

“The Works Of The Lord”

Introduction. Life was not easy for the Jewish remnant that returned to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon. Their neighbors were often hostile, the Persian officials were not always cooperative, and the economic situation was difficult. Ezra the scribe and the prophet Haggai describe some of these problems in their books and point out that the Jewish people were not always faithful to the Lord or generous to each other. This was why God withheld His blessing.

This psalm may have been written by one of the Levites to remind the people to put the Lord first and trust Him to meet every need. Psalm 111’s theme is the “works of the Lord.” These works are the occasion and cause of fervent praise, and an exhortation to praise God is made in the psalm. This psalm is known as a “Hallelujah Psalm” because it begins with the words, “Praise the Lord,” or “Hallelujah” in Hebrew. Furthermore, this psalm is an acrostic with each line beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This was a special style of writing and perhaps the arrangement helped the people to memorize God’s Word.

We have so many songs of praise to the Lord. One is reminded of hymns like “God Is So Good” or “Praise Him, Praise Him.” It is edifying to study the contents of specific psalms because they point us in the direction of praising and glorifying the Lord, which is our purpose here on earth (Isaiah 43:6-7).

If we cannot rejoice in our circumstances, we can always rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). This opening verse is actually a vow; the writer is determined to praise God no matter what happens. But he does not stay at home and worship in private, as important as that is; he goes to the sanctuary and joins with others, for we encourage one another as we praise God together. The “assembly of the upright” is a smaller group of the psalmist’s friends who, like him, are a part of the larger “congregation.” As he is willing to praise the Lord, there are seven attributes of the works of God in this brief psalm.

I. His Works Are Great — Psalm 111:2

- A. His works are as unsearchable as Himself (Romans 11:33). All His works praise Him because they are a credit to the worker. A building reflects the genius and ingenuity of the architect (cp. Daniel 4:30).
- B. This is evident in God’s work of creation (Revelation 4:11), redemption (Romans 3:24), and providence (Ecclesiastes 5:19). His work is great in every sense as to quality, variety, utility, and eternity. No matter what test of greatness you chose to adopt — motives, methods, spirit, or results — every work of God is great.

II. His Works Are Desirable — Psalm 111:2

- A. In Psalms, His works are expressions of His thoughts, and these thoughts are deep and precious (Psalm 92:5). The Lord’s works are sometimes His deeds, as in v. 6, but more often what He has made (e.g. the heavens, 8:3; 19:1; 102:25; and the earth, 104:24).
- B. Because these are made in wisdom they repay research, as recent centuries of rigorous study have shown. But while this verse is considered God’s charter for

the scientist and artist, verse 10 must be its partner, lest “professing to be wise” we become fools, like the men of Romans 1:18-23.

- C. Most important to us, though, is in the redemption of Jesus Christ. How earnestly this work is “sought out by all them that have pleasure therein.” If we do not care to study the Scriptures, it is an argument to prove not only that we have no pleasure, but no part in it also (Psalm 1:2; 119:35, 47, 97; 2 Timothy 2:15). One can really tell the people who hunger and thirst for the work of God (cp. Amos 8:11-13).

III. His Works Are Honorable And Glorious – Psalm 111:3

- A. There is a special dignity about the work of creation and redemption that reflects great honor on the worker. “Glorious” means “beauty, majesty, adornment,” and His royal splendor is especially evident in His great acts of redemption on behalf of his people (Exodus 15:6-7, 11; Ephesians 1:6-8).
- B. The salvation of Jesus Christ by the cross brings eternal glory to His name (Revelation 5:12-14). God always has and always will be just and righteous in dealing with all His creatures (Genesis 18:25; Psalm 96:13). That same glory can be ours (Romans 9:22-23).

IV. His Works Are Memorable – Psalm 111:4

- A. The expression “wonderful works” opens up another line of thought. It is a single word, “wonders,” and most often refers to the great saving acts of God. The first line can be rendered, “He has made a memorial of his wonders.”
- B. As Abraham went from place to place, he left behind altars and wells as memorials that God had brought him that way, The Passover was a memorial to their deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 13:3-10). The Jewish nation left “memorial stones” after they entered Canaan and during their passage through the land (Joshua 4:4-7). Jewish parents were commanded to teach their children the meaning of the special days and the memorial stones (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). There are no “sacred places” where God dwells in some unique way, but there are special places where God can bring edifying memories to mind that will help us remember His greatness and grace such as the memorial of the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- C. Who can forget the day of their conversion to God, the day of deliverance from guilt and sin? The work of forgiveness in our hearts through the blood of Jesus Christ should be the most memorable event in our lives. But the occasion of the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the overthrow of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, and the fall of Jerusalem should remind us that the last great memorable work of God will be the judgment (2 Peter 2:4-9).

V. His Works Are Powerful – Psalm 111:6

- A. Israel saw the mighty power of His working in the plagues of Egypt, in their passing through the Red Sea, in their crossing of the Jordan, and in the collapse of the walls of Jericho. The good king Amaziah, when preparing for battle with the children of Seir, learned that “God hath power to help, and to cast down” (2 Chronicles 25:8).

- B. But what has God worked for us and in us? Has He not showed us the power of His work by the cross, and by the Holy Spirit in us by virtue of His holy Word? It is God's power that is able to establish us in the gospel (Romans 16:25-27), and prove to us the veracity of His claims.

VI. His Works Are Truthful – Psalm 111:7

- A. There are no crooked, insincere, and disingenuous ways of the Lord (Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 7:28; Romans 3:4; Titus 1:2). His work in the world and His revealed instruction together display that He is trustworthy and faithful (Psalm 19:1-11).
- B. There is no standard of truth or righteousness separate from and independent of God (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17). He has made His own standard, and His grace and works of salvation are exactly what we need, and all we need. Just and true are the ways of the King of saints (Revelation 15:3).

VII. His Works Are Eternal – Psalm 111:8

- A. Man's works, like himself, will wither like the grass, but the word and work of the Lord will stand (propped up, buttressed) forever (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:25; Revelation 1:8). What God has done will never be undone (cp. Matthew 19:6).
- B. All His works are firmly established by His covenant so that He faithfully performs them (Hebrews 6:13-20). This New Covenant will last until the end of time, when Christ will deliver it up to God and our mortal bodies will be turned into immortal ones (1 Corinthians 15:24, 42-44). Until then, it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure for the purpose of inheriting eternal life (Philippians 2:13).

Conclusion. The short psalm ends with the only sensible conclusion that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (vs. 10). One who will take the preceding points and apply them will be on the path to godly wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). The fear that is spoken of in the end of Psalm 111 is not dread, but loving reverence which finds its expression in ready obedience. Dependent man must fear God. He must cherish the sense of duty and carry out the designs of his creator. Practical wisdom is asking God day by day, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"