

Text: Psalm 8

Genre: Praise/Messianic

Title: Greatness Through Weakness

Main Point: God uses human weakness to display his greatness.

Greatness Through Weakness

Psalm 8 (ESV)

To the choirmaster: according to The 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] Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

[3] When I look at 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,
and the son of man that you care for him?

[5] Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

[6] You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

[7] all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

[8] the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

[9] O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

I. Introduction: *The Lord of the Rings*

I *love* a good story—we all do, right? There's nothing especially thrilling about an entirely capable and equipped hero easily defeating an opponent, is there? Insofar as stories go, that's what we call BORING. No, a really good and gripping story involves seemingly impossible odds!

Right now, to my shame, I'm reading *The Lord of the Rings* for the first time! I've seen the movies, so I have a general idea of the narrative... but as I read, I'm struck by the storyline: a massive and terrifying evil DARK LORD is on the move in nine black riders, in relentless search for the ONE RING to rule them all. And who possesses it? A hobbit—this small and humble creature that's a bit reminiscent of a leprechaun! Ultimately, the fate of all Middle Earth rides on this little guy's mission (accompanied with some friends at various points along the way) to destroy the ring and save everyone! Now THAT'S a good story!

I'm sure you can think of all kinds of stories, fiction or not, that follow a similar narrative. The best stories have an unexpected, upside down, against the odds quality to them—otherwise, they're usually not worth telling!

And it's not unlike the stories we read in the Bible—Moses and Egypt, Joshua and Jericho, David and Goliath, Esther and Persia, Daniel and Babylon. And of course, behind each of these events is a God who delights in using weak and unlikely people in order to display his greatness.

Our text this morning is Psalm 8, a psalm of PRAISE written by David. And it's sandwiched in the middle of eleven (11) psalms about David's enemies. Yet, in the midst of all that's terrifying and wrong, Psalm 8 rings out:

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

And we find that human weakness becomes the backdrop against which God's glory radiates! This is the big idea of our passage: **God's greatness is brilliantly displayed through human weakness.**

Would you follow along with me as I read Psalm 8:

To the choirmaster: according to The 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] Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

[3] When I look at 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,
and the son of man that you care for him?

[5] Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

[6] You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

[7] all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

[8] the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

[9] O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

I want to consider two aspects of this psalm this morning. First, God's greatness.

1. God's Greatness (1, 9)

Or, as it's phrased in the ESV, God's majesty. It's emphasis in Psalm 8 is undeniable, as it bookends with the same line:

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Our God is GREAT and greatly to be praised, and David comes to this conclusion when he looks around and sees all that God has made.

Verse 3: *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place...*

And this launches David into a meditation on Gen 1, which is summarized in Gen 1:1: *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

And the psalm's structure reflects this—Look:

Bookend: God's majestic name (1)

Heavens (1b, 3)

Man (4-6)

Earth (7-8)

Bookend: God's majestic name (9)

All creation begins and ends with God—in him we live and move and have our being! So our chief end in life is God's glory! Hence this psalm surrounds all of creation in praise to Him.

God created the heavens and the earth, and at the very heart of his creation, he created mankind. This is why David puts his question about MAN directly at the center of the psalm. But we'll get to that in a moment. First, just consider God's greatness here with David.

Our Creator is GREAT. There is nothing that's been made that he did not make, and so *everything* reveals his gloriously divine artistry, if we but have the patience and clarity of mind to consider it, as David does here.

Notice, David says that the heavens are the work of God's FINGERS! I've heard a couple of pastors before that if the distance between us and the sun (which is 93 million miles!) were the thickness of one sheet of paper, then the distance to the next star would be a stack of paper 70 feet high! And the stack to get to the edge of the Milkyway Galaxy: 210 miles high! And our God fashioned it all, carefully, with his fingers.

And he devoted that same attention to detail to earth, to all the creatures crawling and swimming and flying around.

Everything, everything declares OUR GOD IS GREAT.

Application: Do you sense the MAJESTY of our God and all his works this morning?

Take a moment this afternoon to stop and revel in God's creation and wonder at how GREAT our God is—whether it's the sunshine or the shade, the vast fields or a flower, a peacock or your pet, a song, a meal, a game, everything!... Consider in them the majesty of our LORD. Creation is loaded with God's fingerprints, shouting out for his glory! Brothers and sisters, we live in a distracted age! Let's not miss the grandeur and glory of God all around us!

Transition: Truly, the majesty of God merits that we fall on our faces, overwhelmed by our LORD... in fact, that's what David does! As soon as he considers God's greatness, he is instantly confronted with his own smallness and weakness. And here, we come to the heart of this psalm. Consider this second aspect in Psalm 8:

2. God's Greatness through Weakness (2-8)

Verses 3-4:

[3] When I look at 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,
and the son of man that you care for him?

David immediately asks the rhetorical question, *What is man that you are mindful of him??* David is not wondering what man *is* philosophically, as much as he's baffled that such a great God would care for such an insignificant creature as man. We are so small amid God's vast creation. And yet, God strangely cares for us.

We know, from Gen 1:26, that God made Adam and Eve as the crowning jewels of his creation, as the only creatures made *in God's image and likeness*, and as a result, humanity is endowed with TREMENDOUS dignity.

