

The Lord's Excellent Name

Psalm 8

- I. Praise the Lord for His glory. 8:1-2**
- 1) He is glorious because He is my Lord. 8:1
 - 2) He is glorious because He is a majestic God. 8:1-2
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 - 2) He has a great reign.

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Introduction: 1) Everyone has a worldview, a particular way of looking at life. It helps you deal with the ultimate questions of life like who am I? Why am I here? Is there a God? What's it all about? What will happen to me when I die? Is anything worth dying for? These questions are unavoidable. We have been asking them since time began and sin entered the world.

2) On the inside, deep within our souls, we have a nagging and lingering sense that things are not quite right, something has gone wrong, something is amiss in our world and lives. The great church father Augustine (354-430) saw our dilemma and in a sense blamed it on God. He wrote, "You have made us for Yourself, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in You". History would seem to support Augustine's thesis, for wherever you look and whenever you look you quickly discover that humanity is incurably a religious, worshiping creature. He must find a god to worship, even if it is the wrong god who is destined to disappoint and not deliver, the wrong god who actually is nothing but an idol.

3) It may be the god of the:

atheist – who saying there is no god, turns and worships himself.

pantheist – who worships creation and all that is.

deist – who tips his hat toward God convinced He is out there but doesn't care.

finite theist – whose impotent god is hardly worthy of worship.

panentheist – who thinks he senses a divine force running throughout the universe like an electrical charge we need to tap into.

polytheist – there is a smorgasbord of gods for the picking and choosing. And, the more the better.

4) In contrast to all of this the Bible paints a completely different picture. Here we discover there is one and only one God who is personal, powerful and perfect. He is the awesome God who made the Universe and all that is in it. He is also the approachable God you can know by name and with whom you can have a life changing relationship. Psalm 8 tells us all about it.

5) Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise, of creation praise. Its origin is perhaps in young David's life as a shepherd, when lying in the fields one night gazing into the majestic night sky, he was filled with awe and wonder concerning God's marvelous creation. This God, and only this God, is to be worshiped and adored as the good and great Creator, Ruler and Sustainer of all things. The psalm looks back to Genesis 1-2 and God's Creation, especially His creation of man. However, it also looks forward in anticipation to the coming of a New Man, a second Adam, who will make right all that has gone wrong since sin entered the world through the 1st Adam's disobedience. That man is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, who regains for us Paradise lost. A God who accomplishes all of this truly has an excellent name!

Transition: What does David believe we should do when we are confronted with such a great, majestic and awesome God?

I. Praise the Lord for His glory. 8:1-2

- Psalm 8 has 4 major components. The 1st (v.1) and the 4th (v.9) are identical, forming what we call in literary terms "inclusio" or bracketing. All of the psalm, every word

and every truth, is to be understood in the light of the excellence, the majesty, of the name of the Lord. The psalm has the appropriate starting point for genuine and authentic worship: it begins with God. Why is the Lord glorious to the children of God?

1) He is glorious because He is my Lord. 8:1

- The corporate community of believers has gathered for worship. As they contemplate who their God is and what their God has done they breakout in personal praise: O Yahweh (Lord, Jehovah), our Adonai (Lord).
- Yahweh is His personal, covenant name revealed to the Hebrews. It occurs 5,321 times in the O.T. Gerald Wilson points out Yahweh carries within it both the idea of “the God who is and the God who will be.” The name is “a powerful promise of continuing divine presence in their lives” (p. 210). The psalmist begins in worship as we should begin. He begins His theology as we should begin our theology: with God. The starting point is crucial!
- David begins with 2 great names of God and wonderfully notes that Jehovah is our Lord, our governor, ruler, master. This great God is my God!

