

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1-18-15 PM NOTES
"PRAISING THE EXCELLENCY OF GOD"
PSALM 8:1-9
#2 in Series, "Learning to Pray from the Experts"

Matthew 6:12 (NKJV) "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Luke 11:1b (NKJV) "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Matthew 6:7 (NASB) "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."

"The Lord's Prayer may be the single set of words spoken more often than any other in the history of the world. Jesus Christ gave it to us as the key to unlock all the riches of prayer. Yet it is an untapped resource, partially because it is so very familiar... The whole world is starving for spiritual experience, and Jesus gives us the means to it in a few words. Jesus is saying, as it were, 'Wouldn't you like to come face-to-face with the Father and king of the universe every day, to pour out your heart to Him, and to sense Him listening to and loving you?' We say, of course, yes. Jesus responds, 'It's all in the Lord's Prayer,' and we say, 'In the *what?*' It's so familiar we can no longer hear it. Yet everything we need is within it." —Tim Keller

I. The Pattern (Matthew 6:9)

"By the sweetness of this name, 'Father,' He frees us from all distrust."

—John Calvin

Psalms 115:3 (NKJV) "But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."

Psalms 9:10a (NKJV) "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You."

"If that were the only prayer request the Christian community ever made and they made it earnestly and regularly, I suspect the revival we pray for and the reformation we so earnestly desire would be accomplished in no time. Everything—our work, our ministry, and all aspects of our daily lives—would be affected." —R. C. Sproul

II. The Prayer (Psalm 8:1-9)

A. The Excellency of His Position (vv. 1, 9)

Psalms 8:1b (NASB) "... Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!"

B. The Excellency of His Power (vv. 2-3)

1. In Children's Comprehension (v. 2)

Matthew 21:15 (NKJV) "But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant."

Matthew 21:16 (NKJV) "and said to Him, 'Do You hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes. Have you never read, "*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise*"?"

Matthew 11:25 (NKJV) “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.”

2. In Creating the Cosmos (v. 3)

C. The Excellency of His Plan (vv. 4-8)

1. The Plan of God in Creation (vv. 5-8)

Isaiah 43:7a (NKJV) “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory...”

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV) “In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth.”

Slightly lower than God is better than slightly higher than the apes!

Genesis 5:3a (NKJV) “And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a *son* in his own likeness, after his image...”

2. The Plan of God Restored in Christ

Hebrews 2:6-8 (NKJV) “⁶ But one testified in a certain place, saying: ‘*What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him?*’ ⁷ *You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands.* ⁸ *You have put all things in subjection under his feet.*’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.”

Hebrews 2:9-10 (NKJV) “⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Hebrews 2:14-17 (NKJV) “¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

*Adam’s likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place.
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.*

—Charles Wesley

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PSALM 8:1-9

#2 in Series, "Learning to Pray from the Experts"

In this series, we are learning some practical lessons on prayer by examining some of the prayers of God's saints recorded in the Scripture (we are calling them the "experts" in this series). The structure that we are using for this series is to focus on prayers by the experts that major on one of the five parts of the model prayer that Jesus gave His disciples to pray. In the first message in this series, we looked at an overview of the prayer Jesus gave that is commonly called, "The Lord's Prayer". Technically, it is not the Lord's prayer in the sense that He prayed it. One of the 5 parts of the prayer is **Matthew 6:12 (NKJV)** "And forgive us our debts [sins], as we forgive our debtors [those who have sinned against us]". Jesus was without sin. This prayer could better be described as, "a model for prayer", "a pattern of prayer" or "a blueprint for prayer". Remember that Jesus gave His disciples this prayer in answer to their request in **Luke 11:1b (NKJV)** "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." This prayer was never intended to be quoted word for word (privately or corporately) as a ritual. Just before Jesus gave His disciples this prayer he gave them a warning. **Matthew 6:7 (NASB)** "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words." Certainly Jesus wouldn't give that command and then 2 verses later give them a prayer to be quoted ritually that would surely become a meaningless repetition.

