

## Psalm 8 “His Great Name”

### Intro:

It's probably difficult for Christians to connect the Psalms with the teachings of the New Testament. And I think that's because of the lack of understanding of one very simple truth: and that is this: that the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation is one complete story, written by the same Author (Divinely speaking). The Bible, in its entirety, in its chronology, is the unfolding revelation of God's plan of redemption through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The whole bible points to Christ. And when you realize that, you can't help but to see Christ revealed across the pages of scripture. Including the Psalms. In fact, what fascinates **me** personally most about the Psalms is actually seeing Christ revealed in them. And I'm not just talking about the obvious Messianic references that we see for example in Psalm 2 and many, many others. I'm talking about all the shades and shadows of Christ that are revealed.

Many of the Psalms contain doctrinal truths. Not all of them, but certainly many do. The scriptural concept of doctrine includes the ENTIRE message about God, about God's salvation, about our depravity and the nature of sin, and about righteousness. So what **IS** doctrine? One definition gives doctrine as this: teaching that is FROM God, ABOUT God, and that directs us TO THE GLORY of God. Doctrine is a means to an end. And what is that end? GREATER AND GREATER DEGREES OF WORSHIP of our Lord! Because if doctrine doesn't cause us to behold the astonishing, earth-shattering, MAJESTY of Christ Himself, then we're left with nothing but dry, lifeless, rote religion.

And even with all that talk of doctrine, particularly when it comes TO the Psalms, there's another thing to consider and that is this: that even though the Psalms very often highlight some

profound doctrinal truths, and they certainly DO, the reality is that they don't have to be read with an eye that looks for doctrine at all. Remember, the Psalms are meant to stir us, to move us, to TRANSform us, **not just to INform us**. The Psalms are meant to *help* us, to *guide and shape* our emotions.

We are ALL emotional creatures. We **all** feel anger, sadness, fear, grief, injustice, isolation, resentment, in varying degrees, at one time or another. You can ALWAYS find yourself in the Psalms, no matter what you're going through or what you're dealing with; you can always be found there.

The Psalms, perhaps more so than any other book in the Bible, are designed to **take hold** of our emotions and to **mold and shape** our emotions. They're like a pressure valve for our emotions. And the Psalms change them and keep them in check and free them up and magnify them and mortify them, where they need to be mortified. The Psalms are such an *amazing* gift to us as Christians, as the body of Christ.

Here's another way to look at the Psalms as they relate to our own walk with Christ: we as born-again Christians are not made perfect. At least not here on earth. We, who are in Christ, **are** actually *new*, we **are** actually *spiritual*, but in a lot of ways we're still *immature* - much like newborn babies. And so the question for us is this: How do our new minds and our new hearts - full of all of the imperfection in our thinking and imperfection in how we feel - walk towards righteousness and walk in affection towards Christ? And one of the main answers of the early church was to **saturate and immerse themselves in the Psalms**.

And we can see that in Scripture. The book of Psalms is the most often-quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament. It was the book of poetry, it was the hymnal. Psalms, alongside the

teachings of our Lord and the Apostles, was the book that molded the thinking and affections of the disciples more than any other. And so I encourage you to look at the Psalms afresh. Meditate on them. Pray them. Sure, we see history in some of them. But more than mere information, we find the possibility of *transformation* in them.

### **PSALM 8:**

***To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.***

[1] O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

[2] Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

[3] When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

[4] what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

[5] Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

[6] You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

[7] all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

[8] the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

[9] O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

### **Verse 1(a):**

Now one of the first things we notice right off the bat is this strange word, "Gittith". A couple of weeks ago in Psalm 6 you may remember we saw the word "Sheminith", last week we saw the

word “Shiggaion”, and this week we now see the word “Gittith”. What’s a “Gittith”? Well, as in the past couple of Psalms we looked at, we have another word here in the superscript that we are really unsure of. Another word that seems to be lost to time. However, many scholars seem to think that a Gittith was either some sort of stringed instrument, perhaps invented in Gath or perhaps even a song sung over Goliath, the champion of Gath, after David had killed him. Ultimately, we’re just not sure. There are only 2 other Psalms that we find this peculiar word and those are Psalm 82 and Psalm 84 both of which, as in the case here of Psalm 8, are songs of joy and praise.

