

remembering just how much our lives ought to be transformed in light of God's mercy. So how do we go from a position of boredom and presuming upon God's grace, to one of being absolutely amazed by who God is and what He's done for us?

I think that's the kind of question Psalm 8 can answer for us. Here's what it says.

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at 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, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalms 8:1-9)

Father, I pray that we would be in awe of who You are and what You've done. I pray that we would never lose the wonder that we ought to have about Your majesty and the salvation that you provide through Your Son. And help us to proclaim Your name in all the earth. In Jesus's name, Amen.

When's the last time you were really surprised...about anything? Was it a good surprise, or a bad surprise?

I read about a married couple living in Central Bosnia who were on the brink of divorce. Apparently they had become bored with one another to the point that they said that they had fallen out of love with each other, and so they both began to have emotional affairs with other people online. The husband went by the screen name "Prince of Joy," and his wife went by "Sweetie." With the people they found online, they each shared their marriage troubles, and each of them said that they fell in love with the person with whom they chatted online. But when they each arranged to meet up with the person who they considered to be their soulmates, they discovered that they were chatting with one another, their spouse.

The husband later said, "I still find it hard to believe that Sweetie, who wrote such wonderful things, is actually the same woman I married and who has not said a nice word to me for years."

Well, I don't know whether the couple ended up getting a divorce, or if that experience helped them to reconcile in their marriage, but I do know this: they were surprised by a relationship that they already had.

Christians, do you ever find yourself bored in your faith? Well, I think that you can be surprised by a relationship that you already have.

Verse 1.

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David. (Psalm 8:1a)

In other words, David wrote this psalm and had it delivered to the choirmaster so that all of the people of Israel would join together in singing this song. So it was a song to remind all of the Hebrews of just how mighty and good God is.

I think we all need that reminder, and we need it often. Although we sing these kinds of things often in church, it's easy for us to only sing them at church. But the message of this psalm is that God is so awesome that everything in heaven and earth ought to give Him praise. Check it out.

David continues:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. (Psalm 8:1b)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.⁶ In other words, He created everything. He created the physical, and even the spiritual realms. And God's name and glory are displayed majestically in both.

You know, we often say that heaven is where God lives, but that's not technically true, because God existed even before the heavens that He created. And according to David in verse 1, God's glory is above the heavens. Not merely in the heavens, but above them. Now, some people understand the heavens in this verse as just talking about the sky and the stars, since these are also often called the heavens in the Bible, but the problem with that understanding is that this Psalm is clear that heavens refers not just to the physical realm of the sky and the stars, but also the spiritual realm of where angels are from in verse 5.

So, if God doesn't merely live in the heavens, where does He live? Hold that thought. Verse 2.

Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. (Psalms 8:2)

Now that's a surprising verse, and it's curious as to why David would include it here. But I think the sense is this: God's glory is above the heavens, and how majestic is His name in all the earth, and that's shown even through the mouths of babies, who have been established by God to defeat the enemy.

You see, God doesn't need the mature and eloquent to win. God can and does use those who we consider to be weak and helpless, and He even chooses to do so in order to clearly display that He is the One that's strong.⁷ And I don't think this is just an illustration. Think about it. One of the most obvious examples of God's existence is the birth of a child. We were created by God.⁸ For a single-celled organism to grow into a fully-functional baby is nothing short of a miracle. The Bible says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.⁹ And so when we first hear a baby's cry, we should be reminded that only God can give life. It's from the mouth of babies and infants that God is praised.

And when God is praised, His enemy is made still. Do you want to lessen Satan's influence in your life? Then praise God. Read His word when you get up, and sing to Him throughout the day. I'm not saying you won't still be tempted in various ways, but the more you direct your mind to worship God, the more it becomes very difficult for the evil one to get your attention.

Verses 3 and 4 give us just one inspiring meditation as to how to do that. It says:

⁶ Genesis 1:1

⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:27

⁸ Genesis 1:27

⁹ Psalm 139:14

When I look at 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, and the son of man that you care for him? (Psalms 8:3-4)

It's an awe-inspiring thing to look up at the sky. We often feel so small in light of the vastness of the universe. But note also that God created this vast universe by setting it in place. In other words, He's even bigger, and we shouldn't be so surprised that the universe is big, but we should be in constant awe that our big God, who made this big universe, cares for each of us not just in some general way, but specifically.

Many people today seem to suggest that the size of the universe and its expansion disproves the existence of God, because it shows that man is so small and insignificant, and therefore cannot possibly be the crowning work of God's creation. But G.K. Chesterton, who always had a witty way to state the obvious, put it this way:

Why should a man surrender his dignity to the solar system any more than to a whale? If mere size proves that man is not the image of God, then a whale may be the image of God; a somewhat formless image; what one might call an impressionist portrait. It is quite futile to argue that man is small compared to the cosmos; for man was always small compared to the nearest tree. - G.K. Chesterton, "Orthodoxy"

In other words, it shouldn't bother our faith at all to learn just how big the universe is. We've always been small compared to trees, and yet we've always known that God created us, not the tree, in His image.

