

Psalms 19

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[0 : 00] I know if you'd like to take a Bible again and turn back to that Psalm, Psalm 19! It's on page 456. Psalm 19. I hope you don't think I'm rude by asking you this question, but are you the type of person who constantly hears voices? Have you got voices in your head?

Maybe that little voice is talking to you right now. If it is, please don't share it with the person next to you. But what is it saying if it is speaking to you? If you are the type of person who hears voices, it could be that you need a holiday or you need some medication.

Have you got voices in your head constantly talking to you? As we look at this Psalm, though, written by God's servant, King David, it seems as though he is one of those people.

He's got voices on the brain. God-praising, God-glorifying voices wherever he goes. Look at all the voice-type words in the Psalm right from the beginning. The sky above proclaims day-to-day, day-to-day, pours out speech. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out, their words to the end of the world. God-praising, God-glorifying voices. Then there are more different types of voice from verse 7, aren't there? Law, testimony, commandment. And then the Psalm, it all ends in verse 14 with his voice. David's voice, the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart. David is obsessed with voices. He's got God-praising, God-glorifying voices on the brain. His ears are constantly hearing them, aren't they? Speech is everywhere in his life. There's a cacophony of sound full of God-praising,

God-glorifying voices. But I want us to see three main voices that we hear in this Psalm. Are they just voices in his head? What are they saying? And can we hear them as well?

[2 : 39] So firstly, there's the voice of the skies. The voice of the skies. Now Psalm 19, it's a truly majestic Psalm. It's a wonderful piece of writing. I've really enjoyed looking at it over this past few weeks. It's been turned into choruses by Bach and Beethoven. Joseph Haydn had it as the chorus in his massive masterpiece, Oratorio, The Creation. They are grand words with a grand subject. It's lofty and it begins with those famous lines, the heavens declare the glory of God. The sky or the firmament above proclaims his handiwork. The vast expanse of the sky is telling something. It's speaking to you. The heavens above, he says, are proclaiming something. And David says, can you hear it? Can you hear the voice? Listen up. If you listen to a good piece of music, or see a beautiful piece of art, or eat a five-star meal, as we thought about with the children earlier, the first question that we instinctively ask is, who made it? How did it get there? How did it get on my plate? How did it get in this art gallery? Or into my ears? Was it an artist? Picasso? Or Rembrandt? Was it a musician? Mozart?

Or Schubert? Or was it a chef? Who made it? And isn't it the same when we see the heavens? Don't you just look up sometimes at the vastness of it and think, who made it? We can think to ourselves of our little lives on this little planet Earth, can't we? And you look up at the sky and you perhaps wonder to yourself, is there something else? The sky, it speaks of the one who made it. It declares the glory of God, David says. Now the word for glory in the Bible, it's used to describe something when it's impressive, when it's really breathtaking, when it's weighty, when it's heavy with glory. The heavens tell us that God is weighty and vast. As you look up at the sky, and it's been a great sky today, hasn't it? You look at the vastness of it, maybe think of the summertime, if you can use your imagination really well, the hues of blue and pink in the morning. The jet streams of the Heathrow plains tearing through the crisp stratospheric air. Have you ever stared at it? marvelled at its beauty?

You know, the cathedrals in this country, a lot of them anyway, over the last thousand years if they'd been built. They tried to symbolise the immensity of the sky with ceilings, with ornate masonry and paintings. So if you go to St Paul's Cathedral, it's a great example, isn't it? But you know, when you go there and look at the ceiling, you find that you have to look at a mirror. They

have mirrors around the place, don't they? So you can look and see the reflection. And that's a great illustration, that the sky is so great and so big and so vast that it actually hurts. So look at it for any length of time. For us little humans, it's just too great to take it in. It's hard in London to really appreciate that, isn't it, with so many buildings blocking the view. But just try it one day this week. Just try it if you go outside. Just try looking up for any length of time, trying to take it all in. The heavens are so great, it hurts to try it. And we wonder, who made it? Who made it? And then of course there's the night time sky as well, isn't there. Have you ever seen the night time sky on a clear night in a dark place? The silver, the diamond sparkle of the stars, the deepness of the black. Like that time on holiday in France, and I really remember it still now, where we counted 11 shooting stars one evening during a meteor shower. Or the mysteriousness of the northern lights. Can you hear it? David says. Listen up. The voice speaking to you out of the expanse. It's a great and massive voice. And we wonder, who made it? Who made it?

