

Sunday, September 13, 2026 - Strength in Weakness as Perfected Praise - Pastor John Henry Raskin

Psalm 8:2 • Matthew 21:14–16 • Hebrews 2:9 • 2 Corinthians 12:9

Big Idea: Jesus is present throughout Scripture, and Psalm 8 reveals His pattern: God ordains strength through apparent weakness and perfects praise through humble, childlike dependence.

Setting the Scene

During the week before the crucifixion, Jesus entered the temple, drove out the money changers, healed the blind and lame, and received the children's cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" When the religious leaders objected, Jesus answered with Psalm 8:2: "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise."

Psalm 8's Message

Psalm 8 begins and ends with the name of the Lord: "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!" Everything in the psalm is framed by God's glory. David declares that God ordains strength from the mouths of babes and nursing infants to silence His enemies. Jesus applies that verse to Himself, showing that He was not merely foreshadowed in the Old Testament; He was present, active, and speaking through it.

Four Key Truths

- **The name frames the psalm.** Yahweh, Adonai—the covenant Lord and sovereign Master—is the true center of Psalm 8.
- **God ordains strength in weakness.** Infants cannot fight, argue, or defend themselves, yet God establishes strength through their praise.
- **Christ is present in the text.** Jesus uses Psalm 8 as His own, revealing Himself as the Lord whose enemies are silenced by childlike praise.
- **Weakness becomes worship.** God's strength is not perfected despite weakness but through humble dependence on Him.

How We Respond

- **Become like a child.** Stop resisting humble dependence; Jesus says we must become as little children to enter the kingdom.
- **Read Scripture with Christ in view.** Ask, "Where is Jesus already present and active on this page?"
- **Don't hide your weaknesses, Give them to God in Christ.** Treat weakness as the ground where God ordains His strength and forms true praise.
- **Let praise silence pride.** Childlike worship sees what self-sufficient hearts often miss: Jesus at work, lighting up the darkness.

Takeaway

When we come to Christ in humble, childlike weakness, He establishes strength, perfects praise and reveals His excellent name in all the earth.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS AS PERFECTED PRAISE

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we learned that the blessed life for followers of Jesus is the pilgrim life: receiving strength from God, walking faithfully and prayerfully through hard situations, and shining Christ's light so others can find the road to righteousness.

Today we are going to look at a Psalm of King David that Jesus used to answer the Pharisees and see how the Son of Man, the Christ incarnated, showed Himself in this Psalm 900 years before His human birth.

As I've said before, one of the goals that I have attempted to achieve from this pulpit is to demonstrate the very real presence of Jesus in the entire scriptures from "In the beginning" all the way to the end of Revelation's "Amen".

It is my hope that it will help you to look at the scriptures in a fresh and engaging way that will bring Jesus out on every page and allow the Holy Spirit to have free reign in your hearts and minds.

Before we dive into David's Psalm, I want to set the stage in the Gospel of Matthew for what is to come in today's message.

This is the scene...

It is the week before Jesus' Crucifixion, on the Sunday before Passover.

Jerusalem was a chaotic scene with Jewish pilgrims from all over the known world visiting for the Passover festivities.

Jesus had just overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple courts, driving out those who had turned His Father's house into a marketplace.

In the cleared space that was left, something remarkable happened.

The blind and the lame came to Him there, and He healed them.

And then children — actual children, babes and nursing infants, in the language of the psalm He is about to quote — began shouting through the courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The chief priests and scribes were indignant. Not moved. Not curious. They were indignant... and angry.

They had just watched blind eyes open and lame legs walk, and their reaction was to turn to Jesus and demand, with barely concealed accusations of blasphemy, "Do You hear what these are saying?"

Jesus answered them with a single word- "Yes" and then posed a question of His own: "Have you never read...?"

And then He quoted a Scripture...

not a fresh saying He minted for the occasion, but one that was nine hundred years old, straight from the second verse of the eighth psalm:

He said... **"Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise."**

I want you to notice that Jesus did not say, "This reminds me of something David once wrote."

He did not reach for Psalm 8 as a convenient illustration that happened to fit the moment.

He quoted it as though it were about Him — because it was.

And that is where I want to camp out today:

the Old Testament is not a collection of shadows waiting for Jesus to arrive and give them meaning after the fact.

He was there. He was present, active, and speaking, in Psalm 8, nine centuries before Bethlehem.

In the Temple, Jesus was quoting this scripture...

Psalm 8:2

2 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.

The strength ordained out of the mouths of infants in verse two was not just a metaphor waiting for a future reality.

It was Christ's own pattern, already at work, already true, already His.

We will walk through four key points this morning:

First, the name that frames the whole of psalm 8;

Second, the strength that God ordains in weakness;

Third, the proof that Christ Himself is present in this text, not merely foreshadowed by it;

and fourth, what all of this asks of us.

Let's start by reading the whole Psalm.

Psalm 8

**1 O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!**

2 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.

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, 4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen — Even the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!

Now let's look at how the psalm begins and ends.

Verse one says: "O LORD, our LORD, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens!"

