

## A Reason To Praise

### Psalm 8

**H**ave you ever stood alone on a hill on a crystal-clear, moon-lit night? Your first response is to look at the sky. The psalmist looked at the sky on a night like that, and his experience taught him some very important things about his relationship to the Creator of the entire universe. What he learned that night alone under the stars is something which we need to learn more and more in our lives centuries later.

Sometimes we think that something earth-shaking has to happen before we can praise God with any degree of comfort. Perhaps we think that someone will label us as a fanatic if we praise God too much. Our attitude seems to be that it's alright to say "thank you" to God once in a while, but someone may get the wrong idea if we praise God too much!

The psalmist certainly wasn't hindered by thoughts like that. All he could think about was God, and how deserving He is of our praise.

That sounds good. That's a beautiful thought. But what reasons are there for it? Why should we modern-day Christians be involved in praising God more than we do? Psalm 8 gives us two very good reasons why we should praise God.

**1** **We should praise God for His Glory revealed in nature, vv. 1-3**  
David spent night after night looking after his father's sheep, so it was natural that he should contemplate nature and its wonders as much as he did. God was present in nature, because God created everything in nature. So he began this psalm by exclaiming, "*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*" That is an awesome thought, but it leads to more profound insight.

Behind the glorious splendor of brilliant sky he envisions the One Who has created all that splendor. The broad expanse of the sky encompasses the whole earth, and the glory of God spreads out over the whole world. That night, the psalmist saw three primary ways that the glory of God is revealed in nature.

*The glory of God is revealed in His creation of nature.* David was overwhelmed by the wonders of God's creation. It was more than he could take in! When he meditated upon the works of God in the skies, he saw himself as being so small and insignificant. He expressed that feeling in verses three and four: "*When I*

*consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"*

Outside, under the canopy of the heavens, David saw the stars and the moon, and they were to him a vision of power, order and unfailing precision. He recognized that God had done this, and he praised God for His glory revealed in nature. That glory of God can be seen, not only in the small things on the earth—such as a grain of sand or a single drop of water—but also extends high above the heavens. The latter part of verse one reads, *"You have set your glory above the heavens."* The stars in the sky as well as the songs of children proclaim the divine glory of God. Verse two begins, *"From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise."*

The glory of God is stamped in all of creation. His glory can be seen from the smallest raindrop to the mighty flash of lightning; from the tiny rosebud to the huge magnolia blossom; from the rich, fertile soil of the Mississippi Delta to the arid, dusty land of the desert. We can see His fingerprint of glory in all the world, from the gurgling of a sparkling brook to the mighty tumbling waterfall; from the gnarled, gentle hands of a loving grandfather to the fresh smile bursting on a child's face; from the silence of the stars to the mighty peal of thunder; from the mirror-like smoothness of a placid lake to the wind-driven thunderous waves crashing on the shore.

David was so caught up in praise of God, yet he had never seen the colors of the Grand Canyon, or the majesty of the Rocky Mountains. Never once in his entire life did David see a Bradford pear or a maple change colors in the fall, or smell freshly mown grass. He had never gazed in wonder upon Niagara Falls, seen a hurricane, or watched the water in the Mighty Mississippi River flow past. David never saw the ancient redwoods in California or the towering Alps of Austria.

We know so much more about the sun, the moon and the stars than David did. With his naked eye on a clear night, it is estimated that he could have seen only about five thousand stars. Our own Milky Way Galaxy contains about 200 billion stars. Astronomers estimate that there are approximately 100 billion to 1 trillion galaxies in the universe. Ours is average in size. There are far more stars out there than we can even imagine.

