

Psalms 18-06-21

This is Thursday, the 21st of June, 2018. We continue our study in the book of Psalms. Tonight, we're going to be looking at Psalm 8. Psalm 8. We'll take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study, and then we'll begin.

Father, we thank you for the many ways you have expressed your grace and your faithfulness toward us. We find ourselves, especially in the light of this portion of your word, particularly aware of the great distance between ourselves and your throne and your person and the mighty gulf that was spanned at Calvary and the Lord Jesus rescuing us from the lost and fallen condition and making us presentable, giving us access and so many wonderful privileges in him. We thank you for that.

We thank you for the opportunity to learn who we are and why we're here and the great sweep of your plan and purpose in human history. We pray that tonight, as we take a look at one aspect of it in this portion of the book of Psalms, that your Holy Spirit will teach us and guide us and help us to see its pertinence and its relevancy to our lives so we can more fully present ourselves as living sacrifices. We can more fully follow the example of the Lord Jesus in taking up our cross and following him, and that we can ultimately arrive at that place of greater service and function as we seek to reflect your glory both now and in the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. In our study of the Psalms, we have covered the first seven and we now come to Psalm 8. This could be classified a number of different ways.

It certainly praises God, so you could call it a praise psalm. It mentions the night sky and the stars, so you could call it a nighttime psalm or an evening psalm or a psalm of contemplation such as Psalm 4. We saw that was an evening prayer, if you will. But we're going to adopt, I think for purposes of title and introduction here, the revelation of the glory of God in man.

This has been variously expressed. There's one commentator who says the psalm is God's glory revealed in man's dignity. Of course, this is not a dignity of our own, but a dignity that is inbuilt by God, a dignity that is potential along with most of the rest of the aspects of our salvation.

Much of our deliverance from sin and from fallenness is potential and we work our way toward it. But let's read this psalm to reacquaint ourselves with it. Most of you will recognize the content.

And then we're going to see the answer to the question, so what? It's a wonderful piece of poetry, but what difference does it make as we go forth and go out and try to keep on living what remains to us of this life? So let's read it together. Psalm 8, you'll first of all see the superscription in my New King James, my Thompson chain reference here. The human subtitle here is the glory of the Lord in creation.

Not bad, but I think it is more specifically directed than that. Then it further says, God's glory

magnified by his works. And in verse 6, he gives man dominion.

So that's a fair summary. When we get to the inspired portion of the text, it says, to the chief musician on the instrument of gath, a psalm of David. Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth who have set your glory above the heavens out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants.

You have ordained strength because of your enemies that you may silence the enemy and the Avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you visit him for you have made him a little lower than the angels. And you have crowned him with glory and honor.

You have made him have dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth. We begin as we are want to do at the superscription to the chief musician or to the choir director, to the one who is in charge of worship music in Israel.

This is a Psalm of David and he has commended it for public performance. And so the thoughts contained therein are designed to be absorbed and reflected upon in a group setting. We don't often think about this, but as opposed to a nighttime individual contemplation or a song of individual lament or something, these that are given to the choir director are designed to be shared.

There is a group that performs them. There is a group that is listening to them being performed. So to the choir director, to the chief musician, then it says on the instrument of gath.

This is two words in Hebrew, al-gitith, A-L, which is the preposition that means upon or over, A-L, and then gitith, G-I-T-I-T-H. And you see immediately how you could arrive at gath from that, gath being one of the five cities of the Philistines. David spent time there.

And so when you come to upon gitith, you think, well, is this a musical instrument of sorts? It might be a variation on a harp. The suggestion has been made that if there is a generic guitar and then you say, well, it's a Spanish guitar, a gitith might be a harp of gath or some other instrument that was sort of well-known or unique to that town. Here's my suggestion.

I think that this, when it says upon, it is to the tune of, set to the tune of, rather than to be played upon one particular instrument. It's uncommon to say, well, here is Silent Night upon the guitar. Why would you limit it? Couldn't somebody hum this to themselves later or sing it a cappella or play it on some other instrument? So it doesn't make sense to me that this would be written to be played only upon a single instrument or type of instrument.

I think this is the, just like we have in a hymnal, words and music. If you ever wonder, by the

way, the words are on the left, the author of the music is on the right. Sometimes it's the same person in both slots.