Now, one way to see this Psalm in addition to the very clear and obvious exaltation of God’s greatness is as an allusion to Christ. An allusion is an indirect reference designed to call attention to something else where the listener or reader has to make the direct connection in his or her mind. For example, someone might say “It must have rained for 40 days and 40 nights”. The mention of the 40 days and 40 nights would cause a person to conjure up the story of the flood and the Ark and then that brings to mind the sheer **amount** of rain that must be falling and therefore hammers the point home. So we’ll also look at the allusion to Christ as a parallel as we work our way through Psalm 8.

Now what’s really cool though is that looking at the first verse here of Psalm 8, we see that it’s immediately bookended at the front-end by the same praise that we see this Psalm bookended by at the back by, which is, “*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*”.

Firstly, and most importantly, this Psalm is an exaltation and praise of God’s greatness. Greatness in His Name, greatness in His earthly work of creation, greatness in His consideration of man, greatness in His handiwork in the heavens, etc. The main, overarching thought in David’s words is the greatness OF God revealed BY God in nature and furthermore,

that the utter “smallness” of mankind makes the revelation of God so great. God is to be glorified because He has revealed Himself to us.

Note also, that the first expression of the word “LORD”, the one in all caps here in verse 1 is not translated “Lord” in the original Hebrew. It’s a translation of the name “*Yahweh*” which is not the generic name for God. This personal name refers to the nature of God being the One who always was, the One who is, and the One who will always be. He didn’t come into existence, He will never go out of existence, and He will never change in His existence. He depends on absolutely NOTHING for His existence and yet everything else depends on Him. He sustains all things everywhere, He is above all things, He is the foundation of all things and the ultimate end of all things. He is more wonderful and He is more grandiose than everything. So we can read that beautiful first verse as “*O Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth*”.

David addresses God using the wording, “O LORD, our Lord” which makes sense for us because if we believe in fact that God is Lord, and we who are in Christ belong to the Lord, then we can surely shout right along with David that He is OUR Lord! And He IS ours; He made us, He keeps us, He protects us, He provides for us, He disciplines us, He takes special care of us, He preserves us, etc. And if God indeed be ours, then we are to submit to Him and to be bound TO Him and to obey His word. Look, if we belong to God through Christ, then we truly do BELONG to Him. In Christ, we actually belong to Him. Our lives are not our own. We have been paid for with a price. He owns us. That’s one of the great comforts of our salvation. That you belong to Him. NOTHING can snatch you from His hand.

And we can’t just rely on the affections of our hearts to do that. Our feelings and our hearts deceive us all the time. The Lord tells us through the prophet Jeremiah that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” [Jer. 17:9]. We have to rely on the TRUTH of

things. And how do we rely on the TRUTH of things? Well, we spend time in God's word. We sit under solid teaching. We fellowship with other believers. We spend time on our knees in prayer. We grow in our knowledge of WHO GOD IS. Most of us are so prone to look at our circumstances and create a false impression of who God is based on them. And in so doing, our faith in who God ACTUALLY is becomes diminished, His utter majesty in our hearts becomes dull, and then we go limping through life almost totally defeated. And so the great remedy is to use what we know to be true about God as revealed **BY** God in His word to judge our circumstances. Then by doing that, we begin to stand on objective truth rather than relying on the subjective experience of our fleeting and deceptive emotions.

### **Verse 1(b) & 2:**

Now David expresses exuberance in God's majesty in all creation. When we examine the last sentence of verse 1 and then look at verse 2, we begin to see this incredible contrast. Verse 1(b) we read this, "*You have set your glory above the heavens.*". And in verse 2 David then writes, "*Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.*". The contrast is this: In verse 1(b), we see how highly God is exalted above everything else in creation. No one is greater, no one is a match for Him, no one is as wise, no one is as mighty, no one is as powerful. And then a stark and powerful contrast: we see infants.

But why? Newborns are fragile, they are weak, they depend entirely on their parents. Why does David include them in his song to God? Because They.Defeated.The.Enemies.Of.God. How can THAT be? Because of Who.God.Is. Though high and lifted up, though His majesty knows no bounds, though He is greater than all things, though He is dependent on nothing, because of Who He is, He causes BABIES to be the means of His glorious victories. Amazing. God has adversaries, right? He isn't threatened by them; He could literally **un-make** them. But He

doesn't. Why? Because He chooses to defeat His enemies through BABIES. And there's the answer. That God conquers His enemies using the very weakest of all weak things; babies.

Consider that Jesus Himself quoted Psalm 8, verse 2 in Matthew 21 (verse 16) after He had cleared the temple of money changers and after He had healed the blind and the lame. In that account, the chief priests and scribes were seeing the miracles that Jesus did and then heard the children crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David", they couldn't believe what they were hearing. So they said to Jesus, "Do you hear what they're saying?" to which Jesus replied by quoting the Greek version of Psalm 8:2 saying, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies, you have prepared praise". Now in the Hebrew version, the one we are looking at this morning, we read "out of the mouth of infants...you have **established strength**".

So why did Jesus even cite this Psalm in the first place? Our Lord Jesus, King of Kings, rode on a donkey. And the victorious shout came from the mouths of babes. All the way to Cross, the Priesthood of Jesus, the Power and the Kingship of Jesus would be victorious in weakness.

But another thing happened when Jesus quoted Psalm 8:2. See, the meaning of the Greek version of Psalm 2 is obviously **praise to God**. Those kids were singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David". That praise was directed towards JESUS! And those priests and those scribes knew it. God is being praised by these young kids. When the children are praising God while directing it at Jesus, they are praising Jesus as God. Because that's Who He is.

#### **Verses 3 & 4:**

Now, continuing forward through this Psalm, we see another amazing contrast being set up. In verse 3, David writes "*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place...*". He doesn't describe the daytime sky. He doesn't describe the sun and how it shines over all creation. He speaks of looking upward into the overwhelming

vault of the night sky and he speaks of the glory of the moon and the stars against the inaccessible depths of the universe. And that just seemed to speak to David so much more about the handiwork of God and His grandiosity of creation in the heavens above.

And then David goes on to illustrate that amazing contrast here in verse 4 where he writes, “...what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”. The contrast is the unimaginable glory of God and the insignificance and smallness of us, of mankind. And yet the knowledge of being handmade by God, we have the assurance of God’s care for us, for such a small creature by comparison that we are. God is so infinitely GREAT and by comparison, we are utterly nothing. It’s been said from this very pulpit that any theology which elevates Christ and makes Him indispensable while at the same time negates our pride and makes us totally dispensable and unnecessary, is good theology.

I love talking about Who God is, His attributes. But it might be helpful if we spent some time talking about who WE are. Because doing that is sometimes helpful in framing who God is. We don’t have enough time to go into who WE are this morning but if you want to know who WE are, just look at history. Actually forget history, look at ourselves. Look at our own lives and the mess we’ve made of it. Look at the Law of God and count how many times we have followed it perfectly to know who WE are. Even our FAITH is a gift from God. God literally has to give us the faith that we spend on Him. I don’t want to diminish the glory of that but it reminds me of how when fathers give their kids money to go buy them a gift for Father’s Day. If you’re a father in that example, then effectively, you bought your own Father’s Day gift. The child is really proud of what he found for dad but he used dad’s money to buy it. Our faith is much like that. There are no great men and women of faith. There are only weak, faithless people who receive the gift of faith from their Father in heaven. And yet we prance about all day talking about how great we

are and all the wonderful things we do for God. We are reminded to spend a lot less time talking about what we do for God and a whole LOT more time talking about what He is doing for us.

You may remember that I've spoken a couple of times over the past couple weeks about how God is always creating weakness in His children. I'll go a step further to drive home the point. What if I were to tell you that God actually INSISTS on our weakness? Why? Because that weakness would drive us to **prayer**, more and more and more. And therefore, it would cause us to **depend** on Him more and more.

In reading that question here in verse 4 where David asks, "*what is man...*" we shouldn't stop there. Because the magnitude of the night sky ALONE dwarfs us. David is giving full weight to our lowliness. And the words from verse 3 "*the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars*" only enhance the contrast. That even a God who is so majestic as to (frankly) escape human words, that He actually cares for us in a most special way. So why are we here? Why are we - a seemingly insignificant, tiny, weak - people even here?

