

Educating the Heart Psalm 19

In Psalm 19:14 we find a rather remarkable prayer on the lips of David. David actually prays this:

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.

Here is a man who actually prays, “God, I want every word I say and every thought I think to be pleasing to You.” That sounds good on Sunday morning, but quite often we aren’t that eager for God to notice and evaluate **everything** we think and say. We bear grudges and say harsh things to others, feeling fully justified in words and thoughts that are very contrary to what we know to be “acceptable in God’s sight.” But the cry of David’s heart was for the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart to be acceptable in God’s sight.

There’s a connection between the meditations of our hearts and the words of our mouths, right? Jesus said that our mouths speak from what fills our hearts. The heart informs the mouth.

Today we are going to think about how we can become the type of people who would pray what David prayed and want what David wanted. This prayer is the last verse of Psalm 19. What we are going to see in the rest of Psalm 19 is that **this prayer is a response to God’s revelation in both creation and in the Scriptures**. Both creation and Scripture have the capacity to "educate our hearts" - to inform and convince our hearts what we should want and therefore think and talk about. Our responsibility is to pay attention to what God is saying. That’s exactly what David did so well: he paid attention to the voice of God both in creation and in the Scriptures. God is speaking. We need to listen. Please turn with me to Psalm 19.

Hearing God's Voice in Creation (vv. 1-6)

Verses 1 through 6 describe God's revelation of Himself in creation - specifically "the heavens."

1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

"The heavens" are [continuously] expressing the **glory** of God. If something has “glory” it is weighty and substantive. The heavens continually express how weighty and substantive God is. When David looked up at night he wasn’t looking out “into space” – which has the connotation of emptiness and void. He looked up into “the heavens” – which were full of God and full of His glory. Heaven is the place where God dwells (Psalm 2:4); the Lord "looks down from heaven" (Psalm 14:2); the heavens are the very "work of God's hands" (Psalm 102:6). When David looked up, he saw the heavens and immediately began to think about God.

Verse 2 emphasizes how **continually** the heavens speak:

2 Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.

Whether it is daytime or nighttime, God is revealing His glory through creation. It doesn't matter whether you're looking at the sun or at the moon and the stars; the heavens continually express how amazingly substantive God is. Creation proves that God is no "lightweight." Verses 3 and 4 emphasize how **universally** God declares His glory through the heavens without using words.

3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
4 Their line [voice] has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.

...

Creation doesn't speak in human language, nevertheless, God's message **does** go forth. Using a "voice" that transcends human language, God's creation declares His glory throughout all the earth, to the end of the world. The genius of "natural revelation" - God's revelation through creation - is that nothing can stop it. Sometimes governments that are hostile to God can prevent people from speaking the name of Christ or can prevent the Scriptures from reaching people. But through His creation, God goes "over the heads" of governments (both figuratively and literally) to declare His glory. Nothing can silence God's revelation through creation.

In verses 4c through 6 David speaks of the sun as a specific example of how God continually and universally declares His glory.

4 . . . In them [the heavens] He has placed a tent for the sun,
5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.

Every night the sun goes into its "tent." Every morning the sun bursts out of its tent like a groom coming out of his chamber the day after the wedding night. The sun is radiant, strong, and confident day after day. There is nothing timid about the sun declaring the glory of the Lord. You experience this when you walk out the door on a hot Kansas day; the sun almost knocks you over with its radiance and heat.

6 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.

No thing and no person is hidden from the heat and radiance of the sun. As such, the sun serves as a continual reminder of the glory of God. [This theme is carried

throughout both the Old and New Testaments (see Acts 14:15-17, Romans 1:20).] God continually speaks of His glory through creation; the question is whether or not we are listening.

Sometimes I ignore the glory of God in creation. Sometimes I fail to take time to look up and become filled with wonder at the sun, moon, and stars. Sometimes I'm too busy to stop and notice the beauty of God in a flower that is bursting with color and intricacy and life. Some of us are more insulated from creation than others of us. We have to be very intentional about putting ourselves in a position to soak in the glory of God that is being declared by creation.

The glory of God in creation has the capacity to educate our hearts. Creation can convince our hearts to give God His rightful place in our lives. Psalm 8 is a good example of how this might work. Here's David's meditation on the heavens:

8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
4 What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?

David couldn't help but be amazed that the same God who created the moon and the stars thought about and cared for *him*. The glory of God as declared in the heavens made God's love for David all the more precious. If we're attentive, creation can educate our hearts and impress upon us that God is weighty and substantive and that He deserves our praise.

But more revelation is needed, isn't it? God's glory in creation is not specific enough to communicate how we should live our lives. Without further revelation, it is even possible to draw wrong conclusions about God. Two people can experience the same things in creation and come to very different conclusions. One can conclude that if there is a "god" it's an impersonal force; another can conclude that God is personal and creative. Clearly more explanation is needed.

Hearing God's Voice in the Scriptures (vv. 7-11)

In these verses he uses five different terms to describe God's Word: law, testimony, precepts, commands, and judgments. These various terms are employed to give a very comprehensive endorsement of the value of God's Word in a person's life.

