

# Mirror, Mirror

*Becoming Like the God You Worship*

Vs		Psalm 111 <i>Hallelujah</i>
1	א (aleph, ' ) ב (bet, b)	<b>All</b> my heart will <b>thank</b> the LORD, <b>Before the company</b> of the upright, in the congregation.
2	ג (gimel, g) ד (dalet, d)	<b>Colossal</b> are the works of the LORD, <b>Diligently studied</b> by all who delight in them.
3	ה (he, h) ו (vav, v)	<b>Exquisite</b> and majestic is his work; <b>Forever</b> enduring is his <b>righteousness</b> .
4	ז (zayin, z)	<b>God</b> has caused his wondrous works to be <b>remembered</b> ;
5	ח (het, ch) ט (tet, t) י (yod, y)	<b>He</b> is <b>gracious</b> and merciful. <b>Imparting food</b> for those who fear him; <b>Jehovah remembers</b> his covenant forever.
6	כ (kaf, k)	<b>Keeping</b> his people awestruck by the <b>power</b> of his works,
7	ל (lamed, l) מ (mem, m) נ (nun, n)	<b>Looking</b> to give <b>them</b> the inheritance of the Gentiles. <b>Made things</b> of his hands are faithful and just; <b>Never-failing</b> are all his precepts.
8	ס (samech, s) ע (ayin, ' )	<b>On</b> and on, they are <b>established</b> forever. <b>Performed</b> with faithfulness and uprightness.
9	פ (pey, p) צ (tsade, ts)	<b>Quick redemption</b> he sent to his people <b>Ruling</b> through his covenant forever.
10	ק (qof, q) ר (resh, r) ש (shin, sh) ת (tav, t)	<b>Sacred</b> and awesome is his Name! <b>The</b> fear of the LORD is the <b>beginning</b> of wisdom; <b>Understanding</b> belongs to all who practice it. <b>Veneration</b> of him endures forever!

Vs		Psalm 112 <i>Hallelujah</i>
1	א (aleph, ' ) ב (bet, b)	<b>Always blessed</b> is the man who fears the LORD, <b>Because</b> he delights in his <b>commandments!</b>
2	ג (gimel, g) ד (dalet, d)	<b>Children</b> will be <b>mighty</b> in the land; <b>Descendants</b> of the upright will be blessed.

3	ה (he, h)	<b>E</b> meralds and diamonds are in his house,
	ו (vav, v)	<b>F</b> orever his <b>righteousness</b> endures.
4	ז (zayin, z)	<b>G</b> loom <b>gives way</b> to light for the upright;
	ח (het, ch)	<b>H</b> e is <b>gracious</b> , merciful, and righteous.
5	ט (tet, t)	<b>I</b> t is <b>well</b> with the man who deals generously and lends;
	י (yod, y)	<b>J</b> ustice is how he <b>conducts</b> his affairs.
6	כ (kaf, k)	<b>K</b> nowing <b>that</b> the righteous will never be moved;
	ל (lamed, l)	<b>L</b> asting shall be his name.
7	מ (mem, m)	<b>M</b> isfortune he shall not fear;
	נ (nun, n)	<b>N</b> ow his heart trusts firmly in the LORD.
8	ס (samech, s)	<b>O</b> ver and over, his heart <b>remains steady</b> and fearless;
	ע (ayin, ')	<b>P</b> erceiving his adversaries, <b>until</b> he looks in triumph.
9	פ (pey, p)	<b>Q</b> uite <b>free</b> is his hand in giving to the poor;
	צ (tsade, ts)	<b>R</b> ighteousness endures forever in him;
	ק (qof, q)	<b>S</b> ublime and honorable is his <b>horn</b> .
10	ר (resh, r)	<b>T</b> he <b>wicked</b> man sees it and is angry;
	ש (shin, sh)	<b>U</b> nderstanding nothing, he gnashes his <b>teeth</b> and melts away.
	ת (tav, t)	<b>V</b> eering towards hell is the <b>desire</b> of the wicked! <sup>1</sup>

Psalm 111-112

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## Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

*WHICH ONE HAS THE* memorable impact:

### Number 1:

“Psssttt. Hey. Guy. Yeah, you. Shady man in the mirror. Show yourself for once, will you? I need to talk to you. I wanna ask ya a question. Yeah, so I was wonderin’, I was

<sup>1</sup> **Bold** = the first word of the line that starts, in Hebrew, with the appropriate letter.

thinkin', I mean, I pull out my brush and makeup, like forty times a day. I let the spray fly like crazy. You know what I'm talkin' about. So, tell me. How gorgeous am I, really? I mean, you don't have to answer or nuthin'. I mean, I pretty much already know and stuff. But hey, if you want to talk, I'll be here staring at myself for a couple more hours.

## **Number 2:**

*Slave in the magic mirror,  
Come from the farthest space.  
Through wind and darkness,  
I summon thee!  
Speak! Let me see thy face.  
Magic mirror on the wall,  
Who is the fairest one of all?*

As you can \*obviously\* tell, I'm a pretty good prose writer. But I have this nagging feeling that Walt's poetic way of telling it is more memorable and, indeed, conveys the message in a much simpler and better way.

Psalms 111 returns us for the first time since Psalm 37 to a form of poetry used in the Psalter called **acrostic**. Acrostic songs are essentially **alphabet songs**, where each new line

begins with the next letter of the alphabet. The purpose of such songs seems to have been **to ease memorization** of the song, while simultaneously conveying **a message of completion** or totality. “From A to Z” as we say. Or “**Alpha and Omega**” as Jesus described himself.

