

I know, my title may be a bit irreverent but when we are in a maelstrom of extreme difficulty or pain the image is quite applicable. I do not claim to have some special gift of being able to “gut it out” over any difficulties. Indeed, I can remember many a night of lost sleep over difficulties that measured much lower on the Richter scale of discomfort than was the case in many of the lament Psalms.<sup>1</sup>

I like to think of Psalms as a book that encourages transparency in one’s life – that’s the it should be. I would like to bring our attention to some select passages in the book of Psalms that might help us when we face difficulties.

**Psalm 8: Remember, the LORD is Sovereign over all, including our difficulties.**

**O LORD , our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. <sup>2</sup> From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. Psalm 8:1, 2**

Note the use of Jehovah in this passage. Holman points out that this was the personal name the LORD used with Israel who knew His name in the context of an awesome display of His power. Along with this power came responsibility of obedience to the LORD – see [Deut 28:58-63](#).

**We as His Children are to bring praise to our Lord.**

So on one hand the LORD had chosen the unsophisticated “children” of this world – in this case Israel – to praise Him, He, in turn, expects them to have a personal relationship with Him. Not in the sense of being a captive people under His severe rule but in a loving relationship with Him and out of that love, an obedience to His commandments – and to quote a well-known celebrity of today’s age “That’s a good thing.” Note this passage goes right from the unquestioned majesty of the LORD in the heavens to the response of praise from rightly-related men and women who praise Him. This praise will ultimately silence His foes and those who would take the role of the avenger when it came to acting against His children. In regard to this, please read Matt 21:15, 16<sup>2</sup> where Jesus was teaching in the temple and the children there were giving praise to Jesus as the Son of David, which had Messianic implications. The chief priests and teachers of the law became the avengers in this case, wanting to do harm or at least silence the children, but Jesus silenced them by quoting our passage – most

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<sup>1</sup> Holman lists these Psalms: 3-7; 12, 13; 22, 25-28; 35; 38-40; 42-44; 54; 54-57; 59-61; 63, 64; 69-71; 79, 80; 93; 85, 86; 88; 90; 102; 109; 120; 123; 130; 140-143

<sup>2</sup> **But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. 16 "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?" Matthew 21:15-16 (NIV)**

likely a quote not lost in these would-be avengers<sup>3</sup> (and by implication foes of the LORD). All this to point out that we in our good times and bad times are children of praise to the LORD our Lord – we should never lose sight of this responsibility.

Note the use of the word Adonai. It essentially denotes authority, superintendence, governing authority. Let's put it on a more personal level, Adonai was also used by Sarah in association with her husband (who was too old to father children – [Gen 18:12](#)). Centuries later Peter gives proper recognition to Sarah's proper submission to Abraham (see [1 Pet 3:6](#) for this).

Boice properly points out this use of Jehovah and Adonai to emphasize the very *personal* implication of these two verses and that the LORD (Jehovah) our Lord (Adonai) takes a real interest in us and graciously places on our shoulders the privilege of bringing praise to Him – in the good and bad times.

#### **Our Lord has us on His mind Constantly.**

**<sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, <sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? Psalms 8:3-4 (NIV).**

What a mind-blowing comparison! On the one hand our Lord is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe<sup>4</sup> but on the other hand He is mindful of man (that's you and me). The force of "mindful" here is that it's a constant in the Lord's mind – you and me! This is so helpful in my prayer life. I do not have to work up some sort of pious mind-set to pray to the Lord – I just have to talk to Him – that's prayer – talking to the Lord. But I digress.

#### **The Lord Has Given to Us Glory and Honor.**

**<sup>5</sup> You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup> You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: <sup>7</sup> all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, <sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Psalms 8:5-8 (NIV).**

There is a very close relationship between this text and [Hebrews 2:5-18](#). Indeed, the passage in Hebrews is a direct quote from Psalm 8. It is not the scope of the lesson to explore the full implication of receiving glory and honor from the Lord – only to point out that the writer of Hebrews takes things from receiving glory and honor from the Lord to *Suffering!* How so? We live in a world of sin and rule by Satan. In these circumstances we must needs suffer. The problem with suffering is that we as men

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<sup>3</sup> Another comment, if I may, the use of the term avenger suggests that the perpetrators actually thought they were fighting the Lord's cause but were mistaken.

