

Proverbs 8

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Preacher: Jonathan Worthington

[0 : 00] If you would, turn back in your Bibles to Proverbs 8 that we read just a moment ago. And while you're turning there, let me tell you a little short story that happened to me in Santiago, Chile, not too long ago, when my wife and I were down there before coming here.

I was about to teach a class, and we were just chatting beforehand, and it was about time to start the class. And I was trying to interact with the students in Spanish, although I barely have any Spanish to my name, enough to be dangerous, as you'll discover.

I was about to start the class, and so I asked the guy there if he was ready. At least that's what I was trying to ask him. I meant to say, *Están listos?*

Which means, are you all ready? But I said, *Están lindos?* Which happens to mean, are you beautiful? He, I'm sure, wasn't expecting that one.

So he simply said, Well, yes. And we proceeded with the rest of the class. So, I didn't know his language. Not much of it, anyway. I didn't know his culture.

[1 : 09] And if you're interested in any stories about cultural faux pas, certainly see me, and maybe my wife will let you hear some stories as well. But I was fairly ignorant. I also am a bit ignorant about your own culture.

It's similar to the States in a lot of ways, but I'm constantly putting my foot in my mouth, saying things like the hymn book for the Psalter here, and other things. I just don't know all the details of your culture, and there are even some parts of the language that I don't know.

I'll be listening to a conversation in English, and suddenly I have no idea what's going on. I don't recognize that word. So I don't know a lot. of language, of culture.

But I do know this, that in Chile, as well as here, as well as in the States, that suffering exists, and is very personal to each one of us.

Bad things that happen. Pain. That's something that, no matter where you go, and no matter what blunders you make, that is always present.

[2 : 12] So we're going to think about suffering tonight. in an interesting way. Some of you who are here this morning might recall that we looked at Christian faith, and that it's not simply believing that something is true, although that is part of faith.

Christian faith is specifically trusting. Trusting in God. Trusting in the Lord Jesus. But even that is not quite enough to describe Christian faith.

It's trusting in God the way that He wants to be trusted. And that might challenge us sometimes, to trust Him the way that He wants to be trusted. So we're going to look at that again tonight, but from a very different angle.

We're going to ask the question, what was it like before the world existed? So think about Genesis 1. Think about the Psalms that we've been singing. Creation.

Before anything out there, or in here, anything existed, what was it like? So let me read Proverbs 8. Just a section of it again.

[3 : 21] Starting in verse 22. This is wisdom speaking, remember. And wisdom says, The Lord brought me forth as the first of His works, before His deeds of old.

I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. And then wisdom goes on to explain things like, When there were no oceans, I was given birth.

When there were no springs of water. Starts listing off aspects of creation. Okay, before that, I was there. So the first thing for us to think about is simply the fact that wisdom existed before the world began.

And we're not going to work all the way through this passage. Tonight we're actually going to jump to a lot of different passages to get a fuller picture of what the world was like, what existence was

like before the world.

So let me just point out a few things from this complex passage. You might have noticed some of the language that sounds like wisdom was created. It was given birth.

[4 : 28] It was brought forth. Some translations even say I was His first creation of old. I just want to mention that that's simply a very creative and poetic way of describing something.

It doesn't exactly mean that there was a time when wisdom did not exist. Think about the implications of that. Was there ever a time when God was not wise? When there was no wisdom? This is a very creative way to get at the point that God is the source of wisdom. So much so that you could talk about Him giving birth to it or bringing it out as His first work.

God is the source of wisdom. Another small point to make is that wisdom was helping with creation. Did you catch that in verse 30? It says, Then I was the craftsman at His side.

I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world, and delighting in mankind. I was a craftsman at His side. And also, the last thing to point out is that wisdom was rejoicing in the world and specifically rejoicing in mankind, delighting in mankind.

[5 : 38] It literally says, delighting in the sons of Adam, the sons of man. Now think about that.

Because they would have been sinners. They would have been fallen. But those are the people that God's wisdom delights in.

I think that will shed light on our understanding of what it means that God is love. That His wisdom celebrated and delighted in humanity, even fallen humanity. But we'll look more at that in just a moment.

So the first simple point is that wisdom existed before God created anything. Before Genesis 1, wisdom was there. Now there's another thing to bring out and that's that Jesus was also there before the world began.

Now if you will, think about John, the Gospel of John chapter 1. You might recognize some language if you think about the proverb that we just read. When John says, in the beginning was the Word.

And the Word was with God. The Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him. And without Him, nothing was made that exists.

[6 : 51] We hear then that the Word became flesh and dwelled with men. Think also of Colossians 1 when Paul is describing Jesus.

This is what he says, In Jesus, all things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, whether lords, whether rulers or authorities.

All things through Him and for Him were created. And He is before all things and all things in Him hold together. Now it's interesting, thinking about Jesus as existing before the world began, thinking about how wisdom was there before the world began, is it any wonder how Paul can say in 1 Corinthians 1.24, to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Is it also any wonder that if it was God's wisdom to delight in humanity, even fallen humanity, is it any wonder how the wisdom became flesh in Jesus and God loved the world so that He gave His only Son to die for that world.

Now, some of you might have heard of the distinction between Jesus' person and His work. We've just seen an example of how Jesus as a being existed before the world began.

[8 : 23] But what about what He did, His work, dying on the cross specifically? Did that simply come about in time only? Or was that in some way thought about before God even created the world?

Turn with me now to 1 Peter, what we read a little bit earlier tonight. 1 Peter 1. And before we look at verse 20, which we're going to look at, before we do that, let me simply mention some of Jesus' own words about His own existence before the world began.

In John, the Gospel of John, Jesus says to His Father in prayer, He says, Now, Lord, now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began.

Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

So Jesus Himself knew that He existed before Genesis 1 happened. So now let's shift to 1 Peter and what the Apostle Peter says about Jesus.

[9 : 45] in 1 Peter 1, verse 20. Look at that. He, Jesus, was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for Your sake.

What does that mean? That Jesus was chosen before the foundation of the world, before the creation of the world? In what way was Jesus chosen?

was it simply, I don't know, that He was, well, it's hard to figure it out unless it means that what Jesus was going to do, that He was chosen to do something specific.

He was chosen to do something in the world and that choice was before the foundation of the world. There's actually a parallel in this verse, in this statement that Peter says.

He contrasts two things. He says that Christ was chosen before the creation but was manifest in the last times. So you can hear the time contrast before the creation of the world in the last times.

[10 : 55] So He's paralleling these two ideas of Christ was chosen then He's revealed in the last times. The word chosen is actually not chosen. The actual word is foreknown.

But those two ideas in the Bible are very similar. So the NIV chose to translate it chosen, which is fine. So He was foreknown before the creation, manifest now.

What that means is that the way that He was foreknown or chosen before the creation is the way that He was manifested now. Conversely, the other way, the way that He was manifested, if we know that, that's the way that He was foreknown, the way that He was chosen.

Because on the one hand, this is true. On the other hand, this is the case. Well, how was He revealed? How was He manifested in the last times for our sake?

We don't have to go far or make it up on our own. Just look at the previous statement of Peter.

Starting in verse 18, that's where the sentence begins. For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

[12 : 14] On the one hand, He was chosen before the foundation of the world, but on the other hand, He was revealed in that way in these last times for your sake. So what does this mean?

as a person who would pour out His own blood as the price to buy you and me back from our empty ways of life.

That's how He was revealed in the last times for our sake, as one who gives His own blood to buy us back. That's how He was revealed now.

That's exactly how He was foreknown before the creation of the world as that blood redeemer, that lamb without blemish. Before the creation of the world, before God said, let there be light, Jesus was chosen for this specific mission to pour out His blood to bring back sinners.

Now this has implications for how we understand suffering. And I'm just going to hint at that right now. We're actually going to look at that in more detail at the very end. But know this, that it was planned before anything existed except God.

[13 : 34] It was planned that Jesus would fight with His own blood for you and for me. So we might want to ask, why did God go ahead and create the world anyway if before He created it He knew that His own Son was going to die for sinners?

So He obviously knew that people were going to be sinners. Why did He create the world anyway? Before we get to that, let's move on and look at a few other things that the Scripture says about before the foundations of the earth.

So if you will, well at this point just listen. We're going to turn to Ephesians in a moment. But right now listen to Matthew. What Jesus says in Matthew chapter 25. He's telling a parable about the King representing Himself.

So He is King. the King will say to those on His right, Come, you who are blessed by My Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

Alright. So, the kingdom of God ruled by Jesus had been prepared since the creation of the world. Prepared for you, whoever is on His right.

[14 : 54] In that parable, those who are on His right are those who believed in Jesus and in fact those who acted that out and loved those people who were hurting. Those are the ones who are on His right. And He says, the kingdom has been prepared for you since the creation of the world.

That's before Adam and Eve. Now, some could say, alright, I understand that God prepared the kingdom for whoever might believe.

But how do I know that He had me in mind? How do I know that God personally loves me? I might have just happened to become one of those who believe. And so, the kingdom was made for all of

you.

Well, I don't know if you're going to believe. You may or you might not. But if you do, the kingdom is for you. So, how do I know that God's love is specifically for me? Let's look at a few verses in Revelation before we get to Ephesians.

Let me just mention Revelation 13, verse 8, and Revelation 17, verse 8. Chapter 13, verse 8, says this, All who dwell on earth will worship the beast.

[16:05] That is, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. You all have the NIV in front of you, so it actually probably says everyone whose name has not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb who was slain before the foundations of the earth.

It's hard to tell in the original which way to translate it. Was it the Lamb who was slain before the foundations of the earth? Or was it the names who were written from the foundation of the earth? And either way, it's biblical because we've already seen verses that talked about Jesus' blood being prepared as the plan before the world began. But Revelation 17.8 makes me think that it's the names being written before the foundation.

Let me read this verse. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast. So regardless of what the first verse, how it should be translated, this is clear.

That names were written in a book. The book of life which belongs to Jesus and when were they written?

[17:25] Let me ask it this way. When did you receive your name? I thought my parents named me. I thought that they thought of the name Jonathan and said, you shall be Jonathan. I haven't even had that name 30 years.

How long have you had your name and who actually named you? Well, this says that your name, that's an individual thing, your name was written in a book and it was written not when you were born, not even when your parents thought about naming you, but it was written from the very foundation of the world, before the foundation of the world.

How much more particular of a love can that be for Jesus to write your name to promise to give you life? He's written your name in the book of life.

You have a promise from before Genesis 1 happened that you will receive life. And Jesus holds that book. It's His. So let's turn to Ephesians 1 right now.

Ephesians 1, we're just going to read a few verses. Verses 3 to 8. So again, we're thinking, what was it like before the creation of the world?

[18:45] We've already seen that wisdom existed so that God made the world in the wisest way possible. We've already seen that Jesus existed and He was loved and glorious.

We've already seen that His blood was planned on being spilled for sinners before the creation of the world. And we've now seen that our individual names who ever believe in Jesus have been written since before the foundation of the world.

So, what else is there? Ephesians 1, verse 3 to verse 8. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love, He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with His pleasure and will.

To the praise of His glorious grace which He has freely given us in the one He loves. In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

[20:08] Wow! That's a lot of riches. A lot of glorious things. Despite all the details of getting into that passage, this much is right in our faces.

The abundant riches of God's grace given to us. And it started with His choice of us before the foundation of the world. It started with His love predestining us to adoption, to be children of God. And then it got worked out in time in our lives by us receiving the forgiveness of sins, redemption. All of these incredible glorious riches by the grace of God, the Scriptures say, was prepared for us before God even created light, before He created mountains.

So, Jesus is fighting with His own blood for those who are written in His book of life.

He is fighting for those who have been promised all of these riches in Him. So, let's tie some of this together and see what it has to do with our lives of pain now.

[21 : 28] Our lives of suffering and discontent, even confusion. And let me go ahead and put out a question that might be on some of your minds.

It will be if you think about this in more detail. If before the creation, before God started to make stuff, He planned on sending His Son to die, and that for sinners, why did He go ahead and create this world?

That's a big cost. Think about it in this way. God, before making, before beginning to make things, He was thinking about it, planning things. So, we can think about it this way and I hope this comes across as reverently as I mean it.

suppose God was thinking before He created, you know, if I make the world this way, people are going to sin. A lot of people are going to go to hell and receive my just wrath for their sins.

I'm going to send my own Son to pour out His blood to die so that some people can have life and blessings. At that moment, why didn't God say, whoa, okay, scratch that idea, that one's not good, let me come up with a different plan that doesn't involve sin, doesn't involve hell, doesn't involve the death of my own Son.

[22 : 54] Alright, all of that, we'll just do it a different way. It wasn't that. At that moment, with that plan, with those implications, God basically said, that's the plan that I want to do.

And He went ahead and He did it. He created the world good, but He created a world in a way that He knew exactly what was going to happen, and He basically said, that's what I want to happen. I'm okay with this. This is what I think is the wisest plan. Well, that does have implications for our lives, our pain that we experience, the suffering.

So, think about the difficult times in your life. Think about some of the particulars. We experience the death of loved ones. We experience injuries, bad health.

We experience the sinfulness of loved ones, hurting us. We experience our own sinfulness, hurting people that we love.

[24 : 04] We're treated unfairly sometimes. we have frustrations in our body, frustrations in our souls. Churches go for four years without a pastor and have difficult times.

We don't seem to get many breaks in this hard life. It's in those times, those times that are difficult, the times that are confusing, the times that are painful, even excruciating, that we need to remember what was with God the very first thing that we looked at before the creation of the world. The wisdom was with God. In other words, God is wise, even in all of those times. When we're experiencing that pain, God is absolutely wise.

Now, you might be saying, that doesn't seem like a very good answer to the problem of suffering, to the pain that I'm actually experiencing. How is that? Okay, God's wise.

How does that really answer that? And I would probably say that we're not called to have all the answers. What we're called to do is to trust God's character in those times when we don't have the answers.

[25 : 30] We know that He is wise, even though we don't know why exactly He chooses what He chooses. So, you even might ask, well, how do I know that I can trust God's character, God's wisdom?

And I would say, look at Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is the revelation of God's character. And let me put it this way. Jesus was there before the world began.

As all of this was being planned, God was planning this, Jesus was there as God. That means that when Jesus decided to come into this world in flesh and blood, He knew exactly the pain and the suffering that were going to be here.

It's exactly this world of our experiences of pain and confusion. This is the world that Jesus said, I'll go into that world and experience that with them. so Jesus came into exactly such a world.

He experienced people hating Him, friends betraying Him, enemies even killing Him. Of course, He raised from the dead. But that's exactly the world that He was willing and wanting to come into for your sake.

[26 : 51] Jesus is fighting for you, for your benefit. He's fighting right now for you, today, in these experiences you're in at the moment.

He's on your side. He's for your good. But not only is He fighting for you right now or today, but He's actually been fighting for you for a long time. Even before you trusted in Him.

