

DAY TWENTY-SIX

“NO EXCUSES”

PSALM 19:1-7

The Heavens do declare the glory of God, and for all who have existed, **there are no excuses for denying the existence of a Creator!** It is “The fool [who] has said in his heart [that], ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1; cf. 53:1). These thoughts permeated my mind this morning, as a night of fitful sleep—interrupted by images of many who need prayer and healing/deliverance for their circumstances—kept me moving back and forth between intercession and thoughts seeking favor. Having read the meditation for today prior to sleep, which in my mind is an attempt to simulate the evening sacrifice that occurs when the new day begins, I was tossing and turning over the concept of *warning* that is mentioned. But before commenting further about my concerns, please take the time to refresh your soul by lifting up your heart and voice in order to minister unto Him, by reading the following passages:

PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

PSALM 19:1-7

For the choir director. A Psalm of David. The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat. The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

COUNTING THE OMER

For many of the readers of these reflections, the Holy Scriptures make up the Divine words of the Creator of the Universe. Many believe in the power of these words, having seen them in action. If you are a true person of faith who has experienced the supernatural, you would have a most difficult time conceding that the Holy Writ only makes up a nice moral code and series of essays that have been collected in order to form a religious system for civilizing humanity, which advanced far beyond the writings and philosophies of other religions.¹ Because of the life-changing and transformative nature of the Holy Scriptures, in being present to help you in your time of need—to discern various situations and the will of God—you know that His Word is more than just some kind of mortal composition.

Some people have truly been called to devote their entire lives to the study and/or teaching of various aspects of God's Word. In order to do this effectively and properly, understanding the authority of Scripture is critical for sustaining the effort required. To even contemplate the idea that the Creator God is somehow *not* categorically just, righteous, pure, and perfect in all of His ways, would have the tendency to *shatter* even the most zealous pursuer of truth. Yet, most sadly in our day as we steadily approach the return of Yeshua the Messiah, there are many (mostly liberals) who teach the Scriptures from the standpoint that they are simply the works of various humans who are trying to "figure out" God. No one can deny how various Biblical authors appeal to God for answers, but ultimately men and women of faith are required to treat such appeals **as being Spirit-inspired**. One of the questions asked in Scripture that our own ministry is most concerned about for the long-term future is very simply: "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). A study of Scripture must be coupled with a healthy relationship with the Lord!

When one considers some of the compositions of the different Psalmists, he or she needs to conclude that God inspired a Biblical author **to communicate words from His very heart**. Since King David, often known as a man after God's own heart (cf. 1 Samuel 13:14; Psalm 89:20; Acts 7:46), is credited with being the one chosen to bring forth the greatest number of Psalms, we can be moved by his candid comments. At times, these may be *our own* human frailties and struggles. This morning, after reading the entire text of Psalm 19, I was reminded that our Creator often demonstrates two levels of understanding that must be considered when praying strategically for those He has placed on my heart.

From the opening line of this Psalm, David declares the reality that is self-evident to all of humanity. *There is a God and He does exist*, whether one wants to admit it or not. As creatures **we are without excuse** when it comes to denying His existence. This thought quite naturally took my mind to the words of the Apostle Paul, who wrote in his letter to the Romans,

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, **so that they are without excuse**. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-

¹ For a useful discussion of this, consult John N. Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 1:20-25).

Reflecting on the similarity of Paul’s words to David’s, I directed more attention to Psalm 19. I realized that those who claim to be followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have a much higher degree of accountability for the knowledge that they have been given. David states that God’s Word is perfect for restoring the soul, sure for making wise the simple, right for rejoicing the heart, pure for enlightening the eyes, clean and enduring forever, and true for righteousness (Psalm 19:7-9). After seeing these explanatory terms, I could not help but be reminded of some additional thoughts from Paul, as he prepared to close his letter to the Philippians:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:6-9).

On the testimony of two Biblical witnesses,² I was convinced that those who believe in the Creator God of the Scriptures should be focusing, *if not feasting*, upon His Word in order to be the most effective servants they can be. I then read a further comment that really caught my attention:

“Moreover, by them [words from God] Your servant is **warned**” (Psalm 19:11a).

The word “warned” jumped off the page to me, as I do seek to be a useful and blessed servant of the Most High. *What does God actually mean about His people being “warned”?* If I had already concluded that humanity in general, and especially those who looked to the Scriptures for guidance, were already accountable for their respective knowledge—how is God going to deal with His servants? Since His servants should be totally committed to knowing and serving Him, is this warning only applicable to those who serve and minister to Him, or does it apply across the board *to all*?