But this, I have a hymnal that belonged to my great, great, great granddad who was a primitive Baptist preacher and he carried it around. He had a couple of different hymnals. I've got one that's called the Sacred Harp and it contains shape note music to accompany the lyrics.

Another one of his hymnals is a much smaller book that would easily fit into a coat or vest pocket and it just has the words. And then up at the top, it has numbers, almost looks like an IP address. And these are line lengths and people knew tunes that matched those line lengths.

And so they could sing words to several different tunes. Well, David specifies a tune here. So what is Geteeth? Well, rather than being a reference to gaff, although indirectly it might pertain, Geteeth references a winepress.

This is, if you wanted to be a little bit interpretive and expansive, you've never known me to be interpretive and expansive, I know, but I'm going to go out on a limb here. This is the grape stomping tune. It's a grape stomper.

To the tune of the grape stomper, the treaders of the winepress. There's a very beautiful guitar piece called The Beautiful Bricklayer's Daughter and it's an instrumental. It has no words, but the fellow who wrote it, who by the way also founded the New Age recording company, his name and its name I now forget, but it's, what was that sampler we used to get? Narada? Thereabouts.

I think he's the guy that launched that whole brand, but he's an accomplished guitar player. He likes to play with tunings. He'll just shut his eyes and twist all the pegs and get, and then match the nearest note and then figure out songs.

I actually tuned my guitar this way and figured out The Beautiful Bricklayer's Daughter one time. I don't know if I could still play it or not, but it's a tune. It's a tune name.

So if it's the winepress, what does a winepress suggest to you? Most of us have seen at least one winepress seen in our lives in black and white with Lucy stomping up and down in that big vat of grapes, right? That's about our closest contact with it. But in the ancient Near East, it was quite common, quite a common sight. Let me read you a little something from Easton's Bible Dictionary under winepress.

It consisted of two vats or receptacles, a trough, Hebrew gath, G-A-T-H. So G-A-T-H would be troughs, and these would be winepress troughs, into which the grapes were thrown and where they were trodden upon and bruised. This is referenced in Isaiah, Lamentations, and Joel.

And secondly, the second trough is the trough or vat, Hebrew yakev, into which the juice ran from the trough above, the gath. So the gath is where they are stomped. The juice runs down into the yakev.

Everybody with me so far? So if you're going to have a tune, you know that there's sort of a rhythmic type of music that was associated with chain gangs and with slaves working in the fields, and Swing That Hammer. There was a whole album of these songs recorded by Harry Belafonte back in the late 50s, I think early 60s. Harry Rattler and Swing That Hammer and several others that have a rhythmic, repetitive chant-like quality to them, sort of like counting cadence or keeping time so that men that were beating spikes into a rail or pounding posts or whatever could keep time together.

So if this is the winepress song, this would have a steady rhythm. And you think, well, when I look at the moon and the stars, how could that associate with a winepress song? Well, we've lost the tune. We don't know the tune.

We just know the tune's name, and it is the name that has the significance, not the rhythm. This may not have been a wine treading song with a steady beat for stomp, stomp, stomp them grapes. Instead, it may have gone to the biblical or the theological significance of winepress.

What is, in the same way that yeast has a value and the sea has a value and storms have a value symbolically and metaphorically in scripture, what is the winepress associated with? Anybody. If you're going to think of something besides the literal wine that comes out and pours down into the yekef, you remember that there is the winepress of God's wrath. Jesus is going to drink the cup.

Let this cup pass for me. This cup has been filled from the winepress. So it was a very pregnant and significant symbol in ancient Israel.

Easton's goes on to say that winepresses are found in almost every part of Palestine. They are, quote, the only sure relics we have of the old days of Israel before the captivity. Between Hebron and Beersheba, they are found on all the hill slopes.

They abound in southern Judea. They are no less common in the many valleys of Carmel and they are numerous in Galilee. The treading of the winepress is emblematic of divine judgment.

For example, Isaiah chapter 63 verse 2. You remember the structure of Isaiah? You've got one through 40 and then you've got the second half. But in Isaiah 63, it says, why are your garments red like those of one treading the winepress? And it goes on to talk about the judgment of God. The blood that runs as high as the horse's bridles, the grape juice is suggestive of this figure.

They didn't seem to stomp white grapes. So you can put with that Lamentations chapter 1 verse 15. It goes on in Isaiah, the next verse, Isaiah 63, 3. I have trodden the winepress alone.

From the nations, no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger. I trod them down in my wrath.

