

Psalm 8, *New Revised Standard Version*

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Ephesians 1:15-23, *New Revised Standard Version*

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

I was vacationing in North Carolina at Cape Hatteras one time,  
and there happened to be a lunar eclipse while I was there.  
The cape is a long and narrow strip of barrier islands  
that extends for several miles out from the mainland.

Back in those days, that part of the Outer Banks  
was sparsely developed with almost no ambient light,  
and with the eclipse blocking any light from the moon,  
there was **no light other than the stars in the night sky.**

Yet it was surprisingly bright, and the clear skies were alive  
with the majestic brightness of more stars than I had ever seen.  
It was truly incredible, and a very powerful and moving experience  
of the beauty and wonder of God's creation **that blew me away.**

It was a most remarkable and awe-inspiring sight of millions,  
maybe even billions of stars brilliant across the heavens,  
and a call to reflect on the wonder of God and God's creation...  
... which is also the point and message of Psalm 8, vs. 1 & 3.

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Amazed by the brilliant majesty and mystery of the heavens,  
the psalmist declares there's far more to God and God's creation  
than we finite-mortals can ever possibly perceive or measure.

**This psalm is a prayer of heartfelt**

**praise and celebration that is addressed in its entirety to God.**

Most of the time,

the moon's reflection, clouds and the lights of civilization  
diminishes, interferes and block us from being able to see  
the full wonder of all the stars I saw that night at Hatteras.

So too the demands and busyness of our lives can distract us  
from recognizing & appreciating the blessings & glory of God  
that surrounds us, the work of the Lord present in our lives.

The psalm reminds us and urges us not to forget or lose focus,  
that God made us, that God created us to love and bless us,  
and that God's grace & compassion will never come to an end.

Looking up to the night sky, the poet proclaims God's glory  
and our wealth of spiritual resources through God's grace.

The Lord God, having made us, is fully aware of our limitations,  
yet chooses to see us beyond our failures and flaws, vs. 5-6, 9

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them  
dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet. O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your  
name in all the earth!

The point is to notice the glory and wonder of our God  
and to reflect with gratitude for the blessings of our lives  
as participants in the reign of the Lord through Jesus Christ.

As Christians we are given **a rich and glorious inheritance,**  
**which is the same message of prayer and encouragement**  
**that Paul wrote to the Christians living in Ephesus.**

The nine verses of this Ephesians passage  
are really just one single sentence in the original Greek...

... and characteristic of the Apostle Paul's writing style,  
it is **a cascade of joyful and hope-filled celebration of grace,**

as he piles phrase upon phrase each one an image of wonder,  
proclaiming, almost shouting God's saving purpose--  
- the glory of what God accomplished in Christ...

... and the abundant blessings of what that grace means for us,  
and what riches we have received by walking in faith with Jesus,  
abundant joy, blessings and grace beyond our comprehension.

In these verses, Paul's most earnest desire for the Ephesians  
is to explore and grow into the abundance that is already theirs  
by the grace and goodness of God... an unimagined treasure  
that is freely theirs by faith, as they delve deeper.

Paul wants the Ephesian Christians to understand  
that we don't just decide to be a Christian, then we're done,  
but that it's a rest of our mortal life journey & adventure,  
a process that God gradually accomplishes in our lives  
as the Holy Spirit reveals and guides us to grow deeper.

The message is that as the beloved people of God  
there is always far more than we can  
perceive, understand or comprehend today.

Have you ever watched the TV program, "The Storage Wars"?

Filmed in California, by law, if someone rents a storage locker,  
but then if they don't pay the rent on it for three months,  
the business owner is allowed to hold an auction and sell  
whatever is left in storage to recover the unpaid rent.

On the TV show, for the auction, they open the storage locker door,  
and then potential buyers have five minutes  
to look in from the outside before the bidding starts.

Then based on what they can see from the outside,  
they bid on what else they hope might be inside.

The draw of the show is when the winning bidder goes inside  
and starts to unpack, and discovers what they really have,  
sometimes they find unimagined treasures as they delve deeper...

... **something like what Paul had in mind for the Ephesians.**

The Christians living in Ephesus were recent gentile converts  
and the Apostle wants to encourage them to grow deeper,  
and for them to understand how much more was already theirs.

Like the winning bidder exploring for treasure inside a locker,  
Paul wants them to explore their faith more deeply and fully,  
and discover what they really have in Jesus Christ. vs. 17-19

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know \*what is the hope to which he has called you, \*what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and \*what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

The Apostle Paul is eager for their faith to explore more deeply,  
to live their faith and blessings more fully as God's children,  
for them to live out **the significance and rich blessing**  
of God choosing to love us and to show us his grace.

The church in Ephesus was also under severe persecution, the first  
of the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, 2:2~3

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. ... I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and **that you have not grown weary.**

Paul's prayer is,  
that despite the trials and persecution they are enduring,  
that their faith will continue to grow richer and deeper,  
as by the grace of God they would know there is  
so much more than just the stuff of this world...

... for just as the life, resurrection and ascension of Jesus  
demonstrates God's power, that God is in charge & sovereign,  
that God has a plan and purpose, and is at work in the world,

so too God's saving purpose and grace will be entirely fulfilled—

-- and that is God's promise that blesses and transforms us,  
our true hope that strengthens, encourages and sustains.

**Ultimately, it is the certainty of God's victory in the long term  
that empowers our trust, faith and hope in the short term,  
which means that powers toward destruction don't the last word.**

As Paul wrote, vs. 20~22

God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things.

So too our hope is not in the power and victory that we see now,  
but in the truth and promises revealed in Jesus Christ,  
that assures the hope and promises of our eternal home.

**Indeed, Christ truly is our King and eternal giver of grace,  
and that is the true cause for our hope, joy and sense of peace,  
our source of courage, strength, and tenacity to stand firm  
so we can give thanks to God even amid trial & raging storm.**

It also means that first impressions & appearances can be deceptive  
and it won't be until the end when God reveals  
that we will truly understand the purpose & working of God.

As the Apostle Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 13:9-10, 12

For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

One time on her way to Wilmington, Kathy's car died.  
The tow truck driver thought it sounded like a major problem,  
that something was broken, possibly too expensive to fix,  
something costing more to repair than her car was worth.  
It was some pretty disturbing and upsetting news.

It wasn't until the next week,  
that an actual mechanic had time to look at her car.  
When he called, he said that her car was ready to be picked up.  
**He' already fixed the problem, for less than forty dollars.**

When confronted by trouble, we see only our own minimal resources.  
In fear and panic we tremble and may mistakenly believe  
that our deficiencies define what can possibly happen.  
**We let what we feel we are lacking, desire or need  
stifle our hope and weaken our confidence in God.**

Sometimes in our fear and frustration we may want to give up --

but the point of today's texts is a call for us,  
to shift our focus away from limits and deficiencies,  
and instead to look with hope to the promise and power of God.

The question isn't do we have enough, but what might God accomplish  
beyond all that we have or how much we can accomplish on our own.

I suspect many of us may have forgotten how very far we have come.  
We humans tend to forget the mighty acts of our Sovereign God,  
and that God's grace and hope can change us and how we live.

No, consistent and faithful Christian service is not an easy thing.  
We get fatigued, we get discouraged and forget to whom we belong.  
Sometimes we even forget just how much God really loves us,  
and how much God has already taken care of & accomplished.

For many the circumstances of life are difficult and overwhelming.  
Disappointments, losses and distress can warp our perspective,  
and block our hope and trust that the Lord is with us already,  
and will perfectly resolve our struggles, troubles & tribulation.

In the meantime, here are a few ideas that might help:

- ~ strive to look for the good and a reason to give God thanks
- ~ de-focus off of myself and my desires by serving others
  
- ~ forgo something I want so that I can give more generously
- ~ seek to make a positive difference for someone,  
anonymously if possible
  
- ~ before speaking,  
rework my complaint into an affirmation of gratitude

**Perhaps the real purpose and point of Christ is King Sunday  
to remind us of the past blessings we've already received,  
so we remember about our future, God's promise & our eternal hope.**

For me these two passages today are an important reminder  
of how awesome, incredible and infinite our God really is,  
and perhaps most amazing and incomprehensible is the truth,  
**that the God who created and sustains the whole universe  
also knows fully, yet loves and even cares about me,  
and the life of every person who has or will ever live.**

As Paul explains and reminds us in Romans 11:33-34, 36

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.