

## **“O LORD, How Manifold Are Your Works!”**

by Pastor Jason Van Bommel

Psalm 104

*<sup>1</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul!*

*O LORD my God, you are very great!*

*You are clothed with splendor and majesty,*

*<sup>2</sup> covering yourself with light as with a garment,  
stretching out the heavens like a tent.*

*<sup>3</sup> He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters;  
he makes the clouds his chariot;*

*he rides on the wings of the wind;*

*<sup>4</sup> he makes his messengers winds,  
his ministers a flaming fire.*

*<sup>5</sup> He set the earth on its foundations,  
so that it should never be moved.*

*<sup>6</sup> You covered it with the deep as with a garment;  
the waters stood above the mountains.*

*<sup>7</sup> At your rebuke they fled;  
at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.*

*<sup>8</sup> The mountains rose, the valleys sank down  
to the place that you appointed for them.*

*<sup>9</sup> You set a boundary that they may not pass,  
so that they might not again cover the earth.*

*<sup>10</sup> You make springs gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow between the hills;*

*<sup>11</sup> they give drink to every beast of the field;  
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.*

*<sup>12</sup> Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;  
they sing among the branches.*

*<sup>13</sup> From your lofty abode you water the mountains;  
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.*

*<sup>14</sup> You cause the grass to grow for the livestock  
and plants for man to cultivate,  
that he may bring forth food from the earth*

*<sup>15</sup> and wine to gladden the heart of man,  
oil to make his face shine  
and bread to strengthen man's heart.*

- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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.*  
 34 *May my meditation be pleasing to him,*  
*for I rejoice in the LORD.*  
 35 *Let sinners be consumed from the earth,*  
*and let the wicked be no more!*  
*Bless the LORD, O my soul!*  
*Praise the LORD!*

- Psalm 104, ESV

### ***Bless the LORD for His Manifold Works!***

In 1994, the musical geniuses known as They Might Be Giants recorded a song written in 1959 and popularized it for a new generation. Originally recorded on an album called *Space Songs*, the lyrics, by Hy Zaret, attempt to answer one of the most profound questions in life, reflected in the song's title "Why Does the Sun Shine?" –

The sun is mass of incandescent gas, a gigantic nuclear furnace  
 Where hydrogen is built into helium at a temperature of millions of degrees  
 Yo ho it's hot, the sun is not a place where we could live  
 But here on earth there'd be no life without the light it gives

We need its light, we need its heat, we need its energy  
 Without the sun, without a doubt, there'd be no you and me  
 The sun is mass of incandescent gas, a gigantic nuclear furnace  
 Where hydrogen is built into helium at a temperature of millions of degrees

The sun is hot  
 It is so hot that everything on it is a gas  
 Iron, copper, aluminum and many others  
 The sun is large  
 If the sun were hollow, a million earths could fit inside  
 And yet the sun is still only a middle-sized star

The sun is far away  
 About 93, 000, 000 miles away, and that's why it looks so small  
 And even when it's out of sight, the sun shines night and day

The sun gives heat, the sun gives light, the sunlight that we see  
 The sunlight comes from our own sun's atomic energy

Scientists have found that the sun is a huge atom-smashing machine  
 The heat and light of the sun come from the nuclear reactions  
 Of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen and helium

The sun is mass of incandescent gas, a gigantic nuclear furnace  
Where hydrogen is built into helium at a temperature of millions of degrees

But the song misses a bigger question – Why is there a giant nuclear furnace the size of a million earths generating temperatures of millions of degrees sitting a comfortable 93 million miles from earth? The answer, of course, is that God created the sun by the word of His power and put it where it is and the earth where it is so that the sun could give light and heat to generate and sustain life on earth.

Songs like “Why Does the Sun Shine?” rightly call us to consider and wonder at the marvels of God’s creation, but they fail to give credit where credit is due, to honor the perfectly and wonderfully wise God who has created and who sustains all of these things.

Psalm 104 is a beautiful song reminding us that the LORD is the wise, powerful, and good Creator of all and Provider for all.

## I. The Creation and the Flood (vv. 1-9)

The overall structure of Psalm 104 basically follows the structure of Genesis 1, and this hymn of praise seems to have been inspired by that creation account, even though it uses very different language and terms. Derek Kidner lays this out in his excellent commentary:

Day 1	<i>Gen 1:3-5</i>	Light & Darkness	<i>Ps 104:1-2a</i>	Light
Day 2	<i>Gen 1:6-8</i>	Heaven & Earth	<i>Ps 104:2b-4</i>	Divides the waters
Day 3	<i>Gen 1:9-10</i>	Land & Sea	<i>Ps 104:5-9</i>	Land and water distinct
“ “	<i>Gen 1:11-13</i>	Vegetation	<i>Ps 104:14-18</i>	Vegetation, trees, hills/rocks
Day 4	<i>Gen 1:14-19</i>	The lights of day and night	<i>Ps 104:19-23</i>	Luminaries as timekeepers
Day 5	<i>Gen 1:20-23</i>	Sea & Sky Animals	<i>Ps 104:25-26</i>	Creatures of sea and air
Day 6	<i>Gen 1:24-28</i>	Animals & People	<i>Ps 104:21-24</i>	Animals and Man
“ “	<i>Gen 1:29-31</i>	Every green plant for food	<i>Ps 104:27-30</i>	Food appointed for all

One major difference is that Genesis 1 uses the Hebrew word *Elohim*, the general word for God, emphasizing His might and power, while Psalm 104 uses *YaHWeH*, the LORD, emphasizing His covenant relationship to His people and His unchanging self-sufficiency as our faithful covenant-keeping God. So, Genesis 1 emphasizes God's power as the Creator of All Creation, but Psalm 104 emphasizes His sovereign faithfulness as the Covenant Lord.

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

See how personal this language is. God doesn't just create the light; He covers Himself "with light as with a garment." God is robed in splendid and majestic light. Yes, God's creation has both light and darkness, and from our perspective here on earth, the light and darkness are in balance and seem to be equal. Even the Genesis 1 account might seem to lead our thinking in that way, to see a balance between light and darkness. But that would be to miss the whole point. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6 –

*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (ESV)*

This reflects back on Genesis 1 rightly: *God said "Let there be light," and there was light, and God saw that the light was good.*

Why would God speak forth light and then wrap Himself in light? As 1 John 1:5 says, “*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*” God is light, and so He wraps Himself in light. This means His character is seen in creation in the Light – the Light illuminates so we can see and gives life to everyone and everything. All life on earth comes from the light, either directly or indirectly.

Verse 4 brings us an unexpected connection to Christ here in Psalm 104, as Hebrews 1:7 quotes Psalm 104:4 – “*he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.*” Hebrews 1:6-7 applies Psalm 104:4 to the angels and contrasts the angels to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus –

*6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,*

*“Let all God's angels worship him.”*

*7 Of the angels he says,*

*“He makes his angels winds,  
and his ministers a flame of fire.”*

This use in Hebrews 1 tells us two things:

1. Not only does God rule over the natural world we see around us in the wind and in fire, but also the supernatural world of the angels that we don't see. God is the Creator and Lord of All.
2. Jesus is not part of the created world, but He is far superior to angels and is worshipped as the Lord by all creation.

Verses 6-8 is a double-reference both to the creation separation of land and water and to the judgment of the whole world by the waters of the flood and then God sovereignly assigning the waters to their place –

*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.*

God has promised in the covenant with Noah that He will not flood the earth with water again, and this is a reminder to us that Psalm 104 is presenting God to us to be praised as the Covenant Lord of Creation. He is the sovereign judge who has the right to cover the world with water and destroy His rebellious creation, but He also sovereignly restores and renews creation and makes good on His covenant promise not to flood the earth again.

## II. Providence Over All Creation (vv. 10-23)

Psalm 104 doesn't just show us God as the covenant Lord in His creation and judgment but also in His providential care for His creation. God is not just the Creator who made everything and then left it to run on His own. Yes, the world works according to fixed laws and patterns, but the Lord in His providence oversees all of these and provides for His creation as a good and gracious Lord –

- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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.*

So, Psalm 104 is calling us to see not just how wonderfully God made everything in order and beauty but also how wonderfully God rules everything. Providence is the word we use to describe God's good rule. Sovereignty tells us **that** God rules over all, but Providence tells us **how** God rules over all His creation. You should see in the word Providence the word "provide" because God provides for His creation as her Lord.

The very waters God used to judge the world He now sends forth to water the earth to sustain life. Light and water are two powerful images that dominate the picture of creation in Psalm 104, as they are essential to life. Reading Psalm 104 should remind us of how abundantly and prolifically pro-life God is – He created a world teeming with life, and He delights to see that life increase and flourish all over His world.

Every year, the world sees the powerful combination of water and light in the phytoplankton blooms of the northern oceans every spring. As the sunlight warms the northern waters of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it causes a plankton bloom that creates the largest concentration of life and of calories anywhere on the planet. Krill eat the plankton, huge whales come and eat both plankton and krill, fish feed on the plankton and krill and these northern oceans teem with life that spreads all over the world, all from the powerful combination of sunlight and water.

Creation testifies and points to the reality of God the Creator, and also to Christ. Jesus said "*I am the light of the world. Whoever believes in me will not walk in darkness.*" (John 8:12) He also said, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*" (John 7:37-38) The light of Jesus applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit brings regeneration – new life – a flourishing and eternal life.

Psalm 104 also shows us how God cares particularly for the needs of humanity and even for the joy and gladness of people, despite the fact that we rebel against Him constantly. God gives us good things and invites us to partner with Him and participate in the work of creation as we cultivate grain to make bread, grapes to make wine, olives to make oil, etc. Even those things which come through the skilled labor of people are gifts of God.



### III. Reverent Awe and Wonder at the Works of God (23-30)

What is the psalmist's response to the beauty and glory of creation? It is wonder and reverent awe and meditation on the greatness of God -

- 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.*

Everything in all creation is so completely dependent on God for everything. We are utterly and entirely dependent on God. We must worship the Creator and not the creation.

### IV. Response to the Manifold Works of God (vv. 31-35)

The psalmist also responds by desiring to see God glorified forever and to see God take delight in His creation –

- 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.*
- 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the LORD.*

*35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth,  
and let the wicked be no more!  
Bless the LORD, O my soul!  
Praise the LORD!*

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, and the chief end of God is to glorify His own name and to enjoy His creation enjoying and glorifying Him.

Verse 35 may seem like an odd, out-of-place buzzkill at the end of such a positive, beautiful psalm. And yet, the more we understand the goodness and covenantal faithfulness of God in creation, the more we will be disturbed by the evil of humanity and how wicked sinners mar God's creation and obscure God's goodness. Ultimately, the more we love creation and rejoice in the Lord of creation for His manifold and magnificent works, the more we will long for the day when the creation will be freed from the bondage of wickedness –

In the words of Romans 8:19-25 –

*19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (ESV)*

**So, what is our application? It's quite simple -**

*Go outside, open your eyes, and praise the LORD!*