

“Powerful Privileges Forever”

Psalm III [NIV]

- ¹Praise the LORD.
I will extol the LORD with all my heart
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.
- ²Great are the works of the LORD;
they are pondered by all who delight in them.
- ³Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures forever.
- ⁴He has caused his wonders to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.
- ⁵He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.
- ⁶He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.
- ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.
- ⁸They are steadfast for ever and ever,
done in faithfulness and uprightness.
- ⁹He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant forever—
holy and awesome is his name.
- ¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise..

Psalm 112 [NIV]

- ¹Praise the LORD.
Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
who finds great delight in his commands.
- ²His children will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.
- ³Wealth and riches are in his house,
and his righteousness endures forever.
- ⁴Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.
- ⁵Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely,
who conducts his affairs with justice.
- ⁶Surely he will never be shaken;
a righteous man will be remembered forever.
- ⁷He will have no fear of bad news;
his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
- ⁸His heart is secure, he will have no fear;
in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.
- ⁹He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor,
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn will be lifted high in honor.
- ¹⁰The wicked man will see and be vexed,
he will gnash his teeth and waste away;
the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.

HOPE
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I. Introduction

We concluded last week by noting that Psalm 111 has a built-in device to help you memorize the psalm. Each new line of the psalm (as printed on the insert in your Order of Worship) begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Okay, maybe that does not help you much. But it does tell you that God would like you to memorize the psalm. He will help you memorize these lines if you ask Him, for it is His will that you "Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart."^{Job22.22}

Psalm 112 employs the same device! But something far more than memory devices ties these two psalms together. You can easily see their similarity in structure, by glancing at the insert where I've printed them side-by-side. The two psalms correlate very closely verse-by-verse. In them we see the tie between who God is, and what He is making us to be.

II. Fear of the Lord

Before we step through the verses of these two psalms, however, we must see a vital link from the end of one to the beginning of the other. We find this link in the last verse of 111 and the first verse of 112. The vital link between who God is and what He is making us to be, is *the fear of the Lord*. Listen:

^{111.10}"To him belongs eternal praise." ^{112.1}"Praise the LORD." The last words and first words are a direct tie. If eternal praise belongs to Him, then it is only right for us to Praise the Lord *always and in all things*. Do you see? You never have to look for an excuse to enjoy praising the Lord. It is *never* inappropriate to praise the Lord. "Eternal" has no pauses, no gaps, and no "time-outs." Praise the Lord...*Now*. The God of eternal praise is making you into someone who praises God eternally.

Now move two lines in from the end and from the beginning. ^{111.10}"The *fear of the LORD* is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding..." ^{112.1}"...Blessed is the man who *fears the LORD*, who finds great delight in his commands." If you put these psalms together end-to-end, praise and fear of the Lord are right in the center. Praise and fear are right in the heart of the psalms.

On the one hand, it is quite clear that those who fear the Lord follow His precepts. Following His precepts is the same thing as obeying His commands. On the other hand, it is just as clear that those who fear the Lord find great delight in His commands. They delight in His precepts. ^{19.8}"The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes."

I think we can reasonably conclude a pure and simple definition of the 'Fear of the Lord' from these verses. *The fear of the Lord is following His precepts with great delight in His commands*. Notice that the fear of the Lord brings praise to God and happiness to men. Wisdom and good understanding reflect who God is. He is all-wise and all-knowing. A child who imitates her parents' piety and diligence honors her parents. A child who asks his parents to have family worship when they are feeling a bit too frazzled honors his parents. So too, our reflecting God's nature in wisdom and understanding honors Him. "The *fear of the LORD* is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding."

At the same time, to '*be blessed*' is to be made happy. Not with the silly felicity we think we get from Facebook and iTunes. Not with the temporary heart-rush we get from shopping. But rather with the reviving of the soul that feels profoundly fulfilled, standing on solid ground that won't wash away like sand in the waves. ^{19.7}"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple." *That* is happiness. *That* is

blessedness. *That* is ^{19.10}more precious than gold. *That* is sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

The fear of the Lord is following His precepts with great delight in His commands. The fear of the Lord brings praise to God and happiness to men. John Murray wrote, "The fear of God is the soul of godliness." How do you get the fear of the Lord? You can't mix it up in an ice-cream maker and eat it. You can't put it on like a costume and wear it. Listen to Isaiah prophesying the coming of Christ: ^{Is11.2}"The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the *fear of the LORD*—³and he will *delight* in the *fear of the LORD*."

