

Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

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PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.

I have been reading through the book of Psalms for some time now and continue to be blessed as I take time to read devotionally on each one. I have also been listening to a sermon from Pastor Michael Cloer, on Psalm 19. He will be speaking at the Perth Keswick convention April 8th, 9th and 10th and then at the Esperance Keswick April 15th, 16th and 17th. He is the Senior Pastor of Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount North Carolina.

His Sermon spoke volumes to me as he skilfully opened up the wealth of biblical truth in this psalm. Let me share what I have been learning from him in brief.

We live in an age where more than ever people are looking for a spiritual connection. The New Age phenomenon is but one example of this desire within the community to get some answers for their spiritual questions. The clear distinctive of the Christian church is that we can experience a personal relationship with the one true God. For most of us our entry into the kingdom of God has come about from some sort of crisis or struggle in our lives that has awakened us to our need of God, and to know Him personally. For others it is the realisation that there has to be more to life than just existing for the purpose of just existing and then push up daisies when our number is up.

The common denominator for all Christians is that in some way or another God has graciously revealed Himself to them. Psalm 19 is all about how God declares to us how we can know Him through three key ways.

1. The proclamation of His glory in the skies verses 1-6

Creation is a wordless book that has spoken to people down through the ages. As it does it reveals God's person in the form of His glory. The word glory in the Scriptures has the idea of the sum total of all that God is. In this case it is the idea of God's authority as He spoke the universe into existence. A number of testimonies that I have written over the years have indicated that creation has been a key element in their conversion.

Creation also shows God's power not only to create but to sustain what He has created. The more that is discovered about the universe, as we know it, the more it speaks of God's power and authority. This authority is wonderfully summed up for us in Psalm 29 when David declares in verse 2; "Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name." Why? Well in the following verses David declares that; "The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth." All this speaks of the power and authority of the Lord and that nothing happens unless He has ordained it.

Then the heavens speak of the providence of God. God has put a process in place that keeps on happening day after day. This means that every day is a gift every breath is a gift because God has faithfully kept this process in place providentially day after day. The wonderful thing about God's handiwork in the heavens is that it speaks all languages. No matter what country you come from you can see the heavens utter their speech of the ingenuity and creativity of the Almighty God.

2. The revelation of God through the Scriptures verses 7-11. While the heavens show the reality of a creator, designer God, which makes us accountable to God by conviction whether we believe in Him or not, it is not enough to convert the soul. There are a number of characteristics of the Word of God mentioned here that are worth noting.

The Word of God is perfect. Why? Because all Scripture is inspired of God and without error, so that it can be completely trusted. Not only is it perfect, it is powerful because it converts the soul. It can transform the most unlikely person into a child of God. Then the Word of God is plain to understand because one does not need a degree to understand what is being said. When we do understand what is being said it rejoices our heart because we become so aware of the fact that the Word of God is living and powerful and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4 verse 12).

Then we can see that the Word of God is pure in its goals purpose and motivation. The Word of God is permanent not just some trend or fad. It has endured through the ages and continues to transform millions of lives year after year. Because of all that the Word of God does and has endured it is precious and should be treasured. Unfortunately in today's western world in particular it is far from treasured and we are seeing the results of this in our churches and in our homes. The protective aspect of the Word of God in warning us not to do certain things or in directing our lives, is not being experienced either because we don't treasure God's Word as we should. However, as we read and study God's Word we find it so profitable as God imparts His wisdom and understanding.

3 The application of God the Holy Spirit verses 12-14

As we read and study God's Word we come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He reveals things in our lives that maybe we didn't realise were there. This is why David in Psalm 139 cries out to God and says;

"Search me O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me..." David knew he couldn't trust himself to examine his own heart, so he asked God to do it.

As the Holy Spirit reveals our sin and we confess our sin we experience the cleansing of the Spirit. **Not only can we be cleansed by the Spirit we can be controlled by the Spirit so that we are kept from sinning.** This all leads us to enjoying on-going communion with the Holy Spirit as our praise, prayer and meditation are acceptable to Him

Please continue to pass on to us any unused study books and commentaries for our fellow African pastors.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge



Praise:

1. Praise the Lord for a fruitful trip for Carl Carmody to Adelaide and Sydney. In co-operation with our South Australian representative, Alan Bailey, around 35 churches were contacted. This was encouraging as it is becoming more difficult to contact pastors in today's busy environment. Also there was a very encouraging time with the NSW Bible Society and their staff. Praise God for their support of our prison edition of the paper in South Africa. They have committed to supplying us with \$50,000 worth of Bibles per year for the next three years, for the follow up of the 600 plus commitments that we are getting each month.
2. Praise God for some wonderfully encouraging gifts that have come in lately which have been much needed. We never fail to be humbled by the faithful gifts of some amazing people.
3. Praise God for our working partnership with Outback Focus ministry based in Toowoomba Queensland. As we work with Greg and Jill Lanyon we are reaching out to some 4,000 properties in South West Queensland each month.
4. Praise the Lord for our partner ministry in South Africa, Multi Ministries who are doing an excellent job in promoting and distributing the paper in SA, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.
5. We are so thankful to God for the commitments to Christ that we are seeing here in Australia, NZ and in southern Africa.

Prayer:

1. Continue to pray for our new partnership with Outback Focus. The project needs \$1,500 per month to cover printing and distribution costs. If you would like to give to this ministry mark it for the Outback Project. Pray for a real on-going response to the paper as these outback folks receive their regular copy of the good news paper.
2. Pray for the follow-up to the churches and pastors that we contacted recently in South Australia. We are praying that the good response will translate into action.
3. We would value your prayer for finances for our African project. We need some \$6,000 per month to fund what we are doing at the moment, let alone what we are prayerfully wanting to extend to.
4. Pray for Carl and Carolyn Carmody as they head to the US to attend two mission conferences and promote the African and Australian work to various churches. Pray for the Lord's leading and blessing with the development of the itinerary and for a good response to the trip. Also please pray for safety in travel.
5. Continue to pray for our partner ministries in NZ and in South Africa. The Challenge Weekly in NZ is going through some very difficult times financially and would value your prayer for finances to overcome their present struggles.

Multi ministries in South Africa have got a number of important outreaches going on as well as training of local pastors and leaders. They would appreciate your prayer for the Lord's blessing in all that they are doing. Please keep Billy Baker and Johnny Young as they promote the Challenge paper into churches and in the area of industrial chaplaincy.

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