As we go through these verses, consider David foundational convictions about God's Word. We need to have these same convictions in relation to God's Word. I find that I need to have my perspective about the Scriptures renewed. When you've been a believer for a long time, there is a tendency to have a "ho-hum" attitude toward the Word ("Sermon on the Mount . . . been there, done that. . ."), not realizing the treasure that God has given us.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;

The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

We all have times when we need our souls to be "restored" or "revived." I dare say that some of us here this morning are enduring heartaches - circumstances that have drained a bit of life out of our souls. Something has been lost that needs to be recovered. David understood that **law**/instruction of the Lord is perfectly suited for restoring our souls. The second half of verse 7 mentions how "the testimony of the Lord is sure, **making wise the simple**." In the Scriptures, being "simple" is not a good thing; it is first cousin to being a fool. [Proverbs 15:14 describes the simple (or naïve) as someone who believes anything. Proverbs 27:12 describes the simple as someone who (in contrast with the wise) sees evil, walks right into it, and pays a heavy price.] David is saying here in verse 7 that if such a person listens to the testimony of Scripture, s/he will become wise. We all need to know what to believe and consequently how to live our lives.

8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

When properly understood by someone in relationship with God, the precepts/principles of the Lord **make our hearts glad**. In Romans 7:22 Paul said, "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." In the deepest part of our being, we say "Yes! That's right!" when we hear God's Word. The second half of verse 8 speaks of the commandment of the Lord being "pure" and "enlightening the eyes." God's commandments allow us to see life very clearly because they are pure; they give us an unadulterated perspective on life in this world.

The first line in verse 9 changes the perspective a bit and celebrates **a proper response** to God's Word:

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

When we fear the Lord by paying attention to His Word, we lay a foundation (Craigie, p. 183) that will never disappoint us. We won't wake up one day to find that we should have been trusting in someone or something else. The second half of verse 9 reemphasizes the faithfulness of God's Word. God's estimation of a situation or a lifestyle or a pattern of behavior is never ever wrong; his judgments are "righteous altogether."

In light of everything David has just said about God's Word, it only follows that he writes in verses 10 and 11:

10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.

David was absolutely convinced that God's Word was a great gift from God - more valuable than gold, more satisfying than the choicest food (honey). He valued God's revelation because it warned him when danger was near and pointed him toward great reward (things like life, joy, wisdom, light, and righteousness).

What has been your experience of God through the Scriptures lately? Are you consistently hearing the voice of God? Are you being nourished by what you read and meditate upon? You may need to spend some time examining your attitude toward the Scriptures. I have to admit that at times I have approached Scripture with: 1) boredom – really not expecting to find anything interesting or life-changing there, 2) dread – thinking that God will beat me to death with His Word because of my own disobedience, 3) arrogance – not really open to having my heart and mind changed on a topic, thinking that I've got it all figured out and no longer need to listen.

But when I have come to the Scriptures with the attitude we've seen in Psalm 19 (that it is perfect and wise and infinitely valuable), I've come away refreshed and nourished – almost without exception. God is so very willing to confirm in our lives that ***the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.***

The Heart Response of Humble Submission (vv. 12-14)

When we come to David's prayer of response in verses 12 through 14 we see that David's heart has been conditioned to want what God wants. He is thoroughly convinced both from creation and from Scripture that there is nothing more urgent and more satisfying than pleasing God. His heart was educated - trained and taught - to long for holiness. Listen to the way David pleads with God to forgive him from past sins and keep him from future sins.

12 Who can discern *his* errors?

Acquit me of hidden *faults*.

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.

We should probably see a contrast between the "hidden faults" of verse 12 and the potential "presumptuous/willful sins" of verse 13. David prayed for God to forgive him for the ways he had failed God unknowingly (we all have blind spots); and he definitely wanted God to keep him from sinning willfully (with his eyes wide open). He wanted to be blameless in every way. Verse 14 expresses a desire for holiness in the depths of his being.

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.

David was convinced by creation and by the Word that God's evaluation is what really matters. Because he had heard the heavens declaring the glory of the Lord and because he took such great delight in God's Word, David prayed, "God, I want everything I think and everything I say to meet Your approval! You are YHWH! You are my Rock! You are my Redeemer!" Can you honestly pray that prayer? Do you sincerely want every word and thought to please God - or are there things you want to hide from God?

Imagine what **your** life would be like if everything you thought and therefore everything you said were pleasing to God. Imagine how you'd handle situations differently if you were able to break out of your own small, selfish ways of thinking and began seeing things from God's perspective. Imagine how different your relationships would be if you didn't think and say things that displease God. Much of the suffering that we cause other people can be traced back to thinking and speaking in ways that displease God.

As we come to the Lord's Table, let verse 14 be the cry of your heart. At the Lord's Table we remember the body and blood of Jesus. As we remember His sacrifice for us, we should invite God to scrutinize our lives and refine us. Perhaps this very area - our thoughts and our words - is the thing that God needs to refine within us. Let this be your prayer today at the Lord's Table:

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.

If you trust in Jesus alone to take away your sin and give you life, you are welcome to join us at the Lord's Table. We will distribute the bread which represents Jesus' body; please hold the bread until all have been served, then we'll eat together. Then we'll distribute the cup which represents Jesus' blood; when all have received then we'll drink together.