I was prompted to take a closer look at the Hebrew verb *zahar* (זָהַר), which is translated in the NASU as “warned.”³ The first time it is used appears in the wilderness episode where Moses’ father-in-law Jethro is giving him some sound advice about how to handle delegating some of his responsibilities:

“Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then **teach** [*zahar*] them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens” (Exodus 18:19-21).

² Cf. Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15.

³ *Zahar* appears in the Nifal stem (simple action, active voice) in Psalm 19:11, meaning “*be instructed, admonished, warned*” (BDB, 264).

COUNTING THE OMER

Here, the rendering of *zahar* as “teach” seems to make good sense, because Moses certainly had to instruct the people of Israel to adhere to God’s laws. Yet, the verb *zahar* appears in the Hifil stem (casual action, active voice) here, and probably better means “to **caution**” (*HALOT*)⁴ or “warn” (ESV). In accordance with Jethro’s counsel, Moses selected qualified individuals to carry on the responsibility of warning Israel to obey and perform the instructions that came forth from the Lord.

A most prolific time that the verb *zahar* is used in the Scriptures comes in the prophetic Book of Ezekiel. Here, we see notable references to the “watchman”:

“Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, **warn** [*zahar*, Hifil] them from Me. When I say to the wicked, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not **warn** [*zahar*, Hifil] him or speak out to **warn** [*zahar*, Hifil] the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet if you have **warned** [*zahar*, Hifil] the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself. Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not **warned** [*zahar*, Hifil] him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. However, if you have **warned** [*zahar*, Hifil] the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he **took warning** [*zahar*, Nifal]; and you have delivered yourself” (Ezekiel 3:17-21; cf. 33:2-9).

The Prophet Ezekiel was appointed to be a “watchman” (*tzafah*, תִּצַּף) or “sentinel” (NRSV) for the House of Israel. It was his direct responsibility as a servant of the Most High to follow His instructions as delivered to him. Ezekiel is required to warn the people who are either wicked or righteous about their deeds, in order to keep the blood of those being judged from falling on his head. In a similar manner, we may compare this to how sentinels, in various towns in Ancient Israel, would be on the lookout and declare the approach of danger, so that a town’s inhabitants would be ready. For a watchman like Ezekiel, he had to declare forth warnings, so that his responsibility was fulfilled, and he would not incur any penalties or judgment on himself for failing to speak forth God’s messages, derelict in his duties.

Contemplating the great responsibility that would have been placed upon the shoulders of ancient sentinels looking out for potential danger to a town—and comparing this to the life of a servant, and to those who simply are spending a little time in the Word of God—I then was cued to the thirteenth verse of Psalm 19, where the servant begs the Lord for help to avoid presumptive sins:

“Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins” (Psalm 19:13a).

The term rendered here as “presumptuous” is *zeid* (זֵיד),⁵ and was itself “another dagger” in my heart of reflection. In Psalm 119 *zeid* is liberally sprinkled throughout the text six different times,⁶ and I noted that the author is constantly trying to move the arrogant away from their deceitful and self-defeating ways. A significant place where the word *zeid* appears in the Tanakh is found in the concluding warnings from the Prophet Malachi:

⁴ *HALOT*, 1:265.

⁵ “insolent, presumptuous” (*HALOT*, 1:263).

⁶ Psalm 119:21, 51, 69, 78, 85, 122.

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the **arrogant** [*zeid*] and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘so that it will leave them neither root nor branch’ (Malachi 4:1).

Here, the Prophet Malachi makes his final warning, particularly telling the unrepentant arrogant and evildoers that they will be consumed by God’s judgment.

In like manner, let me also warn all who read these words: whether you are a mocker of God who claims He does not exist in spite of the declarations of the natural order, or whether you are one who simply pays lip service to the Word of God when your heart is not in it, or whether you are a servant of the Most High, or whether you have been called to be a watchman on the wall—the same declaration applies to all. **Do not be arrogant or prideful about who you are in relation to the Holy One of Israel.**

As we should all know from God’s Holy Word, He does have a plan and He is executing it perfectly according to His infinite wisdom. We are not to be dismayed or anxious by what we may be witnessing in the world today. Rather, we are to direct our thoughts and attention toward Him, and the opportunity we have to turn toward Him and to His Word—to **receive all that we need to sustain ourselves**. Our actions can be a testimony to all we encounter, and they often speak much louder than all of the words we can shout!