

A PRAYER FROM GOD'S WORD
PSALM 19:12-14

Think about a moment in your life when you have been awed by some part of creation:

- ✓ You have walked through trees to arrive at a vast meadow that leads to the foot of a towering mountain; you are swallowed up in the immensity of the mountain in front of you.
- ✓ Or you have hiked to the peak of a tall mountain, and then looked out and seen taller mountains and vast plains surrounding you and realized your smallness, despite the significance of your climb.
- ✓ Or you have gone out on a dark and cloudless night and seen the brilliance of the stars and the number of the stars and contemplated their size and distance from you and you have felt so small.
- ✓ Or you have been in an airplane flying over the Grand Canyon and realized that smallness of the people that you knew were in the canyon, but you couldn't see — and further realized that while you were 30,000 feet in the air, you were just as small and powerless as those people in the canyon.
- ✓ Or you looked at the solar eclipse last summer and recognized the power behind the sun and the One who is able to both make it and blot it out in an instant.

Creation affords us many opportunities to contemplate our mortality, weakness, and insignificance. And God's greatness and grandeur. How glorious must the Creator of such wonder be? God has designed creation for both those purposes — to reveal His greatness and our weakness. Likewise, God has also revealed Himself in His Word so that we understand who He is and our dependence on the Word of God to guide us. That's the message of Psalm 19 — God speaks and reveals Himself in His world and in His Word.

- ✓ God has revealed Himself generally (to all) in nature/creation (vv. 1-6) — He is grand, expansive, transcendent, omniscient, and omnipresent.
- ✓ God has also revealed Himself specifically in Scripture (vv. 7-11) — He (and His Word) is perfect, true, righteous, wise, sufficient, and eternal. And He is personal — He is the covenant God of Israel (YHWH), and His followers can know Him and have fellowship with Him.

Because of these revelations, the psalmist David is rightly humbled before the Lord — He sees His smallness both physically and spiritually and prays as an expression of fidelity and faithfulness to the Lord (vv. 12-14); he has heard the Word of God and now he is heeding the Word of God. Here is the theme of the passage:

BECAUSE GOD HAS TOLD US ABOUT HIMSELF IN THE WORLD AND IN THE WORD,
PRAY IN HUMBLE CONTRITION TO HIM FOR FORGIVENESS AND TRANSFORMATION.

At the beginning of every year, we take time to remind ourselves of the importance of spiritual disciplines — especially the priority of Word and prayer. Our hearts are transformed by meditation on the Word of God, and we affirm our dependence on (and submission to) God in prayer. Here is a prayer that could be a daily prayer for each of us as we contemplate both God's position and our position in this world.

Having seen the glory of God in His revelation, the psalmist responds in prayer; the psalmist has “heard” God speak in creation and Scripture, so now in vv. 12-14, he responds with his own speaking and words. What does he say? Notice **three components** of the humbled psalmist’s prayer for us to emulate:

- 1. A Prayer for Past SINS (v. 12)**
- 2. A Prayer for Future TEMPTATIONS (v. 13)**
- 3. A Pray for a TRANSFORMED Life (v. 14)**

