

# For His Acts and Attributes

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**Bible Verse:** Psalm 111  
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Psalm 111, if you will turn there with me. Psalm 111, perhaps not one of the more familiar Psalms, we'll change that this evening, it opens up in verse 1 saying this,

1 Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, In the company of the upright and in the assembly. 2 Great are the works of the LORD; They are studied by all who delight in them. 3 Splendid and majestic is His work, And His righteousness endures forever. 4 He has made His wonders to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and compassionate. 5 He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever. 6 He has made known to His people the power of His works, In giving them the heritage of the nations. 7 The works of His hands are truth and justice; All His precepts are sure. 8 They are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and uprightness. 9 He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; Holy and awesome is His name. 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

Probably the most refreshing and encouraging and fascinating thing that I have personally experienced in my studies as we've gone through the Psalms up to this point, is to see the interconnection between Psalms that are grouped together, Psalms 90 to 92 are like that, Psalms 22 through 24 are like that, and we're going to see more examples of that in the immediate weeks to come, it's just interesting to me because I think I've been maybe before I really studied the Psalms like this, I was conditioned to think about them as individual units, standalone, unrelated to what came before or after, but that's clearly not the case. Whoever had his hand in arranging these Psalms had a clear pattern that he was following and you see it by the themes of the Psalms as they are connected together and it will help us understand Psalm 111 when we place it in its broader immediate context. It is obviously connected with Psalms 112 and 113, for example. The opening themes of those three Psalms are identical. Look at Psalm 111, "Praise the LORD!" In Hebrew it reads Hallelu Yah, short for Yahweh. In other words, our English word hallelujah is taken from a Hebrew construction that means "Praise Yahweh" and that is what opens up Psalm 112 as well, "Praise the LORD!" And in Psalm 113, "Praise the LORD!" They're coming together, these Psalms, their theme is to offer praise and worship to Yahweh.

Now in addition to that, Psalms 111 and Psalm 112 are both acrostic poems in Hebrew. Each line after hallelujah, each line starts with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet and so if you think about it in English, it would go A, B, C, D, the first four lines would start with a word that began with A, then B, then C, then D, and so there was a great poetic creativity that was brought to these Psalms, Psalm 111 and Psalm 112 in particular in that way. And that helps us understand the Psalm as we read it now in English. We don't see that pattern reproduced in English. The acrostic was driving the structure and the message of the Psalm more than a direct logical progression like we're used to, for example, in the letters of Paul, and so it's good to have that in mind but for now we're just seeing that there is an interconnection, a poetic interconnection between these two Psalms.

Along with that, our Psalm here tonight honors God for his works and it calls us to fear him. Look at the end of the Psalm in verse 10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." That's the conclusion that this Psalm is driving to. Well, Psalm 112 continues that theme to honor the man and to speak about the man who fears God. Look at Psalm 112:1, "Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments." And so we see over and over again there are multiple connections between these Psalms and so as we study them tonight and next week, we'll be kind of drawing them together in a way that was obviously intended by the compiler of the Psalter. We are to understand these Psalms together.

Now for Psalm 111 tonight, Psalm 111 is preeminently a Psalm of praise. Look at it again there in verse 1. Psalm 111:1 says, "Praise the LORD!" Then the concluding clause in verse 10 says as it speaks about the Lord it says, "His praise endures forever." So as so often is the case in these Psalms, the opening and the closing gathers up everything that is in between so that we understand that everything that is in between those two phrases is designed to contribute to that one primary theme of praising the Lord. And so we have this Psalm that is lifting our minds away from earth, away from ourselves, our attention is being directed not horizontally, not inwardly, our attention is being lifted up to look at Yahweh, to look at the God of the Bible and to consider who he is and what he has done.

Now we're still just kind of doing an overview of this Psalm which is what I like to do, just kind of see the whole before you look at the individual parts, and that's just so common in the Psalms. This Psalm particularly praises God for what he has done. Look at verse 2 where it says, "Great are the works of the LORD." Verse 3, "Splendid and majestic is His work." Verse 6, "He has made known to His people the power of His works." And verse 7, "The works of His hands are truth and justice." And so we are being called to consider the works of the Lord in this Psalm and to praise him on account of what he has done.