And Verse nine, the very last line of the psalm, repeats the name of the Lord and frames the adoration: "O LORD, our LORD, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!"

Everything David says in between — about the heavens, about mankind, about our dominion over sheep and oxen and birds and fish — is wrapped inside that name.

David is telling you, before he says another word, that whatever this psalm is about, it is not ultimately about you or me.

It is about the LORD, whose name is excellent in all the earth.

Notice the double name: "O LORD, our LORD" — Yahweh, Adonai is the Hebrew.

Yahweh, the covenant name God gave Moses at the burning bush for Who He IS, paired with Adonai, the title of sovereign lordship.

This is the God who binds Himself to His people in covenant love and who rules as Master over all creation, the moon and the stars included.

So, when Jesus stands in the temple courts nine hundred years later and applies this psalm to Himself, He is not borrowing a devotional phrase that felt appropriate.

He is stepping into the identity of the LORD whose name is excellent in all the earth — a claim only God Himself can rightly make.

Now let's revisit the verse that gives this message its title.

Psalm 8:2

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.

Sit with that picture for a moment. David is not talking about toddlers reciting clever things that adults taught them.

These children are praising God out of their innocence and wonder. Their ordained, or predestined strength, is the recognition of the miracles Jesus is doing and who He, in fact, IS.

David declares that out of these God has ordained strength.

"Babes and nursing infants" is about as weak, as dependent, and as unimpressive a category of human being as exists.

These are not warriors. They cannot lift a sword or hold a wall or silence an enemy by force of will or force of anything.

They are not scholars. They can't form an argument that will cause others to accept their conclusion.

And yet David says that out of exactly these mouths, God has ordained strength to silence the enemy.

Now you may have perceived a difference in verse 2 of the Psalm and the way Jesus uses it to answer the Pharisees.

David says that the infants have “ordained strength” and Jesus says they have “perfected praise”.

But if we compare the Hebrew word that David uses in Psalm 8:2 with the Greek word Jesus uses in Matthew 21, you will see the reason, and it adds another layer of depth to our understanding of who Jesus is, and was...

The Hebrew word that David uses for strength is (yissadta) from the root yacad — "to found, to establish, to lay a foundation."

This is architectural language, the same family of Hebrew word that is used to describe the laying of the foundation stones of the temple.

He is describing something load-bearing — a structure strong enough to hold real weight — built out of the weakest possible material, the innocent outbursts of babes.

The Greek word that Matthew quotes Jesus as saying about their praise is katartizo meaning to prepare, complete, make fully fit for its purpose.

Both are translated "perfected strength" not flawless in the sense of polish but perfected in the sense of something brought fully to its intended completion.

Put those two words together and you will get the concept.

Strength, founded and completed, precisely at the point of greatest apparent weakness.

Not perfected despite the weakness. Through it.

This is not a New Testament invention grafted onto an old poem.

It is the theme of the whole Bible, and Psalm 8 is one of its earliest, clearest statements.

Strength is perfected through weakness.

David walks out to meet a giant with a sling and five smooth stones, refusing Saul's armor, because the battle belongs to the LORD and not to the strong man.

Gideon had to cut his army down from thirty-two thousand to three hundred men before God would let him fight the huge Midian Army, and in the Book of Judges the Lord tells us why... "lest Israel claim glory for itself over Me".

Judean King Jehoshaphat put His Levite singers shouting praise ahead of his warriors and defeated a million-man army to demonstrate that the "battle belonged to the Lord".

And when the eternal Word finally takes on flesh, He does not arrive as a conquering general.

He arrives as an infant, in a feeding trough, in an occupied backwater town, and out of the mouth of a babe and nursing infant, quite literally,

comes the strength that will one day silence every enemy of God, including sin and even death itself.

When Paul, centuries later, hears the risen Christ say to him, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness**" (2 Corinthians 12:9), he is not receiving a brand-new doctrine.

He is being included in a pattern that was already ancient when David wrote it down — a pattern with the fingerprints of the Son of the Trinity on it from the very beginning.

Now let's look at the full scripture in Matthew.

Matthew 21:14–16

14 Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. 15 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 16 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 has just quoted Psalm 8:2 to silence the chief priests, and He has done something extraordinary in the process:

He has applied a psalm about the LORD's glory and the LORD's enemies directly to Himself.

The children are shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David" — a messianic title, a royal title — and Jesus does not correct them or hush them.

He defends their praise by quoting a verse about the LORD whose name is excellent in all the earth.

He is telling the religious leaders, in front of the whole temple crowd, exactly who He is.

Jesus did not walk into Psalm 8 nine hundred years after the fact and retroactively claim it for Himself, the way you might reread an old letter and find new meaning in it.

He is claiming to have been its subject all along.

The LORD of verse one and verse nine, the one whose Name is excellent in all the earth and whose glory is set above the heavens, the one who ordains strength from infant mouths to silence His enemies —

that is Jesus, standing in the temple courts, telling you He was there before David ever picked up a pen.

The writer of Hebrews considers the next few verses of the Psalm...

Psalm 8:4–6 asks, "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, and set him over the works of Your hands."

