

DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



God's Revelation & OUR RESPONSE

Dr. Stanley D. Toussaint

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Dr. Stan Toussaint, one of Dallas Theological Seminary's most beloved professors, went to be with his Lord on September 5, 2017, at the age of 89. We are honored to present the last chapel message he delivered at DTS, a classic exposition of Psalm 19 that was part of our Heritage Week series in 2016. In his introduction of Dr. Toussaint, DTS Chancellor Dr. Mark Bailey stated that Dr. Toussaint "has spent more than half of this Seminary's history connected with this place. He is a pastor/teacher and a scholar who taught here for 47 years before retiring in 2013, but we bring him back in as much as we can. He's taught all over the U.S. and the world in ministry and in pulpits expounding the Word of God."

If God has spoken, nothing is more important than to listen to what He has said. He has revealed Himself in many ways—supremely, in the Lord Jesus, who “is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15, NASB).

There's a revelation of God in nature and a revelation of God in the Bible. Many people say that's the outline of Psalm 19. However, the psalm doesn't just have two points; Psalm 19, like all good sermons, has three points. There is the revelation of God in the skies (vv. 1–6), the revelation of God in the Scriptures (vv. 7–11), and the response of the psalmist to God's revelation (vv. 12–14), which needs to become our response today.

GOD'S REVELATION IN THE SKIES

The idea that Psalm 19 refers to the revelation of God in nature is generally true, but it's not precise. You don't find when you read Psalm 19 anything about mountains or animals or trees, nothing about this planet. What you have are the stars, the sun, the moon. In other words, it's not the revelation of God in nature; it's more specific—it's the revelation of God in the skies.

So, let's look at the revelation in the skies. First of all, it's continual. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (vv. 1–2). These participles in verse 1 denote continual action; constantly, day to day, night to night, the skies are revealing the glory of God. There's not a split second when God is not revealing Himself in the skies. When you lie on your back and gaze into the stars, you realize it is the closest thing to infinity that you will see before you die. You begin to see what God is like in the skies.

The next thing about God's revelation in the skies is that it's universal. "There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world" (vv. 3–4). If you have been in a foreign country whose language you don't speak, you know that language can be a horrible barrier to communication.

Some years ago I was in a suburb of Mexico City for a missions conference and decided to get a haircut. I went down the street explaining that I didn't speak Spanish: "*Por favor, no hablo Español, barbershop, haircut?*" I got just shrugs until I stopped a person and said, "*Por favor, no hablo Español, bzzzz*" while making the motion of a barber's shears at my head. He took me right to the barbershop!

Not everybody understands a particular language, but everybody can hear and see and sense God in the skies: the sun, the moon, and the stars. The psalmist illustrated his point with the sun: "In [the skies] He has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices as a strong man to run his course" (vv. 4b–5). Unlike in our culture, in the Bible the center of attention at a wedding is the groom. That's why, while the church is the bride of Christ, it is our Groom who receives the glory.

So here in Psalm 19 we have the picture of a groom at a wedding coming out of his tent dressed in his finery—young, strong, handsome. That's what the sunrise is like. The sun is also like a strong man running his course. In other words, the sun is going to finish its course: sunrise, sunset, continually.

Furthermore, the psalmist wrote, “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” (v. 6). The words “end” should be plural, “ends,” showing the completeness of the sun’s circuit. The sun is universal, with nothing on earth hidden from it. The sun is an illustration of God’s revelation in the skies that any thinking person can see.

During the French Revolution when everything ran amok, an infamous revolutionist said to a simple peasant, “We are going to destroy your churches and pull down your steeples, so you’ll have nothing to remind you of your vain stupid superstitions.”

That simple peasant looked back and smiled. “But, sir, what are you going to do with the sun, the moon, and the stars?” There’s a revelation of God in the skies that cannot be denied.

GOD’S REVELATION IN THE SCRIPTURES

Psalms 19 also says there is a revelation of God in the Scriptures. And notice that there is an immediate change in vocabulary in verses 7–11. The word “God” (v. 1) normally translates the Hebrew word *el* (singular) or *elohim* (plural). In the ancient world any god, including the true God, could be called *el* or *elohim*.

But in this section God is referred to as “LORD,” written in our English Bibles with an initial capital letter followed by small capitals. It appears this way to distinguish it as the translation of Yahweh or Jehovah, God’s personal covenant name—the self-existent “I AM WHO I AM”—revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:14).

This name is used six times in verses 7–9, telling us that the God who has inscribed His name across the face of the universe is the same God who inspired the Bible. Yahweh, the LORD of the Bible, is the God of the universe. That is fantastic. The Creator of the universe has given us this Book. And notice that the six occurrences of God’s unique name are tied to six names for the Scriptures that give us wonderful insight into His revelation.

First, “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul” (v. 7a). This is the same clause we find in Psalm 23:3a, “He restores my soul.” It means the Word of God refreshes us. As a pastor I would often go into a hospital room and listen to the plight of the patient. Then I would try to find a passage from Scripture that would fit the person’s circumstance and read it very slowly and deliberately, so that every word would sink in.