1. A Prayer for Past Sins (v. 12)

• David is aware of his sinfulness —

- ✓ He has heard the revelation of God in creation (vv. 1-6) and the Word, and he is humbled.
 - This psalm might be paired with Psalm 8 which has a similar theme of the revelation of God in creation; there the Psalmist is humbled that God would consider and care for him (Ps. 8:3ff).
 - Here the psalmist looks at creation and is humbled with his sinfulness. Let's see how...
- ✓ He suggests his lowness when he refers to himself as a **servant** (vv. 11, 13) — this is David's prayer (historical context uncertain), who considered himself God's servant.
 - To be a **servant** refers to someone who willingly commits to carry out the purposes of someone else's will. He places himself underneath someone. He is submissive.
 - Here, the servant is in contrast to **Yahweh** (6x in vv. 7-9).
 - ... To be the servant to YHWH is to recognize the authority of God's Word over him. He is in a covenant relationship to God, who has made the covenant the Law. So, he submits as servant.
 - ... David is not sovereign and authoritative, but God is over Him and over all (in creation and in His Word). David does not supersede **the LORD** in creation (physical strength) or in spiritual authority to command others. He is not the Lord; only God is the Lord. David humbly submits to that reality.
 - [Do we submit to that reality? Do we act as if the Bible is authoritative over us and can compel how we act and what we do? Aren't we tempted to anger, despondency, and anxiety because we want to be the authority, and we know that we are not? Let us humbly affirm His kingship.]
 - Note that this is *King* David who writes this — he may be the most influential and powerful ruler in the world at this time; yet even as a ruler, he says he is a servant.
- ✓ David also affirms his humility when he says that he is one who sins in **error** —
 - To be in **error** is to go astray, to wander away from God's commands.
 - Generally, these are inadvertent sins; they are not intentionally rebellious. They are the sins of one who isn't being attentive, and he wanders away from God's commands.
 - Like the sheep that is grazing and looking only at the grass and not the direction he is heading, this sinner is inattentive and falls into various traps of sin because *he hasn't been watchful*.
- ✓ He is one who has **hidden faults** — the word is similar to **error** — they are sins that are "hidden" from the sinner — he is ignorant of the demands of the Word of God and so he sins.
- ✓ In all these ways, David affirms that he has looked at God's revelation and he has been humbled. He is not great and supreme; he is a sinner who needs help. Further...

• **David is aware he unaware of all his sin —**

- ✓ He needs help to **discern** his sin — he is asking “who is capable to see and understand all his sin?” The implied answer is “no one.” All are blind to the extent and depth of their sin. We are unaware of all the ways that we violate God’s law. He reinforces that when he says...
- ✓ He has **hidden** faults — they are unknown to him. They are real; he just doesn’t know them all. Remember he says this despite the presence of the Law. One of the purposes of the Law was to expose the sinfulness of sinners — to reveal that they could not meet the perfect standard of God (Mt. 5:48); yet even with that revelation, man cannot know how great his sin is (Ps. 38:4; 40:12).
- ✓ “There is not one of us who has any idea of the horror and crime of sin before God. We have always lived in an atmosphere so saturated with sin, on this earth that drinks iniquity like water and eats it like bread, that we no longer know how to discern the sin that engulfs us from every side.” [Monod, *Living in the Hope of Glory*, 4.]
- ✓ One writer has rightly and simply said, “The truth is you have no idea how sinful you are.” [Davis]
- ✓ E.g., consider a teenager who takes \$20 from his mother’s purse. How is that sinful? It is stealing. It is deception and lying (in coverup). It is precluding an opportunity for mom to be gracious. It indulges illegitimate desires (he didn’t ask because he anticipated no). It is lack of submission...
- ✓ Add to that example of a particular sin the reality that we are unaware of the number of deeds that we do that are sinful, not to mention that we can’t count the number of sinful thoughts we have, nor comprehend the sinful desires that feed our sinful thoughts. We do not know the depth of our sin.

• **David humbly desires forgiveness — *acquit me...*** While he has sinned (and still sins), he is also aware of the forgiveness that God offers and that in that forgiveness he can have fellowship with God; that is exactly what he wants and is asking God to provide for him.

- ✓ When he asks to be **acquitted**, he is asking to be declared innocent and free of the legal punishment and consequences of his sin.
- ✓ He makes this request because *God is available to forgive*.
 - God is the One who has been sinned against (Ps. 41:4).
 - The sins of man are innumerable and eternally condemning (Ps. 130:3).
 - And yet He is also willing to respond to the confession of (cf. Ps. 32:1-2, 5; 65:3; 103:3, 10).
 - There is no sin that is greater than God’s gracious willingness to forgive. You cannot out-sin His willingness to forgive. But you have to repent. You have to turn away (which is what David did).
- As you contemplate God’s nature — His immensity and greatness in creation and His revealed standard in His Word, be humble enough to acknowledge your sin and then run to Him for forgiveness.
 - ✓ There is a temptation to hide our sin. We cannot hide it. He knows. And even knowing He is ever ready to forgive us when we repent. Such grace.
 - ✓ If you are a follower of God (Christian), this passage gives us the pattern of regular self-examination and honest acknowledgement of our daily sin that He will wipe away and cleanse (1 Jn. 1:9).

- ✓ Sin will never go away when we ignore it any more than a bill will; but it will go away when we repent.
- ✓ If you are not a follower of God (Christian), you may be supposing that your sin is a safe refuge — that God won't condemn you, or that God *will* condemn you and there is nothing you can do to change His mind about your sin. Both those are wrong. There is a safe refuge with God. He will forgive all those who come to Him with humble contrition. Repent (turn away from) your sin, and believe that Christ died for your sins, and you will be freed, forgiven, and acquitted.