2) He is glorious because He is a majestic God. 8:1-2

- Michael Wilcock notes verse one is so familiar “that we can easily miss its shameless political incorrectness. The Bible world, like ours, was pluralistic, awash with all sorts of different beliefs: in the view of any correctly thinking person, all of them valid, but none of them actually ‘right’ in such a way as to make the rest wrong. Not so the psalmist. The Lord, the God of Israel and the Bible, is not just our Lord, he says, but the name, the only name, to be honored in all the earth and even above the heavens. Little Israel is right, and the rest are wrong.” (p. 39).
- This God’s name is excellent (*NIV*, majestic) in all the earth. His glory set above the heavens! All of creation cannot contain His greatness, His majesty. And yet His greatness is displayed in little things as well, such as in the simple and even humiliating manner in which He dismisses His enemies. “From the mouths of babes and infants You have ordained, established strength.” The greatness of creation proclaims your majesty, and so does the cry of the infant and the chatter of a small child. In fact it is the weak who silence the wicked, the tiny who shut the mouths of God’s enemy, one in a manger who would put to flight the avenger (*NASV*, “revengeful”).
- Paul said something similar to this in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 when he writes, “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence” (*NKJV*).
- Jesus applies v. 2 to Himself in Matthew 21:15-16 as He made his great entry into Jerusalem: “But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant. And they said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?*’” (NKJV).

One should not miss what the children were saying! We must not miss the point that in applying Psalm 8:2 to Himself, He also was claiming to be the majestic God of whom the babes and infants give witness!

II. Praise the Lord for His grandeur. 8:3-4

- David moves once again to consider the heavens (v.1), though he will again descend to the earthbound realm (v.2) to reflect upon the paradox of mankind’s insignificance, but also the lofty status bestowed upon him an act of pure grace by the great God. That God, in the expanse and grandeur of His creation would pay attention to a speck of dust like man is all the more reason to proclaim the excellence and majesty of His name.

1) He created the big things. 8:3

- David considers, meditates on the heavens that belong to God (Your heavens...Your fingers). He says they are the “work of Your fingers.” This is what we call an anthropomorphism, ascribing human characteristics to God in order to make a point. The point is this: creating billions of stars in billions of galaxies is child’s play to God. He snaps or points a figure and it is done, all of it. He did not even need to warm up. He does not even break a sweat. How simple all of this is for *Yahweh* our *Adonai*.
- David takes note of the moon and the stars which God has ordained (NIV, “which you have set in place”). The innumerable points of lights in the heavens, the clockwork precision with which the moon and stars turn and then return again and again and again to map out the days, weeks, months, and years of human existence is truly indescribable, beyond our ability to comprehend. Humans come and go, but the moon and stars continue in their regular appearance. A man fails to show up for work, the number of his days is at an end, but moon and stars appear once again undisturbed, without fail, ready to serve their Maker. Each is right where it should be all the time, every time, in perfect obedience to its Master who ordained its existence and assignment. Yes *Yahweh* our *Adonai* created the big things.

2) He cares for the little things. 8:4

David now descends from the lofty heights of the heavens to the lowly regions of planet earth. Overwhelmed and left nearly speechless, he now considers himself, he thinks about us, in the context of this massive cosmic masterpiece called creation. All he can do is muster a single question set in appropriate Hebrew parallelism: “What is man (*enosh*) that You are mindful (NASV, “take thought”) of him, and the son of man (*ben adam*) that You visit (give attention to or care for) him?” Looking up into the grandeur of the heavens David feels dwarfed and shamed into insignificance at the greatness of creation and the smallness of humanity. A speck?

We are less than that! I think I am something special when I consider all of this? Who am I kidding?! On earth I am nothing. In this incredible universe, I am really nothing.

Enosh (man) speaks of our weakness and frail human existence. It highlights our mortality. We come and go, live fragile, troubled lives, and leave quickly with little noticeable or lasting impact if the truth be told.

Ben adam (son of man) likewise emphasizes our fragile mortality, but it also may point to our dependence on God and His attentiveness to us in our need of Him. Man is an earth creature and yet in grace, God has given him glory and honor (v.5-7). Infinite God cares for finite man. The God who created the big things also cares for the little things, even you and even me. He is mindful of us, he is attentive to us. He has not forgotten you. He has not forgotten me. In the midst of running, sustaining and superintending His massive creation, He was watching over me all night long and when I awoke this morning, He was right there at my side to say “good morning, I am here to spend this day, like every day, with you!” What a God. What a Lord. What a Father. What a Savior. What a Comforter is our God.

