

# PSALM 8

This psalm is a solemn meditation on, and admiration of, the glory and greatness of God, of which we are all concerned to think highly and honourably. It begins and ends with the same acknowledgment of the transcendent excellency of God's name. It is proposed for proof (v. 1) that God's name is excellent in all the earth, and then it is repeated as proved (with a “quod erat demonstrandum” — which was to be demonstrated) in the last verse. For the proof of God's glory the psalmist gives instances of his goodness to man; for God's goodness is his glory. God is to be glorified,

**I.** For making known himself and his great name to us (v. 1).

**II.** For making use of the weakest of the children of men, by them to serve his own purposes (v. 2).

**III.** For making even the heavenly bodies useful to man (v. 3, 4).

**IV.** For making him to have dominion over the creatures in this lower world, and thereby placing him but little lower than the angels (v. 5-8). This psalm is, in the New Testament, applied to Christ and the work of our redemption which he wrought out; the honour given by the children of men to him (v. 2, compared with <sup><4216></sup>Matthew 21:16) and the honour put upon the children of men by him, both in his humiliation, when he was made a little lower than the angels, and in his exaltation, when he was crowned with glory and honour. Compare v. 5, 6, with <sup><3886></sup>Hebrews 2:6-8; <sup><6657></sup>1 Corinthians 15:27. When we are observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature and providence we should be led by that, and through that, to the contemplation of his glory in the kingdom of grace.

## <sup><881></sup>PSALM 8:1-2

### THE GLORY OF GOD CELEBRATED

*To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm of David.*

The psalmist here sets himself to give to God the glory due to his name. Dr. Hammond grounds a conjecture upon the title of this psalm concerning the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon *Gittith*, which is generally taken for the tune, or musical instrument, with which this psalm was to be sung; but he renders it upon the *Gittite*, that is, *Goliath the Gittite*, whom he vanquished and slew (1 Samuel 17); that enemy was stilled by him who was, in comparison, but a babe and a suckling. The conjecture would be probable enough but that we find two other psalms with the same title, Psalm 81 and 84. Two things David here admires: —

**I.** How plainly God displays his glory himself, v. 1. He addresses himself to God with all humility and reverence, as the Lord and his people's Lord: *O Lord our Lord!* If we believe that God is the Lord, we must avouch and acknowledge him to be ours. He is ours, for he made us, protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him and submit to him; we must own the relation, not only when we come to pray to God, as a plea with him to show us mercy, but when we come to praise him, as an argument with ourselves to give him glory: and we shall never think we can do that with affection enough if we consider,

**1.** How brightly God's glory shines even in this lower world: *How excellent is his name in all the earth!* The works of creation and Providence evince and proclaim to all the world that there is an infinite Being, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection, the sovereign ruler, powerful protector, and bountiful benefactor of all the creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent, is his name in all the earth! The light of it shines in men's faces every where (<sup><A10></sup>Romans 1:20); if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault. There is no speech or language but the voice of God's name either is heard in it or may be. But this looks further, to the gospel of Christ, by which the name of God, as it is notified by divine revelation, which before was great in Israel only, came to be so in all the earth, the utmost ends of which have thus been made to *see God's great salvation*, <sup><A15></sup>Mark 16:15, 16.

**2.** How much more brightly it shines in the upper world: *Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens.*

**(1.)** God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures and those that shine most brightly.

(2.) Whereas we, on this earth, only hear God's excellent name, and praise that, the angels and blessed spirits above see his glory, and praise that, and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise.

(3.) In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

**II.** How powerfully he proclaims it by the weakest of his creatures (v. 2): *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength,* <sup><4216></sup>Matthew 21:16. This intimates the glory of God,

**1.** In the kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little children (when they first come into the world the most helpless of all animals), the special protection they are under, and the provision nature has made for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one of us, to the glory of God, as a great instance of his power and goodness, and the more sensibly because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we owe it that we *died not from the womb*, that the knees then prevented us, *and the breasts, that we should suck*. “This is such an instance of thy goodness, as may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory, who say, There is no God.”

**2.** In the kingdom of Providence. In the government of this lower world he makes use of the children of men, some that know him and others that do not (<sup><2354></sup>Isaiah 45:4), and these such as have been babes and sucklings; nay, sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes by the ministry of such as are still, in wisdom and strength, little better than babes and sucklings.

**3.** In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah. It is here foretold that by the apostles, who were looked upon but as babes, *unlearned and ignorant men* (<sup><4413></sup>Acts 4:13), mean and despicable, and *by the foolishness of their preaching*, the devil's kingdom should be thrown down as Jericho's walls were by the sound of rams' horns. The gospel is called *the arm of the Lord* and *the rod of his strength*; this was ordained to work wonders, not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external disadvantages; yea, we hear children crying, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him; to that therefore our Saviour applied this (<sup><4216></sup>Matthew 21:16) and by it stilled the enemy. Sometimes the grace of

God appears wonderfully in young children, and he *teaches* those *knowledge, and makes those to understand doctrine, who are but newly weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts,* ~~230B~~ Isaiah 28:9.

Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, and confounds the noble, wise, and mighty, by the base, and weak, and foolish things of the world, that no flesh may glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power may the more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man, ~~407~~ 1 Corinthians 1:27, 28. This he does *because of his enemies*, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence, and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers; see ~~404~~ Acts 4:14; 6:10. The devil is the great enemy and avenger, and by the preaching of the gospel he was in a great measure stilled, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves were not suffered to speak.

