

## Psalm 19 -Certainty

### 1. Incompetent yet confident.

One of the great frustrations of ministry is having to deal with people who dabble in religion. You often find people who are so impressed with what little they know that they assume what they don't know is of little consequence. People who study such things were shocked to find how pervasive this problem is. The more incompetent someone was, the more confident they were in themselves. They actually have a name for this, but most people just call it being a know-it-all.<sup>1</sup> This is all so humorous but it can often be disastrous as in the case of Christopher Duntzsch. He presented himself as a great neurosurgeon. His confidence did not match his competence and he was sentenced to life in prison in 2017 for maiming several patients. Or, it is humorous until it becomes consequential and sidelines a believer, destroys a family, splits a church, or damns cult followers to hell.

Take for example, the claim many make that they know God. I am afraid that what many people mean is that they know *about* God, but they don't *know* God. A popular quote<sup>2</sup> has been paraphrased as "there is a God shaped hole in the heart of every man that only Jesus can fill." People *want* to know God and to one degree or another will admit it. If you are saved, then you *do* know God.

We know God because with the Spirit of God in us we have the mind of Christ.

1Cor 2:12-16 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

...

14But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

...

16For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

However, the Pharisees were *also*

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<sup>1</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning%E2%80%93Kruger\\_effect](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning%E2%80%93Kruger_effect)

<sup>2</sup>What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself. - Blaise Pascal, Pensées VII(425)

sure they knew God, but Jesus challenged their *certainty*.

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

And then there are religious zealots ranging from annoying to dangerous. You have people who are like Tim Keller, Steven Anderson, John Calvin, Robert Van Kampen. They know God but are misleading. You also have people who are like Joseph Smith, Charles Russell, Muhammed, Buddha. They don't know God at all but are sure they do while they lead people to Hell.

Prov 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

Possibly the worst case are the ones who have grown up in church and know all about the Bible and yet never made the decision to truly call on the Lord for salvation. They are self-deceived thinking their works are proof that they know God. They are so close, and yet so far.

Matt 7:22-23 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

I think some of the saddest words in the Bible were spoken by Agrippa, "Almost thou persadest me to be a Christian." People want to know God and to one degree or another will admit it, but how to "know" *anything* is a problem.

I have given you one example of the problem in claiming you know something, specifically, knowing God. However, that is just one among many problem areas and is how there are so many cults and -isms that you will have to wade through as you serve God.

1Thess 5:20-21 Despise not prophesyings.

21Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

To despise prophesyings, or preaching includes more than just rebelling against a sermon. It includes not giving proper consideration for *any* message. Paul was telling the Thessalonians to give honest consideration, prove things out, and then hold fast to *well reasoned* conclusions. As preachers and Christian workers we spend a lot of time explaining *what* the Bible says, but God says that we have to

be ready for more.

1Pet 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

We have to be ready to give an answer to not only the question *what* we believe, but also the *reasons* we believe. We have to be ready to answer the question *why* and *how* we believe. This will also include being able to answer why we *don't* believe what we don't believe. This is where Psalm 19 comes in.

## 2. Knowing vs. Presuming.

Sooner or later you are going come across people who find out you are a preacher and try to impress you with their spirituality by saying their favorite part of the Bible is the Psalms. They really don't know much about the Bible, but if you say you like poetry it makes you sound smart. The Psalms are rich in doctrine and prophecy, not just devotion and challenge. We are going to look at Psalm 19 because it is much more potent than just providing doctrine. It presents a great answer to a major philosophical issue about knowing and being able to justify your claims to certainty (in philosophy this is called epistemology). You are going to be challenged by people who are going to be very certain and very convincing. It is sad to watch promising preachers and church members being led astray. Psalm 19 lays the groundwork for how to reason and be able to recognize error and false teachers.

- Two sources of knowledge.

The first two parts of the Psalm teach us to recognize the *source* of knowledge. The first kind of knowledge is Empirical knowledge. Empirical knowledge refers to those things we can know by experience. It is measurable or observable.

Ps 19:1-6 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3*There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard.

4Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

This portion is making a statement more than calling us to be impressed with how beautiful God's world is. Notice that everything in this part is observable: the heavens, the firmament, His handiwork, the rising and setting of the sun *and everything under it*. Philosophers have not had any real problem with truth that comes from experience. Where they have struggled is having certainty in claiming to know something *apart* from experience.