III. Praise the Lord for His goodness.

8:5-8

- God would say to us today, you are not out of sight or out of mind. I see you, I know you by name, and as my imagers, I have honored you. Looking back to the creation account in Gen. 1, David notes both the dignity and responsibility with which God has endowed mere mortals. Pure grace, pure goodness is the only thing we can say.

1) We are crowned with honor. 8:5

- Set apart from the animal world, the Bible says look up to get the proper perspective on who we are. Draw your dignity from God not beast.
- We were made a little lower than *Elohim*. A troubling word with a significant semantic domain or bundle of meanings, note the following translations:
 - A little lower than the angels (*NKJV*)
 - A little lower than the heavenly beings (*NIV, ESV*)
 - A little lower than God (*NASV, NLT*)
 - A little lower than you yourself (*CEV*)
 - A little less than a god (*Rev. Eng. Bible*)
 - Yet we so narrowly missed being gods (*The Message*)
- Though the precise meaning is uncertain, the basic meaning is clear. We are described as a little lower than those in the heavenly realm, not a little higher than the animal realm. Evolution may say we are slightly above the beast but God says we are just a little lower than Himself and His angels. Further as His vice-regents and delegated authority on earth, we are crowned with glory (like God, cf v. 1!) and honor. This should impact our sense of what it means to be human. This should impact who and what we aspire to be. James Boice puts it in proper perspective,

“it is nevertheless humanity’s special privilege and duty to look upward to the angels (and beyond the angels to God, in whose image women

and men have been made), rather than downward to the beasts. The result is that they become increasingly like God rather than increasingly beast-like in their behavior....

But here is the sad thing. Although made in God's image and ordained to become increasingly like the God to whom they look, men and women have turned their backs on God. And since they will not look upward to God, which is their privilege and duty, they actually look downward to the beasts and so become increasingly like them." (p.71).

- John Piper sees the significance of all of this. Lose sight of who man really is and you lose sight of who God really is in all of His majesty. And lose sight of God and His majesty and the world goes bizerk!" All of it hangs together and the fallout when we get it wrong is enormous. Thus Dr. Piper says,
 - “Now I hope you will agree from this psalm that the truth follows: You cannot worship and glorify the majesty of God while treating his supreme creation with contempt-whatever color or whatever age that creation might be.
 - You cannot starve the aged human and glorify the majesty of God.
 - You cannot dismember the unborn human and glorify the majesty of God.
 - You cannot gas the Jewish human and glorify the majesty of God.
 - You cannot lynch the black human and glorify the majesty of God.
 - You cannot treat human pregnancy like a disease and glorify the majesty of God.
 - You cannot treat the mixing of human races like a pestilence and glorify the majesty of God.
 - You cannot worship and glorify the majesty of God while treating his supreme creation with contempt.” (“What Is Man,” 1-16-94)
- Yes we are a little lower than heavenly beings crowned with glory and honor. We must not lose this perspective. If we do, as Alistar Begg notes, we devolve into nothing more than a monkey or a machine, neither of which has inherent value, dignity or worth.

2) We are commissioned as rulers. 8:6-8

The psalmist continues as if he is oblivious to the Fall. Highlighting the functional aspect of the image of God in man, which is also the emphasis of Gen. 1, he notes we have been fashioned by God for dominion and rulership. Thus:

- We are made to have dominion (be rulers) over the works of your hands (cf v.3, another anthropomorphism)
 - He has put all things under our feet, a symbolic act in the Ancient Near East to demonstrate superiority over a defeated enemy or foe. A king would stand, put his foot on the neck of his enemy lying on the ground at his feet. The king is exalted and the enemy humiliated. The king rules and the enemy submits.
- Thus:

- All sheep and oxen
- Beast of the field
- Birds of the air
- Fish of the sea, that pass through the paths of the sea

All of this God has put under our feet, out authority, our lordship.