Their blood spattered my garments and I stained all my clothing. So a very graphic picture there in Isaiah 63, 2 and 3. Lamentations 1, 15. The Lord has rejected all the warriors in my

midst.

He has summoned an army against me to crush my young men. In his winepress, the Lord has trampled the virgin daughter of Judah. So this is the defeat that was promised in Deuteronomy for the unfaithful nation.

So the winepress, it is associated with divine judgment. A couple of more passages you can put with that. Revelation 14 verses 19 and 20.

The winepress of God's wrath. So we've made it through the superscription upon Gethsemane. What's our setting? Choir is going to perform this thing to a group of worshipers and the tune which they will immediately recognize is the winepress song, the stomper song, the bruised and crushed grapes with the spattering of grape juice like blood song.

It's sobering. It was probably in a minor key, as much of Jewish music even today is. So this would have been not a lively roll out the barrel type of tune.

This is more of a tragic and mournful minor key type of a thing. So now it is a Psalm of David. And as most of these in the first book of the Psalms is, then he begins.

And of course, from David's perspective, just keep in mind, he has been all over the hillsides of Judea as a shepherd and later as a fugitive and a vagabond in his Adullam days. And now as king, he can picture these winepresses and the process of this red liquid flowing down as the grapes are crushed. So he begins and says, Oh, Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth.

Who has set your glory above the heavens. Now in the type setting of your Bible, do you notice anything about that first line? Oh, Lord, our Lord. Tell me what you see.

Do you suppose that the first and second words for Lord are the same? Look at the type closely. This is a clue I've mentioned before. What do you see there? What kind of type is the first Lord in? It's small caps.

What's the second one? Is it the same? It is not. What does the small caps signify? The Tetragrammaton, the personal name of the Lord YHWH, Yahweh pointed by the scribes as Adonai, to be read as Adonai because they didn't want to speak God's holy name. So, Oh, Lord, our Lord, the second word is going to be something different.

So what is it? Well, this is something that is sort of the equivalent of kurios in Greek, which means any master or sir designation. The Lords of England would be a good example. It's a small l in the case of humans.

But the significance here, it looks similar and repetitive in English, but it's vastly different in Hebrew. So you have, Oh, Lord, our master might be a better translation or our benefactor, our serf to owner of the land who has the fiefdom. What is he, a thief? A thief, fief? Is a fiefdom run

by a fief, a fife? I'll have to check.

Anyway, the idea here is, Oh, Yahweh, our Lord, not just in the sense of a trite title, but recognizing his authority, his benefactions, his provisions, his role as creator, sustainer, and so on. So if you look at the introduction here, this is the choir singing to the crowd, but the address begins as a prayer. Oh, Lord, our Lord.

And because it's plural, that reminds you that we're in a group setting here. And this is important. It's important to notice if this is an individual contemplation or if it is cohortative and exhortative and designed to pull the group into a unified expression of praise.

So when he says our Lord, our master, this means something. How excellent is your name in all the earth? As a pure coincidence, I got a chance to see Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure this past week. That's not really the sense in which excellent is used here.

I checked at Matthew's suggestion, the Robert Alter translation of this song, and he has a note that says he thinks that this word, excellent, adir, A-D-D-I-R, actually it's kind of an I-Y-R, it's adir, would have been designed to alliterate with Adonai, Adonai and Adir. But I am not persuaded of that because you have Yahweh Adonainu, Adonai, which is substituted. So when the scribes would read this, it would be O Adonai, our Adonai.

And they would miss the significance. And if David wanted to say O Adonai, our Adonai, he would have just written it that way. But he puts Yahweh there to begin with.

And so I don't see Alter's point really. This would originally have been read Yahweh. They weren't squeamish about God's personal name.

Moses had to tell him what it was because he was given that name at Sinai to communicate to the people. And it was only in later rabbinical Judaism that they started, you know, the phylactery thing and all the rest of the excessive attempts at righteousness that failed to achieve God's righteousness. You know, they missed God's righteousness and tried to establish their own even in the days of Paul.

So this is Yahweh, our Adonai. Mah Adir, how surpassing is your name. This is the shame, you know, the name, the Shema, our Lord is one Lord and so on.

How excellent is your name in all Haaretz, the earth, in the beginning God created at HaShemayim, at Haaretz, the earth. Now this is a signal when he says Haaretz, because as you know from reading the content here, David is going to basically summarize Genesis chapter one in his survey of creation. And so this is a little preview of coming attractions.

