

who not so long ago waited daily for invasion by enemies, like the Assyrians, skilled and constant in systematic cruelty, know how they may have felt. They were tempted, since the Lord seemed deaf, to try those appalling deities who demanded so much more and might therefore perhaps give more in return. But when a Jew in some happier hour, or a better Jew even in that hour, looked at those worships— when he thought of sacred prostitution, sacred sodomy, and the babies thrown into the fire for Moloch— his own “Law” as he turned back to it must have shone with an extraordinary radiance. Sweeter than honey; or if that metaphor does not suit us who have not such a sweet tooth as all ancient peoples (partly because we have plenty of sugar), let us say like mountain water, like fresh air after a dungeon, like sanity after a nightmare...

In so far as this idea of the Law’s beauty, sweetness, or preciousness, arose from the contrast of the surrounding Paganisms, we may soon find occasion to recover it. Christians increasingly live on a spiritual island; new and rival ways of life surround it in all directions and their tides come further up the beach every time. None of these new ways is yet so filthy or cruel as some Semitic Paganism. But many of them ignore all individual rights and are already cruel enough. Some give morality a wholly new meaning which we cannot accept, some deny its possibility. Perhaps we shall all learn, sharply enough, to value the clean air and “sweet reasonableness” of the Christian ethics which in a more Christian age we might have taken for granted. But of course, if we do, we shall then be exposed to the danger of priggery. We might come to “thank God that we are not as other men”.

Reflections on the Psalms.
C. S. Lewis

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2 REASONS FOR WORSHIP (Psalms 19)

OPENING THOUGHT

Last week, we initiated our study of worship with Psalm 1. We saw there that worship is a lifestyle and that true worship must come, not only from what we do but also from who we are. We read about the only two ways of life: the righteous and the wicked (meaning, those who follow God and those who do not). The righteous are known for their delight in the law of the LORD and for being like deeply rooted trees. The wicked, on the other hand, are like chaff that is blown away with the wind and are destined for destruction.

We now turn to a psalm of David, which could be described as celebrating God’s communication with us. At its essence, the psalm looks at two reasons for why we ought to worship God, followed by a prayer to God. The first part discusses the heavens above and how they reveal to us the glory of God. The second section celebrates the law of the LORD and all of its benefits. Finally, the poem concludes with David’s prayer to the LORD.

Both the world (God’s creation) and the law (God’s Word) reveal to us the character of the LORD. By these two forms of revelation, we are therefore able to know God more fully, which makes them prime reasons for worshipping God. Of course, the more we understand of God’s nature, the more we begin to understand of our nature. This is why David’s concluding prayer is so focused upon his sin. After pondering the holiness and glorious might of God, David pleads with the LORD to keep him from committing sins that God despises. Fortunately, in Christ, we are blameless before God, and we can continue to let the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable to Him.

SUGGESTED VERSES FOR MEMORIZATION & MEDITATION

- The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)
- The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (Psalm 19:7)
- Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

READ VERSES 1-6 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

1. By saying that the heavens declare the glory of God, David is speaking about what is called God's natural revelation (what nature reveals to us about God). What attributes of God can we observe from creation? Is natural revelation sufficient for understanding the basics of the gospel?
2. David claims that the voice of the heavens, which proclaim God's glory, go throughout the earth so that everyone hears. Similarly, Paul writes in Romans 1:18-20 that God's attributes have been clearly known to everyone because of God's creation. Given these two passages, is anyone able to truly be an atheist?

READ VERSES 7-11 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

3. In this section, David turns from the natural revelation of God to the special revelation found in the Scriptures, which he takes great delight in. What are some reasons for why David calls the law of the LORD more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey?

READ VERSES 12-14 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

4. This section seems to be slightly out of place with the previous verses. How might David's prayer for the LORD to keep him from sin relate to the first eleven verses of the psalm?

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Having discussed how nature and the Bible both reveal God to us, take a few moments to observe the beauty of God's creation and meditate on the Word. Prayerfully rejoice in God, who gave us both of them.
- Consider David's final prayer, for the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart to be acceptable to God. Make this your prayer as well, asking God for grace to live and speak in ways that are pleasing to Him.

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**C. S. Lewis on
Delighting in the Law of the LORD**

They know that the Lord (not merely obedience to the Lord) is "righteousness" because He loves it (11,8). He enjoins what is good because it is good, because He is good. Hence His laws have emeth "truth", intrinsic validity, rock-bottom reality, being rooted in His own nature, and are therefore as solid as that Nature which He has created. But the Psalmists themselves can say it best; "thy righteousness stunted like the strong mountains, thy judgements are like the great deep" (36,6). Their delight in the Law is a delight in having touched firmness; like the pedestrian's delight in feeling the hard road beneath his feet after a false short cut has long entangled him in muddy fields.

For there were other roads, which lacked "truth". The Jews had as their immediate neighbors, close to them in race as well as in position, Pagans of the worst kind, Pagans whose religion was marked by none of that beauty or (sometimes) wisdom which we can find among the Greeks. That background made the "beauty" or "sweetness" of the Law more visible; not least because these neighbouring Paganisms were a constant temptation to the Jew and may in some of their externals have been not unlike his own religion. The temptation was to turn to those terrible rites in times of terror— when, for example, the Assyrians were pressing on. We