What is really interesting is that Psalm 112 is *also* an acrostic. And, there are two more songs that are acrostics: 119 and 145. By itself, that fact is rather meaningless. But taken in conjunction with the other songs in Book V, and we get this marvelous symmetry going on in the arrangement of songs in the collection. In other words, they are hear for a greater reason than even themselves.

### **Book V (with the last two songs of Book IV)**

Historical Songs (105-106)

Preparation Song (107)

David Songs (108-110)

Hallelujah Songs (111-118):

(**Acrostic**:111-112; **Non-acrostic**: 113-118)

**Psalm 119 Acrostic**

Songs of ascent (120-134)

Historical Psalms (145-136)

Preparation Song (137)

David Songs (138-145)

**Non-acrostic**: 138-144; **Acrostic**: 145

Hallelujah Songs (146-150)

As we've seen, this collection (Book V) is called “**The Return of the King**” by some scholars. Certainly, the Davidic *select-a-set* (108-110) that we spent the last two times looking at gives us the immediate context of **the King**, and the prophetic nature of those songs, which are so highly Messianic, showed us that the Jews were clearly awaiting the return of their King in some form.

But what form would that be? More precisely, what kind of a person would the Messiah be who was coming in the future? This is what Psalms 111-112 now attempt to show us through a kind of **mirror, mirror on the wall**.

What do mirrors do? They reflect the image standing before them. What does it say about mankind at creation? We were made “**in the image of God.**” And of the Son it says especially, “**He is the image of the invisible God**” (**Col 1:16**). This is exactly what we are going to see in Psalms 111-112.

The idea I have in mind here is that Psalm 111 tells us about **the kind of God we worship**. Its focus is especially on God's awesome work in Israel. In describing those works, it also describes him. He is the one standing before the mirror.

Psalm 112 tells us about what kind of people worship this God. It isn't full of commandments. More like observations. And through some truly fantastic poetic

symmetry with Ps 111 including **identical acrostics** (a complete alphabet), **the same length of song** with the same number of lines (each song is 11 lines each paralleling perfectly in letters), the **same introduction** (“Hallelujah”), **repeating phrases and ideas in the very same lines** (sixth line = “**and his righteousness endures forever**”; eighth line = “**gracious and compassionate**”; fifteenth line = “**upheld**”), and even an overall structure that links them together,

- A** The honor and eternal righteousness of God (111:1-3)
- B** God will remember (111:4a)
- C** God is gracious and merciful (111:4b)
- D** Those that fear the LORD (111:5a)
- E** God will remember his covenant (111:5b)
- F** **The power of God’s works (111:6)**
- F<sup>1</sup>** **God’s works are true and just (111:7-8)**
- E<sup>1</sup>** God commanded his covenant (111:9)
- D<sup>1</sup>** Fearing the LORD is wise and blessed (111:10-112:1)
- C<sup>1</sup>** The godly man is gracious and merciful (111:2-5)
- B<sup>1</sup>** The godly will be remembered (111:6-8)
- A<sup>1</sup>** The honor and eternal righteousness of the godly (112:9-10)<sup>2</sup>

the message of Psalm 112 teaches you how to become more godly. It isn’t found by trying harder to be like God, by trying to obey him, by watching CNN or Fox News, by

<sup>2</sup> Robert Alden, “Chiastic Psalms (III): A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 101-150,” JETS 21/3 (Sept 1978): 204 [199-210].

posting discussions on Facebook, by getting all worked up by world affairs, by anything. It is found in one simple thing. Studying and learning about who God is. Period. As you do this, by God's grace, the mirror begins to reflect back the image of its creator. Then, you find yourself doing after you are becoming.

The central focus of Psalm 112 is the Image of God in Christ. He is the perfect image of the Father, and you are conformed to his image when you understand who he is and what he has done. You become the man of Psalm 112, because he is The Man of Psalm 112.

Before we begin, a word on translation is appropriate on a very practical level. While we usually use the ESV, as I have been doing throughout this series, I have attempted my own acrostic translation into English which goes through our first 22 letters, paralleling the Hebrew, yet using our letter order instead of theirs, but trying to stay as close to the ESV as possible after the first word. As I was looking for help, I discovered a beautiful translation of both songs (along with Psalm 119) where the author uses our 26 letter alphabet, thus bringing the songs fully into English. But, she also rhymed the verses, and used alliteration and other devices, giving us a profoundly English way of thinking

about these songs that fits the way we sing music, even though the Jews did not like line-ending rhymes the way the English do. She did so, as much as is possible, without sacrificing meaning, which in her estimation (gladly!) is more important than form. This reflects to me the best of both worlds that biblical poetry creates.<sup>3</sup>

God inspired not just words, but also form. For those more poetically inclined, the form conveys things that words can't. Rather than the brute mind, the form works on the man deep within his being, on an almost unconscious level. We do not do ourselves a favor when we ignore this part of who God made us to be. God's word is so all-encompassing, that it has parts that everyone is drawn to. Some of us love the historical parts, others the theological, others the practical, others get excited about numbers, still others are drawn to the poetry. This is what it means to be