- And yet is this true now? If we look back to a pre-fallen world we see how this is the way things were. But now...this is not the world that we live in. This is not the way things work. This is clearly not the way things are. Right now we do not live in a Psalm 8 world. Verses 6-8 direct us back to the idyllic scene of the Garden of Eden, but they also drive us to look to the future asking, wondering, can Paradise be regained? Can the Fall be reversed? Can death be defeated, tears dried up, sorrow, pain and suffering be no more? Will there ever be a day when “all things” are once again under the feet, the authority, of men, of any man?
- The book of Hebrews says yes! Quoting Psalm 8 in 2:6-8 the author honestly acknowledges that “but now we do not yet see all things under him. Oh, but now read v. 9: “But we see Jesus who was made a little lower (or”for a little while”) than the angels crowned with glory and honor...”
- Paul saw a specific implication and application of Psalm 8 in Eph. 1:22-23 where the all things under the feet of Christ includes “the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”
- Paul also saw the eschatological and Christological impulse pulsating through the heart of this Psalm. In 1 Cor. 15:24-28 Paul sees the last enemy which is death destroyed and all things brought under subjection to the Son of God who will give it all back to the Father from where it all came.
- Yes, there is a future grand and glorious, bright and beautiful, marvelous and majestic for the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve. Paradise lost will be Paradise regained because of a man, a man of God’s own choosing, even Jesus our Lord. His crown of thorns was actually a crown of glory, and now the glory of Psalm 8 is already His, with even death under His feet. And as co-heirs with Jesus (Rom. 8), His present reign is our future destiny. Oh praise the Lord for His goodness.

IV. Praise the Lord for His greatness. 8:9

- Psalm 8 ends as it begins, on a note of praise. Earlier we gave attention to the fact that the Lord is my Lord and a majestic God. Now we conclude by focusing on 2 additional truths contained in these magnificent affirmations of God.
 - 1) He has a great name.
 - *Yahweh*, the self-existent one, the one who’s own existence is contained with Himself as Triune deity and sovereign, His is an excellent name. Wilson again is our helper in grasping the greatness of this name: *Yahweh* “is a majestic name for a majestic God, who promises to be with us, continues to reveal himself to us in each and every new circumstance, and yet remains forever beyond our power to control or manipulate to our own purpose” (p. 211). The word “excellent” can be rendered majestic (*NASV, ESV, NIV*). The word carries the related idea of mighty. Indeed the Bible affirms His name is:

Majestic in His victories (Ex. 15:6, “The Song of Moses)

Majestic in His judgment (Ps. 76:4)

Majestic in His law (Isaiah 42:21)

Majestic in His creation (Ps. 8:1, 9; 93:4).

Yes, this God has an impressive, even intimidating name when you see the awesomeness of the one who bear that name.

2) He has a great reign.

- It is all the earth. It all belongs to Him. All of it is under His Lordship. In every square inch, He is there, and there to be praised.
- Charles Spurgeon, the wonderful British Baptist and pastor in London captured something of what the Psalm is saying when he wrote,
 - “Descend to the lowest depths of the ocean where the water sleeps undisturbed and the sand is motionless in unbroken quiet. The glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the farthest parts of the sea. God is there. Fly to the highest heaven, and God is praised in everlasting song. Dive to the deepest hell, and God is justified in terrible vengeance. Everywhere, and in every place, God dwells...” (Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, pg. 45)

Conclusion

- The great theologian J.I. Packer says, “we are at the end of 4 centuries of God shrinking.” He gets smaller while we get bigger. The Bible does not see it this way. David did not see it this way. We must not see it this way. “O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth.” If you will just listen, you can hear those words in the mouth of a child, or a baby.

- *How Great Our God’s Majestic Name*
Words: Timothy Dudley-Smith, 1926-

How great our God’s majestic Name!
His glory fills the earth and sky.
His praise the heavenly host proclaim,
Eternal God and Lord most high.

His fingers set the moon in place,
The stars their Maker’s hand declare;
In earth and sky alike we trace
The pattern of His constant care.

And what of us? Creation’s crown,
Upheld in God’s eternal mind;
On whom He looks in mercy down

For tender love of humankind.

His praise the heavenly host proclaim
And we His children tell His worth;
And great is God's majestic Name,
His glory seen in all the earth.

The Son of Man saw Adam's race,
Sent lower than angels He made.
Tasted death for all by God's grace,
Crowned with honor, what price He paid.