The sun is so large that if it were hollow it would take one million planets the size of our Earth to fill it. One hundred eight Earths could be stretched in a row across

the surface of the sun. We are told that light travels at a speed of 186,000 miles per second. That's fast enough to travel around the earth eight times in one second. Our sun is 93 million miles from Earth, so far that the light we see now left the surface of the sun eight minutes ago! And the nearest star to our sun is so far away that the light left that star over four years ago! It could burn out today and we wouldn't know it for four years. Most of the other stars in our galaxy are the size of our sun, but some are thousands of times larger.

A light year is the distance that light travels in a year, or nearly six trillion miles. Our universe is so vast and expansive that to cross it at the speed of light, you would have to travel forty billion light years. Facts like these were not even available to David, and they boggle our imagination today. Yet our God created it all! The psalmist said, "*When I consider **your** heavens...the work of **your** fingers....*" Creation belongs to God. He and He alone created it, and it reveals His glory.

***The glory of God is also revealed in His Presence in nature.*** We can see this plainly in verse one: "*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*" The word "name" in Hebrew is more than a title. It summarizes and contains the nature and character of its bearer. For example, "Eve" means "life." "Gideon" means "one who cuts down." "Jesus" means "Savior," and "Moses" means "one drawn from the water." In the Old Testament, the "name" of God often represents or is equal to His very Presence.

That Presence is described here as "majestic" which means "glorious, delightful, powerful." So verse one could read, "O Yahweh, our Lord, how delightful is Your Presence throughout the entire earth!" The glory of His Presence is not limited to any one part of the earth—it extends even above the heavens.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote many years ago: "There is no place where God is not. God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding rocky barriers, filling the buttercups with their perfume and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of his mouth. Descend...into the lowest depths of the ocean, where undisturbed water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet, but 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 uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there."

God is present in nature, and He is present in our world. It is extremely difficult for us to see Him sometimes, or to be aware of His Presence. But He is here, always has been here, and always will be here. He will always remain as a bulwark to His

people, working in lives to help us realize our potential in Christ, convicting us of sin, forgiving us, saving us, justifying us, setting us apart for service to Him.

***The glory of God is also revealed in His Sovereignty over nature.*** In verse one, when the psalmist sang, “*O Lord, our Lord,*” he was actually saying, “O Yahweh, our Sovereign,” or “O Yahweh, our prop, stay and support.”

The Scriptures are plain in their teachings on the sovereignty of God over nature. He created it. He controls it. He is present in it. He rules over it. His sovereignty stretches above the universe and above every power in the earth. He is Supreme Ruler. Psalm 9:7 reads, “*The Lord sits enthroned forever.*”

In the fictitious story *Frankenstein* the scientist built a man, and even gave the monster his name. But he could not control it. He could not rule it. Our God, the God of the Universe, creates, controls and rules. This is His creation.

There is no other God but the Lord God, the Sovereign Lord of the universe. God alone is the universal ruler. There is no other. It is from this truth that assurance of faith springs.

The psalms are full of the sovereignty of God. “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork*” (19:1). “*Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered*” (40:5). “*O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches*” (104:24). “*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well*” (139:14).

So David sees how the glory of God is revealed in His creation of nature, in His Presence in nature, and in His sovereignty over nature. On this basis, David questions how a God like this can be concerned with puny man. Here is where we can find another reason to praise God:

**2** **We should praise God for His Grace revealed to us, vv. 4-9**  
David asks, “*What is man, that you are mindful of him?*” Then he goes on to answer that question. ***First, the grace of God is revealed in the way He remembers us.*** In verse four, “man” means “man in his fallen state,” man

full of ignorance and sin. The word “mindful” means “remember” and refers to much more than mere mental recall. It means here that mankind is kept continuously in God’s merciful view.

In our fallen state, we often forget God, but in spite of the awesomeness and vastness of His creation, and because of the grace shown to us through Jesus Christ, God never, never forgets us. We are ever in His eye.

Standing there face to face with God, David is aware of his total insignificance, not only of himself, but of the entire race of man. When man gazes at the illimitable expanse of the star-studded heavens, the difference between God and man is truly revealed in all its magnitude.

