

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

PSALM 8

Like the rest of the Bible, this Psalm of praise and thanksgiving does not argue the existence of God, but merely assumes it. Of Him it has been said that "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." He is unchangeable in His essence and attributes. He is infinite in wisdom to conceive His purposes and in ability to execute them. God is eternal. He is present with all His creatures at all times.

I. Appreciation of God. Psalm 8:1-2.

These verses recognize the excellence and majesty of God. God's greatness is in His own excellence. How excellent, great, majestic, splendid and glorious is His name! His name stands for His person and character. The fact that He is infinite and perfect should cause all people to worship Him. God's magnificence is exalted above the heavens. God has made those who are so young that they are just able to lisp God's praises, and therefore are weak, the instruments of His strength. To still the enemy and the avenger is to render their efforts ineffective.

II. Admiration of God. Psalm 8:3-8.

Surveying the outspread canopy of heaven in the stillness of the night, the Psalmist was overwhelmed with awe at the beauty and grandeur of the vast expanse with its starry glories. When God turned His attention from the encompassing heavens, where He had set His glory, He turned to the little children and in them He found the quality of praise which was absent from the former. God had ordained that even the feeblest representatives of humanity should be His champions to confound and silence those who oppose His kingdom and deny His goodness and providence.

By their splendor and stability the heavens manifest the glory of God in an impressive manner. Through the centuries thoughtful men have gazed into the heavens and meditated on the wonder and glory of God's creation. One wonders how anybody could remain an unbeliever when he reverently scans the heavens and sees the work of God. His revelation of Himself should inspire awe and reverence in all of those who behold it.

With all the glories of these heavenly manifestations of God before him, the Psalmist turned his thoughts to frail and apparently insignificant man. At first, in comparison with the lofty heavens, the radiant moon and the numerous sparkling stars man appeared to the Psalmist as being unworthy of God's attention. He marvelled that God should consider him at all, and even more that He should make him the crowning manifestation of His glory. The contemplation of the heavens in all their splendor forced the Psalmist to wonder that God should choose so insignificant a thing as man for the object of His special regard. He exclaimed, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" The word which the Psalmist used for man in this verse is very remarkable. It signifies a being who in himself is frail, weak and mortal.

In thus calling our attention to the littleness and feebleness of man, he inquired, What is man that God should think of him, have anything to do with him or care for him? Compared with the majesty, splendor and permanence of the heavens, man is lowly and frail and his existence is brief. In view of this vast and magnificent universe, man appears as a speck, an atom or a vapor that appears and then vanishes.

In our text the littleness and the greatness of man are set before us in powerful contrast. God is picturing the glory of the heavens, the moon and the stars and the majesty of His marvelous creations as a background to show the place and importance of man, the crowning piece of His creation. In other words, He is saying, "If I have given such consideration in creating things, crowning them with beauty, wrapping them with the mantle of majesty, over-arching them with the canopy of heaven, planting the earth with trees, carpeting it with grasses, embroidering it with flowers, bedecking it with jewels; What is there that I would not do for man?" "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." Although little in himself, there is something in man which separates him from all other creations, something which enables him to think of God, to know God, to love God and to serve God.

God has done much for man. He created him. There is nothing which gives such dignity to man as the fact that he is the crowning achievement of all God's creation. He laid foundations for greatness within him. He endowed him with the ability to think, dream, hope, aspire, reason, grow, invent and build. The rest of creation accepts the world as it is, but man undertakes to make it what he thinks it ought to be.

God gave man dominion over the created things on the earth. God has given man dominion over his environment. An individual is not responsible for the environment into which he is born; he is responsible for the environment in which he lives. Some of the brightest chapters of human history have been made possible by the fact that men and women have risen above and beyond their environments, converting the swamps of sin into beautiful rose gardens. It is amazing what an individual can do when linked to God.

God has cared for man every day of his life. His works for the benefit of men display amazing wisdom, goodness and power. God has provided salvation for man. It was for insignificant men that Christ died.

God has given man the ability to overcome the handicap of poverty and to achieve success. Some years ago there was a brilliant young preacher who was a student in college. His parents were poor. When he was in college all funds were exhausted. He came to the end of one term without any money in sight to pay his bills or fees for the next term. At the close of the term he went home. His mother met him at the gate of that country home and kissed him. He took her hands in his and noticed that they were stained and very rough. A little later she took him aside and showed him a large pile of walnuts that she had hulled with her own hands for the purpose of putting them on the market. A little later she placed in his hand seventy-five dollars that

had come from the sale of walnuts and like labors of love, and with a smile she said, "Son, you are going back to college." That is an example of the overcoming of poverty. But being poor did not keep that young man from crawling out and climbing up the ladder of usefulness and success. You, too, can overcome poverty, get an education and make a success if you want to bad enough.

A contractor and his pastor stood before an open window, looking down on the busy street ten stories below, when the former said to the latter, "Do you see that building across the street?" "Yes. What's peculiar about it?" asked the preacher. "Well, it's like a lot of people I know. It was planned, originally, as a ten-story structure, and the foundation was put in for such a building, but something happened after the work was started and only the first two stories were completed. There it stands--a two-story building on a ten-story foundation." The contractor was right; all about us stand two-story lives on ten-story foundations.

On the basis of what He has done for man, obviously God rightfully expects much from man. He expects him to be saved, to practice self-denial, to represent Him conscientiously, constantly and consistently, and to be faithful to Him. He certainly has a right to expect His children to be faithful and dependable.

III. Adoration of God. Psalm 8:9.

If by grace God is your Lord, your possession should produce adoring wonder in you. This Psalm closes with the same exclamation of reverent wonder and adoration with which it began. Therefore, we should adore, honor, worship and serve Him until He calls us home.