

# **Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Wisdom Psalm Genre, Psalm 19, Session 27, 6-min. Video Overview**

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Alright, let's jump right in. Today, we're going to unpack a poem that's about 3,000 years old, but you'll see it speaks right into our world today. It's Psalm 19.

And to help us get to the heart of it, we're going to lean on some incredible insights from the brilliant biblical scholar, Dr. Bruce Waltke. But before we go any further, I want to start with a question, kind of like a riddle that this ancient poem throws at us right from the start. How can something broadcast a message to the entire world, day in and day out, without ever actually making a sound? Think about that for a second.

See, Psalm 19 is what scholars call a wisdom psalm. It's basically a masterclass in how to live life skillfully. And it teaches us by showing us two totally different but completely connected ways that we can listen for truth.

First, there's the big, silent message from the universe itself. And second, there's the specific word-for-word guidance we find in Scripture. I think the best way to think about this psalm is as a journey.

It starts huge, I mean, cosmically huge, looking up at the stars. Then it zooms way in to a detailed guide for living. And where does it end? Well, it lands in the most intimate, personal place there is, the human heart.

So let's start that journey together. Okay, part one. The first leg of our trip is all about what some people call general revelation.

It sounds fancy, but it's simple. It's this powerful sermon that the universe is preaching all the time, 24-7. And it's available to absolutely anyone, anywhere on earth.

All you have to do is look up. Now the way the psalmist builds this idea is just fascinating. He kind of weaves back and forth between two ideas.

First, he says the heavens are declaring something. The sky is proclaiming a message. But then he immediately points out that it's universal.

It's constant, day and night. And it goes out to the whole world. And here's the kicker.

It does all this without a single word. No sound. It's like this silent, visual broadcast meant for every single human being.

To really drive the point home, the psalmist then zooms in on the star of the show, literally, the sun. And he uses these two amazing metaphors to describe it. First, the sun is like a bridegroom.

It's an image of pure joy, beauty, and fresh starts. And second, it's like a strong man, an athlete just bursting with energy to run a race. He's a sprinter.

Nothing's faster. And he's a marathoner. Nothing goes farther.

It's a picture of total, joyful, unstoppable power. You know, the 18th-century poet Joseph Addison just nailed this idea. He wrote this beautiful paraphrase of the psalm, saying that even though creation moves in solemn silence, in reason's ear it has a glorious voice.

That's it. Right there. It's the whole point.

This silent sermon from the cosmos speaks directly to our minds, pointing to something or someone divine behind it all. And now the journey takes a sharp turn. We pivot from the huge, silent universe to something incredibly specific and full of words, what the psalmist calls the Torah, or the law.

This is Special Revelation, a detailed instruction manual for how to live a good life. And believe me, the psalmist does not hold back his praise. He pulls out seven different words just to describe how morally excellent this guide is.

He says it's perfect, meaning it's complete, flawless. It's sure, as in totally reliable. I mean, it's from the same one who made the cosmos, right? It's upright, no crookedness.

It's pure, and the Hebrew word here means it's been scoured until it shines. It's clean, so it endures forever. And finally, it's true and righteous.

It's totally aligned with the way things really are and with God's own character. But so what? Why follow this? Well, the psalmist says the rewards are way better than gold. And Dr. Waltke has this incredible way of putting it.

He says, Gold can buy you a house, but this wisdom gives you a home. Gold can put food on the table, but wisdom gives you true fellowship around it. Gold can buy jewelry for someone you love, but it can't give them the love they actually want.

You see? The rewards aren't just things. They're the very substance of a meaningful life. So you'd think that thinking about the perfection of the universe and the perfection of this moral law would make the psalmist really proud, right? Like, hey, I've got it all figured out.

But that's not what happens. Not at all. Instead, it crushes him with humility and leads him to make two very specific prayers.

And this right here is the climax of the whole journey. After looking out at the cosmos and then looking at the law, the psalmist finally turns his gaze inward, into his own heart. And what he finds there leaves him feeling totally vulnerable and realizing he's completely dependent on help from outside himself.

The thing that absolutely terrifies the psalmist is what he calls the Great Transgression. Now the Hebrew word for this is *pasha*, and it's super important to understand. This isn't just about making a mistake or slipping up.

Pasha means rebellion. It's a willful, conscious decision to break faith to walk away from God. We might call it apostasy today.

So faced with this reality, he makes two incredibly humble requests. First, he asks for forgiveness for his hidden sins. You know, the faults he doesn't even know he has.

The stuff that just bubbles up from our flawed human nature. And second, he asks for protection. He actually asks God to physically hold him back from choosing willful rebellion, from committing that great transgression.

So here's the bottom line. The psalmist knows himself. He knows he's, like that old hymn says, prone to wander.

He gets that he just doesn't have the willpower or the inner strength to stay on the right path by himself. He is 100% dependent on God's grace to protect him and keep him safe. Now, does that prayer sound at all familiar? Dr. Walke points out something amazing here.

This ancient prayer is basically saying the exact same thing that Jesus taught his followers thousands of years later: lead us not into temptation. It's not a prayer that questions God's motives. Sometimes it's a gut-level, humble confession that says, I know my own weakness.

I can't handle this on my own. Please protect me from myself. So let's pull all these threads together.

Why does this 3000 year old song still hit so hard today? I think it's because it maps out a journey that is universal to all of us. It's a journey that begins in pure awe, that feeling you get when you just stop and look up at a sky full of stars. It's a journey that then moves toward a search for meaning, for a reliable compass to help us navigate the complexities of life.

And it's a journey that finally, ultimately leads us to an honest, humble place where we recognize our own fragility and our deep need for help. The whole Psalm ends with this famous, beautiful line, a final plea, but listen to the names he uses for God: my rock and my redeemer. This isn't the prayer of somebody trying to earn points with God through their own perfect behavior.

No way. This is the cry of someone who knows they need a protector, a solid rock and a savior, a redeemer. And that really leaves us with one last thing to think about.

In our crazy, noisy, constantly distracted world, what would happen if we actually took the journey of Psalm 19? What would we discover if we just stopped for a minute to listen to that silent sermon being preached by the universe, and then turned our attention to the timeless wisdom that speaks directly to our hearts? What do you think we'd find?