The author of Hebrews then notes plainly that "we do not yet see all things put under Him" — clearly no mere human being now holds the dominion this psalm describes.

But he continues...

Hebrews 2:9

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.

The Son of Man that psalm 8 speaks of finds His true and full reality in Jesus Christ, who took on the very weakness of flesh, who suffered, who died, and who was, in and through that weakness, crowned and given dominion over all things.

This is the difference between seeing Jesus in the Old Testament as a faint foreshadowing and understanding those scriptures as the record of Jesus as the Second Person of the Trinity genuinely present and active.

Here at Abundant Life Church, we do not read the Old Testament as though the eternal Son were absent from it, waiting offstage for His entrance in Bethlehem.

He was the Angel of the LORD who wrestled with Jacob and appeared to Moses in the bush.

He was the Rock that followed Israel through the wilderness, as Paul tells us plainly in 1 Corinthians 10:4.

And He was the LORD, OUR Lord who, in Psalm 8, ordained strength from the mouths of babes centuries before He became one.

Psalm 8 is not a shadow that Christ later filled in.

It is a moment when the eternal pattern of strength perfected in weakness was already being spoken by the very Word who would, in the fullness of time, become flesh and dwell among us.

Notice why God ordains this strength: "because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger."

In Psalm 8, this is cosmic language — the powers and principalities arrayed against God's ordered creation, silenced not by superior force but by the praise of the weak.

In Matthew 21, it becomes immediate and specific: the chief priests and scribes, men with education, status, and religious authority, are the ones being silenced.

Their credentials, their positions, their careful theology could not see what a child's untrained heart saw at once.

Pride is not simply a moral failing in this text; it is a form of blindness.

The very things the leaders trusted in — their standing, their expertise — were the things that kept them from recognizing the LORD standing in front of them

I say this carefully, because I know this congregation includes people with very different resources.

Some of you carry real financial security; others of you are not sure where you'll sleep this month.

Hear me clearly: the strength God ordains in this psalm has nothing to do with which side of that line you're on.

That strength is not given because of what you have.

It is founded on dependence — on humility, on the honest admission that you are, before God, a helpless babe who cannot save yourself, regardless of your bank balance, physical prowess or education.

The proud religious leader, the proud politician, the proud successful professional, and the proud poor man convinced he needs no one's help are all standing in the same spot.

They are all equally at risk of being the ones silenced rather than being the ones through whom God's strength is founded and revealed.

So what do we do with this?

First, stop resisting being a humble child.

Matthew 18:2-3

2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

There is something in every one of us that wants to be the strong one, the capable one, the one whose praise sounds impressive and whose faith looks put together.

But Psalm 8 was never about impressive praise.

It was about dependent praise — the kind that has no sophistication to hide its need behind.

If your prayers this week feel less like a carefully constructed list of requests and more like a nursing infant's cry, you are not behind in your faith.

You may be standing exactly where this psalm says strength is ordained.

Second, let this sermon reshape how you read the rest of your Bible.

If Christ is genuinely present in Psalm 8 — not read into it centuries later, but there, ordaining strength before He was born of Mary — then the same is true across the whole Old Testament.

The Mosaic sacrifices are not a symbol He later explained; they point to a substitution He had already appointed.

David as the the shepherd-king is not merely a poetic device; he anticipates a throne Christ would ascend to and was already establishing.

When you open your Bible this week, ask not only "what might this foreshadow?" but "where is He, already at work, already speaking, in this very page?"

You may be surprised at the fresh insight that comes to you from that very question.

Third, when weakness comes, and it comes at times to all of us, don't treat it as an obstacle standing between you and God's strength.

Treat it as the very place and attitude that He has always chosen to establish His strength in.

That was true for the infants in Psalm 8 and it was true for the children shouting in the temple courts while trained scholars stood silenced beside them.

It was true for Paul, thorn still lodged in his flesh, when he was told that God's grace was sufficient for him.

And it is true for you, this morning, whatever your particular weakness is.

And now we end in the same place David did in the 8th Psalm: **"O LORD, our LORD, how excellent is Your name in all the earth."**

Nine verses of wonder — at the heavens, at mankind, at infants who silence enemies — and the last word is not about any of us.

It circles back to His name. Yahweh. Adonai. Yeshua.

So let your weakness be what it has always been meant to be in the hands of OUR LORD: not a liability to manage or to hide, but the very ground where His strength is ordained.

Not despite you. Through you. The way it was through the children in the temple, who saw with innocent open eyes what closed, proud hearts could not see at all.

Jesus at work. Lighting up the darkness of the world.

Let's pray...

O LORD, our LORD, how excellent is Your name in all the earth.

You have set Your glory above the heavens, and yet You bend low enough to ordain strength from the mouths of babes and nursing infants.

Silence in us whatever enemy would keep us proud, self-sufficient, or ashamed of our need.

Let our praise be childlike, undefended, and true.

We thank You that You did not arrive in Christ as a stranger to this pattern, but as the very LORD who spoke it into being long before Bethlehem.

Where we are weak, perfect Your strength in us, as You promised, for Your grace is sufficient.

In the name of Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, crowned with glory and honor forever and ever.

Amen.