

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Session 27, Wisdom Psalms – Psalm 19 20-min. Podcast Audio Overview

BiblicaleLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Welcome back, everybody, to another Deep Dive, and today, we're going to be exploring Psalm 19. Okay. And to help us out with that, we have a lecture from Dr. Bruce Waltke, who is, well, a leading scholar of the Old Testament.

He's particularly known for his work on wisdom psalms. And this lecture focuses on Psalm 19, which beautifully connects God's creation with the wisdom of his moral law, the Torah. It really does.

It's like the psalmist is inviting us to just look up at the stars and just experience that sense of wonder, and then you go, wait a minute, the same God who did all this also gave us his word, his Torah. Gave us this instruction manual. Right.

Yeah. So let's unpack that connection. So Dr. Waltke breaks down the first part of the psalm, which is verses one through six, into two sections.

And he starts with this idea that the heavens declare God's glory, even though they don't have a literal voice. He calls this the firmament's declaration. The firmament's declaration.

Yeah. And I think this really resonates with anybody who's ever just looked up at the night sky and felt that sense of awe. Oh, yeah.

You know, and day after day and night after night, you know, creation just keeps revealing, you know, God's glory and knowledge. To anybody who's looking. Yeah.

Yeah. Anybody who's paying attention. It's like that line from Joseph Addison, what though no real voice nor sound amid their radiant orbs be found.

Right. In reason's ear, they all rejoice and utter forth a glorious voice. Absolutely.

And then he moves on to what he calls the sun's journey. The sun's journey. Focusing on verses four through six.

Okay. And he uses these, you know, really, really vivid images, you know, of the sun as a bridegroom, you know, full of energy and radiance, and as a strong runner. Oh, okay.

Just relentlessly crossing the sky. And think about, you know, the last time that you watched the sunrise. Oh, yeah.

You know, that feeling of awe and wonder in the way the light spreads across the world. Right. It's a picture of God's power reflected in his creation.

You're reaching every corner of the earth. It is. And, if we, you know, connect this back to the bigger picture, you know, remember John one where it talks about Christ being the Word through whom all creation came into being.

Yeah. You know, this adds another layer to Psalm 19 because it suggests that, you know, the same God who spoke the universe into existence also gave us his moral law. His moral law.

Okay. So we go from this vast, awe-inspiring panorama of creation straight into the heart of God's moral law. And so Dr. Waltke then takes us verse by verse through these seven perfections of the Torah as described in verses seven through nine.

Okay. And he really dives into the original Hebrew to kind of show us the depth of meaning behind these words. And what's so fascinating is that, you know, these qualities aren't just about, you know, rules and regulations.

It points to the character of God himself. Right. You know, uh, the Torah being perfect means that it's complete.

Right. Nothing needs to be added to it or taken away. It's like a perfectly crafted masterpiece.

Like, how about this? Then there's sure. Yes. Or reliable.

Reliable. Which makes me think about, you know, sometimes you're wrestling with a problem, and you read a passage of scripture, and it's like a light bulb goes off. Yes.

That's the Torah's sureness. It's rooted in God's comprehensive knowledge. Yes.

And so it's always trustworthy guidance. It is. And that leads into the next one, upright.

Upright. You know, the Torah is presented as perfectly straight, you know, without a single flaw or deviation. Okay.

There's a sense of integrity and trustworthiness; it's also described as pure, a gradient even. Like it's emanating light. Which makes me think about, you know, those moments when you encounter a truth in scripture.

Yeah. That just illuminates your understanding. It shines a light on a path forward.

Yeah. And because it's clean or unmixed, free from impurities, the Torah endures forever. It's unchanging.

Unchanging and steadfast, unlike human laws and philosophies that come and go. Then there's true or firm. True or firm.

Which is so important in today's world where everything feels fluid and uncertain. Right. You know, the Torah's firmness is grounding.

It is. It's an anchor in the storm. Yes.

And then finally, it's described as righteous. Righteous. Which means that it aligns perfectly with God's own character and will.

Right. It's a reflection of who he is and what he desires for us. So we have this incredibly powerful and perfect word.

Right. But Dr. Walke brings up this really interesting question. Okay.

If God's word is so amazing, why are people afraid to preach it? And he suggests that, you know, maybe it's because we are prioritizing pleasing people over challenging them. That's a good point. Maybe focusing on growing churches rather than growing individuals.

It's a very thought-provoking point, isn't it? It is. Are we so worried about making people comfortable that we shy away from the hard truths that could actually help them grow? Yeah. So that's something to ponder.