This is where the next part of Psalm 19 comes in. There is a sharp shift in vs. 7-11. Everything in this second part is related to the second kind of knowledge: Revealed Knowledge. This is what philosophy has struggled with. Revealed Knowledge does not come with observation, it has to be given to us.

Ps 19:7-11 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

8The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

9The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

10More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.

The Law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the judgments of the Lord are all references to Scripture given by revelation.

- Two methods of reasoning.

All the problems of the skeptics and the heretics depend on how you *work* with these two sources of knowledge so we are going to compare the two methods.

The problem with Empirical Knowledge is that the more complex the observations, the more you realize that it is not absolutely certain. All you can get is your best guess. This works out pretty well for a lot of things in life, but predicting the stock market, climate change, and elections shows us the difficulties. Let me give you an example of this reasoning. I take you to a room that has 100 black cats, 100 white cats, and 100 calico cats. 60% of the *black* cats are *male*. 60% of the *white* cats are *female*. However, 100% of the *calico* cats are female. Now I go out and bring in three more cats: one black, one white,

and one calico. I ask you to choose which one is female. If you guess correctly, I will give you a million dollars. If you guess wrong, I will shoot your best friend. Also, if you fail to make *any* guess, I will shoot your best friend. Which would you choose? If you chose the calico based on all the information you were given, you would be right. I might have set the problem up differently and had 100% black female cats, but I am charitable and wanted to make it easy for you to save your friend. However, it wasn't totally certain because you don't have all the calico cats in the world to suggest the odds of female to male calico cats. You *do* have enough to go on to give you *some* kind of confidence. The interesting thing that you don't know ahead of time is that *all* calico cats carry the XX chromosomes that are used to determine whether a cat is female. When dealing with Empirical Knowledge, unless you have 100% of all evidence possible, there is *uncertainty*. Your knowledge is *indistinct*, *indirect*. We call this method of reasoning *Inductive Reasoning*. We use it to develop truths that are based on our best assumptions. Once we accept those truths, we can work with them in our argumentation. This is the way it is with the first part of the Psalm. By observing nature, it is safe to conclude that God exists. This is the argument of Paul in Romans 1:

Rom 1:19-20 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

20For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

The problem, though, is that such knowledge, to whatever degree we can be sure of it, is lacking. You cannot know, from observation of nature, the Trinity, the Pre-trib Rapture, the Deity of Christ, and other truths. For this you need revelation.

There is a high premium placed on Revealed Knowledge according to vs. 7-11. It will make people who only have basic knowledge wise, it will rejoice the heart and enlighten the eyes, it will endure for ever, they are 100% completely right and 100% completely true, they are more desirable than fine gold, and they will provide great reward. This is reflected also in Romans:

Rom 3:1-4 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?

2Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

3For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

4God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

Where the pagan had only nature, the Jews had the certainty of the oracles of God, or the inspired Word of God. When you have that, you can skip past the process of inductive reasoning and just taking your best guess because you know that the truths from God's Word are direct, distinct, and certain. You can use those truths immediately in your argumentation. For example, I pick out two cats, one with the XX chromosome and one with the XY chromosome. The one with the XY chromosome is male. What does the make the other cat? Female. We know this with certainty because God's Word says that He created them male and female. Where inductive reasoning helps us to make assumptions based on the evidence we have, deductive reasoning helps us to make arguments that *use* truth, whether it is assumptions based on observations or whether it comes from revelation from God. If the premises of your argument are true, then your deductive conclusions are certain. All we have done is rearrange the premises and applied truth. This is why we like Paul: Romans is written with deductive arguments. To the Corinthians he said

2Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

*This is very important to know because this is where the false prophets go to work!* They distort, twist, deny, and redefine the premise.

### 3. Presumption.

Let's look at the third part of the Psalm now. The first two parts give us the two sources of knowledge, but the third part gives us a warning on what we *do* with that knowledge.

Ps 19:12-14 Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.

13Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

14Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

David's prayer is that the meditation of our heart and the words of our mouth be *acceptable*. He is referring to our

reasoning. You will notice that the word *sins* is in italics in vs. 13, which means that the emphasis in this verse is on the problem of presumption. Premises for arguments are based on the *assumptions* from our empirical experience or from revealed knowledge. Premises turn into *presumptions* when the wolves in sheep clothing inject error at this level. To illustrate this, let me bring out another cat. I take Mittens to the Democrat National Convention. I ask the question, "Mittens has two X chromosomes. What gender is Mittens?" They say, "I don't know. Let's ask Mittens what they think they are." Do you see what they have done here? They have played with the premise because they presume that gender is something society invented while they ignore the plain declaration of Scripture and evidence.