Now that leads to a question: what can we say about his works? Well, as we'll see as we go through, they are great. The works of God are splendid. They are majestic. They are powerful. They are true. They are just. They are sure. They are upright. The psalmist multiplies adjectives to describe the works of God and he does that for a particular

reason. The works of God reveal to us his character. His works tell us what God is like and so as we're going to see as we go through this Psalm and the multiplication of the description and ascription of the attributes of God, we'll see him speaking about righteousness and the grace of God and the compassion of God and the holiness of God and the awesomeness of God. In these brief 10 verses, there has been compacted for us a concentrated review of the acts and the attributes of God and we praise him for his acts and his attributes. This is the righteous response from us as we look at what God has done and the way that he has revealed himself in his works, as we look at how he's revealed himself in his word, and what they tell us about his ineffably great character, then the only proper and right response for us is to praise and honor him, and not simply us but all of the world should join in praising this God, and the obligation and the duty and the rightness of praising him is not diminished by the fact that people do not do it. God is still worthy of it even if no one praises him for it. It reminds me of when Jesus was on earth and he was being appraised and they told him to silence the people, they were creating a ruckus and he said, "I tell you if these people are silenced, the very rocks will cry out." So deserving of God is praise that there must be an outlet for it either among men or his creation will pick up the slack if men do not praise him themselves.

So our title of tonight's message with all of that introduction is "For His Acts and Attributes." For his acts and attributes, if you are taking notes, and the significance of the title is we could ask the question this way: why should we praise God? We're busy people, got a lot on our minds, a lot of sorrows, a lot of difficulties, there is a whole lot on earth to preoccupy our minds, why should we step above that, why should we rise above that and give our minds and hearts over to an undistracted worship of God? We should do that for the sake of his acts and his attributes. And so Psalm 111 calls us to praise and in the process it refreshes us with the person and the works of our great God. So I'm going to break tonight's message into two sections: praise for his acts and praise for his attributes. I acknowledge that it's a somewhat arbitrary division and somewhat arbitrary because these things overlap as you go through the Psalm but I think it's helpful for the sake of understanding to be able to process it in this way. So are you ready? I'm ready.

Point 1: praise for his acts. The psalmist writes this for the sake of public worship. Psalm 111:1 says,

1 Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, In the company of the upright and in the assembly.

So the psalmist opens up by saying, giving his personal commitment, "I will give thanks to the LORD with all of my heart," and this is a mark of good spiritual leadership, isn't it, that a man comes into your presence perhaps, he's committed to the Lord and he is unashamed and he's bold and he's outspoken about it and he says, "I will give thanks to the LORD with all of my heart," and he does so publicly. There's something invigorating about that. There's something that draws others to want to worship in that same way. And so it's important just to do a little bit of in-house encouragement here, it's important when our men step up onto the platform to lead us in music or to lead us in Scripture reading as they're opening the service, it's very important for them to have the honor of God and to

have conditioned their heart and to have taken time for their own heart to be right before they step up, and then when they step up out of the fullness of their heart they say, "Let's praise the Lord. Let's praise the Lord together. Let's honor God together." This is what the man of God should be doing on a consistent basis if he's going to have a public presence before the people of God because the people will tend to follow a man that is devoted to the Lord with the thanksgiving full in his heart. So this is what everyone should do. Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind. It's not simply those who have a public role to play in the assembly and in worship, but this is what is proper for all of us, boy and girl, man and woman. You know, no matter how quiet you may be, it's okay to be quiet, believe it or not I'm kind of a quiet guy. It's hard to believe that whenever I step up here and I speak for 60 minutes without stopping and I know how that goes, but even in the quiet of your own heart, this should be the commitment of the believing heart, "I want my heart to be devoted over to giving thanks to the Lord in an undivided, unified way." So this is what everyone should do.