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<sup>3</sup> These translations were put into a theological journal where the author argued her case for the translation. While I believe that when it comes to poetry, multiple theories of translation are helpful (since no one of them by itself can perfectly communicate the meaning in that it is simply impossible to bring over all the linguistic and stylistic points of a song from another language at once), she has some interesting observations that I think are worth contemplating. For example, she writes, "A significant part of the meaning and beauty is inherent in the form itself. Both form and content are woven together in a poem to reflect the beauty and order imposed by the author. Meaning is clearly conveyed extralexically [beyond the bare words]." See Brenda H. Boerger, "Extending Translation Principles for Poetry and Biblical Acrostics," *Notes on Translation* 11.2 (1997): 36 [35-56]. [https://www.sil.org/system/files/reapdata/14/61/15/146115256701042800118990279703957942589/Boerger\\_Extending\\_translation\\_principles\\_NOT11\\_2.pdf](https://www.sil.org/system/files/reapdata/14/61/15/146115256701042800118990279703957942589/Boerger_Extending_translation_principles_NOT11_2.pdf)36.

human, to be created with different tendencies that draw us to God. This is what it means to be the church ... different gifts that make up one body of Christ. Therefore, in what follows, I'm going to give her translation at the beginning, but then we will work with the ESV as we try to think through the more objective linguistic meaning.<sup>4</sup> If you are so inclined (and after the sermon), spend to time thinking about her translation on a more poetic level.

## Psalm 111

*Vs. 1*

*Allelujah! Praise Yahweh, the almighty King!  
Bless him! I thank him with all my being.  
Commune with my righteous companions<sup>5</sup> and sing.*

Psalm 111 begins with the word “**Hallelujah.**” This word does not start with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. As such, it is not original to the song. Instead, it was added by the editor to fit this section of Hallelujah songs which go from 111-118. The word means “Praise (*halel*) the

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<sup>4</sup> I have provided a chart at the end that puts her translations side-by-side for helpful comparison of these two magnificent songs.

<sup>5</sup> I might have put “church” rather than “companions” here.

LORD (*Yah*).” As such, you can get a feel from it for what kind of focus the song will have.

It begins, “I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart” (Ps 111:1a). This is where the first letter begins (see my translation at the top of the sermon). As a song of praise, it is always fitting to give thanks. This is our chief duty as created beings, no matter what God throws our way.

“In the company of the upright, in the congregation” (1b). The second half of the verse specifies *where* we are especially to give thanks. The Greek word is *synagogue*. Its parallel in the NT is the church. This is corporate thanks, with God’s people, others whom he has saved and redeemed. So much of the Psalter of focused on the corporate worship of God, meaning that God’s people are not permitted to be Lone Ranger Christians who only worship God by themselves up in the mountains. It’s fine to do that, but not on the Lord’s Day. That kind of spirituality is for Buddhists, not God’s people. Show up to church. Worship with God’s people. Make it your number one priority. That’s how we worship God—with each other. The rest of the song focuses very much on *the works of God to his corporate people*.

*Vs. 2*

*Dynamic his deeds in every detail  
Eagerly studied in all they entail  
For delight can be found in them all without fail.*

“Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them” (2). Yahweh’s works are the focus of so many songs and so much of the Bible, because he displayed his power publicly, in the open, for everyone to see. But here, the verse says that they are to be “studied,” that is carefully pondered. You can hear till you are blue in the face *about* the works of God. But it is only once you begin to think about them in the private moments of your life that they begin to have meaning for you personally. Be consumed with God’s works, not the foolish, wicked things of this world in the news and movies. I can’t emphasize this enough, because our natural tendency is to be consumed with our works. Its why people like so-called practical sermons so much. This this song is teaching you the opposite right now. As we will see in the parallel at the very end of the sermon, this is how you become more godly. Isn’t that what you want?

This study is not given purely for theologians or pastors or teachers. It says “all” who delight in them. Every

Christian is supposed to delight in the works of God, and therefore they are to be studied by one and all. This is *your* duty, not just mine.

*Vs. 3*

*God's glory glows from his every endeavor,  
His heavenly holiness enduring forever.*

What are these works like? This is the question now answered. “Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever” (3). “Splendor” (*hod*) means beautiful, honorable, praise-worthy, glorious, fully of majesty. This word is accompanied by a second—“majestic” (*hadar*, notice the alliteration). Again, the word can mean ornamental, honorable, full of splendor, beautiful, full of dignity. When you study or contemplate the works of God, you are entering into *that which is otherworldly*, but come down to us. You are rising up to that which is glorious, lofty, and transcendent. You are fixing your eyes on things above. You are filling your mind with that which lasts and is good. This is the opposite of dwelling on things down here, not that you can't think about those things, but when they consume you, you need to beware. There is something

far greater out there for you to ponder. And far more helpful.

The second half of the verse speaks of his “**righteousness**.” This refers to the righteousness of God, and it is proven by his works. You see? His works are righteous, *because he* is righteous. He is righteous, we know, because his works are splendid and marvelous. Righteousness is therefore not some abstraction difficult to wrap your mind around. It is concrete, easy to understand. All you have to do is study his works. **Keep this word tucked away, for we will see it mirrored in exactly the same place in the next song.**

The song ends with the idea that these things are “**forever**.” In fact, “forever” becomes the organizing principle of the songs structure, and it helps you to remember its lyrics:

- A** Yahweh’s righteousness “abides” “forever” (2-4)
- B** Yahweh remembers his “covenant” “forevermore” (5-6)
- X** All Yahweh’s precepts are steadfast “forever and ever” (7-8)
- B<sup>1</sup>** Yahweh commands his “covenant” “forevermore” (9)
- A<sup>1</sup>** Yahweh’s praise “abides” “forever” (10)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Return of the King, 123. “Psalm 112 is, in many respects, a mirror of Psalm 111. Whereas Yahweh is described in 111, the man of Yahweh is the focus of 112. It becomes conspicuous that the man of Yahweh (112) reflects the character of Yahweh (111).” Especially righteousness (tsadiq) and forever (l’d) and ‘olam. “These two words have been in close conjunction since Psalm 110 (4; 111:3), and now they are paired three times.