In singing this let us give God the glory of his great name, and of the great things he has done by the power of his gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended, not only with our praises, but with our best wishes. Praise is perfected (that is, God is in the highest degree glorified) when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

## ~~403B~~ PSALM 8:3-9

### GLORY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God by recounting the honours he has put upon man, especially the man Christ Jesus. The condescensions of the divine grace call for our praises as much as the elevations of the divine glory. How God has condescended in favour to man the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

**I.** What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man; it is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense (v. 3): *I consider thy heavens, and there, particularly, the moon and the stars.* But why does he not take notice of the sun, which much excels them all? Probably because it was in

a night-walk, but moon-light, that he entertained and instructed himself with this meditation, when the sun was not within view, but only the moon and the stars, which, though they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. Observe,

- 1.** It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them. By this, among other things, man is distinguished from the beasts, that, while *they* are so framed as to look downwards to the earth, man is made erect to look upwards towards heaven. *Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque tueri jussit* — *To man he gave an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the heavens*, that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us unless we consider it.
  - 2.** We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens, not only as all the world is his, even the earth and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner. *The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's* (<sup>HB5</sup>Psalm 115:16); they are the place of the residence of his glory and we are taught to call him *Our Father in heaven*.
  - 3.** They are *therefore* his, because they are the work of his fingers. He made them; he made them easily. The stretching out of the heavens needed not any outstretched arm; it was done with a word; it was but *the work of his fingers*. He made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work which the artist makes with his fingers.
  - 4.** Even the inferior lights, the moon and stars, show the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnish us with matter for praise.
  - 5.** The heavenly bodies are not only the creatures of the divine power, but subject to the divine government. God not only made them, but *ordained* them, and the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how does this come in here to magnify God's favour to man?
- (1.)** When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world we may well wonder that he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man, that he who resides in that bright and blessed part of the creation, and governs it, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth; see <sup>HB5</sup>Psalm 113:5, 6.

(2.) When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heavens are *divided unto all nations* (Duet. 4:19, <sup><0015></sup>Genesis 1:15), we may well say, “*Lord, what is man* that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven with an eye to him and to his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so consulted in the making of the lights of heaven and directing their motions!”

II. How he expresses this admiration (v. 4): “*Lord, what is man (enosh, sinful, weak, miserable man, a creature so forgetful of thee and his duty to thee) that thou art thus mindful of him*, that thou takest cognizance of him and of his actions and affairs, that in the making of the world thou hadst a respect to him! What is the *son of man, that thou visitest him*, that thou not only feedest him and clothest him, protectest him and providest for him, in common with other creatures, but visited him as one friend visits another, art pleased to converse with him and concern thyself for him! What is man — (so mean a creature), that he should be thus honoured — (so sinful a creature), that he should be thus countenanced and favoured!” Now this refers,

1. To mankind in general. Though man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm (<sup><1876></sup>Job 25:6), yet God puts a respect upon him, and shows him abundance of kindness; man is, above all the creatures in this lower world, the favourite and darling of Providence. For,

(1.) He is of a very honourable rank of beings. We may be sure he takes precedence of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but a *little lower than the angels* (v. 5), lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is so near akin to the holy angels that he may be truly said to be but a *little lower than they*, and is, in order, next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay, but the children of the resurrection shall be *isangeloi* — *angels' peers* (<sup><4276></sup>Luke 20:36) and no longer lower than they.

(2.) He is endued with noble faculties and capacities: *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour*. He that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for, having made *him wiser than the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven* (<sup><3511></sup>Job 35:11), he has made him fit to rule them and it is fit that

they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory; let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

**(3.)** He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has *made man to have dominion over them*, v. 6. His charter, by which he holds this royalty, bears equal date with his creation (<sup><0028></sup>Genesis 1:28) and was renewed after the flood, <sup><0029></sup>Genesis 9:2. God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself, not only of the labour, but of the productions and lives of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all *put under his feet*. He specifies some of the inferior animals (v. 7, 8), not only *sheep and oxen*, which man takes care of and provides for, but *the beasts of the field*, as well as those of the flood, yea, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man, as *the fowl of the air*, yea, *and the fish of the sea*, which live in another element and pass unseen through the paths of the seas. Man has arts to take these; though many of them are much stronger and many of them much swifter than he, yet, one way or other, he is too hard for them, <sup><0027></sup>James 3:7. *Every kind of beasts, and birds, and things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed*. He has likewise liberty to use them as he has occasion. *Rise, Peter, kill and eat*, <sup><0013></sup>Acts 10:13. Every time we partake of fish or of fowl we realize this dominion which man has over the works of God's hands; and this is a reason for our subjection to God, our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

**2.** But this refers, in a particular manner, to Jesus Christ. Of him we are taught to expound it, <sup><0026-8></sup>Hebrews 2:6-8, where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ both in heaven and in earth, shows that he is that man, that son of man, here spoken of, whom God *has crowned with glory and honour* and made to *have dominion over the works of his hands*. And it is certain that the greatest favour that ever was shown to the human race, and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, were exemplified in the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus; these far exceed the favours and honours done us by creation and providence, though they also are great and far more than we deserve. We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it,

(1.) That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and, in that nature, humbled himself. He became the *Son of man*, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him, which some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said (<sup>310</sup>Hebrews 2:9), *For the suffering of death, a visitation in wrath, he was crowned with glory and honour*. God visited him; having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was, *for a little while* (so the apostle interprets it), made lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant and made himself of no reputation.

(2.) That, in that nature, he is exalted to be Lord of all. God the Father exalted him, because he had humbled himself, *crowned him with glory and honour*, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, set not only the *head of the church*, but *head over all things to the church*, and gave all things into his hand, entrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence in conjunction with and subserviency to the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet; and, even in the days of his flesh, he gave some specimens of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute. With good reason therefore does the psalmist conclude as he began, *Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth*, which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel and governed by his wisdom and power!

In singing this and praying it over, though we must not forget to acknowledge, with suitable affections, God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him and all his enemies made his footstool.