Now along with that, this Psalm points to another important principle as we praise God for what he has done. This is to be done corporately and that's why it is so good for every one of you to be here in this room tonight, it's so encouraging to me that you take an evening out to be here for this because this is what the people of God are supposed to do, we are supposed to assemble together and praise God and stimulate one another to love and good deeds. You know, for whatever we think about the past year that's gone by and online services and all of that, you know, there's this increasing sense as you read what people say on social media and all of that, that as people try to enforce safety restrictions, God bless them, as they try to enforce that, they step further and try to impinge upon the role of the people of God and what the people of God are to do and say, "Do you know what? You can worship just fine at home. There is online services. You can listen to that and you can praise God in the privacy of your own home and that's just as good." Now look, I want you to understand and I believe that you already understand it because you're here tonight, here with me in the room, that's not true and whatever, you know, we're not talking about, you know, should people be careful and all that, that's not my point tonight, what my point is that there is something serious that is lost when that is what is done. And corporately the church cannot accept the imposition of isolation as though that was an appropriate way for the people of God to worship on an open ended unending basis. That's not true and that's why so many pastors have resisted the government restrictions that have tried to be put upon them, it's because they understand the importance of the public assembly of the believers. There is something about face-to-face communication. There is something about having a loving believer put their arm around you in a time of discouragement that cannot be accomplished online. And so while we may accept the fact that online things have been necessary for a while and that some people are necessarily for health reasons homebound and we sympathize with them and we love them and accept them for that, corporately, corporately we understand that we have an obligation before God to gather publicly in order to magnify his name as this Psalm calls us to do. I'm going to do it in the company of the upright and in the assembly and Hebrews 10 famously talks about that, "Let us not forsake our assembling together."

So we cannot let the government, we cannot let nagging liberal Christians try to tell us how we are to worship. We must resist that. And if circumstances call and we closed down for a few weeks when it seemed like the pandemic was going to be a very serious matter with a lot of risk in gathering corporately together, we shut down for a while. We were willing to cooperate with that, but there comes a time where you have to reassert your right to this public worship regardless of what the government says. It's that important. It's that important and God is worthy of that kind of worship and praise, and we will obey him and gather together to honor him even if there's resistance to it. It's that important. This is what God calls his people to do, he calls us to gather together and to give worship to him and to stimulate one another to good deeds.

So I just want you to understand the importance of this and I just get so irritated seeing people who obviously have no love for Christ and no love for his people trying to tell the church what it ought to do. That is for the church to decide, not for outsiders who have nothing to do with loving our God and loving our Christ. We will decide what we need to do. We will decide how we will praise our God. We will not let the government tell us the way that that will be done. It's that important and the past year has probably, I think everyone in ministry has learned a lot through what we've gone through. People have come to slightly different conclusions but for us, this is where our church stands without apology.

So public worship, he calls the upright to join him in giving thanks to the Lord, and then he proceeds, as we begin in verse 2, he proceeds to give us many reasons why God should be praised. It's one thing to say let's praise the Lord, and you know and you can get swept up in the emotion of that, but the thinking person, the sentiment being in the audience should say, "Okay, well, why should we praise the Lord?" We need to have a clear understanding of why we are praising him. This is not simply a cultural event. We're not doing this simply for social reasons because this is what we do. We must understand something about the Lord and what he has done so that our praise is informed and not merely a mindless emotional reaction to external stimulation. We appropriate, we understand these things in the world by faith and in faith we respond in worship, and so the psalmist tells us in verse 2 why we should praise God, and the ground of praise in this Psalm is the marvelous acts of God.

Look at verses 2 and 3.

2 Great are the works of the LORD; They are studied by all who delight in them. 3 Splendid and majestic is His work, And His righteousness endures forever. 4 He has made His wonders to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and compassionate.

Now the basic point being made here is really really simple. Don't let the simplicity of the point cause you to miss the profundity of what is being said. God's great works reveal his great worth. His great works reveal his great worth. A God who does great things is obviously a great God.

Now in this section of Scripture, in these verses here, verses 2 and 3, he does not detail exactly what he has in mind, but just think about the whole biblical record with me just in very broad and general terms. God created the world by his spoken word. There was nothing, which we can't even fathom, there was nothing and then God spoke and there was a universe. Now that creation by divine fiat reveals a God who is great, a God who is awesome, a God who is of unlimited power and wisdom and intelligence and ability; to be able to speak that into existence tells us something about who he is. That's Genesis 1:1. Now as we live in the flow of thousands of years of subsequent history, we look and we see that what God has done is that he has sustained his creation. He has kept the stars in perfect orbit. He has provided food for his people, as the psalmist will go on to say, and we see the magnitude of the design, we see the magnitude of the excellence, the magnitude of the order whether you look at the smallest microbe or you look at that galaxies as they orbit in the universe, whether you look down closely or you look up broadly. Everywhere you see the display of God and his greatness, calling forth a response of praise.

Now we realize that men don't take this too seriously but what you and I have to understand and the way that you and I approach it is this, is that our thoughts are not driven by what the world thinks, our thoughts about the importance of this is driven by what God thinks about it all, and what God thinks about it all is found in Romans 1. Turn there with me. Romans 1. So great is this duty of worshiping God based on the way that he has revealed himself in creation, that it invokes the wrath of God who refused to praise him when they see it and do not respond. Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." This is what we were saying earlier, the works of God display something about the power and greatness of God and therefore call forth his praise. As a result of that, as a result of that a refusal to praise God, a failure to praise God is in the eyes of God inexcusable. This is just based on general revelation. And so it goes on in verse 21 and says it is a morally culpable failure to refuse to worship God when you see what is all around you in the skies and on our planet, "For even though they knew God," verse 21, "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." They suppress the truth in unrighteousness it says there in verse 18. They suppress it. They hold it down. They refuse to acknowledge it. If they acknowledge it, then they've got a problem with sin that they've got to deal with and men love their sin.

And so God has done a great work that calls forth a great praise for all of mankind and there are consequences. You know, think about it, there are consequences to the fact that men wake up day after day for decade after decade, 70, 80 years of waking up and seeing the consistency of the sunrise and sunset and the orbit of the stars, and to refuse to acknowledge God in that day after day after day after day, there's 80 years of accumulated guilt by the time someone is laid in the ground if they don't come to God and worship him through the Lord Jesus Christ. So what we're talking about has massive

massive implications far beyond what the futile thinking and the shriveled minds of men might contemplate here today. But what about us, what about believing people? What's really sweet about this Psalm is that it tells us, tells the people of God that God in a special way has done his work for his people. There is a special way that God works for his people, those that he calls to himself, that is not like what, it's not the same for unbelieving people. There's a special covenant relationship between God and his people and so his works are an expression of his faithfulness to us.

Look at verse 5, we'll jump ahead just a bit here. "He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever." Verse 6, "He has made known to His people the power of His works" Verse 9, "He has sent redemption to His people." So to his people he has done this and so when we gather together, we realize as those that have been saved by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, speaking in New Testament terms now, as we gather together, joined together by a common bond of the Holy Spirit, saved by a common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, sharing in a common salvation, we gather together and we realize that there is a unique and special way that God has made himself known and he has done it on our behalf. So we love him for that. We love him for the fact that he chose us out of sin and drew us to Christ. We love him for the fact that the Spirit created faith in us so that we might put our faith in Christ and be saved. We love him for the fact that he chose us before the foundation of the world. We love him for the fact that Christ died 2,000 years ago in an act of great redemption for his people. We love him for the fact that the Spirit worked in our hearts and imparted new life to us. We love him for the fact that the Spirit keeps us. We love him for the fact that one day we will be glorified in heaven with him. All of these things reflecting the great work of God on behalf of his people. A work, so to speak, in election. A work in the cross. A work in regeneration. A work in sanctification. A work in glorification.

I mean, when you think about these things rightly, beloved, and you know, look, you're like me, I'm like you, we get focused on what's happening right now and we kind of lose sight of these things left to ourselves. You know, you take the ember out of the fire and we're kind of off by ourselves and, you know, the flame goes out, but when we come together and remember the works of God, remember the acts of God on our behalf, our challenge isn't to find reasons to praise him, our challenge is to know where to start. "Where do I even start to praise You for Your works? Do I start at Genesis 1:1 and creation? Well, you know, that takes up all of my mind. Do I start in the fact that Christ left heaven to come to earth? He was obedient to You to the point of death, even death on a cross, and He did this in obedience to save unworthy sinners like me, I mean, that takes forever to give thanks for. To give Him thanks for mercies day by day and for providential blessings, do we remember and give thanks for the way that even our trials sanctify us and He works out good even in the midst of the evil that people do to us." It just goes on and on and on. Where do you even start?

One thing you could say as we contemplate this as his people, as we contemplate this as believing people, we realize that our slowness to praise God and our halfhearted praising of him, and our failure to bring these things to mind and to offer him our thanks for them on a day by day basis is a reflection of the sinfulness of our hearts. It's wrong for us not to

be more fully and wholly devoted to praising God, and this Psalm holds up a mirror to us and helps us to see how far short we fall of really loving him as we should. Now aren't you glad that when Christ died for our sins, that he died even for our sins of halfhearted worship and cold prayers and all of that? You just see the magnitude of how much Christ has cleansed us from when you realize how greatly God is to be praised for his acts and how slow we are to respond with wholehearted worship like that. Well, studying Psalms like this stimulate us and help us and sanctify us to do better as we go forward from this day forth.

You know, it's funny as I preach through the Psalms, as I'm preaching each Psalm, whatever Psalm, you ask me what's your favorite Psalm, you know, you've preached through a lot of them. My favorite Psalm is whatever one I'm preaching on right now. Right now Psalm 111 is my favorite Psalm in the entire Bible. Next week it will be Psalm 112 the way this goes. But we see the richness of God's works and we see the richness of what it tells us about him.

Look at verse 3: splendid, majestic is his work, his righteousness endures forever. Verse 4, he's gracious and compassionate. I mean, think about what Christ has done to save you, my Christian brother, my Christian sister. You unworthy in your sin, Christ coming to earth full of mercy, his hands dripping, as it were, with grace and kindness and concern and patience for you, and what does that tell us that our Lord Jesus is like? He's gracious. He's compassionate. He's splendid. He's majestic. All of these adjectives describing what our Lord Jesus Christ is like which is what you would expect when Christ is Yahweh incarnate.

So to study what he has done stimulates us to faith and obedience. Verse 4, look at it there, "He has made His wonders to be remembered." Now to remember is more than just a memory recall of a certain fact. What we're doing here tonight, we're not simply remembering facts about what God has done as an intellectual exercise. No. No, we are considering these things so that they would move our heart to worship him more fully and more appropriately. To remember in this way, to remember in a biblical way the acts of God promotes devotion to him, promotes worship of him, promotes faith in him. He is gracious and compassionate and we put the faith of our heart in that. We trust him for that. We honor him for that and the works of God show that what our heart is responding to is true. It's true. It's right.

God's acts in history reveal his righteousness and his power. Think about it with me just to pick out a few Old Testament examples that were kind of the basis of the history of Israel. God's people were in slavery in Egypt, they were in bondage under the power of the greatest nation on earth at the time, and they were in great hardship and had been so for centuries, for 400 years they suffered in slavery in Egypt, and what did God do? He sent 10 plagues on Egypt, he rebuked Pharaoh by Moses, and he led his people out, and he led them out, he led them through the Red Sea, miraculously parting the waters so his people went through on dry land, and when the Egyptians tried to follow, the waters came back and destroyed the greatest army on earth. Now what does that tell you about God and what does that tell you about the God of the Bible? He's pretty great. He's great.



He's mighty in power, and he is great in compassion and love on his people. He looked on this miserable group, this miserable weak people and rather than doing what earth does and giving honor to those who have power, God had compassion on his weak people and delivered them from their bondage and brought them into a land of their own. That's great. That's righteous. That's power. That's compassion. That's what God did. That's who he is. And while they were, you know, it took them 40 years traveling through the wilderness because of their sinfulness against him, what did he do? He miraculously fed them, gave them manna from heaven day after day after day for 40 years feeding them in that way, bringing forth water from rocks in order to care for them in their daily needs, protecting them from the enemies that would have attacked them. And then further on as they crossed the Jordan River, they entered into the land, God gave them victory and displaced wicked nations so that they could be established in a land of their own and truly become the nation that God had promised to Abraham some 600 years earlier.

