

Prayer

Praise You, Lord God, for all that has happened in the last day. Your hand has been upon me both when I have known it and when I have not; and you have touched me for good and blessed me. I also place into Your hands the day that is coming, for I long to serve You with all my heart and mind and strength in everything I do. I praise you for all that is past, and I trust you for all that is to come. AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

In the course of a day, jot down a few notes about what has happened, in the form of a brief diary. At the end of the day, pray through all you have written.

On-going prayers

- **Pray for the air transport industry** *Pray for all those whose jobs depend on the air transport industry*
- *Pray for morality and integrity in government, local and national*
- *Give thanks to God for your life and your future*

Meditation

In a world full of beautiful sights and the marvels of creation,
Save us, Lord, from blindness and insensitivity:

In a world full of air and water, earth and natural elements,
Save us, Lord, from polluting ourselves to death:

In a world full of plants and animals all dependent upon each other,
Save us, Lord, from brutality and destruction:

In a world full of trees, plants and a vast array of vegetation,
Save us, Lord, from exploiting this gift, for greed:

In a world full of people with vast potential for creativity and love,
Save us, Lord, from using others to meet our needs:

In a world full of the evidence of the mighty hand that made it,
Save us, Lord, from treating it as ours alone.

Bible passage - Psalm 8

For the director of music. According to 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 From the lips of children and infants
You have ordained praise because of Your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.
- ³ When I consider 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,
the son of man that You care for him?
- ⁵ You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honour.

- ⁶ You made him ruler over the works of Your hands;
you put everything under his feet:
⁷ all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field,
⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
⁹ O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is Your name in all the earth
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Bible Study

Review

Psalm 8 is a unique psalm of praise and there is no other psalm quite like it. The words of the psalm are full of praise to God as the Creator of all things and the creator of humanity, and before the time of Christ, such praise was the true characteristic of God's people. God had revealed Himself to Israel and it was her privilege and duty to praise and worship Him.

Now, we sometimes use the two words 'praise' and 'worship' interchangeably today, and this is because most people reckon that worship has not taken place unless they have been led to praise God. Nevertheless, here in the Bible, these two words mean different things, and if we do not know the difference then we could easily misinterpret this psalm.

Praise is the outpouring of the heart in thanksgiving to God; it is an emotional response to God's glory and majesty, typically expressed in shouts (Ezra 3:11, Ps 25:20, Zech 2:10) or in song (2 Sam 22:50, Ps 9:2, James 5:13). Praise is also one part, perhaps the best part, of what we mean by worship, which is the duty and service of God's people. Worship is expressed through praise or course, but also through everything from reading God's Word and praying for others, to living a life of service for others.

Psalm 8, therefore, is a psalm of praise and it is frequently used in worship, and it is also highly emotional and is best sung with a majestic tune or spoken in shouts of praise! However, if we try to unpick the song as if its words and phrases should all boil down to clear and specific points about God as Creator, then we will lose the plot. A psalm of praise such as this works because it speaks of things that are bigger and greater than people understand, for such is God's power as Creator.

Of course, the psalm is based upon an ancient understanding of the universe very different from ours today, but this does not matter; the song transcends this limitation. For example, an ancient Israelite would sing this song believing that the earth was a flat disc with the sky as a dome mounted over it on pillars. He also knew what he meant by talking about God's glory being set '*above the heavens*' (8:1), or placing people lower than the angels in heaven, on earth (8:5). But these great words are poetry, and they mean far more than this. When we read them, we think of God's glory as set far beyond all known boundaries of the Universe (8:1), and we marvel at God's gracious gift in making people with identity as well as feelings, quite different from either animals and with the likeness of God (8:5, Gen 1:26,27)

Verse 2 is the most difficult part of the psalm, and you will find that each Bible version is different. The confusion arises because the original Hebrew of verse 2 in verse is unclear, and no one knows what was meant when it was written. In general, even though the words sound a little odd, it is something to do with the sheer power of true praise on the lips of even the youngest of children, for it is powerful enough to defeat evil! Clearly this is not some disinterested fact that needs to be tested out, it is poetry, and it expresses the sheer glory of God. How wonderful that the devil may be defeated by praise, and that even children (children in age or children in faith) can be victors over evil!

In psalm 8, praise is offered to God for His majestic glory in Creation, but also for the relationship He has with humanity. Because of this, the psalm has been studied for clues about human nature and the nature of God, and books have been written about the verse that describes people as made '*a little lower than the angels*' (8:5). The last few verses of the psalm also reveal more about the nature of humanity, confirming the dominion over all the earth granted to humanity by God at Creation (1:26f.).

However, the very last verse echoes the first, and brings us back to praise. Psalm 8 is not a theological or a religious statement, it is a song written from the heart, by someone who was overwhelmed by the majesty of Creation and of God's care in making humanity. A detailed study of the psalm will yield much of interest, but no one will gain more from this psalm than the person who sings it from the heart, in praise of the God is Lord of All and who loves and cares all He has created.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What do you think is meant by the word 'glory', where it is used in this psalm?
2. When you look at the heavens, the moon and the stars, do you think of God? What do you think of, and why?
3. What does it mean for God to place things on earth under human authority?

Personal comments by author

Praise is liberating, and I have found that expressing my feelings to the Lord on a regular basis throughout the day has helped change many things for the better in my life. Praise is also something that it is easy to avoid and can slip away from you in life almost without thinking. If you do not do it, then nothing 'happens'. I have discovered that some people find praise easier if they read a psalm out loud, for example, a psalm such as Psalm 8 (and there are many others that can be used).

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *How can you develop praise as a natural part of your life? As 'praising God' means addressing God with all our hopes, desires and feelings, seek to find new ways of including Him in everything that happens, through a brief prayer, for example, talking to Him as someone present with us.*
- *Pray for the life of your church and the praise of God that it offers. Pray that God will enable all His people to praise Him through what is done.*

Final Prayer

Help us, Lord Jesus, to look back and be happy that we have learned from the past, look forward and anticipate the future you have in store for us with joy, and be content that we do indeed reflect the Faith that has been handed down to us. Bring us to that place of peace, Lord Jesus; AMEN

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