I believe that this model prayer, this blueprint covers in principal every aspect of prayer. In other words, I don't believe that there is any prayer we could pray that is acceptable to God that would not fit under one of the five parts of this model prayer. Here is the problem we have. Most Christians have become so familiar with this model prayer that we fail to see what it can mean to our prayer life. Allow me to illustrate. The house I grew up in from 2 years of age though my junior year of high school was very close to a very busy railroad track. The passing trains were very loud. If you were listening to the radio or watching television, everything just had to go on hold when a train came by. I can never remember being awakened at night by a train. When guests would spend the night with us the train would wake them up multiple times, and they couldn't understand how we coped with the noise of the train. We didn't really notice it because we were so used to it, we just tuned it out. Some people are so familiar with this model prayer that they don't see how vitally important it is.

Tim Keller said, "The Lord's Prayer may be the single set of words spoken more often than any other in the history of the world. Jesus Christ gave it to us as the key to unlock all the riches of prayer. Yet it is an untapped resource, partially because it is so very familiar... The whole world is starving for spiritual experience, and Jesus gives us the means to it in a few words. Jesus is saying, as it were, 'Wouldn't you like to come face-to-face with the Father and king of the universe every day, to pour out your heart to Him, and to sense Him listening to and loving you?' We say, of course, *yes*. Jesus responds, 'It's all in the Lord's Prayer,' and we say, 'In the *what?*' It's so familiar we can no longer hear it. Yet everything we need is within it." [Tim Keller, *Prayer, Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, page 109].

In this message, we are going to look a little more in depth at the first part of this model prayer and then we are going to look at an **example** of this first element of Prayer.

I. The Pattern (Matthew 6:9)

There are very few references in the Old Testament to God as Father. In every case where the word "Father" is used to refer to God in the Old Testament it is referring to the relation of God to the nation Israel. There are **no cases** of individuals addressing Him as Father. Based on what is recorded in the Old Testament, neither Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, nor any other individual ever addressed God as their Father. Yet in the New Testament, 275 times, "Father" is how He is addressed. "Father"! Don't move on until the preciousness of that intimate name sinks in. John Calvin said, "By the sweetness of this name, 'Father', He frees us from all distrust."

What is the significance of, “in heaven”? Since God is omnipresent, He cannot be confined to a single location. Heaven speaks not so much to His exclusive location as it does to His authority and sovereignty. *Psalms 115:3 (NKJV)* “But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.” He is the sovereign, holy, creator. He has all authority and all power. These two little words (“in heaven”) serve to balance the two words “Our Father”. The words “Our Father” speak of relationship and intimacy and closeness; the words “in heaven” speak of authority and transcendence. He is to be revered and feared and treated as One totally other than ourselves.

“Name” in the Scriptures is more than a combination of letters. God’s name speaks of who He is. It speaks of His character and activity and will. No one name can fully reveal God. In the Scriptures there are many names given to God. However, in most English translations they appear only as a description of God instead of being presented as a proper name. Some examples of the different names of God are: Elohim – the strong and powerful One; Jehovah – I Am; Jehovah Jireh – the Lord will provide; Jehovah Rapha – the Lord that heals, etc. etc. This also helps the following Psalm make more sense: *Psalms 9:10a (NKJV)* “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You...” As you come to know His character and attributes you know that He is worthy of your trust.

Notice how we are to respond to His name. We are to hallow His name. What does that mean? The word “hallow” means to treat as holy, to revere, or to set apart. A life that hallows God’s name is a life that hates sin and is constantly presented as a living sacrifice to our holy God. **To pray for His name to be hallowed is to pray for a yielded, obedient, holy life on our part.** All sin should deeply offend and bother us because we see sin as dishonoring His Name. Listen to this word from R. C. Sproul as he speaks of this petition to hallow God’s name. “If that were the only prayer request the Christian community ever made and they made it earnestly and regularly, I suspect the revival we pray for and the reformation we so earnestly desire would be accomplished in no time. Everything – our work, our ministry, and all aspects of our daily lives – would be affected.” [R. C. Sproul, *Does Prayer Change Things?* Page 31].

After that examination of the first section of the pattern prayer, I want us to look at a biblical prayer that focuses on the person of God and our response of worship. The “expert” that I want us to learn from is David as he praises God in Psalm 8:1-9.

II. The Prayer (Psalm 8:1-9)

This prayer is so deep that we could spend months on it, but I want to just introduce it to you. This is a prayer that magnifies the excellence of God. The Hebrew word translated “excellent” means majestic, noble, mighty, famous, glorious, and splendid. What is it that is excellent, majestic, and magnificent? It is God’s name! David is praying according to the pattern that Jesus gave us 1,000 years later in the model prayer!

