

MAN'S PLACE IN GOD'S UNIVERSE

Psalm 8

This psalm of praise and thanksgiving does not argue the existence of God, but merely assumes and affirms it. God, the creator and ruler of the universe, is unchangeable in His essence and attributes. In infinite wisdom He conceived His purposes and He has the ability to execute them.

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

These two verses contain a recognition and acknowledgment of the excellence and majesty of God. How excellent, great, majestic, splendid and glorious is His name, which stands for His person and character! God's magnificence is exalted above the heavens. His excellence is revealed in His creative work, which is so vast and spacious. God's glory is set above the heavens, and it is revealed in them and in the universe which He created. Our glorious and gracious God has enemies who despise Him and seek to thwart His work. Some of His enemies even question His creative power and providential care. God has made those who are so young that they are just able to lisp His 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.

Surveying the outspread canopy of the heavens in the stillness of the night, the Psalmist was overwhelmed with all the beauty and grandeur of the vast expanse with its starry glories, as he had been so many times during his career as a shepherd while gazing at the stars and wondering about the meanings of life. By their splendor and stability the heavens manifested the glory of God in an impressive manner. Through the centuries thoughtful men have gazed into the heavens and meditated on the marvels and glories of God's creation. One wonders how anyone can 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.

III. Appraisal of Man. Psalm 8:4-8.

With all the glories of these heavenly manifestations before him, the Psalmist turned his thoughts to man. At the outset, in comparison with the lofty heavens, the radiant moon and the innumerable stars, frail and apparently insignificant man appeared to the Psalmist as being unworthy of the attention and concern of God. He marvelled that God should consider man at all, and even more that He should make him the crowning manifestation of His glory. He wondered that God should choose so insignificant a thing as man as the object of His special regard. The word which is used for man in verse four is very remarkable. It signifies a being who in himself is frail, weak and mortal. Compared with the majesty, splendor and permanence of the heavens, man is lowly and frail and his existence on earth is brief. Man's life is described in these words: "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

Created in God's image and superior to all other creatures on earth, man was placed in a world which was without blemish and discord, and was given the responsibility of having dominion over it. Man's uniqueness and dignity stem from his personal relationship to God.

These verses set before us in powerful contrast the littleness and the greatness of man. Although little in himself, there is something in man which separates him from all other creatures, something which enables him to think of, know, love, obey and serve God. There is nothing which gives such dignity to man as the fact that he, the crowning achievement

of all God's creation, can be the means of glorifying the name of God on the earth. This wonderful privilege has been given to man by the Creator Himself.

God had a glorious purpose in creating man and He had great plans for him. God endowed man with the ability to think, dream, hope, aspire, reason, invent, build and serve. Whereas the rest of creation accepts the world exactly as it is, man undertakes to make it what he thinks it ought to be. Because God has given man dominion over his environment, he is responsible for the surroundings in which he lives. It is truly amazing what one who is linked to God can do to transform the environment in which he is placed.

Not only has God created man, but He has also providentially cared for him. His work in behalf of the human race is a marvelous revelation of His wisdom, goodness and power. Out of love and mercy God provided salvation for all men who would believe on His only begotten Son. On the basis of His provisions for men, God obviously and rightfully expects much from them. To Him each individual is of tremendous importance. Once a shabby old man was injured in an accident and was hospitalized. While he was lying on the operating table, one of the attendants who did not know him spoke of him as "this worthless fellow." Surprisingly the old man understood what was said. Being a Christian, he startled those present by remarking, "Call not that man worthless for whom Christ died."

Inasmuch as Christ died on the cross in order that men might be saved, God wants men to repent of their sins and believe on Christ as their Saviour. After they are saved and become members of His family, He wants them to practice self-denial, to represent Him conscientiously, consistently and courageously, and to be faithful to Him under all circumstances. God certainly has a right to expect the saved to be dependable in His service.

IV. Adoration of God. Psalm 8:9.

God has endowed man with the capacity to worship Him and to live in such conformity to His purposes that he can honor Him, be a great benediction to the lives of others and be the recipient of much joy and innumerable personal blessings.

This psalm closes with the same exclamation of reverent wonder and great adoration with which it began. Therefore, it behooves those of us who are Christians to admire, appreciate, adore, love, worship, honor and serve God, our heavenly Father, until He calls us home. Through this psalm we are challenged to glorify Him in our thoughts, our words and our deeds.