Your name is surpassing in all the Haaretz, the created Haaretz, the visible world. And of course, the magnificence or the majesty is in view here when he says Adir, the majesty, the surpassing excellence of your name. Now, what's going on here, really? We're going to step back a little bit and look at a little bit more forest and a little bit less trees.

Oh Lord, our Adonai, how excellent is your name in all the earth, who has set your glory above the heavens. It doesn't actually say that God has set his glory above the heavens. This is a textual crux.

It basically says Asher Natan. Asher means which, and Natan means given, to give. The word Nathan means given or gift.

So it says which given, then above the heavens. So you've got the earth and the heavens in reverse order of what you have in Genesis 1.1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Well, David is on the earth and he says, how excellent is your name here on earth, who have, and then something about God's glory above the heavens.

But based on what is coming up in the Psalm, since we've read it now and we know where he's going with this, what is the idea? Babes, suckling infants, what is man, the vast expanse of the heavens and so on. Out of these mouths of weak ones, you have ordained strength and the praise of strength and so on. Well, here's what I would suggest to you.

It is not who have set your glory above the heavens. I suggest you cross out who have set and put in its place which gives you glory, which gives, you as in parentheses, which gives glory above the heavens. You think when you look at the way the universe is constructed, that the earth is a small, minute speck, and that the heavens are above.

And what David is about to introduce here in this Psalm is, Lord, it's such an example of reversal. How many times have we seen this? The elder will serve the younger, the last will be first. By the way, I was looking at that last will be first, and it didn't really impinge on my consciousness that the word last is eschatos, meaning last in time.

And it's one of those things where Jesus says in Matthew 28, 20, you know, as you go make disciples, teaching them, baptizing them in the name, we'll get to name in a minute. And Lord, I'm with you always, even to the eschatos of the Aionu, even to the last of the age. It's a time word.

And it's very fascinating, you put that with Acts 1.8, which is haos telos of the gaze. And haos is also a time word. So both of them, to the end of the world, to the end of the age.

But back to our point here, how excellent is your name? Well, is it just a really cool name? I noticed that now they're naming. I saw a question asked, is Elijah a boy's name or a girl's name? Because more and more girls are being named Elijah. And names are just a smorgasbord, grab bag, shotgun.

You can be named for anything these days. And girls get boys' names and boys get girls' names and people get named for inanimate objects and who knows what all. What does name really mean? How majestic, how surpassingly admirable is your name? I'm going to suggest to you a one word translation for this word shame, and it is revelation.

Revelation. When you give a name, you have just revealed. You know how so often biblical names say something about the person who bears them.

When I mention a name to you, if I say Donald Trump in a crowded room, immediately a flood of information comes into a person's mind. Twitter storm, unlikely election success, Russians, controversy, you name it. But when you name it, when you name a name, there is a body of information associated with that name.

If I say to you Croxit, how much information do you get? C-R-O-Q-U-E-S-E-T, Croxit. I just made it up on the spot. There's no information associated with it.

As far as I know, nobody's ever said or used or heard that name before, but I kind of like it. Next dog I get, C-R-O-Q-U-E-S-E-T. You see what I mean? The name is the revelation of God.

Try substituting that in this verse. Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your revelation, the revelation of your person and plan and works in all the earth. It sets your glory above the heavens.

What is revealed about God on earth glorifies him above the heavens, right? So in unlikely place, how unlikely is the earth? I looked up an article here that I want to share with you. It's just excerpts. This is called Our Cosmic Insignificance.

The universe that surrounds us is vast. This is what David points out, right? When I look at the heavens, the moon and the stars, the work of your hands, the universe surrounds us is vast. We are so very small.

When we reflect on the vastness of the universe, our humdrum cosmic location and the inevitable future demise of humanity, our lives can seem utterly insignificant. Many philosophers assume that such worries about our significance reflect a banal metaethical confusion. They dismiss the very idea of cosmic significance, which is a short way of saying, if you look around and say, wow, you know, we're riding this tiny planet in an insignificant part of a galaxy.

That's one of many galaxies in just an infinitude of space. How could we possibly have any importance? Well, because nobody likes to really dwell on that, they say, worrying about whether you're important or not is a waste of time. Just don't even raise the question.

That's just banal metaethical confusion. That's another one I'm going to have to file away for future use. What you're telling me is just that.