Yes, it is. Now, let's dive into the rewards of following God's law as described in verses 10 and 11. And Dr. Walke paints this beautiful picture of how the Torah revives the soul, makes the simple wise, and brings true joy to the heart.

He uses this fantastic anecdote about the Mona Lisa to illustrate, you know, this point about finding joy in God's word. He talks about how, you know, appreciating art is both objective and subjective. You know, there's the painting itself, but then there's how you see it, which is influenced by, you know, your own experiences and perspectives.

And he applies that same principle to the Torah. He says that, you know, if your heart is aligned with God, you'll find his word delightful, like the sweetest honey. But if your heart is rebellious, it's going to seem restrictive and bitter.

Yeah. It's all about perspective. It is.

It's so true. And then he compares the value of God's word to gold, arguing that it's even more desirable than, you know, the finest gold. Because true wealth isn't about material possessions.

It's about aligning your life with God's wisdom. And, you know, we all want that feeling of security and abundance. We do.

But what if true wealth comes from living in accordance with God's truth? It's a perspective shift, isn't it? It is, yeah. And it leads us to the last section of this part of the psalm, where David gets really personal with his prayers in verses 12 and 13. So let's shift gears and explore what David's prayers reveal about his heart and what they mean for us today.

You know, what strikes me about these prayers is how honest and vulnerable David is. He's not presenting himself as some flawless hero. He acknowledges his own weaknesses and asks God for help to stay on track.

That's a great observation. And his first prayer, asking forgiveness for hidden sins, is something we can all relate to, right? We all have blind spots, things we might not even

realize are wrong. It's comforting to know that God offers forgiveness even for those hidden sins, especially since this prayer is now a part of Scripture.

And that's a really important point. Dr. Waltke suggests that, you know, the inclusion of this prayer in the canon shows that God answered David's request. Because it's in the Bible, we can pray it too, knowing that God extends that same forgiveness to us.

Then there's that second prayer where David asks to be kept from insolent men, which Dr. Walke interprets as a prayer for protection from apostasy, turning away from God. It's a reminder that staying true to our faith can be a battle, especially when we're surrounded by people who challenge or mock our beliefs. Have you ever felt that pressure? Oh yeah, absolutely.

I think we've all encountered, you know, those moments where it's tempting to compromise our convictions to fit in or avoid conflict. What's fascinating is how Dr. Walke connects this prayer to the Lord's Prayer, where we ask God to lead us not into temptation. Both prayers acknowledge our human weakness and our need for God's help to stay faithful.

Dr. Walke even shares a personal story about turning down a college scholarship because he didn't feel strong enough in his faith at the time. He was afraid of being pulled away from God by the temptations and challenges of that environment. It makes you realize that even someone who's devoted their life to studying the Bible can still struggle with doubt and uncertainty.

That's right. You know, it's a powerful reminder that we're all in this together. We are.

We need each other's support, and we definitely need God's grace to navigate the complexities of life and stay true to our beliefs. Absolutely. So after these very personal prayers, it's interesting how David concludes the song with this very formal request.

It is. Almost like court etiquette. It is a shift in tone.

Yeah. In verse 14, he says, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. It's like he's presenting his whole being before God, seeking his approval.

And by calling God his rock and Redeemer, he's acknowledging his dependence on God's grace. Yes. It's not about earning God's favor through perfect rule-following.

Right. It's about recognizing that we need his forgiveness and guidance. And Dr. Waltke believes that David's words did indeed find favor with God.

Okay. Because they became part of Scripture, they were accepted into the canon. Right.

Which means that, you know, they now carry divine authority. It's pretty mind-blowing to think about how this psalm, written thousands of years ago, still speaks to us today. It does.

It all started with that simple act of looking up at the sky and recognizing God's glory in creation. That's the beauty of Psalm 19, isn't it? It connects the vastness of the universe to

the very personal experience of faith. It reminds us that the same God who created the stars also cares about the thoughts and desires of our hearts.

Yeah. So what does all of this mean for us? How can we take these insights from Psalm 19 and apply them to our own lives? Well, one key takeaway for me is the importance of spending time both in God's Word and in his creation. Just as the psalmist, you know, found inspiration in the heavens.

I can too. I think we sometimes underestimate the power of nature to refresh our souls. We do.

And connect us with God. Absolutely. Think about the last time you were out in nature.

Yeah. Maybe hiking in the woods or walking along a beach. Did you feel a sense of peace and wonder? It's like our worries and stresses just kind of fade into the background, and we're reminded of something bigger than ourselves.