2. A Prayer for Future TEMPTATIONS (v. 13)

- In verse 12, David addressed sins that he has already committed; in v. 13, he looks to the future and asks the Lord to keep Him from future sin. It is akin to Ps. 141:3-4 and the Lord's prayer — "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13).
- So, he asks, ***Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins...***
 - ✓ He is acknowledging He needs God's help in not sinning, and that God is able and willing to help.
 - ✓ ***Presumption***, as used in the OT, refers to prideful sin that "over-steps;" it's "high-handed" sin.
 - ✓ Presumption is *willful* sin (contrast with v. 12); it knows, and it ignores what it knows. The conscience has been trained about right and wrong and it intentionally goes against that training.
 - ✓ It is used of those who conspire to murder (Ex. 21:14), of the rebellion to attempt to enter Israel after first refusing to enter it (**Dt. 1:43**), of those who refuse to listen to the priests (Dt. 17:12).
 - ✓ You might have a 2-year-old in your home. Imagine that the child toddles over to the computer area. You call her name, "Cindy Lou...don't get on the chair..." She crawls on the chair, and she places her hand above the keyboard and then turns back to look at you. "Don't touch the computer," you say. She turns around (putting her back to you) and starts pushing buttons. That's presumptuous sin. One has been warned and reminded; one knows and one places himself in a position to commit the sin and engages in the sin while knowing he is sinning.
 - ✓ It's the worst sort of rebellion because it is sin that is committed against knowledge and conscience.
- That's the sin David wants to avoid: "don't let me be hardened to the point I intentionally ignore You."
- David also reminds us through his prayer what happens when we commit presumptuous sin:
 - ✓ When we engage in presumptuous sins, they ***rule over me. The sin becomes our master.***
 - ✓ The insidiousness of sin is not only that we commit one sin periodically, but it is the nature of sin to be a master, to rule and enslave its practitioners.
 - We entice ourselves with sin and sometimes suggest, "I'll just do it this once and then stop; I won't do it after today; I'll stop tomorrow..." But that's part of the deception of sin; the act of committing sin once disposes us to continue in that sin; not repenting of sin today inclines us to do it again tomorrow.

- J.C. Ryle said, “Tomorrow is the devil’s day, but today is God’s. Satan cares not how spiritual your intentions may be, and how holy your resolutions, if only they are fixed for *tomorrow*.”
- *And* — what we are today plants, waters, and fertilizes the seed of what we will be tomorrow.
- We will all be ruled by one of two authorities — God and His theocracy or Satan and His lies.
- Presumptuous, willful sin will ultimately rule us (if we indulge in it); cf. Gen. 4:7; 1 Pt. 5:8.
- Jesus: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin” (John 8:34).
- Every sin says, “this will make you better and put you in control.” Every sin is to our detriment and always put us in some kind of bondage.
- So, David asks, ***keep back Your servant...*** Is God capable of keeping us from sin? Yes. But he keeps us back through our obedience. E.g., You can’t listen to explicit music and expect to have pure thoughts.
- Our problem is not that God is unwilling to answer the prayer, but that we are unwilling to pray and act on the prayer (be obedient) — “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mk. 14:38).
- The psalmist’s desire to avoid presumption is also his way of saying, “keep me discontent with sin;” and “keep me from sin and its desires.” It is to cultivate a hatred of sin.
- Don’t miss this either — who is asking for God’s help in avoiding presumptuous sin? David. The King of Israel. The man after God’s own heart. The one who was among the greatest men in Scripture.
- *David recognized the possibility of his failure and sought the Lord’s help.* Don’t assume you can’t fall into some ruling pattern of sin. You can. Think about the examples of Scripture:
 - ✓ Twice Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife because he was afraid. (And also, Hagar...)
 - ✓ Moses wasn’t allowed to go into the Promised Land because of his rebellion.
 - ✓ David (who made this request) adulterated and murdered.
 - ✓ Solomon, the wisest man on earth, succumbed to godless worship and serial adultery.
 - ✓ Jonah, a prophet of God, ran from God and was angry with God.
 - ✓ Judas was with Christ for three years and turned traitor for a handful of silver.
 - ✓ Peter denied Christ three times immediately after he was warned that he would.
 - ✓ Demas traveled with Paul and let the bright lights of Thessalonica seduce him.
 - ✓ And you and I know too many stories of too many personal relations who have failed.
 - ✓ *It is possible to sin presumptuously and catastrophically.* Some in this room today might be wrestling with those temptations and a year from today might have failed. Oh, take sin seriously.
- We often ask the wrong questions about sin: “is it ok to listen to this music....go here...watch this...?” The question is, “does this honor the Lord?” “Is He pleased with this act?” “Does this stimulate my worship?” “Does it help me think rightly about God, His Word, and His world?”
- Aside: how does God keep us from presumptuous sin? His Word ingested: **vv. 7-9.** Know and use it.
 - ✓ The correction and antidote and preventative to sin is God’s Word (and meditation on it).
 - ✓ Cf. Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2; 4:4; 104:34; 119:11, 15, 23, 27, 78, 148.