Truly, those things which belong to God, including his works and his ways, are enduring, lasting, forever things. And in the next song, it is knowing things that helps you become like it yourself.

*Vs. 4*

*Incomparable marvels make us recall,  
Just, gentle, good Yahweh is Lord of all.*

The song sings next about **God's wondrous works**. “**He has caused his wondrous works...**” (4). This word (*pala*) is tied to one of the very names of God himself. “**Why do you ask my name,**” God once asked. “**Seeing that it is wonderful (*pali*)**” (Jdg 13:18). “**And His Name will be called Wonderful (*pele*)**” (Isa 9:6). The point is, the works of God mirror the character of God. Thus, in studying his works, you come to know who this God is.

Thankfully, “**He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered (*zeker*)**” (Ps 111:4). They are not forgotten. Their memory is retained from generation to generation. Keep this word in mind, for we will see it again in the next song as well.

The verse concludes, “**The LORD is gracious and merciful.**” Let’s say you forget to think on his works, or you commit your own works that are wicked. Let’s say life is extremely hard for you right now or it is incredibly good for you right now, but in either case, you just aren’t thinking about God’s works. What kind of a God is he? You must know that he is a gracious and merciful God. In fact, this is a huge part of his works! Again, keep these two words in mind, for we will see them return in the exact same spot in the next song. This is not a coincidence.

*Vs. 5*

*King Yahweh gives food to those who revere him,  
Lovingly fulfills his pledge, draws us near him.*

Now that we know what his works are like, we want to know **what some of those works actually are**. The next verses speak about the saving works of God among Israel. One person has summarized them this way: **his deeds of creation**, especially in **redeeming his people**, **providing** for those who fear him, **giving** the Promised Land to Israel, and **instructing** his people with his covenant and precepts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jack Collins (Covenant Seminary), “Psalms 111-112: Big Story, Little Story,” Religions 7/9 (2016): 115. Mdpi.com.

“He provides food for those who fear him” (Ps 111:5). The first explicit work mentioned is providing food. One is reminded of the manna and quail in the wilderness, a place barren of sustenance, with just a few scavenging creatures and insects around to eat. But God took care of them.

The second part is meant as comfort rather than a threat. Remember how Jesus speaking of food said, “If your son asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matt 7:9). Or he said, “Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!” (Luke 12:24). He added, “If God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith” (28). The focus in adding “those who fear him” is not that he won’t give food to those who don’t, but how much more will he feed those who fear his Name? The greatest food God has given us, is, of course, Christ himself, the very manna from heaven. Feed upon him and live. Feed upon him by hearing

his teaching, seeing his works, studying all he has done for you, praying and talking to God through him.

A reason why he feeds us is given next. “**He remembers his covenant forever**” (5). The works of God are covenantal works. All you need do is look to the Torah to hear the covenantal promises, “**The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you**” (Lev 25:4). Or “**I will confirm my covenant with you. You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new**” (26:10). Or you think of God providing for Jacob and his family long before the coming drought, sending Joseph ahead so that God might provide for them (Acts 7:14). On and on it goes. The point here is that because God has sworn these things, he will keep his promises. His very word is at stake. This is the beauty of understanding and studying covenants. Covenant is also the backbone of this song.

*Vs. 6*

*Manifesting his marvelous might to his clan,  
Now we inherit other men's land.*

A second work is mentioned specifically. “**...in giving them the inheritance of the nations**” (111:6b). This refers

back to Babel and the giving of the land of Canaan to other peoples (i.e. the Canaanites). This land was *their inheritance*. But they were wicked, and God cut them off, bringing in a new people—one he called his firstborn son (**Ex 4:4**). Earlier Psalms have said, “You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it” (**Ps 80:8**). “He drove out the nations before them; he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents” (**78:55**). “He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the people’s toil” (**105:44**). God took Abram and said, “To you and your seed I will give this land” (**Gen 12:5**). It was the covenant promise.

The first half of **Psalm 111:6** tells us that he did this with *great power*. “He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them” this inheritance. In other words, everything from the days of Abraham’s sojourn and the troubles he and Isaac and Jacob had there, to the sending of Joseph, to the birth of Moses and the exodus from Egypt, to the conquest of the land with Joshua ... all of it was the giving of the land to Israel, and all of it was done with power so that they might study those works. Did these people deserve this land? No. Could they lose their right to that land? Yes. That’s the point of the exile, the destruction of

the temple, and God saying that they are but tenants in *his* land. But it was a bountiful gift given only because it pleased God to be kind. That's the kind of God that is displayed in such a work.

*Vs. 7*

*Outstanding truth, his justice renowned,  
Principles proven on hard-packed ground.  
Quintessentially solid and sound.*

These works are called “**the works of his hands**” and they are “**faithful and just**” (**Psalm 111:7a**). He did these things, not them. He did them by fulfilling his covenant promises, thereby being faithful to his sworn oath to Abraham. He did so because doing this was justice. That is, kicking the wicked inhabitants out of that land was just and right, for they were rebellious, wicked men.