A. The Excellency of His Position (V1, 9)

The first part of verse one is so important that David closes his prayer with the same words. Let’s examine the elevated position of the Lord that David praises. We will do that by looking at His name. He opens the Psalm by giving us two of His names. First is “LORD”. In the Old Testament, when we see LORD in all capital letters, it is the Hebrew “Jehovah” or “Yahwah”. The word “Lord” with only the “L” capitalized is a title that means Master. Jehovah is the self-existent one who has no beginning and no end. He is the eternal “I Am”. He has need of no one or no thing. Any proper view of anything and especially man must begin with the eternal “I Am”. What we see is genuine worship. He goes on to confess that His name is so excellent, so majestic, and so glorious that it cannot be contained to earth. His glory overflows the earth and goes beyond the heavens. I like the NASB translation of **Psalms 8:1b (NASB)** “...Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!” Suddenly, man begins to look more and more puny.

B. The Excellency of His Power (V2-3)

In these two verses, our expert David’s prayer zeros in on one aspect of God’s glory – His power. He demonstrates that power from two examples.

1. In Children’s Comprehension (V2)

That phrase “You have ordained strength” can be translated as it is in the NIV, “You have ordained praise”. That is the way it is translated when Jesus quoted the verse in the New Testament Matthew 21:16. The Psalmist here is amazed that a child can often grasp some things about the transcendent glory of God easier than a mature adult. Adults unnecessarily complicate things but children have a simple and yet genuine faith. You tell a Child that Jesus is coming again from heaven, and it could be today, and they start looking at the sky. You tell a lot of theologians that and they immediately jump into an argument as to the merits of the Postmillennial approach or the Amillennial approach or the Premillennial approach that is pre-tribulation rapture, mid-tribulation rapture, or post-tribulation rapture. Children have a simplicity that is often profound. One little 8 year old girl was asked what she liked best about God. After some thought, she said, “I like it that God never has to say ‘Oops’”. That’s really profound and accurate. Out of the mouths of babes He ordains praise.

We see this verse illustrated in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus was in the temple healing the blind and lame that came to Him. The children were so filled with awe and praise they began to cry out “Hosanna to the Son of David”. That meant “save us now”. It was shouted to someone they viewed as a Savior or liberator. Contrast the pure praise and joy of the children to the religious leaders: **Matthew 21:15 (NKJV)** “But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ they were indignant”. Jesus answers these hardened religious leaders with this Psalm that we are focusing on: **Matthew 21:16 (NKJV)** “and said to Him, ‘Do You hear what these are saying?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Yes. Have you never read, *‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?’*” Jesus was saying that these children had grasped truths that these learned men were too proud and hardened to understand. To comprehend the glory of God, it is better to have the simplicity of a child-like heart than the sophistication of a prideful learned person. This is a principle all through Scripture. God has ordained that the humble things (children and adults with a child-like heart) expose the barrenness of human pride and human power. Pride obscures truth! It is when we come to God with a childlike heart that we see God at work and are able to join Him as a co-laborer. Listen to **Matthew 11:25 (NKJV)** “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’” Our prayer should be that we could see God and praise Him as a child.

2. In Creating the Cosmos (V3)

Imagine young David out under the stars at night watching over the sheep and looking up at the sky. In those days before pollution and man made light, much more was seen by the naked eye than can be seen today. David sensed an overwhelming awe of God’s power as he observed God’s creation. Now, some 30 centuries after David observed God’s creation, we have the knowledge he had plus so much more. We know that the cosmos is more massive than even David or Galileo knew. The more you know about the cosmos, the more you stand in awe of the God who spoke it all into existence.

Our prayer times should normally begin with praise and thanksgiving to God and a great place to begin our praise is in humbling ourselves and asking that God would restore to us that humble child-like wonder of God and His amazing creative power.

C. The Excellency of His Plan (V4-8)

God did not need to create man. Anytime someone begins a sentence with the words, “God needs...”, unless that sentence ends with “nothing”, it is an untrue sentence. God is complete and self sufficient; He needs nothing. David in this prayer of praise expresses his perplexity as to why God would ever create man. Do you ever just go before God in an atmosphere of praise and wonder why He would create you and then why He would save you and to top it all off, why He would use you to fulfill His purposes? I do that often. Why would God even create mankind, knowing what we would do and how we would act? The last part of verse 4 is better translated, “that you care for him”. David’s perplexity is rooted in humility. One of the things that praise accomplishes in prayer is that it humbles us. When we focus on the glory of God, it shows us our puniness.

