

Psalm 19

1. *The heavens are telling the glory of God
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.*
2. *One day pours out its song to another
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.*
3. *They have neither speech nor language
and their voices are not heard,*
4. *Yet their sound has gone out into all lands
and their words to the ends of the world.*
5. *In them he has set a tabernacle for the sun,
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.*
6. *It goes forth from the ends of the heavens
and runs to the very end again,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.*
7. *The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.*
8. *The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.*
9. *The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever;
the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*
10. *More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,
sweeter also than honey, dripping from the honeycomb.*
11. *By them also is your servant taught
and in keeping them there is great reward.*
12. *Who can know how often they offend?
O cleanse me from my secret faults!*
13. *Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me;
so shall I be undefiled, and innocent of great offence.*
14. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.*

The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Psalm 19 consists of two poems, made into a single hymn. The concept of God and his authoritative presence gives unity to these different poems. The firmament (the dome of the sky), reveals God's creative power in nature, and the law declares his presence in history, especially in the people of the covenant.

Although they have no audible speech or intelligible language, the stars possess a knowledge, which they proclaim day by day to all the earth. They declare that they were created and kept in their places by the authority of God.

This is especially true in the hymn to the sun, which waits in his tent during the night at the far end of the earth. At the time appointed, he emerges, glowing with the radiance of a bridegroom and the strength of an athlete; he completes his circuit by returning to his tent at night. These are examples of God's craftsmanship and witnesses to his glory.

The second poem is a series of statements about the law and its effect on human life, followed by a prayer for help in keeping the law. The law is a living expression of God's will, and to obey it is to have one's life renewed. In this way, God makes his purpose known. The law is perfect and enduring, the fountain from which flows everything of value to people.

The reward is not material prosperity, but the kind of life which the law promotes.

But human beings cannot recognise their own errors, they unknowingly violate God's will (secret faults). They flout it because of their arrogance (presumptuous sins).

The law can be obeyed only by relying on God's sustaining power. The psalm ends with a hymn to the total dedication of the worshipper to God.

Can we fail to be amazed by the beauty of nature, and does its contemplation not make us think of how the world was created and our place as human beings within it? For example, looking at the stars makes us aware of the vastness of the universe and how little we know about it. This leads on to our responsibility as human beings to look after the environment in every way we can. Contemplation of nature and the heavens shows how all is held together. The law of God is guidance for

the whole of life, how we see God and how we behave towards one another, expressed in the Ten Commandments.

Prayer

Almighty God, our Creator and Redeemer,
we praise you for all your wonderful works,
for the beauty and bounty of the world around us,
for everything you have given us so richly to enjoy.
We bless you for our own creation
as men and women made in your image,
with minds to know you, hearts to love you,
and wills to obey you.
Accept, O God, this our praise and thanksgiving,
and to your name be honour and glory for evermore.

Amen.

(Frank Colquhoun)