Satan in the Garden of Eden did this when he asked Eve, "Yea, hath God said...?" This is why the modernists set up the Scopes trial to attack the Biblical creation...knock out the foundation of the creation and you can knock out every other doctrine. When you are preparing a sermon or a lesson, you have to question the meditation of your heart, asking yourself, "Are my premises, my assumptions, correct; are they acceptable to God?" When you have to argue against false doctrines, examine the premises. Let's consider a few examples.

Eph 1:4-5 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

There are actually two problems commonly found in explaining this passage, both have to do with presumptions, or, in other words, faulty assumptions. Some commentators, in vs. 4, will take "chosen us in him" and presume to say, "chosen us *to be* in him" which leads them to the conclusion that some are chosen to be saved. They then back it up with the idea of being predestinated unto the adoption of children. They presume that the adoption of children, because of the origin of the word adoption, means that we are predestined to being born again. All you need is to take your premises from God's Word at face value where we find *God's* definition of adoption. The same Paul wrote to the Romans and said,

Rom 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the **adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.**

He then confirmed this in...

Eph 1:13-14 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,  
14Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The adoption is the resurrection that we are destined to receive *after* we believed and were sealed by the Holy Spirit.

In the next case we take Psalm 2. The Jehovah's Witnesses like to take vs. 7 and use it to suggest that Christ was a created being.

Ps 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

But in Acts 13, Paul explains that this is a reference to the resurrection.

This applies to many areas. Bible critics argue that older Bible manuscript copies are necessarily better than later Bible manuscript copies. We have to ask, "Why?" If the older manuscripts were copies of a corrupted manuscript, being older wouldn't make a difference. Older has nothing to do with better. I was greatly pleased to hear one critic make an admission after using a computer to examine all the data comparing Greek texts. He came to a new assumption that the later manuscripts which were used for the King James Version actually *were better* than the older.

Absolutely all the problems you are witnessing going on in American cities and government can be traced back to one premise: Is society responsible to guarantee happiness or the pursuit of happiness?

All of this reminds me of Alice talking to Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass*:

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

Whoever frames the argument controls the conclusions because the conclusions are merely the rearrangement of the premises.

4. Study to show yourself approved unto God.

What is our challenge, then? First, make sure you are born again. You will



need the instruction and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to guide you:

1John 4:6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

Second, be on your guard.

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

For example, you are going to come across what is called the Emergent Church voting on what truth is. You will be able to recognize there subjectivism and redefining of terms right away. Keep your premises pure.

Third, study.

2Tim 3:14-17 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*;

15And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Continue in the things knowing those from whom you have learned from. This is why Fundamentalism has been so powerful. Fundamentalists majored on preaching God's inerrant Word. When we do this, our premises are accurate and certain. The more I have studied the more I have found that our Fundamentalist forbears knew what they were talking about. What will keep you on track is examining the claims of everyone who wants to have a new, improved version of Christianity.

2Tim 2:15-16 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

It is by the inductive method of examining all the evidence that you can reasonably prove that the Bible and the existence of God is true. Skeptics are looking for the wrong kind of proof when they doubt the Bible. They want

the certainty of deductive argumentation without going first through the inductive method of analyzing the information.

When I first surrendered to ministry, it occurred to me that I would need to demonstrate certainty when it came to the Word of God. God blessed and showed me the prophecies about Christ. There were still many parts of the Bible I didn't understand, but when it came to the prophecies I realized that the only way they could be there was if God had revealed them to His prophets. Once I had sufficient information to accept the Bible all I had left to do was apply what the Bible said. Skeptics let what they don't know rule them. Mark Twain was supposed to have said, "It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand." That is as it should be. Don't let the parts that you haven't figure out yet cause you to walk away. As you study and learn, let the things that you *do* understand challenge you and give you confidence. I was willing to accept the Bible as God's Word and God's Word has never disappointed me.

This, I hope, is the reason you are in Bible college and specifically why you are in *this* Bible college. Get everything you can, because you are going to need this and all that you come to study to escape the wiles of the Devil.

Eph 6:10-11 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.