They dismiss the very idea of cosmic significance. It's useless to ask. It's kind of like saying, well, where did life come from? Well, we don't ask that question.

It doesn't matter. We're here. That's all that counts.

We don't want to ask an uncomfortable question that might force us to a conclusion that there

might be something we don't know. So as we complacently go about our little earthly affairs, we barely notice the black backdrop of the night sky. Even when we do, we usually see the starry skies as no more than a pleasant twinkling decoration.

In one sense, what we see is not very different than what Neolithic or Medieval people saw when they looked up, but we inhabit a different universe. We can repeat the figures science tells us. The universe is 13 billion years old.

The part we can observe is 93 billion light years, but the universe could be bigger than that. Our planet circles a star located around two-thirds of the way out of the center of the modest Milky Way galaxy, which contains 100 to 400 billion other stars. This isn't very much.

According to the latest calculations, the observable universe contains around 300 sextillion stars. These figures are, well, astronomical, but they are also misleading. On the whole, our universe is almost entirely empty, an unending cold intergalactic night.

Now the reason I read you that is I want you to contrast an observable fact where a small planet orbiting a modest star in one of billions of galaxies, the same observation as one looks up into the night sky in David's heart turns into what? The glory of God and how, forgive the casual expression, but how cool it is that God takes this little insignificant speck of humanity dwelling on this seemingly insignificant planet, solar system, galaxy, part of the universe, and uses it, something nobody would notice, to give, to put, to place, to elevate his glory above the heavens. God has done something in this earth that he never did in heaven. His glory is higher because of his name in the earth, what's been revealed about him in the earth, than it ever was when all of this morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy in heaven.

That's what David is talking about here. When he says, oh Lord, our Adonai, your revelation of yourself on this earth puts your glory above the heavens and above the heavenly hosts. Now look at the next verse.

Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have ordained strength. You see the flow of ideas here? He's on the same subject. It's so, people would say ironic, it's not actually an irony, but it is so unexpected that it's one of those, for want of a nail, the kingdom was lost kind of things.

You know, a butterfly flaps his wings and there's a hurricane on the other side of the planet kind of a thing, right? It's counterintuitive. You would expect if God was going to manage to elevate his glory above the heavens, it would take something big and he's done it with something so seemingly insignificant. Now you can see where this is going to lead in terms of application, right? God can be doing very big things in our lives when our lives may be seemingly insignificant.

David, I surmise, composed this perhaps in his shepherd days, sitting on a Judean hillside some miles from Bethlehem by himself, gazing into a clear inky black sky with no town lights to blur

the view. And he sees the Milky Way stretched across the heavens. He sees the infinitude of stars.

He knows the Genesis account. You can tell reading this, he has heard in town on the Sabbath, the reading of the Torah, the Genesis scroll. And David paid attention.

He doesn't have one and he couldn't read it at night anyway. He has internalized it. He carries it around with him.

And when he looks up into the sky, the account in Genesis chapter one comes flooding back into his soul. And he says, it's not just that God had the power to create, but look at what he did with the creation. It isn't just enough that God put us here and gave us life.

Look at what he is doing with our lives. Your life matters. And when you read atheistic screeds about how big the universe is, and we shouldn't think too much of ourselves because we're just tiny.

Let me read you some of the quotes. I've got one here from one of my favorite guys, Carl Sagan. We float in this immense cosmos, Carl Sagan writes, like a mote of dust in the morning sky.

Stephen Hawking delivers the news more bluntly. This is still out of this article, Our Cosmic Insignificance. I'll give you the author here in a minute.

Stephen Hawking says, we are just a chemical scum on a moderate size planet orbiting around a very average star in the outer suburb of one among a hundred billion galaxies. Greetings, chemical scum. The universe is immense and we are so very tiny.

We contemplate the vastness of the universe. We inhabit our humdrum location, our inevitable future doom when the sun implodes or later on in the heat death of the universe, human life can seem utterly insignificant. This sense of insignificance is not uncommon.

Pascal famously wrote, when I consider the short duration of my life swallowed up in an eternity before and after the little space I feel engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces, whereof I know nothing and which know nothing of me, I am terrified. The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me. I'm just giving you a little contrast.

You think about the wonder and the optimism and the praise and the appreciation that wells up in David's soul, looking at the very same thing that scares Pascal to death. These people without God look into the vast spaces of the universe as a wasteland, as an impersonal place to be lost in. One of Joseph Conrad's characters describes, quote, one of those dewy clear starry nights oppressing our spirit, crushing our pride.

Notice, crushing our pride by the brilliant evidence of the awful loneliness of the hopeless obscure insignificance of our globe, lost in the splendid revelation of a glittering soulless

universe. I hate such skies. The young Bertrand Russell, famous atheist of a hundred years ago, a close friend of Conrad, bitterly referred to the earth as the petty planet on which our bodies impotently crawl.

Russell wrote, brief and powerless is man's life. On him and on all his race, the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark, blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. Do you see the gift that God has given us in his self-revelation beginning in the Old Testament days, culminating in the of deity and bodily form, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

What a gift, what a deliverance, what a revelation. You begin to understand why David sings what he sings, why he writes what he writes and what he says. I want the choir to sing this thing.

And I want all the people assembled to hear it. Our God is great. The Lord, our Lord has taken allegedly puny, insignificant us and used us to project his glory above the heavens.

Something he never did with the angels even. It's stunning. And it ought to imbue us with a sense of hope and perseverance in trial, endurance in the face of challenges, recognition that God is gracious and that God loves us.

And that as we navigate the course he has charted for our lives, there is meaning and purpose and definition. Some of you will recognize that phrase, a life of meaning and purpose and definition, but that's what it is. By the way, this whole brief and powerless man's life, you know, pitiless dark doom and so on.

This is why Russell thought that in the absence of God, we must build our lives on quote, a foundation of unyielding despair. What is our hope built on? Nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. He is the rock of our salvation.

These people are building their lives on a foundation quote of unyielding despair. What is the point? Eat, drink, and be merry. Tomorrow we die.

Such quotations can be easily multiplied. We find similar remarks in John Donne, Voltaire, Schopenhauer, Byron, Tolstoy, Chesterton, Camus, and in recent philosophy, Thomas Nagel, Harry Frankfurt, Ronald Dworkin, and Susan Wolfe. And in a footnote to this article, they have one more that I thought was very apt and summed all of this up.

It's by somebody named Stuart Williams. Stuart Williams put this most bluntly, quote, science tells us that we are inconsequential specks of dust scrabbling around blindly on a pale blue dot orbiting a tiny star in an inconceivably large universe. Some say that size doesn't matter, but we all know that it really does.

How can anything we do be important? How can anything we do be important? That's what Psalm 8 answers. Yes, we may be babes and suckling infants, but look at the next verse. Out of

the mouths of those babes and infants, you have ordained strength.

This is the word oz, o-z, strength. It can also be translated a stronghold. You've ordained a stronghold.

Keep your finger here and turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 10. I want to show you something right quick before we stop. 2 Corinthians chapter 10.

We'll get here some short time after we finish 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verses 3 through 5. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. Our significance, our impact, our effect isn't measurable by where we are, who we are, how we comport with the size of the universe, and so on.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They're not material. But mighty in God for what? Pulling down strongholds.

Out of the mouths of babes and suckling infants, God has ordained a stronghold, and our faith pulls down the enemy's strongholds. This is what Bob Thieme used to call the angelic conflict. There was a dispute.

There is a division. There are the fallen angels led by Satan and the unfallen angels who are true to God. And in this rebellion, and in this departure, and in this disconnection, in the creation and fomenting of evil, of deceit, Satan has been a liar from the beginning.

He has been charged. He has been tried. And he and the fallen angels have been convicted already from our perspective.

How do we know this? The lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. It wouldn't be prepared if sentence had not already been passed. The demons ask the Lord Jesus, have you come to torment us before the time? There is a scheduled date of execution, and in the meantime, there seems to be an appeal process.

And God says, I will further demonstrate why your sentence is legitimate, why you must be annihilated in the lake of fire, you and all who follow you. And so there is the prosecution and there is the defense. Is it okay to go your own way and not submit to the authority of God, not connect to his life and his righteousness? Is that okay? Can it function? Can it be left to itself? It's kind of like asking, can a metastasizing malignant tumor be left to grow in the body? And it's okay because hey, it's alive and it has a right to survive and grow.

No, it doesn't because it inevitably will destroy that which is good. God is demonstrating that. So there is a stronghold.

There's a case that my theory, as I've mentioned before, is that God gave Satan whole continents full of people from the time of the tower of Babel all the way down to 1491, populated entirely with God rejecters. God knew when they were, before they were born, that

they would have no interest in him. Their free will would function.