- ✓ What we put into our minds will feed our meditation (what we think about); what we meditate on is what we will be predisposed to do. You can't meditate on God and pray and sin at the same time.
- And when we confess our sin (v. 12) and don't cultivate the habits of volitional sin (v. 13), then he will be **blameless...acquitted** — without blemish (forgiven) and freed (not enslaved). The implication is that he will then be freed to enjoy fellowship with God. The One who has revealed Himself to mankind in creation and the Word will then be enjoyed.

3. A Pray for a TRANSFORMED Life (v. 14)

- Because he had sinned in the past (and been forgiven) and because he recognized the possibility of failure in the future, David prayed for a transformed life —
- **He prayed for transformed actions** — *let the words of my mouth...be acceptable...*
 - ✓ David wants what he says (in worship) to be consistent with what God says.
 - ✓ It's notable that this whole psalm is about speaking and revelation, and David's final comment is that he wants all His words to align and be consistent with God's word(s).
- **He prayed for a transformed heart** — *let the meditation of my heart be acceptable...*
 - ✓ David doesn't just want his words to be right; he wants his heart and inward thoughts to be right.
 - ✓ "Prayer is a sacrifice offered by the inner man. The heart meditates and fashions it; and the mouth presents it, by uttering that which is put into the form of words." [Delitzsch]
 - ✓ It sounds like a NT principle, doesn't it? He wants outward transformation and inward renewal (Eph. 4:22-24; Lk. 6:45). He wants his life to be changed, inside and out (a fitting prayer for a new year).
- **He prayed to be pleasing to the Lord** — *be acceptable in Your sight...*
 - ✓ The word **acceptable** is priestly language, a sacrifice that is presented and accepted (Lev. 19:5).
 - ✓ Because God has accepted the words and meditations, He is also a source of refuge as a **Rock** and **Redeemer** to David. He is the close relative who buys a family member who has fallen into slavery out of that slavery. And He becomes a source of stability and strength.
 - ✓ And just as David had the hope that God would forgive and accept him, so the NT believer is confident that because of Christ, we can please God and that He will delight in us (2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:10; Heb. 13:20-21).

CONCLUSION: Prayer of confession —

Our Father, we bow to You as the great and sovereign Creator and the only authority of all people —

- Thank you for revealing Yourself to us both in creation and Your Word.
- We acknowledge our sin and sinfulness to you —
 - We have violated your standards and law in countless ways — in deed, thought, and desire.
 - At times, we have desired the right thing to do, but in weakness we didn't; other times we sinned through ignorance — we didn't know Your demands, or didn't know how to fight against sin.
 - Other times we have sinned presumptuously and rebelliously.
 - We acknowledge that Your standard is right and that we are wrong. We can do nothing to atone for our sin ourselves — except to appeal to Your grace. Would You, because of Christ, wash us clean from our sin, and give us freedom from the bondage of sin so that we might obey You...
- We also ask that You keep us from sin —
 - Would Your character capture us so that we would delight in You more than in sin.
 - In that delight, would You strengthen us to fight against sin's many temptations and follow You?
 - We want to honor You and live for You. Would You equip us to do that? And...
- We ask that You would preserve us by Your Word so that we would enjoy fellowship with You as our Rock (our only source of stability and strength) and as our Redeemer.

BENEDICTION (GW): Hebrews 13:20-21