

Psalm 8:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

Analysis

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. This verse presents a stunning paradox: God establishes His strength through the weakest, most vulnerable members of society—infants and nursing babies. The Hebrew olalim (עֲלָלִים) refers to young children, while yoneqim (יָנָקִים) specifically means nursing infants still dependent on mother's milk.

"Ordained strength" (yissadta oz, יִסְדַּד אֹז) literally means "You have founded strength" or "established might." The verb yasad suggests laying a foundation, establishing firmly. God has chosen to base or found His power on what seems powerless—the praise of children. This divine strategy confounds human wisdom that equates strength with military might, political power, or intellectual sophistication.

"Because of thine enemies" reveals God's purpose: to shame and silence His adversaries through unexpected means. The phrase "still the enemy and the avenger" uses leshabbeth (לְשַׁבֵּת), meaning to cause to cease, bring to rest, or silence. God's enemies seek to challenge His authority and defame His name, but He silences them not through overwhelming force (though He possesses that) but through the simple, pure praise of children.

Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew 21:16 when religious leaders complain about

children praising Him in the temple, crying "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Jesus's response—"Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?"—applies the psalm to Himself and validates children's spiritual insight. Often those whom society dismisses as insignificant recognize God's glory more clearly than the sophisticated elite.

Paul develops this theology in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are mighty." The cross epitomizes this principle—God's "weakness" (crucified Messiah) proves stronger than human strength, and God's "foolishness" (gospel message) proves wiser than human wisdom.

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, children held marginal status until reaching maturity. They lacked legal rights, economic value (until old enough to work), and social voice. Military strength, impressive architecture, and elaborate rituals demonstrated a deity's power. Against this backdrop, Psalm 8:2 radically subverts expectations: God's strength manifests through society's weakest members.

The concept of children praising God appears throughout Scripture. Joel 2:16 includes nursing infants in corporate worship. Psalm 148:12-13 calls young men and virgins, old and young, to praise God's name. Jesus welcomed children, blessed them, and held them up as models of kingdom entrance (Matthew 19:13-15). In cultures where children were seen but not heard, Jesus's inclusion of them was revolutionary.

Ancient Israel's enemies—surrounding pagan nations with their military power and impressive pantheons—posed constant threat. Yet God's covenant people, often militarily weak and politically insignificant, testified to His glory through simple faith and obedient worship. Like children whose praise silences enemies, Israel's faithful witness confounded nations who couldn't comprehend Yahweh's power working through seeming weakness.

The early church embodied this principle. Composed largely of slaves, poor,

women, and social outcasts, Christians lacked political power or cultural prestige. Yet their courageous faith and joyful worship—even unto martyrdom—silenced accusers and eventually transformed the Roman Empire. What appeared weak proved powerful; what seemed foolish proved wise.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does God's choice to establish strength through 'babes and sucklings' reveal about His character and values?
2. How does childlike praise—simple, unsophisticated, sincere—differ from adult worship that may become performance or routine?
3. In what ways might you be despising 'weak' or 'insignificant' means through which God chooses to work?
4. How does Jesus's validation of children's praise (Matthew 21:16) challenge religious elitism or intellectualism in the church?
5. What 'enemies' or 'avengers' in your life might God be silencing through unexpected or seemingly weak means?

Interlinear Text

עַז	עַז	עַז	עַז	עַז
וְעַזְבָּתִים	וְעַזְבָּתִים	וְעַזְבָּתִים	וְעַזְבָּתִים	וְעַזְבָּתִים
עַזְלָלִים	עַזְלָלִים	עַזְלָלִים	עַזְלָלִים	עַזְלָלִים
יְמִינָה	יְמִינָה	יְמִינָה	יְמִינָה	יְמִינָה
מִפְּנֵי	מִפְּנֵי	מִפְּנֵי	מִפְּנֵי	מִפְּנֵי
Out of the mouth	of babes	and sucklings	hast thou ordained	strength
H6310	H5768	H3243	H3245	H5797
לִמְעֵן	צָוֹרֶךְ יְהָ	לְפָשָׁב יְתָ	אָזִין בָּ	
H4616	H6887	H7673	H341	
because of thine enemies	that thou mightest still	the enemy		
וְמִתְנִצְעָם				
and the avenger				
H5358				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 21:16 (Parallel theme): And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Isaiah 40:31 (Parallel theme): But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Psalms 46:10 (Parallel theme): Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

1 Corinthians 1:27 (Parallel theme): But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

Matthew 11:25 (Parallel theme): At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Luke 10:21 (Parallel theme): In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Psalms 44:16 (Parallel theme): For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

Exodus 15:16 (Parallel theme): Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

Habakkuk 2:20 (Parallel theme): But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

Psalms 4:4 (Parallel theme): Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

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