David is astonished at the smallness of man. In view of the fact that God is the One who created all things, why should God remember *any* man? The answer does not come by human reason, but by divine revelation. Verse five reads, “*You made him [man] a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.*”

God has not jumped ship! He remembers us and is acting to help us, even though terrorists kill innocent people, even though hundreds of thousands of unborn children are murdered every year, and even though we cheat and steal and lie and commit adultery. Even though we show that we have forgotten God in every way imaginable, God has not forgotten us! It is because of His grace shown to us in Jesus Christ that we have the opportunity to rise above our sins and wars.

***Second, the grace of God is revealed in the ways He takes care of us.*** In verse four, the King James includes the word “visitest.” A better translation is “care”: “What is man that you care for him?” It is used in the book of Genesis to describe Joseph being the overseer of Pharaoh’s captain’s house. The word means “to discover what is missing and see to it.” God has done this through making us in His own image, and by providing us a way out of our sins—Jesus!

The very fact that the God who created that vast expanse of the heavens would even remember man, much less care for him in such a way as to go to great trouble for him, is enough for the psalmist to praise God! He saw God for Who He is, and then he was able to see himself in a clearer light.

We find that to be true today. Any revelation of God in His Word throws light on us. When we know God as He desires to be known, then we’ll see that we cannot

demand anything from God, that even the breath we breathe is due to God's incomprehensible grace.

We may not understand it, and certainly we cannot explain it, but the fact remains: God sees us through and through, and sees what our lives are lacking. Then, because of His grace and because He cares, He takes care of the need. That is what He has done through His Son, Jesus Christ.

***Third, the grace of God is revealed in what He has given to us.*** That is what we see in verse six: *“You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.”* In spite of his insignificance, man has been appointed by God to have dominion over the earth. Emphasizing this, the psalmist covers the entire spectrum of life in verses seven and eight. The flocks and herds represent domestic animals. The beasts of the field represent all other animals on land. He includes the birds in the air, and the fish of the sea, and then to make sure he included everything, he said that man has dominion over whatever *“swims in the paths of the seas.”*

Mankind did not gain power over the earth by rebellion against God, but because God has commissioned him to rule the earth. God gave it to him, and he is responsible to God for how he uses it—or abuses it. Abuse of this dominion has led to man-made deserts, dead and extinct species, oil-ridden waters, choking smog and dying forests. But where this dominion is taken seriously and responsibly, man and nature cooperate together and God's Name is glorified.

Another gift is that God has made man in His own image. Because of this, the honor and glory of God Himself rest on us, and mark us as being superior to all other forms of life. It is not something we earned or accomplished by ourselves, or something which happened through an accident of evolution. It is a gift of God.

Human dignity has no value of its own in the Old Testament, but has value only because it is a gift of God. No other creature is crowned with glory and honor. No other creature has dominion over the entire earth, but man.

Someone has expressed it very well. “It is only through man, made in God's image, that God could rightly reveal Himself. If the heavens stood alone, there would be silence. But when man was created, there was made an eye to see, and a heart to feel, and a voice to proclaim God's praises.”

The psalmist concludes his hymn of praise just as it began: Yahweh, our Sovereign Lord, our Prop and Support, our Mainstay for all of creation and all of life! He sees that human dignity in its entirety points back to God, Who has given that dignity to man. When the psalmist saw the glory of God revealed in all of creation, and the grace of God revealed to man, his thoughts naturally returned to the God behind all that grace and glory. Man's dominion over nature, wonderful though it is, takes second place to his calling as a servant and worshipper of God.

Are you looking for a reason to praise God? Look around you! Then praise God for His creation of nature, His Presence in nature, and His Sovereignty over nature. Praise Him for His grace revealed to man through the way He remembers us, the way He cares for us, and what He has given to us. That's reason enough to praise this God we profess to worship!

Why not let praise become a primary characteristic of your life?