This causes us to think about “**all his precepts**” as “**trustworthy**” (**7b**). This word is found only in the Psalms, the vast majority of which are in Psalm 119, though also here, once in 103 and once in 19. It is a word related to the commandments, but can mean instructions. **We will look at it more in Psalm 119.** Here, the point is that whatever precepts God gives, they are trustworthy, for your good.

Because they reflect who his is as **a trustworthy God**. Doing what he says gives evidence to his trustworthiness.

*Vs. 8*

*Righteousness and truth bind them together,  
Securely, supremely, forever and ever.*

“They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness” (Psalm 111:8). His precepts reflect his **unchanging nature**, his moral immutability. They do not change because he does not change. They told Adam what was right, Noah, Moses, Peter, and you. Nothing changes, because he has established them to be the way the world works, because his world reflects the kind of God he is. They are not the arbitrary conventions of society, free to change at the whims of a voting democracy. They reflect who God is.

The way they are carried out by him is **in faithfulness and uprightness**. In other words, yet again, the works of God reflect the person of God. To reflect upon his works is to reflect upon his being. And behold, what God is like our God?

*Vs. 9*

*Truly he triumphed in saving his sheep,  
Upholding his covenant, a promise to keep,  
Victoriously, unwaveringly, always the same.  
Wonderful, holy, and awesome his Name!*

“He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his Name” (9). Here then we see the climactic work of God in this world: the redemption of his people, their salvation. This has in mind probably both the exodus and the return from exile. God did this because he swore to do it in a covenant. Many think the covenant here is the Mosaic covenant, but it seems better to me that it is the Abrahamic covenant—because this is all about God’s works, not ours, about his unconditionally keeping his sworn oath.

And how did he do it? Through his Name. “Name” becomes a major feature of Psalm 113, so we will look more at it next time. Even though we’ve said much about it throughout the Psalms, it is important to remember that the Name is embodied in the OT as the Angel of the LORD. He has the Name “in him” (Ex 23:21). He is the one who redeemed the people, for he is the one who swore the covenant and became the God of Israel. Thus, all of his works are holy and awesome. This is the Christ we worship.

## *Vs. 10*

*Exalting Yahweh shows wisdom is growing  
Yielding to him, understanding is flowing.  
Zealously, then, let his praise be ongoing.*

The song ends almost **like a proverb**. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!” (Ps 111:10). As a summary verse, this shows you what the song was supposed to teach you. Reflecting upon the works of Yahweh causes a person to become wise. Reflecting upon the works of God teaches you and indeed even presupposes the fear of the LORD. Nothing else in the whole world can do this. And, it causes his people to praise him (as the song ends the way it began).

But it also does something more. This is where we need to turn to Psalm 112.

But as we conclude this song, I want to make a very important point. Psalm 111 **is all about the gospel**. It is good news. Yes, there is the word “law” in it. But that law is only given here as a reflection of the kind of God that God is. It is not here used to command you to do anything. It is used to get you to come to know what kind of God this is.

Let me put this another way. We are doing two songs today. The first of those two is gospel. It is not law. I want to establish this in your mind very clearly, because in what we are about to see in Psalm 112, the man of God is established *by* Psalm 111. Psalm 112 is the result of singing and learning Psalm 111! In other words, what makes the godly person godly? It is not commands, not rebukes, not introspection of failures, not trying harder to become a better person. It is God, studying God's works, coming to know who God is, learning that he is full of splendor and majesty, righteous, gracious and full of mercy, full of provision, faithful, truthful, trustworthy, holy, and awesome. This is what establishes the righteous. This is the power of God unto salvation.

## Psalm 112

*Vs. 1*

*Allelujah! Give Yahweh his well-deserved praise!  
Blessed are the ones who revere him always,  
Clinging joyfully to his commands all their days.*

Psalm 112 picks up where Psalm 111 leaves off. After its identical opening “**Hallelujah,**” it says, “**Blessed is the man**

who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!” (Ps 112:1). “*Blessed*” can mean “happy.” This man is a happy man, and we will see all the things the cause and bring about his happiness as we continue. *The fear of the LORD*. One song ends with it, the other begins with it. With the same opening, the same theme, even the same alphabet idea, something’s happening here.

Psalm 111:1, 10	Psalm 112:1
<p style="text-align: center;">Hallelujah.</p> <p>I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, In the company of the upright, in the congregation...</p> <p><b>The fear of the LORD</b> is the beginning of wisdom; All those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hallelujah!</p> <p>Blessed is the man who <b>fears the LORD</b>, who greatly delights in his commandments.</p>

In the verse, to “fear” the LORD is to “delight in his commandments.” Again, it is not a command. It is simply an observation. It is very similar to Psalm 1. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in

the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Ps 1:1-2). Why is this important? It is because who we said Psalm 1 was ultimately about.

Both speak about “the man.” Who is this man? In Psalm 1, we saw that in a sense it is **the Christian**. But in another sense, **it is Christ**. Along with Psalm 2, these opening psalms give us the key to unlock all the Psalms—with Christ. You may recall Augustine who said, “**This statement should be understood as referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, the Lord-man ... ‘who has not gone astray’ ... as did the earthly man who conspired with his wife, already beguiled by the serpent, to disregard God’s commandments. ... Christ most certainly came in the way of sinners by being born as sinners are, but he did not stand in it, for worldly allurements did not hold him**” (Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms* 1:1). This was the opinion of the Fathers.

*Vs. 2*

*Descendants of theirs are deemed mighty on earth,  
Each upright offspring is blessed from his birth.*

“His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed” (Ps 112:2). I believe that this verse is mysterious. Who is “his offspring?” On one level, it is the children of the man fears the LORD. Thus, any godly Israelite. On another level, the Seed refers to Christ, and thus, can be considered a prophecy of him, as we will see with other verses in the song. On still another level, those who are “in Christ” are considered “sons of God.” And thus, the offspring refers to the brothers and sisters of the Son of God, who in him and by the Spirit of God, learn to lead godly lives. We will work back and forth on these last two levels especially in what follows.

*Vs. 3*

*For wealth and riches are found in their land,  
God's approval of them can only expand.*

What will this blessing look like? A pile of riches now awaits our exploration. “Wealth and riches are in his house” (Ps 112:3a). The first blessing is wealth. God prospers the righteous as part of his providential rule over the affairs of men. All one has to do is look at where God’s law has gone in the world of men, and when it has been taken seriously, even as just a rule of life by pagans, the blessings of God

generally speaking come to that place. This is self-evident from world history.

However, is this really just talking about *material* wealth? The second half of the verse seems to say no. “... and his righteousness endures forever” (3b). Notice how wealth and riches are **paired** now with righteousness. This is why in other Psalms it says things like, “I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold” (Ps 119:127). “The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (72). “More to be desired are they [the commandments] than gold, even much fine gold” (Ps 19:10).

But there’s something else here. This is the first of our noticeable parallels to the previous song. Consider:

Psalm 111:3	Psalm 112:3
Full of <b>splendor and majesty</b> is his work And his <b>righteousness</b> endures forever.	<b>Wealth and riches</b> are in his house And his <b>righteousness</b> endures forever.

The parallel is the splendor and majesty of God’s work comes to the happy man who fears the LORD in the form of the wealth and riches we talked about. And **righteousness**

ties them together. Righteousness is the splendor and majesty of God. Righteousness becomes the wealth and riches of the happy man. In other words, The man of Psalm 112 begins to mirror the God who saved him. He begins to become like him. Why? Because he have pondered his works and ways. Like a husband and wife who have been together for half a century, they grow to be like each other. Why? Because this is what it means to know someone. Righteousness makes him happy. He *delights* to do his will. It makes him happy.

For how long? “**Forever.**” As with the previous song, this word now becomes the foundation of the structure of this song as well:

**A** “His righteousness endures forever” (3b) (1-5)

**X<sup>1</sup>** The righteous man (*tsadiq*) will never (*l’olam*) be moved (6a)

**X<sup>1</sup>** The righteous man (*tsadiq*) will be remembered forever (*‘olam*) (6b)

**A<sup>1</sup>** “His righteousness endures forever” (9b) (7-10)

*Vs. 4*

*Here’s a light shining hope in darkness’s face.*

*It helps the honorable learn what to embrace:*

*Justice, gentleness, and surpassing grace.*

“Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous” (Ps 112:4). The first half of this verse has been taken prophetically. The Venerable Bede (672 – 735; one of the first men to bring the Bible into any form of English) said,

“Behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone around them.” What does it mean that, as the angel was appearing to the shepherds, the splendor of divine brightness also enclosed them, something that we have never discovered in the whole course of the Old Testament? Though in countless cases angels appeared to prophets and just people, nowhere do we read of angels enclosing the human beings with the brightness of divine light. [Why is this], unless it is because the privilege was properly kept for the dignity of this time? For when the true Light of the world was born in the world, it was unquestionably fitting that the herald of his nativity should also bathe the bodily sight of human beings with the freshness of heavenly light. Now the prophet says concerning his nativity, “A light has arisen in the darkness for those who are righteous in heart.”

(Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels* 1.6)

But the second half returns us to our **mirror** again. Again, it is in the identical place as the previous song:

Psalm 111:4	Psalm 112:4
He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; The LORD is <b>gracious and merciful</b> .	Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; He is <b>gracious, merciful, and righteous</b> .

Read prophetically, the wondrous works to be remembered become the light dawning in the darkness in the NT! In the former, the LORD is gracious and merciful. In the latter, the happy man becomes like his God ... because of the works of God in Christ. Friend, **you become what you worship**. If you become easily agitated, if you are constantly angry, full of worry, are ungracious and unmerciful, it is because you are not worshiping God, you have not been studying the works of God in Christ.

*Vs. 5*

*Kind, honest people who generously lend,  
Like God's people, will also be blessed in the end.*

**“It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice” (Ps 112:5).** The next

blessing for the happy man is that **things go well** with him because **he is generous**, rather than Uncle Scrooge. In fact, that's the very lesson of that old story. **Dickens** got it from the Bible. He is also just in dealing with every day affairs, especially it seems, at work. He treats employees, co-workers, bosses, clients justly. And for it, he is known by all as a just man and it is well with him. This is basic wisdom being imparted to you, the Christian, and your example here is God himself. In the previous **vs. 5**, God provided food for those who fear him, because he remembers his covenant forever. This was just, because God made a covenant. The happy man of Psalm 112 follows in the train of his King. Because he has been provided for, he provides for others.

Psalm 111:5	Psalm 112:5
He <b>provides food</b> for those who fear him; He remembers his <b>covenant</b> forever.	It is well with the man who <b>deals generously</b> and lends; Who conducts his affairs with <b>justice</b>

*Vs. 6*

*Moreover, the righteous are not undermined.  
 No, they will never be long out of mind.*

“For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever” (Ps 112:6). Again, it is helpful to compare this with Psalm 111:

Psalm 111:5b-6	Psalm 112:6
He remembers his covenant forever. He has shown his people the power of his works, In giving them the inheritance of the nations.	For the righteous will never be moved; He will be remembered forever.

