

## The ABCs of Righteous Living

Psalm 112

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Psalm 112 - English Standard Version (ESV)

*Praise the LORD!*

*Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,  
who greatly delights in his commandments!*

<sup>2</sup> *His offspring will be mighty in the land;  
the generation of the upright will be blessed.*

<sup>3</sup> *Wealth and riches are in his house,  
and his righteousness endures forever.*

<sup>4</sup> *Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;  
he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.*

<sup>5</sup> *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;  
who conducts his affairs with justice.*

<sup>6</sup> *For the righteous will never be moved;  
he will be remembered forever.*

<sup>7</sup> *He is not afraid of bad news;  
his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.*

<sup>8</sup> *His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,  
until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.*

<sup>9</sup> *He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;  
his righteousness endures forever;  
his horn is exalted in honor.*

<sup>10</sup> *The wicked man sees it and is angry;  
he gnashes his teeth and melts away;  
the desire of the wicked will perish!*

### Introduction: Worship & Living

A human being is a worshiping being. To be human is to worship. What is worship? At its heart, worship is “worth-ship” – to find something of such worth that you devote time, energy, effort, zeal to its pursuit. God created in humanity this drive to find the supremely valuable and give ourselves to it. He did it so that we would worship Him.

When the Apostle Paul was taking the message of the Gospel to the philosophers of Athens, he explained to them:

*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for*

*“In him we live and move and have our being” – Acts 17:24-28, ESV*

God wants us to worship Him as supremely valuable because He is supremely valuable. And yet the mind of man is a factory of idols, as John Calvin said, and we will worship almost anything – even inventing new things to worship – rather than worship the one true God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So we make other, created things as supremely valuable in our lives: work, play, sports, pleasure, money, power, popularity, prestige, honor.

But worship is of ultimate importance, because what we worship determines how we live. Think about it. What do people live for? What drives our decision-making? Well, we decide to do what we do based on what we believe to be most valuable. Whatever we consider of greatest worth is what we worship, and so, by definition, what we worship drives the decision-making of our lives.

If we take Psalms 111 and 112 together, we can see this strong connection between worship and life, specifically between learning to praise God rightly and then, out of that worship, learning to live a life that pleases God and is blessed by God. The connection, made very clear at the end of Psalm 111 and the beginning of Psalm 112, is the fear of the Lord.

Consider the last verse of Psalm 111 and the first verse of Psalm 112 together:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all those who practice it have a good understanding.  
His praise endures forever!*

*Praise the LORD!  
Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,  
who greatly delights in his commandments!*

Psalm 111 teaches us how praising God rightly leads to the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. Psalm 112, picking up where Psalm 111 left off, teaches us how the fear of the Lord leads a man to greatly delight in the Lord's commandments and then to live a life of righteous wisdom that pleases God and is blessed by God.

So Psalm 112 is a wisdom psalm, giving a portrait of a life lived according to the wisdom that begins with the fear of the Lord.

## **I. Jesus the Righteous Man**

As a wisdom psalm that gives us a portrait of the life of the blessed man, Psalm 112 has strong parallels with Psalm 1. Both of them are ultimately portraits of Jesus Himself, the perfectly righteous and blessed man.

John Fry, quoted in Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*, wrote: "The righteousness of the Mediator, I make no doubt, is celebrated in this psalm; for surely that alone is worthy to be extolled in songs of praise: especially since we are taught by the Holy Ghost to say, "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." I conclude, therefore, that in this alphabetical psalm, for such is its construction, Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega."

### **A. Jesus as a God-Fearing Man, v. 1**

Jesus was the man who best embodied the fear of the Lord in His life. This may seem confusing. After all, isn't Jesus God? So, did Jesus fear Himself? How does that work?

Understanding how Jesus could be the perfect God-fearing man and also be fully God shows us the importance of understanding the two most core Christian beliefs: the incarnation and the Trinity:

Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. He is not God the Father and He is not God the Holy Spirit. We believe in one God who exists eternally as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are one God.

When God the Son became Jesus of Nazareth in the womb of the virgin Mary, He became fully human while also being fully God. He was and is true God and true man, two distinct natures in one person forever.

Jesus in His human nature was the Christ, the anointed one. As the man Christ Jesus, He is the perfect mediator between God and man, since He unites divinity and humanity in His own person. So, when we say Jesus embodied the fear of the Lord as the perfect human being, we're speaking about His human nature fearing His Father, as every man is called to fear the Lord.

As the perfect God-fearing man, Jesus greatly delighted in the commandments of God. Jesus said,

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the*

*Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

– Matthew 5:17-20, ESV

Jesus taught and kept the commandments of God perfectly. He taught people the true meaning of God’s commandments and then He obeyed them perfectly, fulfilling the law of God in His own life.

### **B. Jesus as a Blessed Man, vv. 2-9**

Knowing that Jesus is the embodiment and fulfillment of Psalm 112, helps us understand how to interpret and properly apply the blessings of the God-fearing man described in verses 2-9. Specifically, how do we understand verses 2-3?