As David enlarges on God’s creation of man, His amazement of God grows.

1. The Plan of God in Creation (V5-8)

Verse 5 tells us that man was from the beginning created for the glory of God and in the image of God. **Isaiah 43:7a (NKJV)** “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory...” If you notice in verse 5, there is a little 1 in the margin, where it gives another translation that is possible. It says that the Hebrew is Elohim, translated “God” in other places such as **Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)** “In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth.” It can in certain contexts be more general and that is why some translations say “heavenly beings”. The NASB says “a little lower than God”. This is another way of saying that man was created in the image of God. Man was not and is not God, but a little lower than God and a little lower than angels in that man’s domain is earth and the domain of angels is in the heavenlies. The point (however we translate Elohim) is that man is higher than anything else that God created on earth. Of all that God created, only man is in His image. **Slightly lower than God is better than slightly higher than the apes!** Verses 5-8 is not fuel for pride but reason for shame when we see what we have fallen from. We were created slightly lower than God, in His image to rule over all His creation. Verses 6-8 simply describes all of creation. Let me ask a question. Does man still carry God’s image and does he still have dominion over God’s creation? When we examine this question, we are brought to our knees. The image of God is still there in man, but it is distorted and twisted and tainted. There is still some dominion over creation but not nearly what was described here and in Genesis 1 & 2. We can kill ferocious animals, build shelters that will survive storms, but man without weapons cannot have dominion over all animals. We can do nothing to stop “natural” disasters. No longer is it true that “all things [are] under [our] feet” as verse 6 says. When sin came into the world as is recorded in Genesis 3, something happened to man at the core of his being – his nature. The consequences of Adam’s sin fell on all his descendents. Adam’s descendents were no longer in the image of God in the same way, but as we are told in **Genesis 5:3a (NKJV)** “And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot *a son* in his own likeness, after his image...” The image of Adam is the image of God that is affected by the consequences of sin. When sin came into the world, man lost the unlimited dominion over God’s creation. Incidentally, Jesus Christ who was God incarnate (in flesh) was born of a virgin and untainted by Adam’s sin. We see him exercising this dominion that David spoke of in Psalm 8. He spoke, “Peace be still” and the winds and waves obeyed Him. He cursed a fig tree and it died immediately. He rode a donkey that had never been ridden and was not bucked off. He commanded the fish of the sea when He told His disciples who had caught nothing fishing all night to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, and when they obeyed Him, the fish filled the net. Even though He is the eternal God the Son, He had dominion over all of God’s creation as perfect man untainted by sin.

2. The Plan of God Restored in Christ

To see the rest of the story we have to fast forward to the New Testament. Sin coming into the world did not take God by surprise. Provision was made before man ever sinned. **Hebrews 2:6-8 (NKJV)** quotes from Psalm 8. It says, “⁶ But one testified in a certain place, saying: ‘*What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him?*’ ⁷ *You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands.* ⁸ *You have put all things in subjection under his feet.*’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.” The writer of Hebrews said, now we see that the plan before sin is not what we are experiencing now. What has God done? **Hebrews 2:9-10 (NKJV)** “⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” **Hebrews 2:14-17 (NKJV)** “¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make

propitiation for the sins of the people.” Jesus (called in Scripture “the Second Adam”) died in our place as the propitiation (satisfaction) for Adam’s sin and our sin. Charles Wesley summarized it well in a seldom sung verse of the Christmas carol, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing:

*Adam’s likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place.
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.*

Jesus gave us so much more than we lost. Adam had innocence; we have Christ’s righteousness. Adam could and did fall from his relationship with God; we cannot fall. Adam had God beside him; we have God the Spirit within us.

CONCLUSION (V9)

How much louder we should proclaim that truth of His excellency on this side of the cross! What the first Adam lost, the Second Adam regained and so much more. God is excellent, glorious, majestic, and awesome. We have nothing to boast about but in true humility we should spend the rest of our lives here and indeed all eternity praising Him for what we have received as a gift of His grace in Christ alone. Learn from the expert David to praise our great God in prayer.