[8 : 03] You know, a holiday company once recently advertised a package that they were putting on for trips to the Rocky Mountains. It's fantastic. And on the poster, there's a photograph of a man and a woman stood on the top of a mountain, looking out over the mountainscape. It's a great photograph. They've got all of their walking gear on. And they're stood at the summit. The sun is just going down over the horizon. And before them is the utter vastness of the Rocky Mountains.

They stand there. And you can just imagine them, what they're saying. They're saying, wow, aren't they? Not really knowing what to say. But the tagline under the poster, under this picture, says, the Rocky Mountains come and feel insignificant. Great line, isn't it? Come and feel insignificant. When we say, wow. Isn't it interesting that the holiday company very cleverly knows of the deep desire that we have to be faced with the vastness of something much greater than ourselves? To wonder at it. To feel insignificant. And as David looks at the heavens, that's how he feels about God. Wow, he says. Who made it? He is waiting. And I'm overwhelmed. He says, the skies proclaim his handiwork. For him, the infinite sky is a work of the fingertips. That is how weighty and vast God is. Now the day and the night, they both feature, don't they, in the psalm? Both of them are there. Verse 2, day to day calls out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge. It's a universal message to the whole globe. It's a universal message to the whole globe, to the whole world. On each turn of its axis, on each orbit of the sun. The voice of the creation, it goes out throughout the whole world. If you think the sermon's along here, this is a never-ending sermon, isn't it? Constant. And no one is too far away from its message. Too far away to hear. Speech pours out, David says, from the heavens. One writer says that it's like he's saying the skies bubble over.

[10 : 47] They can't contain what they're saying. They're bursting to proclaim their creator. And they make us think, wow. Who made it? It makes us feel insignificant. And just notice how there is so much repetition, isn't there? Day to day. Night to night. It's a message on a loop. Have a look at verse 6 there.

He's speaking about the sun, and it rises from the end of the heavens, and it's circuit to the end of the heavens, and there's nothing hidden from its heat. The sun, it goes round and around and around. You know, if you've got young kids, you will know all too well that they love to repeat things, don't they? If you're a parent of young children, you now know songs and TV programmes that you never thought you would know to an expert level. You can do a PhD on fireman's sound. You could recite the alphabet song in your sleep. It's so funny how children love to repeat things. Repeating stuff. Again and again with that song. Again and again with that toy. Again and again with that TV programme. Again and again. And as adults, I suppose we've sort of lost that, haven't we? We're not content doing the same thing. Again and again we want to do new things all the time. But there's a childlike joy in singing the same song day after day, night after night, on a circuit, on a loop. It's as if when the day begins, God says, do it again. God says, do it again. As each sunrise comes up. He says, do it again.

With each crescent moon, do it again. Do it again. And the creation, it loves, doesn't it? To do it again. It loves to repeat itself day after day, night after night. Declaring about the great and vast maker. Haven't we stopped calling the heavens the right name. We don't call the heavens the heavens anymore, do we? We now call it space. Space. It's become empty and void and void and indiscriminate. Space. It's a vacuum without any personality. It's utterly voiceless, utterly arbitrary, utterly meaningless. Richard Dawkins described it as indiscriminate nothingness. Space. But that is just not how David feels about it, is it? The heavens are not empty and void. They're like, verse 4, a tent, a great big circus marquee to show off the sun, which he says like a bridegroom leaves his

The God who speaks through galaxies is the God who speaks through grammar. He speaks through worlds and planets.

And now he speaks in little words and punctuation marks in scripture. From the cosmos to the commandments.

the universe. And intimate voice. An intimate voice that we can grasp. That we can understand in our hands. So what you've got in verses 7 to 10 is a list of reviews that David gives about the scriptures.

[22 : 18] You know when you go to a restaurant or you buy a product on Amazon you see the reviews don't you? And it's four stars this, five stars that. And you get to the bottom of the page and there's a kind of bottom line isn't there? 5.5 or whatever it is. The review average at the end. And it works a bit like that.

We're meant to see the sum of all of the things that he says in verse 7 to 10 as a whole. But maybe let's pick out a couple in detail. What about review number one?

In verse 7. The law of the Lord is perfect. Reviving the soul. Now he's not just talking about the ten commandments there when he says the law.