*His offspring will be mighty in the land;  
the generation of the upright will be blessed.*

<sup>3</sup>*Wealth and riches are in his house,  
and his righteousness endures forever.*

Jesus never married and never had children, and He never had worldly wealth. Yet He still fully received the blessings described in verses 2-3. How? He had disciples who were greatly blessed with salvation and who became mighty in word and deed as they preached the Gospel and saw the kingdom of God grow and advance under their ministry. Jesus’ spiritual offspring continue to be mighty, not necessarily with earthly political power, which has limited use and fades quickly, but with true spiritual power as the children of God and ambassadors for the King of kings in this world.

So also, Jesus’ house was not filled with money and jewels, but Jesus did build a house, the church. His house is full of eternal treasure and His people are well supplied with truth, wisdom, righteousness, grace, goodness and eternal life. Jesus’ righteousness endures forever.

Verses 4-5 describe Jesus, too:

*Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;  
he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.*

<sup>5</sup>*It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;  
who conducts his affairs with justice.*

Jesus faced dark times and trials, but the light of God’s word was shining in the darkness for Him. When Satan tempted Him in the desert wilderness after His 40-day fast, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy to defeat the devil.

In His dealings with others, Jesus was the most gracious, merciful and righteous man who ever lived. These same three attributes – gracious, merciful and righteous – were said of God in Psalm 111. Jesus was the exact image of God in human flesh, and so these same attributes of God were seen perfectly reflected in Him, too.

A gracious man gives people good things, even when they don't deserve them. Jesus was gracious, giving people healing and food and wine that they did not deserve. Jesus was also merciful, forgiving those who needed forgiveness, even though they didn't deserve it. He met needs without regard to merit, and so was gracious and merciful.

Jesus was also righteous and he conducted His affairs with justice. These words, righteous and justice, are closely related. To be righteous is to be just and upright, to do what is right and to do so in the right way, faithful to God's standard. Jesus always did so, when He spoke the truth, when He confronted error, when He showed compassion, when He honored His Father in everything He did.

Verses 6-8 give us a powerful picture of the secure confidence of Jesus:

*For the righteous will never be moved;  
he will be remembered forever.  
<sup>7</sup> He is not afraid of bad news;  
his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.  
<sup>8</sup> His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,  
until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.*

At different times, Jesus faced the personal temptations of the devil, powerful political enemies who wanted to destroy Him, angry mobs who were shocked by Him or disappointed with Him and the knowledge that He would be betrayed by one of His closest followers and abandoned by most of His other followers. Jesus faced all of these trials, tribulations and dangers with calm confidence. He answered Satan's temptations, disarmed His accusers, walked right through mobs that wanted to throw Him off a cliff, calmly predicted both Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. He faced all of these challenges with trust in the Lord, firm confidence in His Father.

Only the anticipation of His Father's wrath and the loss of fellowship with His Father on the cross caused Jesus to agonize so deeply in the Garden. Even then, He submitted Himself to His Father's will and calmly faced what God called Him to endure.

In the end, Jesus did look in triumph on His enemies, as Satan, sin, death and hell were all defeated. All of those who had conspired together for His destruction saw their plans overthrown by the power of His death and resurrection.

And so, after Jesus looked in triumph on His enemies, verse 9 was fulfilled in His life, too:

*He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;  
his righteousness endures forever;  
his horn is exalted in honor.*

Ephesians 4 tells us that when Jesus ascended on high to the right hand of the Father, he generously gave gifts to His people, the church. Jesus' horn is exalted in honor, as He sits as the right hand of God the Father Almighty, on the highest throne in the universe.

### **C. Jesus Contrasted with the Wicked, v. 10**

Think also about how verse 10 so clearly describes the wicked enemies of Jesus:

*The wicked man sees it and is angry;  
he gnashes his teeth and melts away;  
the desire of the wicked will perish!*

Whether it's Herod the Great who sought to destroy Jesus as a baby or the scribes and Pharisees who conspired with the Sadducees and the chief priests to have Jesus killed or Judas Iscariot who loved money more than his Master, each of these perished and their desires were thwarted and overthrown. Consider Jesus' spiritual enemy, too, who tempted Him and who entered Judas Iscariot to lead him to betray Jesus. Satan was overthrown and defeated and his desire to drag all humanity down into hell with him was frustrated and unfulfilled.

## **II. The Christian Life as Growing in Christ-likeness**

But while Psalm 112 was perfectly embodied in the person and work of Jesus Christ, it is also true of all of those who belong to Jesus by grace through faith. As we are united to Christ and made His forever by His gracious gift of saving faith, so the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us and transform us into His image.

It is God's great work of redeeming grace to transform us into the likeness of Christ, just as Christ is the perfect image of God. Thus, we will be restored to our original creation purpose of being God's image-bearers in this world.

