

Psalm 19 • Developing a Right Prayer Life

Introduction

The Psalms are content-rich when it comes to the subject of prayer. They are often used to guide church services or groups through prayer. But how does one become like David? How does one develop the right kind of attitude and skills to come before God in the right way? These questions are also answered in the Psalms if we'll look at the basic elements of these prayers and seek to understand how they relate to each other. This isn't about devising some kind of formula, but understanding the principles that need to be the foundation at work in our own prayer life.

¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

[Read v.14]

Point: We're looking at the last verse first because this summarizes the goal of these verses, to achieve a right prayer life—one in which our heart and mind is spiritually synchronized with the character of God. Now study the Psalm in its entirety from the beginning to determine how this can be achieved, how our prayers can “be acceptable in Your sight”.

¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
²Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
³There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
⁶Its 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.

[Read v.1-6]

Q: The goal provided in v.14 has much to do with “the words of my mouth”. How is this paralleled in these verses?

A: There are many references to speech, all of which are creation's testimony to the presence and sovereignty of God.

- “The heavens are **telling** of the glory of God...” (v.1)
- “...their expanse is **declaring** the work of His hands.” (v.1)
- “Day to day pours forth **speech**...” (v.2)
- “...their **utterances** to the end of the world.” (v.4)

Q: Focus on the things that creation is specifically declaring concerning God. What spiritual act do they combine to produce in the psalmist?

A: The combined references to “the glory of God”, “the work of His hands”, and “knowledge” produce the act of worship.

Point: Remember that the biblical definition of worship is to first and foremost acknowledge God for who He is and what He's done. Throughout the Bible whenever people come into a personal encounter with God or Christ, they fall at His feet and worship; that is, they acknowledge His authority and power and character over everything else.

Q: What is the “line” referred to in v.4?

A: A recurring theme throughout the entire Bible has to do with a “measuring line”, sometimes also referred to as one's “measure”. Everyone has a line or measure, which can be thought of as the course one has to steer as measured out or directed to them. It's a teaching of God's will directing everything, no matter how small the detail (as when He has Ezekiel and John use a line to measure things) or how great the activity (such as setting the repeating course of the sun from one end of the earth to the other). Paul describes it thus:

But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.

2 Corinthians 10:13

[Continued on the next page.]

Psalm 19 • Developing a Right Prayer Life, Page 1 of 3

Q: So how does this reference to the line fit it with the previous verses leading into it?

A: It's the ultimate acknowledgment of God's authority and control, an act of worship granting that God is in complete, measured control of everything, even the workings of the great mysteries we don't fully understand.

Application: When coming to the Lord in prayer, do you sometimes rush straight to your list of requests? Why is it important to incorporate worship of Him, your acknowledgment of who He is and such attributes as His Kingship, sovereignty, and authority? What does it say about us when we spend the whole time talking about ourselves and take little or no time for Him?

[Read v.7-11]

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

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

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;

In keeping them there is great reward.

Q: There are several terms for God's Word listed here. What does "law" specifically reference?

A: The Hebrew word for "law" is "torah", which is not just the formal name of the Law given through Moses, but also means "teaching" or "instruction". One of the amazing things to consider is that God provided the Bible as His instruction and personal teaching on how to live. Here it is specifically praised as being "*perfect, restoring the soul*". God's perfect Law instructs for the purpose of restoration.

Q: What does "testimony" mean?

A: Think of this word in the context of "eye witness testimony". It is a powerful statement about the corroboration of the truth of all aspects of God's Word as provided by His personal witness of their details, effects, and consequences. Here it is described as "*sure*", tangibly producing His wisdom within us.

Q: What is a "precept"?

A: These are the responsibilities God has laid upon His people, requirements **AFTER** one has come to have a right relationship with Him. Keeping them is not only the "*right*" thing to do, but "*rejoicing the heart*" of the obedient. God's service and its ensuing obligations produces joy.

Q: What is a "commandment"?

A: These are those things God has spoken which detail the responsibilities of human beings to live in a covenant relationship with Him. It's not only described as "*pure*"—that is, free from even the remotest pollution due to sin—but "*enlightening the eyes*" because once entered into it reveals God's will and path.

Q: What is "the fear of the Lord"?

A: It is the proper respect of God with the full knowledge of who He is and our right relationship to Him. Like His commandments, it's described as "*clean*"—void of being tainted by sin—and "*enduring forever*"—lasting both for this life and the one to come.

Q: What is a "judgment" of the Lord?

A: Some things have been pre-ordained—that is, declared from the outset—to result in a final outcome. For instance, those that do not accept God are already "judged" dead because their actions are leading to hell. It's a very strong set of boundaries and rules established by the Creator of the universe that provide the basis for all that follows. In this instance, the psalmist affirms that they're not only factually "*true*", but that they combine to provide a picture of God's very righteousness.

Point: *Imagine if we adhered to all these things, we would be coming before God restored, wise, rejoicing, enlightened, clean, and in truth. What would the quality of your prayer life be like?*

Q: The six descriptions of God's Word combine in v.10 to produce 2 effects. What do they mean?

A: To be "more desirable than gold" is to mean that God's Word is far more valuable than any material possession this world can offer. To be "sweeter than honey" is a reference to the fact that God's Word is more nourishing than anything this world can offer. Whereas these attributes in an uncontrollable person—desire for material possessions and feeding one's self—are the leading causes of pride and greed producing sin, in a spiritually obedient person they find their alternative fulfillment in God Himself.

Q: What are the 2 practical benefits of God's Word as provided in v.11?

A: First and foremost, they provide a warning. This addresses the fact that every person has free will, the ability to choose whether or not to obey God's Word. Furthermore, any person that rightly chooses obedience to God's Word ultimately earns a "great reward".

Q: In the context of developing a right prayer life, what is the application of these verses? What role does God's Word play in our prayers?

A: We are not supposed to be living our life any way we please and then coming to Him and seeking things with no intention of changing our behavior. One of the key preparations before coming to God is to keep His Word as consistently as possible.

Application: *Why is obedience in our everyday walk a critical preparation for our time of prayer? As a parent, how do you react to a child that keeps asking for something but continually fails to change their behavior? Is it possible that at least some of the blocks you experience in your prayer life are rooted in disobedience to God's Word and ways?*

¹²Who can discern his errors? Acquit me
of hidden faults.

¹³Also 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.

¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

[Read v.12-13]

Q: Having first initiated worship of God and come to Him in obedience to His Word, what is primarily the first thing the psalmist personally seeks from God?

A: To know if there are any issues of personal, unresolved sin that are lingering between him and God. Before he makes any personal requests, he seeks for God to "acquit me" in order to "be blameless". The psalmist knows that only God can make us acceptable and pure before Him, and that is what is needed before proceeding further.

[Read v.14]

Q: Having been properly prepared and spiritually cleansed, what is the end result?

A: That whatever is presented to God is "acceptable in Your sight".

Point: *The goal isn't to find a formula that somehow obligates God to answer our prayers in the precise manner we desire, but that we should be living according to His standard of righteousness so that our prayers will be in alignment with His will.*