Are you surprised that Jesus Christ is filled with the fear of the Lord? It is not so surprising when you understand that *the fear of the Lord is following His precepts with great delight in His commands*. Who ever followed God's precepts more perfectly than Jesus? Who ever delighted in God's commands more heartily than Jesus? Now get this! Murray writes, "The Church walks in the fear of the Lord because the Spirit of Christ indwells, fills, directs, and rests upon the church, and the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord."

Now there is a difference to note. Those who do not trust in Jesus to save them from God's wrath for their sins, are either filled with terror and dread of God, or they are filled with a stupid, callous, and lifeless indifference to the God with whom they have to do. ^{Heb4.13}"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

What then about those who do trust in Jesus? Our Savior has removed from them all threat of condemnation to eternal judgment. ^{Ro8.1} Jesus has borne all the guilt for their sins and nailed it to the cross in His body. Still, we notice that the psalmist who believes can say, ^{119.120}"My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws." And the writer to the Hebrews can say, ^{Heb10.26}"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

There is a place for terror and dread, then, in the life of a believer who willfully violates the precepts of the Lord. BUT, awe, reverence, honor, and worship constitute the fear in which godliness consists. Murray writes, "The first thought of the godly man in every circumstance is God's relation to him and it, and his and its relation to God... That is God-consciousness and that is what the fear of God entails.

As the angel of the Lord said to Abraham, ^{Gn22.12}"Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." This fear of the Lord liberated Abraham to follow God's command to give his son Isaac to God. It liberated Abraham to let his nephew Lot choose the best of the land for himself. The fear of the Lord knows that ^{Ps111.7}"the works of God's hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy."

The fear of the Lord leaves no room for fear of man or fear of circumstances. *The fear of the Lord follows His precepts with great delight in His commands*. Joshua concludes his summary of the Lord's delivering Israel from Egypt and bringing them into the Promised Land with these words: ^{Jos24.14}"Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness." The great deliverance proved that God was intent on redeeming His people rather than condemning them. That liberates us to follow His precepts with delight in His commands.

III. Faithful Savior Making Saints Faithful

Psalms 111 and 112 are tied together by the fear of the Lord. Knowing that, we can now zoom in on the verses. Since we looked at the last and the first verses first, I'll save the first and the last verses until last and jump right to vs2.

A. V2

^{111.2}“Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.” ^{112.2}“His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.” What greater blessing than to be free from worry and filled with delight? God frees us from terror and fills us with delight. He does great works and we whom He mercifully makes right with Him, find great pleasure in pondering over and over again the power He applies to improving our spiritual estate.

Jesus fears God and delights in His commands. This is who Christ is, and what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow Him with delight?

B. V3

^{111.3}“Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.” ^{112.3}“Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.” As we saw last week, big and powerful works are impressive. But even the devil can do big and powerful works. The devil can *not*, however, do glorious and majestic deeds. The *glory* and *majesty* of God's deeds arise out of his *righteousness*. Everything God ever does is absolutely in accord with His holiness. The Ten Commandments being the transcript of God's holiness, everything God ever does is absolutely in accord with His commandments.

Imagine the glory and majesty of a kingdom, a world, in which every citizen loved the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind... and they loved their neighbors as themselves. Such is the kingdom Jesus Christ came to inaugurate; such is the kingdom Jesus Christ will one day return to bring in fullness. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is his glory and majesty... and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is our wealth and our riches. He is our inheritance forever.

^{Jer23.6}“This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.” The Son of God is mighty in His Kingdom, and blessed with His Father's approval. This is who Christ is, and what He makes all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow Him with delight?

C. V4

^{111.4}“He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.” ^{112.4}“Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.” Again, from last week, “wonders” refers to works that redeem and save souls. Such works require grace. They require seeing someone in distress, softening the heart to their need, and stepping out to deliver and save them. Jesus stepped out of heaven and up to the cross and down to the grave and up from the dead, to deliver us from the distress of sin and its guilt.

In Jesus' depths he set his eyes upon his Father and upon us, rather than upon himself. Those very eyes shine light into our darkness, and liberate us to be gracious and compassionate to step out and attend to another's need. Light shines. Jesus said, ^{Jn8.12}“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” He is THE upright, gracious, compassionate, and righteous Man. This is who Christ is, and what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow the Light with delight?