He's talking about the Torah. The Bible as David had it. So the whole story from Genesis to Exodus. Plus the books of the law. So Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

They're the foundational writings of Moses. And he says that the scriptures that I have got are perfect. They're complete. They're all you need.

[23 : 30] There's nothing left out. Nothing that God has forgotten. There are no sort of asterisk marks with a footnote or a small type at the bottom saying P.S. I forgot to mention this major thing.

There's none of that. It's all there. And it revives the soul. The image that he uses there is the same image that he uses a couple of pages on in Psalm 23.

Do you remember that famous psalm? The Lord is my shepherd. He leads me beside still waters. He revives or restores my soul.

You know, if you've got an old house, if you're living in an old house, you might see signs at times where there needs to be some restoration work doing.

I hope they won't mind me saying this, but when I lived at Cleveland Road, 52 Cleveland Road, there were signs of that. So cracks were appearing. In Natalia's room at the back, there was a crack the size of a fist.

[24 : 32] And so Mark and Sue got more and more desperate to move out of the house because it was obvious major restoration works were needed. But that's the image there, isn't it?

The scriptures to the person who needs restoration. They're really struggling. Cracks are appearing. There's something maybe below the surface.

They're almost falling apart. They've just been battered by the elements for too long. They need restoration.

But the scriptures get under that. They get under the foundations. They get beneath the real problems. They restore your soul, David says.

Or maybe look at review number 4 in verse 8. The commandment of the Lord is pure. Enlightening the eyes.

[25 : 38] It's pure. Without pollution. Without artificial additives. Emma has got some pure manuka honey at home. It's the really special stuff.

It costs a bomb. So we don't use much of it. And maybe that is what David is thinking about as he speaks about the purity of God's word. He's got honey on the brain, hasn't he?

In verse 10. He talks about sweeter than honey. Drippings of the honeycomb. Maybe he's thinking about his friend Jonathan. His best friend Jonathan.

Who in 1 Samuel chapter 14 is tired from battle. He's been fighting the Philistines. And King Saul in that chapter is making stupid rules about not being allowed to eat food during battle.

But Jonathan, who didn't hear that rule, he finds some honey on the forest floor. And he puts his hand to his mouth. And we're told his eyes became bright.

[26 : 43] He said to his company around him, My father has troubled this land. But see how my eyes have become bright. Because I tasted a little of this honey.

And that's the image I think there, isn't it? The one who is in the thick of battle. So you're exhausted. You're beaten down. You're tired.

You're discouraged. And the scriptures, he says, are like a taste of pure honey. That puts the glint back in your eye again. You can fight just a little more.

They're just two of the reviews, aren't they, that David gives. And there are lots more that we maybe haven't got time to go into. But all of these reviews come down to the end verdict in verse 10 to 11. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned.

[27 : 47] In keeping them there is great reward. He says they're decadent. They're unctuous. They're rich. They're rewarding. In other words, he said, I don't want you to just see what they're like.

I want you to want them like I want them. To desire them. You know, the word that it uses, desire there in the ESV, it's slightly weak.

It's more like the word that is used for covet in Hebrew. Covet. In fact, it's the same word that is used when Eve looks at the apple in the Garden of Eden.

And she covets it. She wants it. It's the same word that is used in the Tenth Commandment. You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

It is about lust. It is about grabbing hold of something. And eating it. And wanting it. David says with the scriptures, indulge yourself.

[28 : 56] Get stuck in. Next time you're thinking, shall I bother opening up the scriptures? Shall I bother going to house group this week?

David says, indulge yourself. Go on. Be greedy. The voice of the scriptures. The Bible is like a burning sun.

Like a spiritual supernova in the hands. God praising. God glorifying. Voices in the skies. And in the scriptures.

So he says, can you hear it? Can you hear it? They're the first two voices. The voice of the skies. And the scriptures.

So if you think about it, the pattern of things in this psalm has been to start up there, isn't it? In the skies. Way out there. And then down to the scriptures.

[29 : 55] But now David finishes far closer to home. He finishes in here. In his own heart and mind.

Have a quick look at verses 12 to 14. And I have to warn you that he has kept the hammer blow of this passage to the very end.

So we need to try and stay sharp. Do you see that the audience again, in verse 12 to 14, has changed? So the world and God's people, his covenant people, have now left the theatre.