And more than once I’ve had the person turn to the bedside table, pull out a pen and a pad, and say, “Pastor, what was that passage? I want to read it again; it spoke to me.” The Word of God refreshes us, and you and I will need that refreshing again and again.

Second, “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (v. 7b). That doesn’t mean knowing God’s Word will raise your IQ. Years ago, I taught a course on the spiritual life for first semester students here at DTS. I remember this one student who was convinced that if you walked with the Lord, your IQ would go up. He argued with me about that the whole semester until the final grades came out—then he never said another thing!

Knowing and obeying God’s Word won’t make you more intelligent, but it *will* make you wise. I’ve seen brilliant people make foolish decisions and very simple people make wise decisions because their priorities were on the Word of God.

Third, “The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart” (v. 8a). Have you ever noticed that joy is evidence of walking with the Lord? “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy” (Gal. 5:22). I challenge you to read the Book of Acts and notice how often joy occurs. It’s a subtheme throughout the book. Over and over again you will find the church rejoicing. Why? Because a victorious church is a joyful church. When you are in the Word of God, it rejoices the heart.

Fourth, “The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (v. 8b). Once again it sounds like the Word makes you wise. But this literally says that it gives you “bright eyes.” You can tell how a person is feeling by looking into his or her eyes. If they are glazed over, you know the person isn’t feeling well, while a healthy person’s eyes are shiny and bright. A good example of this on the physical level is how Jonathan’s “eyes brightened” (1 Sam. 14:27) when he ate some honey to

refresh himself after the exhaustion of battle. The psalmist is talking about God’s Word giving us spiritual vitality and vigor. It is God’s vitamin box.

Fifth, “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever” (v. 9a). This is an interesting name for the Bible because it inspires awe and respect for God. God’s Word is “clean”; there is no pollution in it. I’ve been told the writings of some Eastern religions are so filthy they almost defy translation, and they don’t endure. But the Word of God is clean, and it endures forever.

Sixth, “The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether” (v. 9b). The teachings of God’s Word are true and sure, so we as believers can be absolutely confident in building our lives on them. They are designed to lead us to obey God and lead righteous lives.

These traits in Psalm 19 mean that God’s revelation in Scripture should make His Word our ultimate desire. God’s precepts are “more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb” (v. 10). Gold reflects materialism, the pursuit of things. Honey illustrates the pursuit of pleasure—hedonism. Two great blights on world Christianity are materialism and hedonism. The psalmist is saying that God’s Word is more precious than any material thing or pleasure. If God has spoken, nothing—not even gold or honey—is more important than to listen to what He has said.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S REVELATION

There is one thing more important, and that’s our response *to* God’s revelation. That’s why we have verses 12–14, the response of the psalmist.

The psalmist begins, “Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults” (v. 12). Hidden faults are sins you commit, and you don’t even realize it. Those are secret sins—sins you don’t even know you committed. The psalmist continues: “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” (v. 13). Presumptuous sins are those sins we intend to commit. Planned sins.

The psalmist talks about unknown sins, secret sins, and planned sins because your response to the Word of God opens your heart to God. When you open your heart to God the first thing you will see is your sin. That's what Isaiah prayed when he saw the Lord in His majestic glory in the temple: "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). When you are open to the Scriptures, your first response is, "O Lord, I am a sinful person." You will see your sin as you have never seen it before; you will have no pride, no self-exaltation.

Scripture allows us to see ourselves how we truly are. But that's negative. The positive is given in Psalm 19:14, where we read: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer." God doesn't just want the negative; He wants your heart. That's why the psalm talks about the words of your mouth and the meditation of your heart. It's your deepest being committed to Christ.

Why do we have the response of the psalmist? Because the most important thing in the world is not just to listen, but it is *how* you listen. Be careful how you listen to God's Word. Don't just put it in your head and become proud, because knowledge without response puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1–2). Instead, take the Word of God and accept it for your life.

There are three basic attitudes you can have toward the Word of God: One, you can put it beneath you and say it's just a human book and reject it. Two, you can put yourself on an equal standing with the Bible, accepting some things and rejecting others that may not be politically correct to you, making yourself a judge of the Bible. Or three, you can put yourself under the Bible and say like Samuel, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening" (1 Sam. 3:9).

I pray to God that this last one will be our response, that all of us may be in humble and gracious submission to the glorious Word of God.

The late Dr. Stanley D. Toussaint faithfully taught the New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary for 47 years and pastored for more than 20 years. A pastor-teacher who was committed to expository preaching, Dr. Toussaint thoroughly enjoyed both roles. Dr. Toussaint was an editor, author, teacher, and conference speaker who taught not only at the Seminary but also in Christian schools in the Middle East, Australia, and the Far East. He also ministered in the pulpits around the world. Known as one of the world's leading authorities on the New Testament, Dr. Toussaint received a B.A. degree from Augsburg College in 1951 and held both the ThM (1955) and ThD (1957) degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary.