

The Psalms: Infallible Inspiration For Living
Psalm 104
Inspiration From Creation

Introduction: A lot of people love Spring because the temperatures are mild and everything's in bloom. But I've had really bad allergies my entire life, so the yellow plague of spring pollen makes it the least enjoyable time of year for me! Fall, on the other hand, is perfect! From the air that's cool and crisp enough to be perfectly comfortable outdoors in a sweatshirt, to the beauty of the trees in all their fall colors, nothing matches it for me. It's hands down my favorite of the four seasons to be in the woods, on a mountain, a lake, walking by the ocean, or sitting in total quiet on my deck!

To many people's surprise, I'm actually one of those people who has always found solace in nature. I'm drawn to quiet spots where I can be still and observe, and I've been that way my entire life, including my childhood. One of my favorite things to do as a kid was climbing up a tree as high as I could, then sitting in it, taking in everything I could see and pondering life—my life, God, and all the life He created around me to live in. For a guy who's super driven and always on the move, I'm never in a rush sitting on the top of a mountain, hanging out by a creek, watching and listening to the waves reaching their destination at the shoreline, or observing the stars at night. I love quietly taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of all that God created. It's probably why I identify so well with psalms like Psalm 104. In his commentary on Psalm 104, Charles Spurgeon wrote,

"It is the nature-lover's psalm. It is the psalm of nature viewed by the eye of faith, and he that learns to look rightly on seas and mountains, on beasts and birds, on sun and moon and stars sees God in all things."¹

Allen Ross noted, **"Psalm 104 is a glorious psalm in praise of God's marvelous Creation and of His sustaining of that Creation. Whereas Psalm 103 praises the Lord's compassion with His people in history, this psalm portrays the Lord's power, wisdom, and goodness to all Creation."**²

Now understand, God doesn't reveal the Gospel to us while we stare at the golden fall leaves of a ginkgo tree, but creation does testify of the character and nature of God with such significance that no one has an excuse to ignore what it says about God! Paul wrote,

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not

¹ Spurgeon. (2017). *The Spurgeon Study Bible: Notes* (p. 777). Holman Bible Publishers.

² Ross, A. P. (1985). *Psalms*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 868). Victor Books.

honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:18-21)

Creation is no substitute for the clear and authoritative revelation of truth and God's instructions for us in the Bible. But, according to the Bible itself, God intentionally designed nature to display His glory and inspire us to love and trust Him. Therefore, it behooves us to take time to observe creation and glean what we are designed to get out of it, and it's exactly why Psalm 104 and others like it are in the Bible! Psalm 104 points us to the observations and conclusions we should make when considering the universe and all that God has made in it. The title itself sets the tone.

O LORD My God, You Are Very Great

In the psalm, the author looks at creation and sees it testifying to the absolute, unrivaled greatness of Elohim (the word for "God," meaning creator and sustainer of all life). However, in doing so, the title also tells us we can have a relationship with the God of creation! As the author observes creation, he doesn't speak of an unknowable, impersonal guiding force off at a distance, but of an all-powerful, amazing God (Elohim) who has a name! He refers to Elohim (God) in a personal way. He speaks to Elohim not with a title but with His name. He calls "Elohim" "LORD", which is the English translation of the Hebrew name Yahweh. The point being, the very great God of everything is totally knowable by us on a truly personal level ("My").

So, before we even read the first word of Psalm 104, we already know where it's headed—The greatness of God. However, once you read the psalm, it becomes clear that it has two significant themes within the context of God's greatness.

Proposition: There are two significant themes within the context of the greatness of God in Psalm 104.

The first theme is what creation says about God.

(1) Creation testifies to God's ABSOLUTE power and authority over everything. (104:1-30)

- A.** Let's go through the passage and dig into what the psalmist observes about the God of creation and how he describes Him.
- B. 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, 2 covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent.**
 - 1.** I said this the other week: our clothing is what we put on not only for comfort and protection from the elements, but also as a statement to others about what we want people to think of us. To this end, royals are very intentional about what they wear in public and even around those who

serve them. Their clothing is meant to communicate to people that they are powerful and in charge.

2. With that, light is arguably the most powerful and essential force in the universe, and God wears it like a robe! His clothing isn't a garment to convince people He has power, but the manifestation of His actual power!
3. Furthermore, nothing is larger than the cosmos; we can't even find its end! And yet, God handles the heavens as a man handles the materials of his tent. And remember, for most of us, putting up a tent can be cumbersome and aggravating, but for the generations who first heard this psalm, erecting a tent was a routine task done without significant thought or effort. God handles and commands the cosmos with the ease of a routine task because His power and authority are absolute!

C. 3 He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind; 4 he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.