Never being moved is likened to “forever” from the previous song. It was God’s covenant promises that were forever. Now, because he is righteous, the happy man of Psalm 112 will be remembered forever. If we read this not as much about you and it is about Jesus, who did all these things perfectly, who has a name like his name that has now been known these 2,000 years? Truly, he is remembered forever. As are the saints whom his Spirit has brought into the family of the Living God.

*Vs. 7*

*Ominous news brings the righteous no fright,  
Provided they trust Yahweh, let him win the fight.  
Quaking hearts quiet, his help is in sight.*

“He is **not afraid of bad news**; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD” (Ps 112:7). This is one of the most practical verses I can think of telling you about. There may be no better place in all the Bible to talk about the news. I’ve been thinking much about the news in recent days.

Questions about why shootings keep happening, about why our culture is falling apart, about so many insane things are more alive today than ever. Why? It is because of the 24/7 news cycle that simply won’t leave us alone. Almost all of it is bad news. Yet, we worry and are agitated to no end because of it. Look, on a practical level, you want to know a solution? Turn. It. Off. Stop watching it. Just because it’s there doesn’t mean it’s good for you.

But on another level, we don’t want to pretend that there is no such thing as bad news either. Christians receive bad news. But if you are becoming like your God, you are, like Job, not destroyed by it. Some of you have had just disaster after disaster happen to you recently. To solve your woe, make this verse your own by studying the kind of God that he is in the parallel of Psalm 111:

## Psalm 111:7

The works of his hands are faithful and just; All his precepts are **trustworthy**.

## Psalm 112:7

He is not afraid of bad news; His heart is firm, **trusting** in the LORD.

The key word is “**trust**.” Because God is trustworthy in his works, the man of Psalm 112 is trusting in the LORD. Nothing else even makes sense. Of course he does! He knows who his God is. The Psalm shows you the mirror, what you will become by God’s grace when you come ponder daily the works and ways of your God: **Father**—who has planned all things; **Son**—who has won your redemption by his perfect life and sacrificial death; **Spirit**—who redeems you from your sin and misery to give you your only comfort in life and in death.

*Vs. 8*

*Resting in God, their troubled hearts clear,  
Souls are delivered from unfounded fear.  
Triumph’s been granted by him they revere.*

“His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in the triumph on his adversaries” (**Ps 112:8**). Again, here is the parallel:

Psalm 111:8	Psalm 112:8
They are <b>established</b> forever and ever, To be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.	His heart is <b>steady</b> ; he will not be afraid; Until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

The key here seems to be the parallel between the works of God established forever and ever, and the man or woman or child of God having a heart that is steady, fixed, firm, unmovable.

*Vs. 9*

*Unstintingly they give to people in need,  
Vindicated forever for their lack of greed.  
When the wicked witness the respect they hold,*

The Psalm winds down with a contrast between the righteous and wicked. **Vs. 9** gives the righteous. “**He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.**” This lack of being stingy, this care for those less fortunate, this righteousness, it brings him honor, dignity, respect. It is parallel to the LORD making his Name holy and awesome

because of the redemption he brought to his poor people through his righteous covenant.

Psalm 111:9	Psalm 112:9
He sent redemption to his people;  He has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his Name.	He has distributed freely; He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn is exalted in honor.

*Vs. 10*

*Exasperated and angry, they nearly explode.  
Yet their yelling is useless, they're gone in a flash.  
Zap! How the hopes of the wicked are dashed.*

The song ends by thinking about this man vs. **the wicked man**. “The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish” (Ps 112:10). The wicked perish, this is exactly the same phrase found in the last line of Psalm 1. Indeed, Psalm 112 is basically Psalm 1 restated. But now, we have a better way of understanding it. For now, we have 110 songs between them which have taught us so much. And, we have Psalm 111 by which to compare it.

The righteous fear the Lord and gain wisdom. **The wicked simply get angry.** The righteous practice the law. The wicked **gnashes his teeth.** The righteous gain good understanding. The wicked **melts away.** God in the end endures forever, as does his child who loves him. But the **wicked perish** and are destroyed. So ends the wisdom of Psalm 112.

Psalm 111:10	Psalm 112:10
<p>The <b>fear of the LORD</b> is the beginning of <b>wisdom</b>;            All <b>those who practice</b> it have a <b>good understanding</b>.            His praise endures <b>forever</b>.</p>	<p>The <b>wicked man</b> sees it and is <b>angry</b>;            He <b>gnashes his teeth</b> and <b>melts away</b>;            The desire of the wicked will <b>perish</b>.</p>

But I'm not finished. There is one verse we did not compare yet. It is verse 2. And to me, this comparison gets at the whole point I want to teach you today.

Psalm 111:2	Psalm 112:2
<p>Great are the works of the LORD,            Studied by all who delight in them.</p>	<p>His offspring will be mighty in the land;            The generation of the upright will be blessed.</p>

The point is? **How do we become righteous?** Study the works of the LORD. Then, he makes his child righteous in Christ, causing them to become mighty and blessing them with all the things we've seen in Psalm 112. This is not your work, beloved. It is God's work. It is God's promise. It comes because of God's ways, his truthfulness, righteousness, mercy, and grace. It comes because he swore to do it. Your duty? Attend to getting to know him by learning about him in his word. He will do the rest. This is the gospel. This is Psalms 111-112 in their totality, from A to Z.