D. V5

^{111.5}“He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.” ^{112.5}“Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with

justice." One thing we immediately notice about the early apostolic church is that ^{Act4.32}"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had." Those who follow God's precepts with great delight in his commands remember Jesus' words. ^{Mt6.26}"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

God made a covenant and promised never again to judge the birds and animals with a flood. But He made another far more special covenant and promised not to cast into fiery hell those who fear Him—those who follow His precepts with great delight in His commands. One of His precepts is, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." ^{act20.35} Do you follow that with great delight? Good *has* come to you. God *has* provided food for you. You are free, then, to be generous in giving and lending.

Jesus gave up His life to gain yours. You can never lose that, and you can never run out of the life Jesus supplies. Does your giving to the church reflect that reality? Jesus said, ^{Jn6.35}"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." This is who Christ is, and what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow Him with delight?

E. V6

^{111.6}"He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations." ^{Ps112.6}"Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever." A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. Our Helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. Children of the evil one—all those who persevere in persecuting the Lord and His trusting children—will try to suppress and ultimately eradicate the Church.

They will not succeed. Jesus rose from the dead, and cannot die again. The Lord is building His kingdom in the midst of all nations. The Lord is giving His church new spiritual territory every time God transfers a soul from the kingdom of condemnation in Adam to the kingdom of grace in Jesus Christ. No one can stop God's hands in this work, and no one can shake you from Christ's embrace when he has reconciled you to God with his righteousness. He is the solid Rock upon whom we are built. This is who Christ is, and what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow Him with delight?

F. V7

^{111.7}"The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy." ^{112.7}"He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD." 111.7 gives us all the reason we need to remain content in the most trying times. *Everything* God determines to do is good, and we can trust that it is for our good, who fear the Lord. ^{Rom8.28}"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

112.7 shows us the reality of those who are content. The worst of news never caused Jesus to stumble or be terrorized. His heart was steadfast: ^{Lk22.42}"Father, if you are willing, take this cup [of suffering] from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." This is who Christ is, and what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow Him with delight?

G. V8

^{111.8}"They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness." ^{112.8}"His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes. If you fear the Lord, your heart is secure. Though the accuser of the brethren may try fastidiously to frighten you, he has no legal grounds before the court of the Lord. No charges made against you can

ever stick. The precepts, the commandments of the Lord have all been done in faithfulness and uprightness.

For all his sly intelligence, the stupidity of the devil is astonishing. ^{Rom8.33}“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.” When the devil brings charges against you and frightens you, what he’s really doing is telling God that God’s own Son doesn’t cut the mustard! God’s own Son isn’t good enough and didn’t do good enough! You think *that* doesn’t add fuel to God’s infinite wrath against Satan and his sidekicks... including those in this world who spew invective against the beauty of holiness in which we worship the Lord?

Like they say, he who laughs last laughs best, and let there be no mistake, Christ will laugh to all eternity at His foes, all of whom He has triumphed over. This is who Christ is, and what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow Him with delight?

H. V9

^{111.9}“He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—holy and awesome is his name.” ^{112.9}“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor.” God provided redemption for us by sending his Son to purchase God’s pardon for our sins. Jesus did so by paying the fair and honest price for our sins against God: death and the pains of hell forever. This was the covenant agreement between Father and Son. Son pays the price for our sins; Father gives us to the Son for His obedience.

At the same time, since the Son takes upon Himself our sins; He scatters abroad his reward for obedience, namely eternal life in heaven. This pleases God, and in His pleasure the Son rises from the dead. Since God’s covenant with the Son endures forever, the gifts and righteousness which by that very covenant have been given to those who fear the Lord must also last forever. Jesus’ righteousness never runs out! You who were poor now have an eternal supply of riches! United to Him who is lifted high in honor, then, you who fear the Lord are lifted high in honor. Forever. This is who Christ is and what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. Will you follow Him with delight?

I. V1,10

We have come to the end of Ps112. But as we found the link between the end of 111 and beginning of 112, so now we see the link between the end of 112 and beginning of 111. As they say, a circle has no end. These psalms are eternally tied together. Who Christ is can never be separated from what He is making all who fear the Lord to be. ^{112.10}“The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.” ^{111.1}“Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.”

And I will only say this: wickedness has a very bad ending... but fear of the Lord is a very good beginning. Which will you follow? In the one you will find despair, utter dissatisfaction, eternal vexation. In the other you will find eternal blessedness, everlasting delight. ^{Ps19.9}“The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.” The fear of the Lord follows His precepts with great delight in His commands.