Application: This is why we as Christians value ALL human life, from the WOMB to the TOMB. It doesn't matter if your male or female, rich or poor, or of this ethnicity or that one. All human life is valuable BECAUSE God made us in his image and likeness.

On top of that, God entrusted Adam with DOMINION, appointing him as his representative ruler on ruler. David spends verses 6–8 contemplating just that—

[6] You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
[7] all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
[8] the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

One commentator observed that, at the very heart of this psalm, God gives ENORMOUS authority to mankind. And yet at the boundaries of this psalm, we find the only proper context for the exercise of that authority—right worship of the one true God.

But you feel the tension, don't you? Ever since Adam's rebellion against God and the resulting curse and fall in Genesis 3, mankind's dominion has been marred at best, if not entirely broken. We don't properly rule over creation!! In fact, all too often, what we see is abuse of authority! And we're easily plagued by pandemics, disease, disasters, and so on. Both our world AND our dominion is broken. This conflict within the psalm seems to undermine its attempted PRAISE. But I hope to persuade you that there's more than straightforward praise going on here!

Verse 2: You may have noticed that I skipped right by verse 2 up to this point. It's an odd verse, isn't it?? David begins by talking about God's glory above the heavens... and then says,

[2] Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

And THEN he RETURNS to considering the heavens God made. What's up with that? I propose to you that verse 2 is something of a KEY to this psalm! Think about it! Babies and infants are utterly dependent, and weak. And yet, this is the very means that the sovereign God over all things has appointed to still the enemy! God displays his greatness through weak vessels, in this case some of the weakest, like babies and children. God delights to use especially unlikely avenues to display his greatness. And hence, God crowned his otherwise insignificant creature Adam with glory and honor. God uses mere children to still the enemy, and he uses mere man to do the same.

It's for this reason that Jesus himself quotes this psalm in Matthew 21. Jesus has just ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey at the triumphal entry, and cleansed the temple by driving out the money changers... And when the chief priests and scribes saw everything that he was doing, and the children in the temple all crying aloud:

[Hosanna to the Son of David!](#)

Matthew says that the religious leaders were "indignant." In v.16, they say to Jesus:

[Do you hear what these are saying?](#)

And Jesus responds by quoting Psalm 8, verse 2. He says:

[Yes. Have you never read, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise"?](#)

In an unexpected twist, God's enemies whom the little children have stilled are the chief priests and scribes of Israel! These little ones clearly perceive God's majesty in Christ, whereas the enemy is hardened and condemned. But what is it in particular that these small children saw in Jesus??

Turn with me to Hebrews 2, where Psalm 8 is quoted again. Hebrews 2:5-9:

[\[5\] For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. \[6\] It has been testified somewhere \[here he quotes Ps 8\],](#)

["What is man, that you are mindful of him,](#)

or the son of man, that you care for him?

[7] You made him for a little while lower than the angels;

you have crowned him with glory and honor,

[8] putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him [Adam], he left nothing outside his [Adam's] control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him [Adam]. [9] But we see him [another “him”] who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Psalm 8 is not only a psalm of praise, it's a MESSIANIC psalm, pointing forward to the true and better Adam, the Last Adam, Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, who would overcome sin and death for ALL who would turn away from their sins and trust in him alone for life.

I wonder, what prevents you from surrendering your life to Jesus today?

The Apostle Paul also quotes Psalm 8 in 1 Corinthians 15:21–27.

[21] For as by a man [Adam] came death, by a man [Christ] has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. [24] Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. [25] For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. [26] The last enemy to be destroyed is death. [27] For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet...”

Jesus is undoing EVERYTHING that Adam did. The definitive blow against sin and death was at the cross. But living in the time between the cross and his return, we await the full effect, when he returns, when ALL THINGS are put under his feet.

Illustration: There were 336 days between D-Day when Allied troops invaded Europe, signaling their sure victory, and V-E Day, when victory was formally declared in Europe. We enjoy the victory of the cross now, our D-Day, and we look forward to the Day of the LORD, V-E Day, when ALL THINGS are put in subjection to his feet, when sin and death will be destroyed!

Brothers and sisters, when you read or sing Psalm 8, declaring how the greatness of God shines through weak people, don't miss that though Christ

was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:6-8)

God the Son willingly became weak and small, and suffered in a fallen world, and defeated sin and death at the cross, in order to redeem us,

so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord [ALL THINGS ARE IN SUBJECTION TO HIS FEET, under his perfect rule], to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:10-11).

And not only that, but on THAT Day we will reign WITH him, restored IN him to what we were originally created for: WORSHIPFUL DOMINION. We'll sing Revelation 5:

"Worthy are you to take the scroll

and to open its seals,

for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation,

and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,

and THEY SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH." (Rev 5:9-10)

WOW. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! He takes insignificant, sinful people like us and RECREATES us, and RESTORES us to our original role by entering our frailty and conquering the fall. God's greatness is gloriously displayed through human weakness.

Conclusion: The Lord of the Rings is a riveting tale... But as the old saying goes, truth is stranger than fiction.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor 1:25).

And so, we ourselves are saved by what the world deems folly. But to us, it is LIFE.

And it's no wonder that the God who saved us by means of weakness in the world's eyes, continues to use even us in OUR WEAKNESSES, saying,

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Cor 12:9).

Our Lord loves to write unlikely stories, as each one of us can attest to with our lives. And what a prompt for PRAISE:

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!