Let's skip ahead just a second to verse 6: "*You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet...*". Wow. I mean that is absolutely MIND blowing! Remember, we are like infants, we are like babies. We are absolutely NOTHING compared to God. We are so utterly small when placed side-by-side with all the other works of God in terms of the magnitude of all creation. Yet... just as God uses babies to defeat His enemies, He uses us, mankind, to have dominion over His magnificent creation; that we are to rule over the creative works of God's hand.

So here it is so far: God not only crushes His enemies through the weakness of infants, but that He also rules His creation using the weakness of man. And this is a theme that runs the entire

course of God's word. It's one of the golden threads throughout scripture. That the glory and greatness of the strength of the Most High God is made so much greater because He chooses to establish it through the weakness of man. The glory of God's wisdom is made so much greater because it is established through the foolishness of man. What the world sees as useless and weak and of no value, God uses as the means to victory. What the world sees as the foolish things, God chooses to use to confound the wise.

### **Verse 5 - 8:**

Now back to verse 5 for just a moment, David writes "*Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.*". We have seen that by comparison to God, man is nothing, and yet God bestows an abundance of kindness on us. In terms of creation, the word of God is clear that we are **above** all the creatures in this earthly world, that down here on earth, we are the favored creation of God. The picture of HOW God created man was David's only concern here. And so he sort of paints his description here with the palette of the creation account which already includes our original fall.

In that description, we can see a few interesting things. One is that not only are we formed BY God but we are further crowned with glory and honor, perhaps by virtue of us being given dominion over the resources of the earth. Another thing to consider in David's description here is that he uses the phrase "*...a little lower than the heavenly beings*". While it's clear that we aren't angels, what does he mean by the words "*a little*" when he says that we were made "*a little lower than the heavenly beings*"? Well, many theologians and commentators believe that it refers to the spirit of man, which is made in God's image, and owing to the virtue of how it is confined in the flesh, and therefore limited by our flesh, and the fact that we are also subject to physical death, that this highlights our inferiority to the heavenly beings.

But within this context, diving into our hierarchical position and where we rank and all that doesn't seem to be anywhere near relevant to David. What David **IS** saying, and I think this is something we are to see, is that according to the pattern set before us earlier in our look at Psalm 8 - which is the pattern of God operating through and ruling through our weakness - that we ARE placed only a little lower than the angels and that we ARE crowned with glory and honor, and THAT is just flat amazing. What a position to be in.

Now with that in mind, let's walk back again into verse 6 for a moment, "*You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet...*". Ok, so we know that creation is fallen. From where WE sit, it might seem like creation has dominion over US. And so here's the cool part: Paul actually quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 15. Here is what I wanted us to see: Man WILL one day in the future have dominion over all the earth but before that happens, the Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself, must condescend Himself and become man. He is to be the IDEAL Man, the REAL Man, the truest representation of Man because He will have to do what our father Adam, the first man, what ALL of us men fail to do, so that IN HIM, IN CHRIST, all who trust in Him, all who belong to Him, will be able to share in what He does. And what's that? That He lives a perfect life, that He dies because of sin, then He is raised from death, and finally He rules all of God's creation to display and demonstrate the absolute majesty of God!

In verses 7 and 8, we can see listed the various creational works of God on earth at least as it relates to that which we are to have dominion and rule over. He speaks of the creatures of the land, creatures of the sky, and of course, creatures of the water. And though we are to rule over and have dominion over the earth, let none of us allow the possession of any earthly creature or any earthly treasure to ensnare us. Let us always, always, always remember that we are to rule and reign over **them**, and are never to allow **them** to rule and reign over **us**. It is **under our feet**

that we must keep the world and all of its trappings, and we must be diligent to mortify and put to death our flesh which is all too happy to let all of our worldly cares and pleasures influence and imprison us.

**Verse 9:**

And finally we come to the conclusion of this beautiful Psalm of praise. In verse 9, David closes his song with the line he opened it with by saying, "*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*". You might say that what started perhaps as a proposition in the opening verse of Psalm 8, we now see David close his song with a well-proven conclusion of the absolute MAJESTY of Who God is.