So while I don't think it's wrong to be in awe of the size of the universe, it's even better to remember that the God who made the universe loves you, so that you reflect in wonder to God as it says in verse 4, "what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

Now when you read that title "son of man," you should immediately get an idea as to what's going on here. In fact, there are two ways to understand it, and we're going to look at the rest of the psalm in light of both.

The first is the way that all of the people of Israel would have immediately understood it as they sang this song. The son of man was the king of Israel, who represented Israel, and even in a sense all mankind. He was God's anointed over the earth. Verse 5.

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (Psalms 8:5-8)

In the beginning, God told Adam and Eve:

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

We should be surprised, utterly astounded that God made the earth and everything in it, and then gave it to us to have dominion over. I mean, really, what's up with that? God makes it all, and then just gives it to us? And yet, it seems like just the kind of thing God delights to do. God gives strength to the weak. He gives hope to the hopeless. And through Jesus Christ, He gives grace to the undeserving.

So how are we doing at having dominion over the earth? In some ways, we certainly do make it bend to our desires, making amazing technology and medical advancements. But in other ways, we're doing a pretty bad job. We let God's creatures go extinct, we chop down rainforests faster than they can grow, and we pollute the air and the oceans with all sorts of things that ultimately are harmful to us as well. I think this is part of the reason why the creation itself has been groaning,¹⁰ waiting for Jesus to restore all things.

And that brings us to the second way that we should understand the title "son of man." Scripture is clear that Jesus was born as one of us, a man.¹¹ And yet, Jesus was also born of the Holy Spirit.¹² So Jesus is both the son of man, and the son of God. I mean, that truth alone ought to fill you with surprise, but with Jesus in mind, check out what verse 6 says.

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.
(Psalms 8:6)

So Jesus has dominion over everything. Everything is His. In discussing these verses, the writer of Hebrews says this:

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see 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. (Hebrews 2:8-9)

Everyone. Everything, and everyone will be under Christ's authority. And this is actually repeated many times throughout the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. Here is just a small fraction of them.

Psalms 66:4

All the earth will worship You and sing praise to You. They will sing praise to Your name." (Psalm 66:4)

Zephaniah 3:9.

"For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord. (Zephaniah 3:9)

Philippians 2:9-11.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 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, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

And Romans 15:11.

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; all the peoples should praise Him! (Romans 15:11)

¹⁰ Romans 8:22

¹¹ Matthew 1:1-17

¹² Matthew 1:18

And so we see that a major surprise to the Jewish-Christian believers in the New Testament was that the gospel wasn't just for the Jews, but for Gentiles as well. Paul described this as the mystery of the gospel in Ephesians 3:6.

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:6)

So I hope it's no surprise to you that the gospel is for everyone. It's for Republicans and Democrats. It's for conservatives and liberals. It's for everyone you consider to be unworthy of it, like the Jews considered the Gentiles to be. In fact, it's especially for those you consider unworthy of it.

The gospel isn't for those who think they deserve it, but for those who know they don't. I mean, the gospel is for everyone, but those who think they're worthy of it, who think they somehow deserve grace, aren't yet ready to receive grace, because grace by definition isn't deserved. A lot of people who claim to be Christians live as if Christianity is a curse, because they're bored with God, and really just wish they could go out and live however they please, thinking they're strong. But those who know they're weak, who don't think they're worthy of grace, well, they're in for a great surprise.

I mean, think about it. What if you really delighted in every one of God's surprises, and took every surprise not as a curse, but as a blessing?

In other words, what if that the couple from Central Bosnia on the brink of divorce had this kind of ending?

[You've Got Mail ending scene]



Christian, if you're sometimes bored in your faith, don't start looking for other things outside of your faith to give your life meaning. Come home to Jesus. He'll always be there, even though you've ignored Him, betrayed Him, abused Him, and nailed Him to the cross.

And if you'll do that, then you'll proclaim with David in verse 9:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalms 8:9)

Now, we might say that we already read this in verse 1, but notice how it's different. There's no mention of the heavens. And if you follow the progression of the psalm, especially along with the New Testament's understanding of it, I think what we have here is a picture of the final state of things, when the heavens and earth come together, so that when, as it says in the book of Hebrews about this psalm, everything has been subjected to Christ, we will all proclaim how majestic is His name in all the earth. And our Lord will live among us. We won't worship Jesus from afar, because He will be as He is: Emmanuel, which means, God with us.¹³

¹³ Matthew 1:23

And the truth is, you don't have to wait to live on the new earth in order to praise God's name forever. When you receive Jesus in this life, He is Emmanuel in your life. He is God in you. You receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Talk about a surprise!

¹⁴ Acts 2:38