	<b>Psalm 111 God's Character</b>	<b>Psalm 112 God's People</b>
1	Allelujah! Praise Yahweh, the almighty King! Bless him! I thank him with all my being. Commune with my righteous companions and sing.	Allelujah! Give Yahweh his well-deserved praise! Blessed are the ones who revere him always, Clinging joyfully to his commands all their days.
2	Dynamic his deeds in every detail, Eagerly studied in all they entail, For delight can be found in them all without fail.	Descendants of theirs are deemed mighty on earth, Each upright offspring is blessed from his birth. For wealth and riches are found in their land,
3	God's glory glows from his every endeavor, His heavenly holiness enduring forever.	God's approval of them can only expand. Here's a light shining hope in darkness's face.
4	Incomparable marvels make us recall, Just, gentle, good Yahweh is Lord of us all.	It helps the honorable learn what to embrace: Justice, gentleness, and surpassing grace.
5	King Yahweh gives food to those who revere him, Lovingly fulfills his pledge, draws us near him.	Kind, honest people who generously lend, Like God's people, will also be blessed in the end.
6	Manifesting his marvelous might to his clan, Now we inherit other men's land.	Moreover, the righteous are not undermined. No, they will never be long out of mind.
7	Outstanding truth, his justice renowned, Principles proven on hard-packed ground. Quintessentially solid and sound.	Ominous news brings the righteous no fright, Provided they trust Yahweh, let him win the fight. Quaking hearts quiet, his help is in sight.
8	Righteousness and truth bind them together, Securely, supremely, forever and ever.	Resting in God, their troubled hearts clear, Souls are delivered from unfounded fear.
9	Truly he triumphed in saving his sheep, Upholding his covenant, a promise to keep, Victoriously, unwaveringly, always the same. Wonderful, holy, and awesome his Name!	Triumph's been granted by him they revere. Unstintingly they give to people in need, Vindicated forever for their lack of greed. When the wicked witness the respect they hold,
10	Exalting Yahweh shows wisdom is growing Yielding to him, understanding is flowing. Zealously, then, let his praise be ongoing.	Exasperated and angry, they nearly explode. Yet their yelling is useless, they're gone in a flash. Zap! How the hopes of the wicked are dashed.

Brenda H. Boerger, "Extending Translation Principles for Poetry and Biblical Acrostics," *Notes on Translation* 11.2 (1997): 35-56.

[https://www.sil.org/system/files/reapdata/14/61/15/146115256701042800118990279703957942589/Boerger\\_Extending\\_translation\\_principles NOT11\\_2.pdf](https://www.sil.org/system/files/reapdata/14/61/15/146115256701042800118990279703957942589/Boerger_Extending_translation_principles_NOT11_2.pdf)

See also Roelie van der Spuy, "Hebrew Alphabetic Acrostics – Significance and Translation," *OTE* 21/2 (2008): 513-32. <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/ote/v21n2/17.pdf>

	Psalm 111	Psalm 112
	(Alleluia.)	(Alleluia.)
1	<b>A</b> ll my heart goes out to the Lord in praise, <b>B</b> efore the assembly where the just are gathered.	<b>A</b> blessed man is he, who fears the Lord, <b>b</b> earing great love to his commandments.
2	<b>C</b> hant we the Lord's wondrous doings, <b>d</b> elight and study of all who love him.	<b>C</b> hildren of his shall win renown in their country; <b>d</b> o right, and thy sons shall find a blessing.
3	<b>E</b> ver his deeds are high and glorious, <b>f</b> aithful he abides to all eternity.	<b>E</b> ase shall dwell in his house, and great prosperity; <b>f</b> ame shall ever record his bounty.
4	<b>G</b> reat deeds, that he keeps still in remembrance! <b>H</b> e, the Lord, is kind and merciful.	<b>G</b> ood men see a light dawn in darkness; <b>h</b> is light, who is merciful, kind and faithful.
5	<b>I</b> n abundance he fed the men who feared him,  <b>k</b> eeping his covenant for ever.	<b>I</b> t goes well with the man who lends in pity,  <b>j</b> ust and merciful in his dealings.
6	<b>L</b> ordly the power he shewed his people, <b>m</b> aking the lands of the heathen their possession.	<b>L</b> ength of days shall leave him still unshaken; <b>m</b> en will remember the just for ever.
7	<b>N</b> o act but shews him just and faithful; <b>o</b> f his decrees there is no relenting.	<b>N</b> o fear shall he have of evil tidings; <b>o</b> n the Lord his hope is fixed unchangeably.
8	<b>P</b> erpetual time shall leave them changeless;  <b>r</b> ight and truth are their foundation.	<b>P</b> atient his heart remains and stedfast,  <b>q</b> uietly he waits for the downfall of his enemies.
9	<b>S</b> o he has brought our race deliverance; <b>t</b> o all eternity stands his covenant.	<b>R</b> ich are his alms to the needy; <b>s</b> till his bounty abides in memory.
10	<b>U</b> nutterable is his name and worshipful; <b>v</b> ain without his fear is learning. <b>W</b> ise evermore are you who follow it;  <b>y</b> ours the prize that lasts for ever.	<b>T</b> he Lord will lift up his head in triumph; <b>u</b> ngodly men are ill content to see it. <b>V</b> ainly they gnash their teeth in envy; <b>w</b> orldly hopes must fade and perish.
Knox Bible (which is an English translation of the Vulgate)		