1. Verse three continues the idea of God's absolute authority and power, saying that the bedroom of His dwelling place sits on the oceans of the earth. The emphasis is seen in both the vastness of the seas and the impossible concept for the ancients to grasp that one could build a permanent structure on the sea that was secure and comfortable enough to relax in and sleep! It brings to mind Jesus peacefully sleeping on a boat in a violent storm while His disciples panicked!
2. Royals in ancient times also had chariots built to look more majestic and significant than anyone else's. God's chariot is the clouds that move uncontrollably by man through the sky. He is not pulled by a horse that a man can put a bit in its mouth and control, but by the wind, something totally out of the control of man!
3. This same wind that man cannot command at all, God instructs and uses with the same absolute power and authority a king has over his messengers. He also commands fire, something mankind can't even touch, with the same authority and power as a king has over those who serve him in his courts (ministers).

D. 5 He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.

1. Mankind has learned to build magnificent buildings. From the pyramids in Egypt to modern skyscrapers, all are built piece by piece on foundations that keep them sturdy. Even with all the modern equipment, it takes years to build these buildings. However, in God's absolute power and authority, He

effortlessly created the earth and set it on its foundation in an instant! He said it, and it was!

2. The psalmist now turns from God's construction of the earth to its decoration! He states,

E. 6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. 7 At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight. 8 The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. 9 You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.

1. In all the wealth and power that kings attempted to decorate their buildings with, nothing compares with the size, strength, and beauty of all that God created to decorate the world with; all which God established with ease!
2. Even mankind's most advanced technology and engineering still require years of hard labor and the mobilization of massive resources to build and outfit its grandest buildings. Yet, nothing compares to the earth that God made and decorated with ease!
3. In God's absolute power and authority, He ordered the waters and rocks of the earth to their places, and they did exactly as He told them as soon as He told them to (the waters fled!). These most massive, powerful, unconquerable elements of the earth (water and mountains) are nothing more than decorations that God slung into place without resistance by simply willing it.

F. 10 You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills; 11 they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12 Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. 13 From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

Note: The psalmist observed the hydrologic cycle, a self-perpetuating system that God, in His absolute power and authority, created to continually provide an essential element for every living thing on earth—water! Even the water we drink ends up back in the cycle!

G. 14 You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth 15 and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.

Note: In God's absolute power and authority, He provides not only what is needed for crops and livestock to flourish, but, in so doing, He also gives

mankind the opportunity to experience the fulfillment of providing for himself in abundance. Producing wine wastes much of the nutrition in grapes that could be eaten for survival. Oil put on one's face is oil that contains all kinds of calories for human survival. Finally, wheat can be consumed without turning it into bread, but fresh baked bread sure is good! The point is that God not only gives mankind the opportunity to work for what he needs, but also for what he can enjoy beyond his survival needs!

H. 16 The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. 17 In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.

1. Interestingly, kings considered all the trees on the lands they ruled to be their trees and, as such, they could do with them as they pleased. That also meant nobody could cut one down or use a tree without the king's permission.
2. By contrast, in this psalm, the author makes the point that the trees belong to God and, in his absolute authority and power, He gave them to provide for His creation! The author once again points to the perpetual system God created to provide for every living thing He created. He waters the trees that provide a place of protection and rest for the birds. He even built the mountains as a place of protection and provision for the goats and badgers.

I. 19 He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. 20 You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about. 21 The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. 22 When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens. 23 Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.

1. The psalmist observed God's provision in the rhythm of day and night, as well as the seasons. The seasons bring a sustainable cadence to creation and the replenishment of life, but the psalmist also saw how the operating system of day and night creates a balance that lets two apex predators coexist—man and lion! When the lions are at work, man's asleep, and when man's at work, the lions are asleep, which is highly convenient for both!
2. The Psalmist then turns to what the seas testify about God and, in so doing, offers a concluding statement on the significance of God's absolute authority and power. He writes,

J. 24 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25 Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. 26 There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play

in it. 27 These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. 28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. 29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30 When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

1. Everything and everyone is totally dependent on God for its existence, both in its creation and its provisions for the sustaining and enjoyment of life! Therefore, no matter which direction you look or listen, whatever you see and hear ultimately says the same thing. Yahweh is ELOHIM! Yahweh is the creator and sustainer of EVERYONE and EVERYTHING because He alone has absolute power and authority!
2. The psalmist now moves to the passage's application.

The psalm's second focal point is the response that observing God's power and authority in creation should produce in us!

