Worship God today!

*What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*

James 2:14-17

When we understand the basic message of salvation, we realize that our works do nothing to save us. For us to work to get into heaven or win God’s favor is entirely futile. Our salvation is entirely by the grace of God; it comes through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the only way for us to come to the Father, through faith in Jesus as Saviour.

Where works are important is in demonstrating our faith. In other words, works are the evidence of our faith. If we don’t have any good works, it shows that we don’t truly have any faith. If we believe Jesus, if we have faith in Him, our spirits compel us to do things to please Him. These are the works that prove we have saving faith.

In Christ’s love

John

7-18-21

Psalm 104

Firstly, this is a Psalm of praise; these are verses of worship. As you read through, you can see that it poetically follows the Genesis account of the days of creation. God is separated from His creation and praised for His power and wisdom in making it. This separation is important; we don’t praise creation itself; we praise the God who made it. Keeping this separation helps us avoid the error of pantheism. Pantheism puts God and His creation together. Thus, rocks and trees and sky all become God. God is omnipresent, but He does not become what He has created.

When we read the Psalms, we tend to think of just God the Father. The Old Testament didn’t have a good theology developed regarding God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They were there, but the people were not yet able to grasp the concept of the Trinity. But we have an advantage; we live in the New Testament age. God the Son has been revealed in Jesus Christ and has told us about the Holy Spirit. Keeping this is mind, there are things in the Psalms that we can credit to Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The Psalm begins with “*Bless the Lord, O my soul*!” It is an interesting concept for us to bless the Lord; we generally think of Him blessing us. How can we bless almighty God? Really, when God blesses us, He does something good for us. Now, God certainly doesn’t need anything from us; He is just fine without us. But, once we have accepted Christ and been clothed with His righteousness, we are acceptable to stand before God and praise Him.

For us to bless God is to praise Him. Some of your translations may even have praise instead of bless. God is worthy of praise and worship just because He is God. Think about what is going on in heaven; myriad angels, great powerful beings who are also God’s creation, are continually praising Him. And we get to do that too. Unworthy as we are, because of the blood of Jesus Christ, we can praise Him right there with the strong angels who have not sinned.

When we read or speak or pray this Psalm, we start by admonishing ourselves: *Bless the Lord, O my soul*! We praise Him because of who He is and for what He has created. So we’re already looking forward to what is coming in the rest of the Psalm. But the admonition is to our soul. Worship must not come just from our lips; it comes from our hearts, it comes from our very being, from deep inside who we are.

This does not mean working ourselves into some kind of frenzy. In fact, we need the Holy Spirit to help us do this. The Holy Spirit is the One who will enable us to properly praise God. And we need to follow His leading. Our praise may be very quiet and still; there may be tears of repentance or joy as we consider holy God; we may lift our hands to the Lord; there’s no one way to worship, and individual worship will be different from corporate worship.

The next line begins, “*O Lord my God*”. Remember that when you see the word “LORD” like this, with all capital letters, it’s being substituted for the proper name of God: Yahweh. The original Hebrew texts of the Bible would have had Yahweh written down. But the scribes who continued to copy the texts feared that they or someone else, might somehow blaspheme God if his name were used. So they mixed together a couple words that in Hebrew mean “god”. English translations tend to carry this on by using the word “LORD” in capital letters.

The original writer of this Psalm would have called God by His name; then he followed it up by saying “*my God*”. This is writing that was given by the Holy Spirit, we can call God by His first name and claim Him as our own God. This is the intimacy; this is the close relationship that God desires to have with us. Whatever you do, don’t take this for granted: He is the almighty God of the universe. He is able to return things to dust as quickly as He made them.

Still, this is His desire, to be close with us. We see this in other Scripture. When all Israel had gathered around Mount Sinai to hear the LORD’s new covenant with them, He began “*I am Yahweh your God*”. He also spoke through Jeremiah the prophet: “*I am Yahweh; and they will be My people, and I will be their God*” Of course, in the New Testament, we see the great desire God has for us in the sending of His only begotten Son to pay the price for our salvation; and then the gracious gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

After the Psalmist claims God for his own, he is struck by God’s magnificence. He says, “*You are very great*”. And He is. God is the One who had no beginning and will certainly have no end. We can’t even begin to fathom that. Then, He has created everything, seen and unseen, by simply speaking it into being. By His power, He maintains everything just as He wills.

This is one of the things that we must do as followers of Christ: come to the understanding that we can’t understand God. There are many things He has revealed to us, but there is so much that He hasn’t. If we don’t come to this realization, our tendency will be to bring God down to our level and this is where many heresies come from. We can enjoy God and praise Him for what He has revealed to us and we can praise Him in wonder for the things He hasn’t revealed. Yes, Lord God, You are very great!

