

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Lecture 27

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This is Dr. Bruce Waltke in his teaching on the book of Psalms. This is session 27, Wisdom Psalms Genre, Psalm 19.

In the last lecture, we introduced the genre and basically it pertains to Psalms that give us admonition, both positive and also theodical Psalms that warn us not to envy the prosperity of the wicked.

And then we moved into looking at the psalm. We had done in earlier lectures, Psalm 1, put together wisdom and Torah because Torah Psalms are also admonition and instruction. And so, we looked at the very first lecture about Psalm 1, which was a Torah Psalm.

And we looked at the theodical Psalms like Psalm 49 and Psalm 73. And so I thought we would do another one like Psalm 19, which is a Torah Psalm and an instruction Psalm. And we saw the basic structure of it that it praises God in the creation, and general revelation, and it praises God for Torah and special revelation.

And I think there's a relationship between that. It's not just simply praise for two kinds of revelation. But I think the point of it is that as well, because of his knowledge in general revelation, therefore, he's able to give certain moral revelation in Holy Scripture.

So I don't think it's just simply two aspects of praise. I think they're quite unified in wisdom thinking. I tried to demonstrate that from Job 28 and Proverbs chapter 30, which puts that together.

And this would be the similar thing that God knows the whole heavens and therefore the fear of the Lord, what we saw in Job because he knows everything. Therefore, what he says is to keep the fear of the Lord. And here, because he's created everything, here again, we get the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.

So, it seems to be that sort of logic of the wisdom thinker. Now we want to look at it in more detail and exegete, exposit the psalm. And this is on page 331.

And we begin with the first stanza, God's knowledge or his omniscience that's displayed in the creation. Actually that should be verses one through six, not just simply verses one through four, but it's God's knowledge. And what I'm doing here is I'm looking at the psalm exegetically.

And then since we had the eschatological messianic approach, I'm there upon trying to look at it as well in light of the New Testament. And then I'm looking at it and what does it mean to us personally today? So, I divided this up into the historical interpretive exegesis. Then how does this relate to Christ? And then how do we understand that in application to ourselves? First of all, then we have in verses one through four, that the firmament declares, 4B really, the firmament declares God's glory and God's glory is his comprehensive knowledge.

There are two units here. Actually, God's knowledge in the stanza has really two strophes to it. The first one is God's firmament declares God's glory or his knowledge.

And then he focuses in particular on the Son in the last half of verse four through verse six. Speaking of God, let me get the psalm in front of me here. In that first strophe about the firmament declares God's knowledge and that's what gives him glory is that he speaks in verses one and two about the temporal universality of the firmament's praise of God's knowledge.

You can see in verse two, day to day pours out speech and night to night reveals knowledge. So both day and night, ever, always, he is revealing his glory and his knowledge. In verse four, he speaks about his universality in space, his spatial universality of the firmament's praise.

He says, their voice goes out throughout all the earth and their words to the ends of the world and the words to the end of the world. So verses one and three are verbs of declaration. So he has the heavens declare the glory of God.

The sky above proclaims his handiwork. And then verse three, he elaborates, there is no speech. There are no words.

No sound is heard. So, he talks about the communication in the odd verses. And then in the even verses, he's talking about the universality of that revelation in time and in space.

In the second strophe, he focuses on the sun, which again is comprehensive in space. The sun, of course, is daily and in space. In verse six, it's rising from the ends of the earth and its circuit to the end of them.

And so, it sees the whole thing. There's no end to it. And he uses two metaphors or similes in this case.

One is that he pictures the sun as a bridegroom. And the simile suggests to me that it speaks of the sun's freshness, newness, beauty, vigor, and joy. And the second one, he's a strong man.

And as I would look at it, he's a racer who runs his course with joy. And so, he's both a sprinter because no one can run as fast as the sun. And he's a long-distance runner.

No one can run as far as the sun. So, these two similes speak of his exuberance and speak of his strength and universality. So far as it refers to Christ, as I would think of it, that in John 1, Christ is the word that brought about the creation, that he is the agent of the creation through whom it is accomplished.

And the moral, I think I would bring in here what we did in Psalm 8 is that this revelation is so glorious you're without excuse for not responding to the creator. But suffice it to say, I like Joseph Addison's paraphrase of Psalm 19, what though in solemn silence all move round the dark terrestrial ball. What though no real voice nor sound amid their radiant orbs be found.

In reason's ear, they all rejoice and utter forth a glorious voice. And I think that humankind, like Kant, it spoke to him immediately of God. Though there is no voice, there is no sound yet to reason's ear, we hear it and we see it.

Oh, I should have added, what though in solemn silence all move round the dark terrestrial ball. What though no real voice nor sound amid their radiant orbs be found. In reason's ear, they all rejoice and utter forth a glorious voice forever singing as they shine.