Now look, we contemplate these things, we think about these things and we realize what they're telling us is what God has done in history reveals his faithfulness to his people and it reveals his own intrinsic glory. No one can do this. There is no God who has done anything like that. There is no God who is raised from the dead. He is unique. He is sanctified, meaning he is set apart. He is holy in his glory. He is alone in his magnificence. And when we start to see that and have it sink down into our hearts, we give him praise for it.

Look at verse 5.

5 He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever.

God's actions in time showed that he remembered his covenant centuries later, and if God remembered his covenant 600 years later and delivered his people under the hand of Moses, you and I should be able to look at that and say, "Do you know what? He's going to be faithful to me too." In fact, as I like to say from a New Testament perspective, we have far more reason for a strong robust faith in our God, a strong and robust faith in our Christ because we look back at the cross, we look back at an even greater act of redemption and deliverance when we look back and see what Christ did in overcoming sin, Satan and judgment, when he bore our sins on our behalf at the cross. And so we remember what God has done and it strengthens our faith today.

How strong and mighty is he? Well, I alluded to it earlier. He moves nations as he wishes. Verse 6,

6 He has made known to His people the power of His works, In giving them the heritage of the nations.

Israel went into a land that other nations had owned and now they possessed it. God has displaced nations to establish Israel in the land and revealed his righteousness and

compassion for his people. These are great and mighty works, beloved, and we have the truthfulness and the accuracy of them certified to us in his holy inerrant word.

And so we find something here. I have friends who are genuine biblical scholars, I'm grateful for them and they are godly men, the ones that I'm thinking of, but what you and I need to understand is that when we read Scripture, when we study the Bible privately, corporately, publicly, whatever the case may be, beloved, we have to understand that our goal is to do more than to acquire mental facts and apprehension. The goal of Bible study, the goal of studying the works and the word of God is to grow in faith, to grow in devotion and to grow in worship of him, to have the word sanctify us and to change us and to conform us to the image of Christ. This is a spiritual book and a spiritual God who has said in John 4:24 that those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. There is to be a life-altering dimension to our interaction with God's word over time that is more than just simply becoming more knowledgeable people about biblical facts, right? I mean, what does Scripture say? It says knowledge puffs up. Knowledge makes arrogant but love edifies.

Well, that's the praise for his acts. Let's look quickly at the praise for his attributes. Point 2: the praise for his attributes. As I said earlier, the acts of God reveal something of the attributes of God. The works of God reveal the worth of God, you could say. Look at verses 7 and 8.

7 The works of His hands are truth and justice; All His precepts are sure. 8  
They are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and  
uprightness.

Now the word "sure" there, "All His precepts are sure," and all of a sudden we just have a whole other vista being opened to us for why we should love God and praise him. For all of the magnificent things that we've already said, there is still more to be said. You can never exhaust the reasons for praising God, but this word "sure" indicates that God is trustworthy and he is dependable. His character is never shadowed by unfaithfulness, you could say. He is always faithful to his people. Beloved, he is always working for good. Whatever happens in your life, he is always working it for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord because he's trustworthy, he's dependable. Jesus said in John 10, "I have them in My hand and no one can pluck My sheep from My hand." He is sure. This is trustworthy. This is dependable. God keeps his people. He maintains order in the skies. He directs providence on the earth, talking about it in the greatest most macro sense, in the most micro-sense he sees the spiral when it falls, he numbers the hairs on your head.

So nothing escapes his loving care, his loving oversight of his people. Nothing. And what does that mean for you and me? We're in good hands. We're in good hands. If a God like that has saved us, we must be in good hands. And beloved, think with me, even as you're walking through trying to find your way through the tempest of life and rolling high waves that just crash upon you again and again, the difficulty of work or family situations