The next line says, “*You are clothed with splendor and majesty*”. We can’t see God, so what does this mean? What someone wears can make them look a certain way. They may wear something that makes them look dignified or even gives the impression of royalty. We don’t see it so much anymore but kings used to wear clothes that were ornate and expensive in order to show their splendor and enhance their majesty.

When we look for God, we see His creation. Even in creation’s fallen state, it is glorious. The stars and moon at night, the sun in the day; all the beautiful plants and flowers that start from just a tiny seed. All the varieties of animals with their colors and their grace. Even the red-eyed cicadas are an amazement when we consider their lives. God’s creation is splendor and majesty, and it reflects the splendor and majesty of God.

Verse 2 starts, “*Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak*”. Here is where the Psalmist begins to consider the first days of Genesis. Looking at Genesis 1:1-3,

“*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light*.”

Something wonderful here that we don’t want to miss is the Trinity, right here in the first three verses of chapter 1 of Genesis. In verse 1 we have God, obviously God the Father. He is the creator and He made the heavens and the earth. In verse 2 is the Holy Spirit moving over the surface of the waters. He is the giver of life and it will soon be for Him to bestow.

In verse 3, God said. God spoke, and who is Jesus but the Word of God. This is why John tells us in the beginning of his account of the Gospel that all things came into being through Jesus. So, God spoke visible light into being on the first day of creation. And the Psalmist says that God uses the light as a robe or a cloak. First, it’s beyond our imagination how He might accomplish this. But then, we can think of the power of light, for instance, from the sun. The Bible tells us that if we look on God we will die, He is too glorious. So, He covers Himself with light to protect us from His glory. That’s a lot to think about.

Besides physical light, there is a metaphorical light that comes up in the Bible: It is truth, it is righteousness, it is justice, it is holiness. In 1 John 1:5 we are told, “*God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all*”. God is all these good things, these are part of His character, they are part of who He actually is. Furthermore, there is no evil or immorality or untruth in God’s character. God is all good, all the time.

Not only does God use light as a cloak, He is, “*Stretching out heaven like a curtain*.” On the second day of creation, God made an expanse or a firmament. He used this firmament to separate the waters; the waters on the earth from the waters that are in the sky. Think about that, if you dump out a glass of water it immediately falls to the ground; but God is able to make untold millions of tons of water hang in the air. God spread that expanse as easily as we would spread a window curtain or move a tent flap.

Verse 3 waxes very poetic. It begins, “*He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters*”. Upper chambers were the top floors of houses, for those who could afford them. They were the place people could go for privacy to think. God’s upper chamber would be heaven; above the earth, above the sky. God has established the foundational beams of His upper chambers, heaven, in the water that is above the earth; above the firmament; in the clouds.

If we tried to anchor something in the clouds, it would simply be futile for us. But God is able to secure His supporting beams there. We can think of this two ways. One is the absolute weightlessness of the spiritual world of heaven and the spiritual beings that live there. However huge it is, it can rest on the clouds. The other way to look at it is that heaven is a vast place, a physical reality: Its streets are gold, its gates are giant pearls, it has life giving streams and trees that are big enough and bear enough fruit to sustain all the millions of Christians who will be there in glorified bodies. And God is able to support all this on water; that is in the sky.

He is mighty. It is by His will that all this is maintained and remains unmovable. This is just a revealed part of what He is and what He can do. If He can anchor heaven to unwieldly water, He can ride from place to place on the clouds. He is able to walk upon the very wind; no matter how much it carries on or how strong it is.

Think of Jesus calming the Sea of Galilee. God does control all of nature, He made it. We make fruitless efforts to control the wind and the water, while God does it with just a word.

There is much more to consider in this Psalm and we can do that in the coming weeks. We really need to praise God; it is our privilege and to our benefit to do so. Perhaps more importantly, God deserves to be praised and worshiped. Let’s deeply consider the words of this Psalm to open our eyes to God’s beauty and magnificence. The Holy Spirit can then bring our hearts to where we are able to worship God, in spirit and in truth.

Prayer

Glorious Lord, You are worthy of praise, You deserve worship. As disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit draws us with the desire to worship You. We ask now Lord, not only for the desire but the ability. Lead us in praise that our very soul will bless You. Turn our hearts from selfish interests to gaze upon You in wonder and adoration.

Your word shows us that You are constantly surrounded by Your angelic creation and they are singing of Your holiness. Mighty cherubim and seraphim, elders who give their own glory to You, because You are the source of all glory. Great multitudes of angels praise You; and throngs of Your people who are now with You in spirit.

One day, we will be able to join them, having been made perfect, and perfectly able to praise You. For now, we reside in this fallen world and can only praise You imperfectly. But it only adds to Your glory that You are willing to accept our feeble attempts. Thank You, Lord, You are worthy.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen