

Psalm 111

Praise the Lord for His care

Psalm 111:

An acrostic psalm, this poem used two clauses for each verse, except for the last verse which has three, for a total of 22 clauses, each beginning with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (with its 22 letters).

Though such acrostic poems are rarely subject to logical outlining, this one is a psalm of praise and contains the characteristic call to praise (verse 1, cause for praise (verses 2-9), and a concluding exhortation to praise (verse 10).

Psalm 111 exalts the works of God, while Psalm 112 extols the man who fears God.

The author(s), and occasion(s), are unknown.

- I. A Word of Praise (111:1).
- II. Words about God's Works (111:2-9).
- III. A Word of Wisdom (111:10).

Verses 1-10: Psalms 111 and 112 are alike in that:

- (1) They both begin with, "Praise ye the Lord!" (as does Psalm 113), and
- (2) They both are acrostics with 22 lines corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Verses 1-10:

The Lord is to be praised for his works.

The psalmist resolves to praise God himself.

Our exhortations and our examples should agree together.

He recommends the works of the Lord, as the proper subject, when we are praising him; and the dealings of his providence toward the world, the church, and particular persons.

All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one, it is his work; so admirably do all the dispensations of his providence center in one design.

The works of God, humbly and diligently sought into, shall all be found just and holy.

God's pardoning of sin is the most wonderful of all his works, and therefore should be remembered to his glory.

He will ever be mindful of his covenant; he has ever been so, and he ever will be so.

His works of providence were done according to the truth of the Divine promises and prophecies, and so were verity, or truth.

And by Him who has a right to dispose of the earth as he pleases, and so are His judgment, or His righteousness.

And this holds good for the work of grace upon the heart of man, (verses 7-8).

All God's commandments are sure; all have been fulfilled by Christ, and remain with him for a rule of walk and conversation to us.

He sent redemption unto his people, out of Egypt at first, and often afterwards.

And these were typical of the great redemption, which in the fullness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus.

Here his everlasting righteousness shines forth in union with his boundless mercy.

No man is wise who does not fear the Lord as no man acts wisely except those who are influenced by that fear.

This fear will lead to repentance, to faith in Christ, to watchfulness and obedience.

Such persons are of a good understanding, however poor, unlearned, or despised.

Psalm 111:1 "Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with [my] whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and [in] the congregation."

The Hebrew word translated "Praise ye the LORD" is Hallelujah.

It means "to bestow boasting and honor to God".

"With my whole heart":

Implies the inner person.

Yahweh is not fooled by external worship or by the hypocrisy of religious rites that do not include wholehearted love for Him.

Jesus might have had this passage in mind when He stated that the greatest commandment was, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart" (Matt. 22:37).

True praise begins in the heart.

This is a determination on the psalmist's part is to worship the LORD in public, as well as when in private.

The assembly of the upright would be in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The congregation usually indicates the gathering of the Hebrews.

The Israelites were many times referred to as the congregation.

It is always the correct time to praise the Lord.

There is never a place that is the wrong place to praise the Lord.

Praise can be in prayer, in word, or in song.

It seems to add feeling to it when it is sung.

We should be like this penman, and worship and praise our Lord with all of our heart.

Verses 2-9:

God's work(s) are mentioned 5 times (verses 2, 3, 4, 6, 7).

Overall, the greater work of redemption seems to be in view (verse 9), without excluding lesser works of a temporal nature (verses 5-6).

Psalm 111:2 "The works of the LORD [are] great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

His works of creation are great, being made out of nothing, are the effects of great power, and the produce of great wisdom, and which greatly display the glory of their Maker.

The works of providence are great, which are daily wrought, especially such as concern the church and people of God.

For whom he does great things, whereof they have reason to be glad and praise his name.

The miracles of Christ he wrought here on earth were surprisingly great, some of them such as had not been known from the creation of the world.

And yet greater things were shown him, and done by him, particularly the work of redemption.

A work which angels and men were unequal to, a work which none but the great God and our Savior could effect.

And is truly called the great salvation; the work of grace upon the heart is a great work, and requires the exceeding greatness of the divine power.

And which is exerted in the beginning, carrying on, and finishing that work.

And for all which the Lord is to be praised: and the rather since they are such as are;

"Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein":

Or "sought out because of all the pleasures of them, or that are in them", which comes to much the same sense.

There is a pleasure in the contemplation of the works of nature and providence.

To behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in them, and his care over all his creatures. And particularly how he makes all things to work together for the good of his people.

And especially it is delightful to observe the works of grace, how the glory of all the divine perfections is displayed in them.

Angels themselves take pleasure in looking into them.

Now these are sought and found out by those who delight in them.

The works of creation are to be sought and found in the book of nature, the works of providence in the book of experience, and the works of grace in the book of God.

And indeed all of them are recorded there, which are searched with pleasure by those that are inquisitive after them.

This is speaking of those who truly love the Lord.

It is not one nation or one group of people, but all who love God.

Those people see God in all the beauties of the earth.

Atheists do not see God nor do they respect His creation, because they do not believe that He had created everything.

The believer is totally aware that everything, and everyone upon this earth are part of God's creation, and we see His wondrous works in everything.

Psalm 111:3 "His work [is] honorable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever."

Literally, "Honor and glory is his work."

That is, all that he does is honorable and glorious.

The language would then cover all that God does in the works of creation, providence, and also in redemption.

There is honor and there is majesty in "everything" that he does.

"And his righteousness endureth for ever":

That is, it will be found in all the investigations of his works, that he is unchangeably righteous or just.

All that he has done, or that he now does, goes to demonstrate this.

There are doings of people, even of good people which will not bear investigation; but there are no such acts of God.

There are things that people do which excite admiration only when there is no investigation in regard to them.

But the works of God are admired the more, the more they are studied.

There are things which appear beautiful, or appear sweet only when they are not shaken.

A collection of perfumes will give out sweets the more it is stirred.

This work mentioned here, is possibly the glorious work of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary.

Let's look at two Scriptures that say this better than we could.

John 17:1 "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:"

John 17:5 "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

It seems strange that this could glorify the Father, but that is just what it did.

The 6 hours of work by Jesus on the cross purchased our salvation for us.

His righteousness is from everlasting to everlasting.

The thing that makes us acceptable unto the Father, is the fact that we traded Jesus our sin for His righteousness.

He took our sin upon His body on the cross, and He clothed us in His righteousness.

Psalm 111:4 "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD [is] gracious and full of compassion."

All his works are marvelous ones; his works of creation, that they should rise out of nothing at a word of command.

His works of providence, which have such a depth of wisdom and knowledge in them, are unsearchable and past finding out.

And his works of redemption and grace; and these are so wrought by him, and such methods taken to continue the memory of them, that they cannot well be forgotten.

All things in nature are as they were from the beginning; the sun, moon, and stars, keep their course and station.

Cold and heat, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, are as they always were.

Remarkable providences have been carefully recorded, and then the memorials of them handed down to posterity.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was annually remembered in the Passover.

The feeding of them with manna in the wilderness was caused to be remembered by a pot of manna preserved in the tabernacle and temple.

And the great work of our redemption by Christ is brought to remembrance in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, appointed for that purpose.

"The LORD is gracious and full of compassion":

So he was in eternity, and is in time; this appears in all his works, and especially in our salvation by Jesus Christ (see Psalm 86:5).

Every Christian remembers the Lord and the work He has done for each of us.

His works will be remembered from generation to generation by His followers.

His Word (Bible), reminds us of His wonderful works.

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

You can see from the Scripture here and the one above, that it is the desire of the Lord for all to believe and be saved.

The compassion of Jesus was shown to each of us in that while we were yet in sin our Christ died for us.

Psalm 111:5 "He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant."

"Meat ... his covenant":

It is quite possible that the psalmist has alluded to God's faithfulness in providing food for Jacob through Joseph (Gen. chapters 37-50), in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant to make the nation like the stars of the sky (Gen. 15:5).

This could mean that Christ has taken care of the needs of His people, but I believe this is much more spiritual.

Hebrews 5:12 "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which [be] the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

Those that fear Him, study His Word to know what His will is in their life.

They do not need to be fed the milk of the gospel, as if they were brand new Christians, but are able to handle the meat of the Word.

The covenant that God made with man is an unbreakable covenant, because He swore on His own name.

Man may break his covenant with God, but God will never break His covenant with man.

Psalm 111:6 "He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen."