And the roles have been reversed. There is just one person now sat listening. And David is on the stage. It's God listening to the voice of David's heart.

God is watching. And God is now listening. To the secret hidden voice that is in David's heart. In the servant.

[31 : 12] The voice of the skies. The voice of the scriptures. And finally, the voice of the servant. The voice of the servant. The focus is now on what God hears in David's inner life.

On his hidden faults, in verse 12. On presumptuous sins. On things that his senses just aren't delicate enough to pick up properly.

On the sins and imperfections in his own life. That we are just too blind and too deaf to see and hear ourselves. And he prays. And he prays Lord.

As my rock and my redeemer. Listen to me. Get your stethoscope out. And listen to my heart.

And clean me up. Redeem me. Verse 14. Let the words of my mouth. And the meditation of my heart. Be acceptable in your sight.

[32 : 12] Oh Lord. My rock and my redeemer. Have you ever thought about your inner monologue? I think we've all got an inner monologue. You know what that is.

It's the voice that goes on in our heads, isn't it? That we always keep to ourselves. Maybe your inner monologue is speaking to you right now. And there are times, aren't there, where your inner monologue can slip out.

When you didn't mean it to. And we think to ourselves. I cannot believe that I just said that out loud.

It would be terrible, wouldn't it? If we could all hear each other's inner monologues all of the time.

If I could hear what you're thinking. And you could hear what I'm thinking at this moment. It's the voice that should remain in our hearts most of the time. And in our heads.

But out of all of the voices that David knows in this psalm. It's the inner voice that he's concerned with. That inner monologue. Those words in our heart and our minds that show our real attitudes. [33 : 19] The things that we say about each other in the secrecy of our own thoughts. As one American writer says. The words not that are spoken out in the cosmos by God.

But in the closet by man. Behind closed doors. Deep in the heart. What's the voice saying there? God is listening to it. And you know, the more we think about that voice. Given all that we've seen in this passage, in this psalm. The more we realise just how out of tune we are with the voice of the skies.

And the voice of the scriptures. The God praising. The God glorifying voices. There's such a contrast, isn't there? The light and the glory and the beauty of those voices in verses 1 to 11 in this psalm.

Become the darkness and the ugliness and the sinfulness of the voice in the heart of the servant.

[34 : 30] In verse 12 to 14. You know, just imagine how rude it would be. To go to a party and sit in the corner talking to yourself.

As everyone else is having a chat. But like that we are out of sync with the party of the whole of creation. The voice going in our own heart is so sinful and selfish and presumptuous in comparison. And David says, it's a voice that is so hard to get out of my head. It fights to get dominion over me, he says.

We keep holding our own little conversation with ourselves. About ourselves, for ourselves. And we're shamed that so often we don't join in the conversation of the skies.

And the scriptures of the whole of creation. But as the servant's voice is heard by God. We have to think, don't we, of the servant.

[35 : 38] The Lord Jesus Christ. And of course, David's greater son. The Christ. And you wonder, what must his inner monologue have been like?

Who practiced what he preached. Who meant what he said. Who was in his very incarnation, God's word become flesh.

God's very own voice. True voice through and through. That was Jesus. And so you see, in Jesus, what has always been declared in the skies, in the heavens, is finally declared in God's servant. Humanity in the heavens are finally talking in unison at the party in the person of Jesus. Humanity, it comes to the party in Jesus.

Jesus' heart is full to bursting point, pouring out speech, running its course, as it desires and obeys the scriptures, even to the point of death.

[36 : 47] So we get a picture in Jesus of the fulfilment of David's hope in this psalm. That one day, the voice of creation would be echoed in his very own heart.

That it would resound with the sunshine of the scriptures' voice. What heaven has declared in creation, the heart now declares in a human, in Jesus.

So can you hear the voices that David speaks about in this psalm? We look up, don't we, to the skies and we hear God praising, God glorifying voices.

Do it again and again, he says. Saying God is waiting. And we wonder who made it. But we look down at the scriptures and we hear the intimate voice of the Lord reviving and rewarding us, enlightening the eyes.

We look into our own heart though and hear the discord with creation. And pray with David for our rock and our redeemer to change us.

[38 : 06] But we look ultimately at Jesus. The living word. In whom humanity and the heavens finally harmonise.

God praising, God glorifying voices together. Let's pray.