Romans 8:29-30 says: "*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*"

The Apostles taught that becoming more like Christ was the key goal of the Christian life. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*" John said in 1 John 2:6, "*the one who says he*

*abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”* And Jesus Himself taught in Luke 6:40, *“A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.”*

And so Psalm 112 is supremely a portrait of Jesus, but it is not exclusively a portrait of Jesus. It is also a picture of what God is doing in the work of sanctification in the heart and life of every true believer who belongs to Jesus.

### **A. Being a God-Fearer, v. 1**

And this picture begins with being a worshipping God-fearer. As one who praises and fears the Lord, we come to delight in God’s commandments. 1 John 5:2-4 says, *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”* (ESV)

God says there are only two kinds of people in the world, those who belong to Him by faith and those who are in rebellion against Him. In this sense, there are only two voices we can heed, the voice of our heavenly Father and His wisdom or the voice of the world, our flesh and the devil, the voice of rebellion.

We come to delight greatly in God’s commandments when we see that His commandments are not burdensome but are for our good and our freedom and joy, when we see that they reflect the loving heart of our Heavenly Father for our good. A Christian who neglects, ignores or bad-mouths the law of God is not walking in wisdom according to the fear of the Lord and is not living the life of God’s blessing, as described in Psalm 112.

### **B. Being Blessed, vv. 2-9**

When we come to delight in God’s commandments, by His grace, and as the Holy Spirit conforms us to the likeness of Jesus, we come to share in the blessings of the righteous.

#### **I. Abundance, vv. 2-3**

God blesses His people with abundance, but with truly valuable and lasting abundance. Yes, children are a blessing from the Lord. Without a doubt, we should see our children as His blessings and part of the joy of knowing Him. Earthly riches, too, come to us from God’s hand and we should praise Him for them. But we need to be careful not to think that God loves people who have lots of children more than those who have fewer children or who have been unable to have children or those whom He has called to singleness. Likewise, we need to be careful not to think that earthly riches are an absolute sign of God’s favor. Often wealth can be a snare, and God loves and blesses many who are financially poor.

The blessings of abundance God gives that really matter for eternity are spiritual. Spiritual offspring are those whom we have impacted for eternity, whom God has allowed us to reach with His word and to see

come to know Him and grow in Him. Spiritual riches are the fruit of the spirit and our eternal inheritance in Christ, kept in heaven for us.

## **2. Enlightenment, v. 4-5**

As children of God being conformed to the image of Christ, we can also know that light will dawn for us in the darkness. That is, God will bring us enlightenment through His word and His Spirit when things are darkest. God doesn't promise to keep His children out of the dark, but He promises His light.

As God enlightens us, His light bears fruit in two key ways, in our character and our actions. Our character is conformed to the character of God, as we grow in being gracious, merciful and righteous. Our actions become characterized by generosity and justice.

### **a. Generosity: *"It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;"***

Generosity here is specifically defined as lending freely to those who need it, not for interest but to meet their needs. Growing in Christlikeness teaches us to have a very loose grip on the passing treasures of this world and to use them to bless other and meet their needs, as we are able.

### **b. Justice: *"who conducts his affairs with justice"***

Justice is a concern for doing right by people, for treating people as they deserve to be treated. We don't look to take advantage of people or to use them as means to our own ends. No, we see them as made in God's image, having infinite value and being precious on God's sight. And so we seek to do right by them, to help them as we're able and always deal fairly with them.

## **3. Security, vv. 6-8**

Living life in the fear of the Lord gives us great security, for the one who fears God has no reason to fear anything or anyone else. We will face trials and we will undergo severe tests and have enemies who sometimes hate us because they hate Christ. God has not promised a problem-free life, but He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us and to be our helper at all times. With God as our help, we can stand secure. He is strong and faithful. Therefore, our hearts can always be firm, trusting in the Lord.

## **4. Honor, v. 9**

In the end, God says that it will be His delight to glorify us and exalt us. Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:1-3, ESV)

God's grace is so astounding. God justifies us by His grace on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Christ. God sanctifies us by His grace through the power of His Holy Spirit working Christ's righteousness in us. Then, at the end of this life, God glorifies us by His grace, rewarding us for the work He has done in us, welcoming us with the victor's crown that Christ has won for us. If it hardly seems fair, that's because it isn't. But that's how God is – gloriously unfair!

### **C. Being Rescued from Being Wicked, v. 10**

And finally, as we consider verse 10, think about the futility and emptiness God has saved us from. Think about what God could have given us instead of salvation. Our desires, if we were left to ourselves, would have been so empty and vain and passing that we would have been left angry, frustrated and defeated.

If you're here this morning and you don't know the blessing of fearing the Lord and you're still living for yourself and the passing pleasures of this world, then you cannot see verse 10 as the dark reality God has saved you from experiencing. You must instead see this verse as your verse, as the only verse of Psalm 112 that does apply to you.

Thankfully, by God's grace, you can turn from the futility of this verse and find the blessing of verses 1-9 by turning to Jesus and finding life in Him and Him alone!