and valleys to the depths of the sea, all of creation declares His glory. The colors found in rainbows, canyons, sunrises, and sunsets proclaim the artistry of our wonderful Creator. But the wonder of His creative power doesn't end with what He has created because He put that creative spark inside of His greatest creation, us. When we put forth our best in creating something functional, beneficial, pleasurable, or simply beautiful, we are reflecting the creative nature of our Creator. And it's not just the things we see in plain sight. Our nervous system, limbic system, white cells, red cells, and all the way down to our DNA were all created by God. When was the last time you thought about your heart beating or your lungs inhaling and exhaling. It would be exhausting if we had to remind our heart and lungs to do what they need to do, so God set systems in place in your brain and body to take care of those functions for you.

The way all these things point to God is what general revelation is. In Romans 1, Paul writes about how this general revelation is available to everyone:

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,⁷ in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20, ESV)

Creation speaks loudly and glorifies God without uttering a word. When Jesus was on His way into Jerusalem, all His disciples were praising God for all the miracles they had seen and some of the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke them. His response:

“I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Luke 19:40, ESV)

This general revelation is why I like to get out into nature when I can. There is a certain peace there that is hard to describe. When hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, sitting on the beach, or even just driving the long, winding roads through the mountains and forests, there is a connection made with God's creation that reveals His glory in a way that is easy to miss in the hustle back home. But general revelation is not the layer we're going to focus on today.

Another layer in Psalm 19 is God's instruction. In verses 7-11, David reflects on the law of the Lord and how it affects us. It is perfect and revives the soul; His testimony is sure and brings wisdom to the inexperienced; the procedures of God are right and make the heart rejoice; His commands are radiant and enlighten our eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean; His rules

are reliable and true; they are more desirable than an abundance of pure gold and sweeter than the finest fresh honey. Furthermore, we find great reward by heeding their warning.

God's laws, rules, precepts, instructions, procedures, commands... all of them are good and should guide us, but sometimes a heightened focus on the things we should avoid simply makes those things more difficult to avoid. Think about this. When you get a new car, what do you suddenly see on the road everywhere you go. You see the same car. Not just the same make and model, but the same color and even the same year. Psychologists call that the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon. Now think about something you're trying to avoid. Maybe you're on a diet and trying to avoid sugar, but all of the sudden you want to drink even more soda and have ice cream every night. I was a teenager in the 90's at the height of the purity culture movement. What do you think was constantly on my mind with a bunch of shame piled on top of it?

No one here needs me to outline the laws of God so that they know right from wrong. There may be a few gray areas that we might not recognize something as wrong, but we generally know when something is sinful; the more we commit those acts, the more the Holy Spirit convicts us of them. Sometimes that happens on a Sunday morning, sometimes through a friend, and sometimes through God's voice directly to us. It's His voice that we focused on a couple weeks ago during VBS:

whenever you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: "This is the way. Walk in it." (Isaiah 31:21, CSB)

We all make mistakes sometimes though. My mistakes usually come out of my mouth. I tend to suffer from "foot-in-mouth" disease and a lot of times I don't even know it's happening. Growing up, my mom would tell me that she thought I was going to be a debater. It's like it was in my nature to be argumentative or contrarian. I like to think that that tendency has waned as I've aged, but I see it in my kids. Maybe it's human nature, but I think it's more likely that they picked it up from me. But my foot ends up in my mouth over much more serious things than simply being argumentative. Sometimes my words hurt the people I love, whether it's the wrong timing, the wrong tone, or even the wrong words that should not be said.

I think that's the third layer of this Psalm. The CSB version that I read earlier puts it this way in verse 12: "Cleanse me from my hidden faults." ESV says: "Declare me innocent from hidden faults," and LSB says, "Acquit me of hidden *faults*." ESV and LSB are saying basically the same thing. An acquittal is to be found not guilty, to be legally declared innocent. And that's what Jesus did on the cross, is it not?

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV)

In the eyes of the Father, He sees us made pure and righteous through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, but that does not mean we are not guilty of sin. If we were not guilty of sin, there would be no need for a savior. We may not have stolen a car or murdered anyone, but

we've all sinned. Even our unintentional errors like putting your foot in your mouth misses the mark of perfection.

When I saw the difference of interpretation, I went to my Hebrew lexicon to see what it had to say about the original word. נָקָה (nâqâh) can mean "to be without blame" or "remain blameless" but there are different stem formations for verbs in Hebrew. The particular verb stem in this context means to "leave unpunished" or "declare to be free from punishment." (HALOT, נקה)

I would much rather be acquitted than have to be cleansed. I think that's why it's so easy to get defensive. "I didn't say that." "I would never say something like that." "That's not what I meant." Or, if I'm not done putting my foot in my mouth, I get more offensive. "You heard me wrong." "You misinterpreted what I said." "You're putting words in my mouth." If I'm innocent of any wrongdoing, then nothing about me has to change. And like a court trial, I'll call character witnesses to affirm me in all my self-righteousness, but just between me and them so I feel better about myself.

Does anyone else do that?

Do you ever really feel better about yourself? And if you do, does it last very long?