(2) There are two sensible RESPONSES in Psalm 104 to the revelation of God's power and authority (His greatness):

The first sensible response to the revelation of God's power and authority is,

- A. A sincere DESIRE for God to be glorified and praised in solidarity! (104:31-33, 35)
 1. My wife saw a sign in Gastonia that we've been hoping to see for more than two decades. A Raising Cane's is under construction in Gastonia, NC! All the Texas people got excited about Whataburger, but all the Baton Rouge people in our area are doing cheetah flips about Raising Cane's! Gaston County is about to be blessed with the best fried chicken fingers you can buy. My wife, our son, and I have all been known to drive totally out of the way to get some fresh, hot Raising Cane's chicken. I don't even have to look at the menu. I get the same thing every time. It's called a "Caniac" – six fresh-cooked chicken tenders, crinkle fries, Texas toast, coleslaw, cane's sauce, and a sweet tea!
 2. Now, my point in telling you that is to highlight the human tendency to try to get everybody we know to think highly of the things we think highly of. Selfishly, we need everybody to love Raising Cane's, so it stays in business in Gastonia and keeps us from having to drive so far to get to one. I'm motivated to be a volunteer marketing agent for Raising Cane's for no other reason than my own appetite! But there's also something very human about wanting people to love what we love and be fans of what we're fans of!

3. For the psalmist of Psalm 104, as he reflected on all he observed in creation, maybe writing this as he looked on the sea, the mountains, and the sky from somewhere like Mount Carmel, the Holy Spirit opened his eyes to a deeper understanding of the glory of the One who created and ruled everything he could see. As he observed the universe, he realized just how unexplainably powerful God is. He realized how absolute God's authority is, and it caused him to write this,
4. **31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, 32 who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. ... 35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD! (104:31-33, 35)**
5. At the realization of the power and authority of Yahweh, the psalmist can't help but be a totally sold-out fan of God, so much so that he wants God to enjoy the sight of His creation honoring Him! He wants the entire earth and everyone who's in it to acknowledge God for who He is; therefore, no matter what happens in the psalmist's life, he's going to keep on singing God's praises!
6. But it goes deeper than being a huge fan of God who wants everyone else to be that way too. In observing God's absolute power and authority, the psalmist sees the injustice of living as if God isn't our authority! This certainly wasn't a call to kill people who don't believe in God, but it is a desire to see creation, especially God's most precious creation, mankind, no longer rebelling against Him! It's a desire for the return of Christ and the final removal of sin from the Earth, not only for the joy of those who will get to live in eternal life without sin, but also to remedy the injustice of a world that refuses to bow down and submit to the only Elohim—Yahweh!
7. The cross of Calvary and an empty tomb have only increased the injustice of mankind's rebellion against Yahweh, the only Elohim! Think about what Paul was getting at in Romans 5:7-8:

Note: 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8)

8. To reject this great, eternal, gracious work of the Elohim, done through His perfect and only eternal Son, is the greatest injustice ever! If we truly understand God's power and authority, we will see the injustice and evil created by rejecting such a merciful act.

9. Therefore, it is only sensible for those who understand the Gospel, that is, who grasp the significance of the perfectly holy and absolutely powerful and authoritative God sending His perfect eternal Son to suffer the eternal wrath of God on our sin, to not only long to worship God themselves but to also see the Only One truly worthy of worship, worshiped by all He created and died to save! If we truly understand who He is and what He's done, then how could we long for anything less than the total solidarity of all He created living in total glad submission to HIM! But that reality isn't just true for the world; it's equally true for ourselves!

The second sensible response to the revelation of God's absolute power and authority moves our eyes squarely to the mirror,

B. A sincere desire for our OWN thoughts and motives to honor God. (104:34)

1. **34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.**
2. What a great injustice it would be to long for the world to live in submission to Him while somehow justifying evil in my own heart. What greater injustice could there be than to long for a world to honor the power and authority of Yahweh and yet inwardly hide my refusal to do so.
3. The fact is, even the person with the greatest faith still struggles with sin inwardly. If we look in a mirror and see anyone other than someone who needs the grace of God at work in their own heart, then we are lying about what we see.
4. The Revelation of God's power and authority in creation should make us realize there is no way He doesn't know our heart. We should long to be freed from sin because sin is death, and what sense does it make to justify it in our life? But we should also long to be freed from it in our own hearts because it is a divine injustice to know His power, authority, and love, and then justify rebellion of any form against Him in our own hearts. So,

Challenge: Is your life being lived in solidarity with the truth that God has absolute power and authority over YOU?

Are your actions, inward desires, and motivations aligning with God's authority and power? Are they a sensible and proper response to Yahweh being the Elohim?

Today we are bringing in a new song for our music rotation. Some of you likely already know it, but many of you may not. I'm asking you to listen closely to the words our musicians will sing, as well as the passion and emotion of the music the band will play to amplify those words. As you hear it and maybe even catch on and sing along, ask yourself if your mind is aligned with the truth they are singing. Is your heart responding to God with the passion and power highlighted by the music they are singing it to? Is your life in

solidarity with the truth that Yahweh is the all-powerful Creator of the universe, who sustains it and rules it in complete holiness, and yet, in mercy, provides a way of salvation for the worst sinner and biggest hypocrite if they will repent and surrender to Him?