

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
October 10, 2010

God's Law Sustains

Psalm 19:7-14

Key verses: “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes” (Psalm 19:7-8).

“Nature and Scripture are two great books divinely written. He is wise who reads both the world-book and the word-book” (from *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*).

Psalm 19 begins with the declaration that creation testifies to the existence of a Creator: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (v. 1). If you look at the vast and majestic universe with spiritual eyes even half-opened, you will see evidence of God's existence. The New Testament writer echoes this truth when he writes: “For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made....” (Romans 1:20).

Yet, nature only tells us a part of what we need to know about God. Major questions remain: What is God like? How can I have a relationship with God? How can I find God's guidance for living my life? To answer such questions, we need more than nature. We need God's revelation which comes to us through divinely-inspired Scripture. We need, then, to read “both the world-book and the word-book.”

Psalm 19:7-14 focuses on reading God's “word-book.” For the psalmist, that meant the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, which the psalmist refers to as “the law of the Lord.” For Christians, Scripture consists of the completed Biblical canon, Genesis to Revelation. In both cases, Psalm 19:7-14 speaks insightfully to what it means to follow God by reading and obeying the word-book of Scripture.

Notice, first, some of the things that God's Word can do for us. The psalmist tells us that Scripture can *revive the soul*. It can *make us wise* (that is, show us how to live). Scripture also can *give joy to our hearts* and it can *enlighten* us (vv. 7-8).

Because of the great benefits of God's Word, the psalmist had come to see Scripture as “more to be desired...than gold” and “sweeter...than honey” (v. 10).

Yet, notice that the “rewards” of Scripture come to those who both read it and obey it: “in keeping them [the truths and principles of God’s Word] there is great reward” (v. 11).

Would you like to find in the Bible that which will revive your soul, make you wise, give joy to your heart, and enlighten you? Would you like to find in Scripture that which is “more to be desired...than gold” and “sweeter...than honey”? Then read it and obey it, for “in keeping them [the truths and principles of God’s Word] is great reward”!

In her book *Amazing Grace*, Kathleen Norris shares what she calls “the scariest story” she’s ever heard about the Bible. Norris and her husband were visiting a man named Arlo, a rugged, self-made man who was facing terminal cancer. During their visit, Arlo started talking about his grandfather, a committed Christian. The grandfather once gave Arlo and his new wife a wedding present—an expensive leather Bible with their names printed in gold lettering. Arlo left the Bible in the box and never opened it. But for months afterward, his grandfather kept asking Arlo if he liked the Bible. Arlo told Norris, “The wife had written a nice thank-you note, and we had thanked him in person, but somehow he couldn’t let it lie. He always had to ask about it.”

Finally, Arlo grew curious enough to open the Bible. “The joke was on me,” Arlo said. “I finally took that Bible out of the closet and I found that granddad had placed a twenty-dollar bill at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, and at the beginning of every book of the Bible—over thirteen hundred dollars in all! And he knew I’d never find it.”

In *Eat This Book*, Eugene Peterson shares another key to finding the “great reward” of Scripture: “At age 35 I bought running shoes and began enjoying the smooth rhythms of long-distance running. Soon I was competing in 10K races every month or so, and then a marathon once a year. By then I was subscribing to and reading three running magazines! Then I pulled a muscle and couldn’t run for a couple of months. Those magazines were still all over the house, but I never opened one. The moment I resumed running, though, I started reading again.

“That’s when I realized that my reading was an extension of something I was a part of. I was reading for companionship and affirmation of the experience of running. I learned a few things along the way, but mostly it was to deepen my world of running. If I wasn’t running, there was nothing to deepen.

“The parallel with reading Scripture is striking. If I’m not living in active response to the living God, reading about his creation/salvation/holiness won’t hold my interest for long. The most important question isn’t ‘What does this mean’ but ‘What can I obey?’ Simple obedience will open up our lives to a text more quickly than any number of Bible studies, dictionaries, and concordances.”

“The ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:9-11).

(Contact Michael at msigler@fumcfwb.com.)