I don't want to be declared innocent when the truth is that I have sinned. I want to be cleansed. As hard as it is, I want to be corrected and I want to receive that correction without getting defensive or more offensive. I want to walk in the Light. 1 John 1:5 says:

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

It's not just those unintentional sins that we need to be cleansed of. The implication from John here is that we ought to confess all our sin because he is faithful to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In Psalm 19, David calls out willful or presumptuous sin.

Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! (Psalm 19:13, ESV)

Just like Jesus' prayer that we not be led into temptation but delivered from evil, David's psalm leads us to pray that God keep us from willfully sinning so that our sin does not control us. Is there a sin in your life that you are trapped in a cycle of willfully committing? Does it feel

like it has you under its control? I'm not going to list anything here. You know what it is. And if it came to your mind quickly, that is the Holy Spirit prompting you to repentance. Or maybe you're not caught in one of those cycles, but you know you did something wrong this past week that you need to repent of and seek forgiveness. Don't hesitate. Repent.

Here's the scary part. Even if it's something that is just between you and God, confess it to another believer. I know we live in a culture where perception is reality and image is everything, but there is power in confessing our sins to one another. I know how scary it is. I'm scared to death of what some people would think of me if they knew about some of my deepest darkest sins. But I also know the freedom and healing that comes from confessing them to another brother.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:16, ESV)

Do you want to know what the most pervasive sin in my life was for a very long time? It wasn't porn or rage or envy, although I've had my struggles with each of those. It was lying. I could lie so well that I even started believing the lies. I would lie to my parents, teachers, friends, employers, etc. And it was usually about something stupid or to try to cover up some other sin. I would lie to win an argument or to look better than I was. I even went to someone to confess about lying, then told a lie when he asked me a question about the sin I originally lied about.

The biggest lies were the ones I told myself. I'd tell myself:

"You're good enough to handle everything on your own."

"You're not hurting anyone."

"You deserve to be blessed for all the work you put in."

"This time doesn't matter. You can make up for it next time."

"Nothing will go right if you're not there and involved."

"Everything will fall apart if you leave."

"No one would even notice if you were gone."

"You're a failure at life."

"You'll never have any friends if they find out about the real you."

Those words may have never come out of my mouth, but I said them to myself, nonetheless. Words have the power to bind or to set free, to edify or to defile, to give life or to bring death.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. (Proverbs 18:21, ESV)

Look at what the brother of Jesus has to say about our words:

² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. (James 3:2-12, ESV)

Jesus talked about our words as well:

“...it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person... ¹⁷ Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person.” (Matthew 15:11, 17-19a ESV)

I don't take it lightly that I am using words to expound upon the Word of God this morning while recognizing that I often have an issue with my words. After confessing my habitual lying, I am no longer under the control of that sin, but I still struggle with some of the lies I've told myself and I still put my foot in my mouth far too often.

Words have power. And I think they have the most power when they are words of prayer. We spent some time praying together this morning because our hope is found in Jesus Christ. Psalm 19:13 is a bit of a prayer within a song. Powerful prayers don't have to be long and filled with Christianese.

A prayer can simply be speaking the name of Jesus. There's a song called "I Speak Jesus" that does just that. It speaks the name of Jesus over hearts, minds, addictions, strongholds, shadows, fear, anxiety, depression, and families.

There is an ancient practice called breath prayer. It's not some mystical or Zen practice of clearing your mind, but a way to practice praying continually and interceding with God as you breathe. It generally has two parts: a name for God and a request or praise. It could be something like praying "Lord Jesus" as you inhale, and "have mercy on me" as you exhale. "Holy Spirit, fill me with peace." "Father God, You are my King."

There are so many ways to pray, but one of the most significant for me is through song. Psalm 19 is a song written by David. The final verse is one that resonated in me a few weeks ago:

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14, ESV)*

As I was preparing to preach today, I kept getting distracted. That seems to be par for the course for me, but it was different this time. Intrusive thoughts kept coming to my mind, so I began responding to each one by singing this prayer of David. Lies from the pit of hell would enter my stream of thought, and I responded in prayer.

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight, You're my redeeming God**

You're still bitter about the way you were treated...

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight, You're my redeeming God**

No one really cares if you start looking at porn again...

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight, You're my redeeming God**

You really suck as a father and your kids don't really respect you...

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight, You're my redeeming God**

You're fine. You don't have to study. Just play a game for a while...

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight, You're my redeeming God**

Your stomach is growling... food is way more important than Scripture right now...

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight, You're my redeeming God**

Every time an intrusive thought entered my mind, I sang those simple lines and my thoughts turned from those distractions towards the glory of God found in His Word. There is a list of other things that I could have probably tied to this Psalm to preach on, but the words of our mouth and meditations of our heart are so important. My hope is that you can walk away today with a weapon on your belt to bring your thoughts and words in alignment with what is pleasing to God. Our actions will follow what our heart dwells upon.

Would you sing those lines with me a few times?

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight, You're my redeeming God**

Let me close with these words from the Apostle Paul that he wrote to the Philippians:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4-9, ESV)