God does not manifest His "power" for the sake of showing off.

He channels it into purposeful acts to benefit His people.

For this reason, God does not always perform miracles, He has specific purposes to accomplish and will reveal His power only when His people will benefit.

“The heritage of the heathen”:

It seems even more sure that the psalmist has the Abrahamic Covenant in view (compare Gen. 15:18-21; 17:1-8), specifically the Exodus (Exodus – Deuteronomy), and the conquering/dividing of the Land (Joshua; see notes of Deut. 7:1-2).

This possibly has to do with the reign of Jesus on this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

His people (Christians), will rule with Him, as His subordinates, over the heathen.

Israel saw His great power, when He defamed the gods of Egypt on their behalf.

The Christians saw the great power of the Lord, when He defeated Satan, and when He rose from the grave.

Psalm 111:7 "The works of his hands [are] verity and judgment; all his commandments [are] sure."

His works of providence are just and true, particularly these which respected the driving the Canaanites out of their land, and settling the Israelites in it.

These were done according to the truth of the divine promises and prophecies, and so were "verity" or "truth".

And for the sins of the Heathen, and by him who has a right to dispose of the earth and the fullness of it to whom he pleases.

And so are "judgment" or righteous; and this holds good of his work of grace upon the heart, which is the work of his hands, and is "truth in the inward parts".

And is created in righteousness and true holiness.

And of all his acts of grace in election, redemption, etc., which are according to the truth of the divine nature and its perfections, and in which there is no unrighteousness.

Some interpret this as being the two tables of stone, which were the work, writing, and engraving of God.

And on which were inscribed the judgments of the Lord; and are "true and righteous altogether".

Aben Ezra understands it as being the law implanted in the hearts of men.

"All his commandments are sure":

Firm, and to be believed and complied with, either to destroy the nations, or to possess their land.

Or rather the commands of the moral law, which are firm and sure, one jot or tittle of which shall never pass away.

All have been fulfilled by Christ, and remain with him a rule of walk and conversation.

Or the word which the Lord has commanded to a thousand generations (Psalm 105:8).

The covenant which is ordered in all things and sure; also the promises of which are yea and amen in Christ.

And the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David; and even the doctrines of the Gospel are the commandments and testimony of the Lord, which are sure (Psalm 19:8).

And to be believed, being the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation, and coming from God, who cannot lie.

Verity in the Scripture above, means stability, certainty, truth, or trustworthiness.

The work that the Lord did for each of us is something we can depend upon.

His judgement is just.

What were His commandments?

Matthew 22:37-40 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." "This is the first and great commandment." "And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Psalm 111:8 "They stand fast for ever and ever, [and are] done in truth and uprightness."

Not only the covenant and its promises do, but both law and Gospel, the commandments of the one and the doctrines of the other.

The law is an eternal law, as to the matter of it, and is not made void by faith, but established.

And the Gospel is an everlasting Gospel, which lives and abides for ever, being established upon the word of God, which cannot be broken.

And now is continued in the church, the pillar and the ground of truth, from whence it can never be removed.

"And are done in truth and uprightness":

Either made by the Lord according to the truth of things, the moral perfections of his nature and will, and the rectitude of it.

Or observed by men that truly fear the Lord with great truth and sincerity.

This is telling us that the Lord is the same today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

His commandments never change, because they are the absolute truth.

They are not to change with circumstances, but are absolute.

The Truth is always upright.

The truth needs no explanation; it is always the thing to do.

The wonderful thing about the Word is that it is alive and is just as current for each generation as it was for the generation before.

Truth needs no apologies.

Psalm 111:9 "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend [is] his name."

To the Israelites, God's "name" is so awesome they will not speak *Yahweh* aloud but substitute *Adonai*, lest they inadvertently blaspheme God's holy name.

That same kind of reverence for God is commendable in the life of every child of God.

"Commanded his covenant for ever":

In light of (verses 5-6 and Gal. 3:6-9), this appears to look at the redemption aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant, which was declared frequently to be an "everlasting" or "for ever" covenant (compare Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron. 16:15, 17; Psalm 105:8, 10; Isa. 24:5).

Redemption is a free gift that must be received, not earned.

The grace of Almighty God brought redemption.

God saw that man was just flesh and could not save himself.

We mentioned in the previous lesson that Jesus is the Savior of all men.

Then why are not all saved?

Because they do not receive the salvation that He provided.

Only the children of men who become the sons of God, receive the redemption offered.

Reverence is the same word as fear here.

His name is above all names.

The holiness of the Lord is what causes the reverence or fear.

We are aware that we are not holy.

We should hold the Lord in very high esteem above all others.

Psalm 111:10 "The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do [his commandments]: his praise endureth for ever."

The fear of the LORD, whose name is revered, is not a fear of his judgments here or hereafter, but of his goodness and grace.

It is a reverential affection for him, a fiducial fear of him, a fear of offending so good a Being as he is.

And it includes all religious worship of him, inward and outward, private and public.

And as this true wisdom begins; a man begins to be wise when he begins to fear the Lord, and not until then.

This is his highest wisdom, and this is, as it may be rendered, "the chief of wisdom", the principal part of it (see Prov. 9:10).

"A good understanding have all they that do his commandments":

Or "that do them"; the fear of the Lord and wisdom; that exercise them, that do as they oblige and direct to.

So R. Moses in Aben Ezra connects the words; such have a good understanding of the LORD, know him as the object of their fear and reverence, and of their duty to him, and of their own interest, it being their wisdom to fear him.

Since by attending to their duty, to the word and ordinances of God, such arrive to a greater degree of knowledge and understanding of divine things.

Some render it "good success" or "prosperity", as Kimchi.

Such usually have prosperity in soul and body, in things temporal and spiritual (see Joshua 1:8).

"His praise endureth for ever":

Or "its praise"; the praise of the fear of the Lord, of divine wisdom, and of a good understanding.

Just as of circumcision in the heart (Rom. 2:29).

Or the praise of him that does the above things, that does the commandments of God, or acts under the fear of God, and as a wise man (1 Cor. 4:5).

Or rather the praise of God, which shall be given him by angels and men now and for evermore, as it ought to be.

And to stir up to which is the design of the psalm throughout; and which men are encouraged to from the works and word of God, from his name, nature, and covenant, and from his blessings and acts of grace and goodness.

To reverence the Lord with a holy fear is the beginning of life.

Without this reverence, or fear of the Lord, we would have no eternal life.

We have a good understanding, because the Holy Spirit of God has opened our understanding.

We have ears, and we can hear.

We have eyes, and we can see, because the Holy Spirit has revealed these truths to us.

The world has ears, but cannot hear and eyes, but cannot see.

Jesus spoke in parables, so that the world would not understand with their mind and then would come to Him.

God does not want our mind; He wants our heart.

So many times we say, I love God, but how can I show Him that I truly love Him?

Look, with me, at two Scriptures from John that answer that question beautifully.

John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

John 15:10 "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Both of these Scriptures are printed in red in my Bible, which means that Jesus spoke them.

Look with me at one more Scripture from that comes from the Old Testament that is basically saying the same thing.

1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams."

The Christian, that has really grown into maturity with the Lord, is the one who obeys the will of God and is not ashamed to praise Him for His wonderful works.

Can you say that you have grown beyond the milk and honey, and are now ready for the meat of the Word?

Perhaps you can, because you are interested in the study of the Bible.

Psalm 111 Questions

1. I will praise the LORD with my whole _____.
2. Verse 1 names two places he will praise, where are they?
3. Where does true praise begin?
4. What is the assembly of the upright?
5. What is meant by the congregation?
6. Name three ways you can praise the Lord.
7. Who is verse 2 speaking of?
8. Why do atheists not praise the works of the Lord?
9. How does verse 3 describe His work?
10. What work is verse 3 speaking of?
11. What did we trade Jesus to receive His righteousness?
12. What is the Bible?
13. What meat is verse 5 speaking of?
14. Why is the covenant that God made with man unbreakable?
15. Who is verse 6 speaking of?
16. Who will the Christians reign over?
17. What does verity in verse 7 mean?
18. What were His commandments?
19. What does the author say, is one of the wonderful things about the Word?

20. Redemption is a free _____.
21. Redemption must be _____.
22. Why are not all men saved?
23. What does reverend in verse 9 mean?
24. The _____ of the _____ is the beginning of wisdom.
25. Why does the Christian understand things that the world does not understand?
26. Describe a mature Christian.