Right. And then coupling that experience with diving into God's Word, studying the Torah in the Old Testament and its fulfillment in Christ in the New Testament, helps us understand his character and his purpose for our lives. It does.

It's like we need both perspectives: the vastness of creation to humble us and the wisdom of Scripture to guide us. Another important application is recognizing our own need for God's grace, just like David did. Absolutely.

We can't live up to the perfection of God's law on our own. We can't. We need his forgiveness and strength to resist temptation and stay faithful.

Yeah. David's prayer for forgiveness for those hidden sins is something I come back to a lot. Me too.

It's so easy to beat ourselves up over our mistakes. It is. But God's grace is always there waiting for us.

It is. And it's a powerful reminder to extend that same grace to ourselves and to others. And his prayer to be kept from insolent men highlights the importance of surrounding ourselves with people who will encourage us in our faith, not tear it down.

Yeah. It's so easy to get caught up in the busyness of life and lose sight of what truly matters. It is.

Psalm 19 invites us to reorient ourselves, to look up at the heavens, remember the God who created it all, and then dive into his word to discover the wisdom and guidance he offers. It does. For living a truly meaningful life.

I love how you put that: reorient ourselves. It's about shifting our perspective from the temporal to the eternal, from the superficial to the substantial. And, you know, Dr. Waltke doesn't explicitly address this in his lecture, but I'm curious about the connection between the way we treat God's creation.

Okay. And the way we live according to his moral law. That's interesting.

It seems like Psalm 19 is drawing a parallel between the natural world and God's moral order. That's a really insightful observation. Psalm 19 links the beauty and order of creation so closely to the wisdom and goodness of God's law.

Does that imply a responsibility to care for the environment? Could it be that honoring God's creation is an integral part of living a life that aligns with his moral principles? It makes sense, doesn't it? If we believe that God is the optimum of both the natural world and the moral law, there's going to be a connection between the two. I think that's a great takeaway for our listeners to consider. Oh, they do too.

How does this connection between creation and moral law play out in their own lives? Yeah. What would it look like to honor God in both the way we treat the planet and the way we live out our faith? Yeah. It's a big question.

I think Psalm 19 gives us some clues. It does. I think it starts with that sense of awe and wonder that we were talking about earlier.

When we look up at the stars, or we spend time in nature, and we allow ourselves to be amazed by God's creation, it can change our perspective. It can make us more aware of the interconnectedness of everything and inspire us to be better stewards of the planet. It's like that saying: we don't inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.

That's right. If we truly believe that creation is a gift from God, then we have a responsibility to care for it and preserve it for future generations. And that care for creation can take many forms.

It could be something as simple as recycling or reducing our energy consumption. Or it could involve advocating for environmental policies that protect God's creation. It's about aligning our actions with our beliefs.

And that brings us back to the Torah and the idea of living according to God's moral law. What are some practical ways that we can apply those principles to our daily lives? Well, think about, you know, the qualities of the Torah that we discussed. You know, perfect, sure, upright, pure, clean, true, righteous.

These aren't just abstract concepts; they can guide our decisions and our interactions with others. For example, the Torah, being upright, suggests that we should be honest and fair in our dealings with others. Absolutely.

Pure makes me think about the importance of, you know, having pure motives and intentions, not just focusing on outward appearances. And true or firm reminds us to stand up for what we believe in, even when it's unpopular or difficult. It's like those moments when you know what the right thing to do is, even if it costs you something.

It takes courage and integrity to live out those principles. It does. And I think that's where, you know, David's prayers become so relevant.

He recognizes that he can't do it on his own. He needs God's forgiveness, his guidance, and his strength to stay faithful. That's a great reminder for all of us.

You know, we're not perfect; we're going to make mistakes, but we can always come back to God. Absolutely. Ask for his forgiveness and seek his help to live in a way that honors him.

It's a journey, isn't it? It is. And it's a journey we don't have to take alone. That's right.

We have God's word to guide us, his spirit to empower us, and each other to encourage us along the way. I think that's a beautiful way to wrap up our deep dive into Psalm 19. I agree.

It's been such a rich and thought-provoking exploration. It has. And I hope it's encouraged our listeners to, you know, see the world through a new lens, to find inspiration in both the vastness of creation and the wisdom of God's word.

It's been a pleasure diving deep with you. And I hope our listeners are inspired to continue exploring these ideas and discover how they can live out the truths of Psalm 19 in their own unique ways. Thank you for joining us on this deep dive.

We'll be back next week with another fascinating exploration. Until then, keep seeking, keep learning, and keep diving deep.