The hand that made us is divine. Having spoken of the glories of God in the creation and his knowledge, now we come to the moral excellence of Torah. He basically almost exhausts the vocabulary of Torah.

I divided this into two parts, Torah's essence and Torah's reward. His essence is its moral perfections. It's complete, it's flawless, it's righteous, it's eternal.

And then we talk about its rewards and essentially it's wisdom's reward, which is life itself. But notice how he describes it in its perfection, in its seven perfections. He says, first of all, the law of the Lord is perfect, by which he means it is complete.

And I like Spurgeon's comments. He said it is a crime to add to it, treason to alter it, and a felony to take from it. It's an interesting quote about it.

That's Spurgeon. A good lesson for expository preaching. Pardon? A good lesson for expository preaching.

Yeah. And I like the one, yeah, perfect. When he says it's sure, it means it's totally reliable.

And I suggest it's totally sure, totally reliable. The testimony of the Lord is sure because it's based on comprehensive knowledge. It's based on universal knowledge.

Then he says that it is upright. The commandment of the Lord is upright. We already commented on that, which means it is faultless.

It doesn't have a bend or twist in it. It's perfectly smooth, and straight. It's flawless.

When he says it's pure, the Hebrew word means it's scoured until it shines. It's that pure. So that's why it enlightens.

It's pure. Then he says, and he said, the law of the Lord is perfect. It's absolutely perfect.

It's complete. It's sure, totally reliable. There's not a blemish in it.

In fact, it is scoured until it shines. Then he says, it is clean. By that, he means there is no mixture in it.

And because there is no impurities in it, it endures forever. There's nothing to make it decay. 9b, he says, the rules of the Lord are true, by which he means they are firm.

They're steady. They cannot be overturned, unlike human judgments. So that his law is unchangeable.

It's true. It cannot be altered. And it's righteous.

It's in total conformity to God's character and his will. Those are the seven moral excellences of God's word. Why are so many people afraid to preach it then? Of course, I think the reason is, I think, you know, I think we want to please people and we'll preach what we think people want to hear.

I think we want to grow churches. And so, we want to attract people and we tell them what they want to hear. I think that may be the reason.

Grow churches and not grow people. Good enough. Yeah, I think that's right.

That's a good way of putting it. Torah's reward is, he says, that it revives the soul. That renews vitality like in Psalm 22.

I suggest it restores life to the sad and to the discouraged. It's used, for example, of what Obed will do for Naomi. He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age.

So, the word of God will renew you, will refresh you. I think that's why it's good for us to read it every morning. It is the testimony of the Lord making wise the simple.

That is to say, wisdom is the skill, it gives life-giving and social skills. So, it gives us the skill of living eternal life and it's done. And here the Hebrew word is the same as in Proverbs, but simple.

The peti in Proverbs is negative. He's part of the fool. The basic meaning of the word is to be open. And so, the fool is open to everything and committed to nothing. In the Psalms, it's very different. The simple is open. He's open to God's instruction. He's open to learn. He's open to grow.

So, it's unfortunate we have to translate it simple. It's a word of the sage, but they're used in very different ways in these two books. It rejoices the heart.

And of course, this assumes a right heart. And I say that all art has two parts to it. I think that all art has two parts.

There is the actual objective picture with shape and color, and you also bring a certain imagination to it. And so, everyone sees it differently. So, you come to art, it's both an objective and subjective experience.

And so, there's the reality, the objective reality, but the way you see it depends upon your heart. If your heart is right, then you will rejoice in it. If your heart is not right, it will not rejoice in it.

You will hate it. I think, for example, of the painting of the Mona Lisa. It's supposed to be one of the greatest paintings ever produced.

I think by da Vinci. If you go over the lure of the place is packed with people looking at it. What fascinates people about the Mona Lisa is the style.

It's rather quixotic. It's sort of an enigma. How do you understand it? And people see it differently.

Now, I hope I don't ruin the painting for you, but I was reading how people respond to it and everybody trying to explain the smile on the Mona Lisa's face. And this woman said, I know what that smile is. It's the smile of my little daughter who pees in the bathtub.

So, she saw the same smile on the face of her daughter in that situation. She brought a totally different imagination to that picture. And I think, well, anyway, that most of us would bring to it.

Then it says that it enlightens the eye and that's because it's clean and radiant and the commands light up the eyes. Then he says that it is, verse 10, more to be desired are they than gold, even the much fine gold. As I commented when we were doing Proverbs that gold can put food on the table, but it can't give fellowship around the table.

That gold can give you a house, but it can't give you a home. That gold can give a woman jewelry and fur on her back, but it can't give her the love she really wants. So, wisdom will give you a house, give you a home as well as a house.

It will give you a table full of food as well as fellowship around the table. It will give a woman luxuries as well as the love she really wants. So, it does both.

