

September

6

GOD'S LIFE-GIVING INSTRUCTIONS

God's laws give life to those who follow them.

THE WORD

PSALM
19:1-14

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

²Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

³They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

⁴Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

KEY VERSE

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

¹²But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

ENGAGE THE WORD

This psalm begins with a majestic description of God's work of creation, offers one of the most beautiful descriptions of the law in all of Scripture, and concludes with a promise of deliverance and a familiar prayer of praise. With a psalm packed with this much goodness, it may be difficult to understand how verses 1-6 and 7-14 are held together. How do we gather these pieces that seem to point to very different, maybe even divergent, aspects of God and make sense of them? Is there a unifying theme that we can use to bind it all together?

THE CREATOR

Psalm 19:1-6

The first six verses of our psalm offer a powerfully poetic proclamation that creation sings to the Creator every day! In verse 1, the psalmist declares that the "heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." We look around us and realize that they are indeed doing so, right now! Creation acknowledges the benevolent Creator, who has put all of this grandeur into motion. The song of creation transcends words and moves us at the very depths of our souls.

W.T. Purkiser said, "Rightly understood, all nature bears witness to its divine Creator. The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God from the existence of the universe. It does point to the universe as an evidence of the majesty and wisdom of God."* We too, like creation, must acknowledge God as the God of the universe—Creator and Sustainer.

THE LAWGIVER

Psalm 19:7-11

Some scholars question whether verses 1-6 and verses 7-11 should be together, or whether they were written to be in the same poem, because of the sharp

Did You Know?

The Hebrew word *shob/show* in Psalm 19:7 is translated “re-freshing” and also implies “reviving” or “turning.” In this context, it suggests turning from our own ways and resources to trust in God.

departure from the theme of creation in verse 6 to speaking of the written law in verse 7. This jarring juxtaposition can appear confusing. And yet, we must change our perspective to think of these two sections as a married couple who are so very different, but who support and make one another better because of their differences.

In taking this path, what does this section on the law add? How does it work in support of the preceding section on acknowledging God as the God of the universe? Listen to these promises about the Word of the Lord: The law is perfect, reviving the soul; the statutes are trustworthy, making wise the simple; the precepts are right, rejoicing the heart; the commands are radiant, giving light to the eyes (see vv. 7-8). The psalmist even declares that the Word of the Lord is of greater value than gold (v. 10)! From the perspective of this psalmist, God’s laws should be revered rather than feared, lauded rather than dreaded. We often think of God’s laws as a set of rules, things we have to do or accomplish or avoid in order to make God happy. Yet, the law is intended to be seen as a patient guide, a wise “mentor,” leading us through the precarious pathways of life in God-honoring ways. These descriptions of the law support this idea of the law as a way of life that leads to joy and peace.

Psalm 19:11 declares that there is great reward in keeping God’s law, and this declaration is echoed in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, in which the Lord asks us to fear Him, walk in obedience to Him, love and serve Him, and observe the Lord’s commands, all for our “own good.”

THE SPIRIT OF GOD **Psalm 19:12-14**

If these two sections (vv. 1-6 and 7-11) still feel very different, how can we pull them together? What is the connection? First, by recognizing God as Maker, we are confessing Him as the one alone who has the right to create the laws by which we live. These laws,

Think About It

[The psalmist] prays for Yahweh's entanglement in his life, forgiving him, restraining him, shaping him so that he lives pleasing to the Creator, inside and out. –David L. Thompson
[New Beacon Bible Study: Psalms 1-72 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2015), 127.]

created out of love, are the way by which we live in relationship with God and others.

Second, God did not create us and leave us to walk the path of life alone. No, He promised His presence and guidance. How does this happen? It is the Spirit who opens the Word to our minds and by whom the Word penetrates our hearts. It is the Spirit that makes God's commands more than just rules to follow. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to obey.

It is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ who makes God's Word come alive, causing black words on white pages to become a sword dividing bone and marrow, soul from Spirit, plunging deep into our insides where it can judge between our thoughts and our intentions (see Hebrews 4:12). The Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that enabled the disciples to preach the good news (Acts 2:14-40; Acts 3:12-25) and heal the sick (Acts 3:1-11) in the book of Acts, is the same Spirit that enables us to live the life God calls us to live.

When God's Word seems too heavy, like a weight or a millstone around our necks, there is the Holy Spirit to animate, give life, and set the Word free in us. The Spirit draws us to the pages of God's Word and penetrates our hearts with the law of love. Thus, we may pray with the psalmist in the Spirit, "May these words of my mouth and this medication of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

*W.T.Purkiser. *Beacon Bible Commentary: Job through Song of Solomon*. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1967), 182.

REFLECT

Take time this week to think about the meaning and purpose of God's laws.

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