God didn't ordain it. God didn't cause it. God didn't fail to elect them.

He, from his divine vantage point, said, I'm going to make this a completely free agent. And this free agent is going to choose against me. I'm going to have them be born in ancient China.

I'm going to have them born in ancient South America. I'm going to have them born in any one of these regions where the gospel hasn't penetrated in the ancient times and didn't need to penetrate because nobody there would have responded. They would have all rejected.

God, the Holy Spirit still came. He still convicts them. They still say, no, I'd rather worship a tree.

I'd rather go my own way. Satan, you have got these human beings that are just like you, got the exact same attitude, don't need God, don't want God, leave God out of it. So you show me how you're going to create and sustain civilizations that are godless.

And what has happened in every case? What happened in South America with the blood running down the ziggurats? Why do you think the Catholics went in there and wiped those people out as bad as the Spaniards were when they went into Mexico and South America? The people they wiped out were worse. And God used one scourge to eliminate another, kind of like he used the Assyrians to wipe out godless Northern Israel. But the pulling down of strongholds, what do we do with our faith? What do we do when we are consistent, when we trust, when we rely on God, when we seize and lay hold of righteousness by faith? What do we do? Read it again.

We walk in the flesh, but we do not war according to the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not material. They're not of the flesh.

They are mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments, casting down rebuttal cases, rebuttal witnesses, pleas that are made in the legal case. We want an appeal. We want to show other evidence, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, that exalts itself against the name of God, God's name down here.

Satan and his attorney team never saw the puny earthlings as a threat to their case, their stronghold of arguments. But our faith, it may not seem like it's having any effect in circumstances. Well, nobody got saved.

I didn't see a benefit. There was no great witness. There was no great shining light.

I was faithful and life went on as it did before. I've told you before, but it reminds me of what Patty said right after Elizabeth was born, our firstborn child. And when Patty got out of the hospital, she was looking around and she thought, you know, the world ought to be different.

This new life has just come into being. You know, the sky should change color. There ought to

be people that stop their cars and get out and say, a new life has arrived.

I mean, you just, you have that feeling. And sometimes we think, well, if I've, I've overcome tremendous temptation or challenge and I've been faithful and I've been obedient, I've done what I'm supposed to do, but I just don't see where it's making a difference. Remember Corinthians, remember Psalm eight, you're pulling down strongholds.

You don't know what you're doing. Did David know when he wrote Psalm eight that we'd be talking about it, you know, 3000 years later, that it would have inspired and educated and been used by God to nourish the souls of countless millions of people had no thought at the time. He could not have known that this little song he wrote to the tune of the wine press, God's ultimate judgment on evil, God's ultimate judgment and removal of that which offends casting down arguments.

Verse five, every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, being ready to punish all disobedience. When your obedience is fulfilled, when your life is over, when faith and obedience has shined its light and done its work in projecting God's glory above the heavens, that's when all disobedience will be punished. Your life makes a difference.

Don't be deceived. Don't think that eating a little piece of fruit doesn't really matter. It's Satan's own lie.

He's been a liar from the beginning and the world and the flesh and the devil, the unholy Trinity would like nothing better than for us to miss how important our daily decisions are. David is singing. You know, they talk about preaching to the choir.

Well, this is the choir preaching to the people. Don't miss how important your faith is for the pulling down of strongholds. You may think that you're a babe and a suckling infant, but out of your mouth, God has ordained this strength.

Don't miss it. Don't fail to appreciate it. Don't fail to exercise this tremendous privilege and opportunity.

Well, we've only gotten two verses into this Psalm, but it's an important one. And we'll pick up here in verse two and verse three next time. Father, thank you for the revelation of your name through these scriptures.

The truth that they contain in the hands of your Holy Spirit is transformational. It is empowering. It is enabling unlike anything that man can generate.

It makes us realize what we can be worth and what significance we can have, not intrinsically, but as we are a part of your plan and purpose, as we are redeemed, as we are in Christ, as we are enabled and empowered by your spirit and your word, we can be significant. We can be valued. We can make a difference.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, God, the Holy Spirit, will help us to see what difference it ought to make in the life we live each day so that we can vindicate and justify the work of the Lord Jesus on our behalf and in purchasing us with his own precious blood and presenting us before your throne some bright future day. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.