Then he says, it is sweeter than drippings from the honeycomb. That's to a healthy taste. Whereas we saw that the rebels in Psalm 2 saw it as a galling bondage.

So, he's responding as a saint, the way a saint looks at Torah and its benefactions. He goes on to say that, by them your servant is warned to avoid sin, and keeping of them there is great reward, including all that we've just read. That leads him then, by them as your servant warned, that leads him then to his two prayers.

And his first prayer is for hidden sins, two petitions. One petition is for hidden sins. That's in verse 12.

And the other one is to be kept from insolent men. And I think that's verse 13. So the first one then is for hidden sins.

And since they're hidden, you can't confess them. And yet we know we sin. So, Elaine and I begin every morning with our Lord's liturgy and we ask God to forgive us all of our sins.

If we know a specific sin, then we have the responsibility to name it and to renounce it. But we're so depraved that we sin against God, I think almost in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. And we're in constant need of forgiveness.

David is saying, and this prayer is answered, that God forgives our hidden sins because it becomes part of the canon. Therefore, it's God's response to David, I assume, since it was put in the canon of Scripture for the director of music, that we can all pray it and be assured God forgives us our hidden sins as well as our confessed known sins. I say, since they're hidden, we cannot renounce and confess them to God.

His second request is that God hold him back from the rule of insolent men. And we've already talked about that. I suggest here, none is free from the danger of apostasy.

And I think we express it when we sing the hymn, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. I think we all know that it takes the grace of God to persevere in the faith. When he says, he gives the reason for that.

Where am I in the translation? Give me a break here to get the translation in front of me. What page was that on? 328. Yeah.

Okay. His second petition, after he asked God to forgive his hidden sins, then he says in verse 13, keep back your servant also from the insolent. And I suggested that none is free from the danger of apostasy.

And I think that it's appropriate to add here that without help from God, none of us is a match for Satan. That behind the apostate is Satan and demonic forces. And we're no match for it.

We constantly need God's help. And his reason is, then I shall be blameless to keep in integrity and innocent of the great transgression. And the question is, what is the great transgression? And I think the word pashah means rebellion, rebellion against God's rule.

And that means breaking faith with him. Whoever commits pashah does not merely rebel or protest against Yahweh, but breaks with him. And so, what he's asking is, don't allow me to break my relationship with you.

Keep me from apostasy. His conclusion is, may these words of my mouth, the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. And I suggest this is the protocol of the royal court that is asking for the favor of acceptance before the king, that God will accept his prayer.

And these words of his mouth are these words in the praise of the heavens for the Christian would be the praise of Christ the creator. And it would be the praise of Torah, which today is expressed in the new covenant. Then he refers to God as my Savior.

In other words, this is not legalism. He is not striving on his own to keep the law. He's totally dependent upon God.

And he's asking God to keep him from insolent men. And he's asking God to be his rock and his redeemer. The rock is a rock of salvation, a rock of protection.

And he's really dependent upon God who will protect him and keep him. He's not simply, here's God's word and I'm going to do it. He recognizes he can't.

So, he's a petitioner. And I suggest at the end, his words found favor, the words of his mouth found favor because they were accepted into the canon of Scripture. And God was pleased with his prayer.

I keep hearing the last line of the Lord's prayer, which is such a problematic note. It leads us not into temptation. Well, God doesn't tempt us, but he does test us, but delivers us from evil.

They're the evil one. I'm finding myself wondering, is Jesus teaching us to pray the same thing that David is praying here? That keep us from apostatizing, keep us from dealing with Satan who we can't deal with on our own. Yeah.

I think that I've been troubled with it too, but I think this psalm has helped me to understand it. That we're saying we can't handle it. Keep us from even the temptation because we recognize our weakness.

Lead us not, we can't handle it. I think it's a very humble prayer. And we say, then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression.

Great transgression is breaking with God. That's what I think. Which in modern theology would be apostasy, we call it apostatizing.

So, keep me from permanently breaking with you because I can't continue on under my own power that I need God's protection. Well, I think that it's a prayer. Yeah.

That I can't do it. You have to keep me. He's dependent upon God to keep him from doing it because he recognizes I can't do this on my own.

Because we're all prone to wander. Yeah. So, I think this gives us insight.

I used to be troubled by that too. God doesn't lead us into temptation and so forth, but I am praying I'm not able to handle it. So, God, I know myself and how sinful I am, and put me in the wrong context.

I may be guilty of the wrong transgression of great transgression. When I graduated from high school, I was offered a scholarship in a liberal college and I turned it down because I didn't think I could handle it. I was too young and I was afraid.

I didn't know the Psalm. But intuitively, I was afraid I'd be guilty of the great transgression because I couldn't answer the professors.

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