that just never seem to, just seem to grind again and again, well, just remember the wise hand of your God has appointed these things for you, the wise hand of your God hasn't brought them without purpose. He'll accomplish his work in you through them. His purpose is to sanctify you, to conform you more and more to the image of Christ, that there is no one in authority in your life that is doing anything that God has not previously ordained for them to have over you because God is working out a purpose. So that means that when things are dark and things are difficult and the tears flow, it means that we have a refuge that we can go to, we can go to the refuge of our God who does all things well, who loves his people with an infinite love and a perfection of wisdom, and it gives us a sense that though I can't see this, though I may not even like this, I can continue moving forward knowing that in the end God will do good to me and there cannot be any possible exception to that. You see, these things have consequences. What you believe about the sovereignty of God, the faithfulness of God, the love of God, it has enormous consequences and it's so important for us to be feeding ourselves with God's word, reading it for ourselves, hearing it taught in God-honoring ways so that our faith is strengthened and that we glorify God as we walk through the life that he has given to us. And as we do that, as we remember, remember this is what verse 4 said, go back to it with me, Psalm 111:4, "He has made His wonders to be remembered," and we said that this idea of remembrance was more than just recall, it's promoting devotion to God because of who he is. Well, as we remember and this kind of faith is stirred up in us, then we're in the position to remember the ultimate picture of it all.

Verse 9,

9 He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; Holy and awesome is His name.

Now in the Old Testament, they knew redemption as their redemption from Egypt, their deliverance from slavery in that land. Slaves were purchased in order to set them free, that's what redemption means. For us, we look back not to Egypt to remember our redemption, we look back to the cross and we realize that we have a redemption in Christ that is even better than what Israel had. We've not just been delivered from physical slavery, we've been delivered from the slavery of Satan. We've been delivered from the slavery, our slavery to sin, our slavery to judgment. People walk about thinking that they're free when they're in all kinds of bondage to iniquity. That's not freedom. You and I who have been saved by Christ, we understand what real freedom is, what real deliverance is, it's to be delivered from the power of sin, not to be set free to just go deeper and deeper into it. So great is the redemption. So we look at this statement from New Testament eyes and we realize that God has sent redemption to us in Christ, and we try to get to the bottom of the well of that and we realize there is no bottom to get to. We just go deeper and deeper and just find that it gets better and better.

So what can we conclude from this? The psalmist has led us in worship for the acts of God and worship in response to the attributes of God. He is holy and awesome and certainly everything that we've seen tonight undergird all of that, you know, and you just, words get so diluted, don't they? "Hey, look at my new car. Oh, that's awesome!" You

know, and we have to use the same word to talk about, you know, an earthly commodity that we used to describe the greatness of the eternal God. It's one of the limitations of language, I guess. But we see the awesomeness of God, the holiness of God as we study his acts and his attributes, and we're just humbled, we're just humbled before him, humbled by his greatness, humbled by his grace, and all of these things give us an informed worship and this is what the psalmist is driving us to. Verse 10 almost might seem to be out of context, it's actually the climax of what he is driving us to in verse 10. In light of his acts, in light of his attributes, verse 10,

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

You see, beloved, the acts of God and the attributes of God bring us to fear him. Now we've taught on the fear of the Lord in the past here, and this fear that the psalmist is talking about here is not the craven terror of one who fears the judgment that's going to come on him. We don't have as Christians, as those who have been truly born again, we don't fear God in that way because our judgment was absorbed by Christ at the cross. So we're not fearing God in the sense that he might judge us after all in the end. No. No. No. No, that's a total misunderstanding of redemption. God's redeemed us and delivered us from that and so we're not afraid of that in Christ because Christ has suffered the penalty on our behalf, we've been delivered from death and therefore there is no fear of condemnation, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:1.

So what does this fear mean, then? What kind of fear is appropriate for those who have been redeemed in Christ? Well, as we've defined it in the past, this fear of God is something different. This fear of God, I'm defining it for you now, it is the wholehearted life, the wholehearted life of humble worship that you render to God in Christ and through Christ in response to his saving mercy to you. The fear of God is a wholehearted life of worship in response to his acts and attributes which includes all of the greatness of what he has done in the universe, and the greatness of what he has done in our own hearts and who he is to us. You know, we haven't even gotten to, we haven't even discussed, beloved, the fact that Christ tells us to address God as Father. Matthew 6:9, "Pray then in this way, 'Our Father who is in heaven.'" Father, a word evoking the sense of love and trust and commitment and security. The God who is great in his acts and great in his attributes is a God who is also our Father, the one who loves us and cares for us and watches over us, who saved us in Christ.