<sup>4</sup> See my previous lesson "[The Work of Christ: Creation](#)" on this. A must-read, in my opinion.

tend to ask the “why” question. It’s as though we need a purpose for the suffering so that we can make it through the suffering or make it go away. The point I want to make here is this:

- The Lord is mindful of our suffering.
- The extent of His identification with us is that He is not ashamed to call us Brothers ([Heb 2:11-13](#)).
- Indeed, the Lord identified with our suffering to the point that He became incarnate (a man), suffered in this world and tasted Death for us so that we might not be terrified of Death ([Heb 2:14](#)).
- Because of this identification the Lord is a merciful and faithful High Priest ([Heb 2:17, 18](#)).

All this within the context of Psalm 8. Oh yes, one more thing before we leave Psalm 8 and go to our next Psalm: the passage begins on a majestic but very personal note “**O LORD , our Lord...**” and ends the same way: “**O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**” (Psalms 8:9 (NIV)). We must never forget that we are personally related to our majestic Lord.

#### **When Life Hits the Fan, We Need to Turn to the Lord.**

**<sup>1</sup> O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. <sup>2</sup> Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony.** Psalms 6:1-2 (NIV).

Boy! A lot is going through David’s mind at this point. It certainly appears that he has some unresolved issues with the LORD but he is quick to turn to the LORD and plead for His mercy. When life hits the Fan, so to speak it should be our first reaction to search our hearts and make things right with Him. But, we should not become melancholy about our difficulty. There are other reasons for difficulties in life – one of which is to bring praise to the LORD – and we may suffer in service to Him. Here is a good example of transparency with the LORD about one’s personal responsibility for dealing with personal sins and quickness to turn to the LORD in our distress.

**<sup>3</sup> My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? <sup>4</sup> Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love. <sup>5</sup> No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave? <sup>6</sup> I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. <sup>7</sup> My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.** Psalms 6:3-7 (NIV).

Note the following about David’s transparency:

- His transparency is genuine – David knows he cannot fool Jehovah, so, as previously noted, he begs the mercy of the LORD but is quick to talk about his

anguish<sup>5</sup> and his impatience with his circumstances.

- He knows the LORD loves him (and does not challenge it). He does not put the LORD to the test “if you really loved me... etc.”
- He cries a lot – no stiff upper lip here – he lets it all out *before the LORD*. I’m not suggesting we become a pain in the neck to others around us in our pain or difficulty. I am strongly encouraging transparency with the LORD, however.

Loss of a job, health or loved one can produce a tremendous grief in a person. It’s best to express it to the LORD, especially and to allow grief to come to full term and produce a life that is all the more dedicated to the LORD.

**A Life of Praise for the Child of God Who Trusts in Him.**

**<sup>8</sup> Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping. <sup>9</sup> The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. <sup>10</sup> All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed; they will turn back in sudden disgrace. Psalms 6:8-10 (NIV).**

Oh, this is so wonderful! David literally shoos the detractors (the avengers in Psalm 8, if you please) out of his presence.<sup>6</sup> He shoos these people out of his life and praises Jehovah for His answer to his prayer. It’s easy to imagine David’s circumstances both before his coronation as king of Israel and after. David had his detractors as do all of God’s children. But he is confident that through all of his present difficulties, God will put to shame all his detractors and will complete His plan for David’s life *in suffering* as in prosperity – so it should be with us. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> *Heb = bahal* to be terrified of ones circumstances.

<sup>6</sup> Much in the same way Job’s friends tried to impose their incorrect view of Job’s adversity.