When you try, even, I mean, you get lost in the process, when all of these things start to captivate your mind, as they should, then you realize that to call Christ Lord is to recognize that all of life belongs to him. All that I have and all that I am belongs to him and gladly so. You know, people in some circles like to talk about their tithe, you know, I'm going to make sure I give God his 10%. My friend, when you understand these things, you realize God's got 100%. He owns it all. And so we don't divvy out something, 10% to God and 90% for us. It's gladly all his. It's all from his hands. What do you have that you haven't received? And so you give all of your life, that wholehearted life of

humble worship, of devotion, of service, of obedience that you render in response to his saving work in your life, and a life lived that way leads you to wisdom.

Look at it there in verse 10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." I love the start of that. It's the foundation of wisdom. It's not that you start in fear and then move on to better things, fear permeates it all. Wisdom is the skill of living life well and the fear of the Lord in the manner in which we're talking about it is at the heart of all of it. Let me tell you something, let me just make a really dogmatic statement like I like to make sometimes, a lot of times, I guess. There is no one living life well who is rejecting Christ. No one is living life well who is ignorant of these things or ignoring them. Their prosperity doesn't matter, their happy home lives don't matter, none of that matters because in the end it's all gone and you don't have anything to show for it. It's all emptiness as the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us.

So the fear of the Lord is the beginning of the skill of living life well and Scripture makes this point repeatedly. Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction." Chapter 9, verse 10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Chapter 15, verse 33, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor comes humility." And Ecclesiastes 12:13, "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person." So Scripture makes no bones about it. When you realize who God is, it's obvious, beloved, it's obvious that the fear of him has to be at the core of right living, and a life that has not somehow been oriented to fear God, to honor him, to give him supremacy and all of your affections, is a life that's missing the whole purpose of what Scripture says life is about.

Well, this Psalm concludes, I had someone ask me recently, someone asked me recently, "Do you ever get discouraged if you don't see a response to your preaching?" That's a good question, you know. "Does that matter? You know, how does that affect you?" I said, "Well, you know, every preacher would love to see visible fruit. The reality of ministry is that you don't see the impact of it. It's a blessing from God that He shields our eyes from the impact of the ministry of His word." But I said, "No, it doesn't discourage me because I trust in the sovereignty of God, you know? I just do what I do and what God does with it is up to Him. I'm okay with that. I'd rather have it that way than be responsible for the results." But not only that, here in verse 10 in this closing verse, you see the reason that we can persevere in it all. It says in verse 10, "His praise endures forever." Do you know what? The truth of God is going to continue on triumphantly. God is going to preserve his truth. The word of God cannot fail. The word of God abides forever, Isaiah 40. So as you and I study it together, as we proclaim it together, as we minister his word together, we are doing something that has everlasting value and we are serving, the truth that we are serving is going to continue long after we're gone and will ultimately triumph in the end. So how could I possibly be discouraged in serving truth like that? You know, what does it matter if I see results or not? I mean, yeah, you want to see results but the truth transcends what I see with my eyes, that's what I'm trying

desperately to say. There is lasting greatness to the power, love and care of God, lasting greatness to his acts, lasting greatness to his attributes.

One commentator said this and I'll close with this. He says, "Is it not the highest wisdom to fear such a God as this, so great in His works, so true in His word, so faithful to His covenant? To fear and to keep His commandments is the whole of man, to praise Him, man's highest employment both now and forever."

Beloved, I ask you: do you fear the Lord? Do you love him and praise him for his acts and for his attributes?

Let's pray together.

*God, we lift our hearts to You in wondrous adoration, grateful love, confessing, Father, that we fall so far short of what You deserve and yet resting in Your grace that cleanses us from sin and counts us as having the very righteousness of Christ Himself. How we love You. How we praise You. How we ask You to work these things out in our hearts and in our lives in the days to come. May each one here, Father, be those counted among those who fear the Lord, who live life with wisdom as shown by their affections for You. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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