

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
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Psalm 111 — The Works and Words of the LORD

1.0 Introducing Psalm 111

- This is the first of three *Hallelujah psalms* in a row (Pss 111–113).
- Psalms 111 and 112 are also acrostic psalms (see the alphabetic notations in the left margin of the translation below) — with every line of poetry (except the opening “Hallelujah”) beginning with the 22 sequential letters of the Hebrew alphabet. See notes on Psalm 25.
- Psalm 111 speaks about the works of God, but Psalm 112 of the works of the godly person. The study of Psalm 112 will explore the many parallels between these two psalms, which are a natural pair.
- Throughout history the Church has often associated Psalm 111 with observance of the Lord's Supper.

2.0 Reading Psalm 111 (NAU)

111:1 Praise the LORD!

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

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111:2 Great are the **works** of the LORD;
They are studied by all who delight in them.

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111:3 Splendid and majestic is His **work,**
And His righteousness endures forever.

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111:4 He **has made** His wonders to be remembered;
The LORD is gracious and compassionate.

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111:5 He has given food to those who fear Him;
He will remember His covenant forever.

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111:6 He has made known to His people the power of His **works.**

- v. 1 “with all *my* heart”
 - Wholehearted thanksgiving is what the psalmist promises and what we should offer to the Lord.
 - The same phraseology occurs in Psalms 9:1; 86:12; and 138:1.
- v. 1 “In the company of the upright”
 - Public thanksgiving and praise is the believer’s privilege and duty.
 - The parallel is “in the assembly.”
 - ✓ Cp. Psalms 1:5; 89:5.
 - ***In what ways might we give public thanksgiving and praise?***
- v. 2 “Great are the works of the LORD”
 - God’s works are the primary subject of Psalm 111.
 - God’s works include what He has made and what He is doing.
 - Those works are great in design, number, magnitude, and excellence.
 - See Job 9:10; Psalm 92:5; Revelation 15:3.
- v. 2 “*They are* studied”
 - Or, “they are sought.”
 - ✓ Cp. Ezra 7:10 and Ecclesiastes 1:13.
 - The saints’ delight is to study God’s works: creation, provision, preservation, salvation, revelation, etc.
 - ***How might we study God’s works?***
- v. 3 “Splendid and majestic”
 - More than even His works, God Himself displays these attributes.
 - See 1 Chronicles 16:27; Psalms 21:5; 96:6; 104:1.
- v. 4 “gracious and compassionate”
 - “Gracious” = unmerited favor; “compassionate” = kindly mercy.
 - Again, these are God’s own attributes as revealed through His works.
 - ✓ Observe other divine attributes mentioned in verses 6, 7, 8, 9.
 - ✓ No one rises higher than his or her concept of God.
 - Psalm 111 has a number of vocabulary, theme, and inner biblical ties to Psalm 103 via Exodus 34:5-11.
 - ✓ See Psalm 103:8. Cp. Exodus 34:6.
- v. 5 “food”
 - Literally, “prey” (cp. Job 24:5; Prov 31:15; Mal 3:10).
 - The psalmist chose to employ this term here to fit the acrostic.
- v. 5 “to those who fear Him”
 - See, also, verse 10.
 - ***According to this psalm, how do the godly demonstrate a proper fear of the Lord?***
- v. 5 “He will remember His covenant forever”
 - Which covenant does the psalmist have in mind?



- ✓ Characteristics of the Abrahamic Covenant:
 - (1) the theme of promise (vv. 5, 6, 8, 9),
 - (2) emphasis on divine fulfillment (vv. 5, 6, 8, 9), and
 - (3) references to land (v. 6?), prosperity, and blessing (v. 6) and/or cursing.
 - ✓ Characteristics of the Mosaic Covenant:
 - (1) the theme of law (v. 7),
 - (2) emphasis on human responsibility (v. 10), and
 - (3) references to sabbath, sanctuary, and divine sovereignty (vv. 2, 9).
 - ✓ It is more likely that the Abrahamic Covenant is the primary reference, with the Mosaic Covenant being secondary.
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- **v. 6** “the power of His works”
 - Cp. Exodus 34:10b. Verse 5 harks back to Exodus 34:10a.
 - **v. 6** “the heritage of the nations”
 - This refers to the promised land. See Deuteronomy 4:38 and Psalm 78:55.
 - **v. 7** “All His precepts are sure”
 - “Sure” = trustworthy, dependable. See Psalm 19:7.
 - **v. 9** “He has sent redemption”
 - “Redemption” refers primarily to God’s deliverance of Israel through the exodus from Egypt.
 - The word originally referred to a commercial transaction in which a sum of money was exchanged for a transfer of ownership.
 - The price of deliverance from slavery in Egypt consisted of the slaughter of all firstborn men and beasts in Egypt (Exod 4:23; 12:29).
 - **v. 10** “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”
 - See Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28; Ecclesiastes 12:13.
 - **v. 10** “*His commandments*”
 - Literally, “them,” a reference back to “precepts” in verse 7.
 - “All those who do *His commandments*” is the counterpart of “all who delight in them” (v. 2), thereby bracketing the psalm (inclusio) with a focus on the works (v. 2) and the words (v. 10) of God.
 - **v. 10** “A good understanding have all those who do”
 - Understanding and insight result from obedience.
 - **Conclusion**
 - Psalm 111 “is the OT counterpart of Rom 5:1-11.” — Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101 – 150*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 93.

4.0 Singing Psalm 111

Praise Ye the Lord, the Hope of Our Salvation (Tune: "How Great Thou Art")



1 Praise ye the Lord, the hope of our salvation;
Praise ye the Lord, our soul's abiding trust;
Great are His works and wonderful His counsels;
Praise ye the Lord, the only wise and just.

Refrain

Praise ye the Lord, for good it is to praise Him;
O let the earth His majesty proclaim;
Shout, shout for joy and bow the knee before Him;
Sing to the harp and magnify His Name.

2 Praise ye the Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer,
Praise ye the Lord, His mighty love recall,
Tell how He came from bondage to deliver,
Tell how He came to purchase life for all.

3 Praise ye the Lord, whose throne is everlasting;
Praise ye the Lord, whose gifts are ever new;
Praise ye the Lord, whose tender mercy falleth
Pure as the rain and gentle as the dew.

4 Praise ye the Lord, oh, glory hallelujah!
Praise ye the Lord, whose kingdom has no end;
Praise ye the Lord, who watcheth o'er the faithful,
Praise ye the Lord, our never changing Friend.

— Words: Fanny Crosby
Music: William J. Kirkpatrick

O Give the Lord Whole-hearted Praise

(Tune: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" or "He Leadeth Me" or "Sweet Hour of Prayer")

1 O give the Lord whole-hearted praise,
To Him thanksgiving I will bring;
With all His people I will raise
My voice and of His glory sing.

2 His saints delight to search and trace
His mighty works and wondrous ways;
Majestic glory, boundless grace,
And righteousness His work displays.

3 The wondrous works that God has wrought
His people ever keep in mind;
His works with grace and mercy fraught,
Revealing that the Lord is kind.

4 God's promise shall forever stand,
He cares for those who trust His Word;
Upon His saints His mighty hand
The wealth of nations has conferred.

5 His works are true and just indeed,
His precepts are forever sure;
In truth and righteousness decreed,
They shall forevermore endure.

6 From Him His saints' redemption came;
His cov'nant sure no change can know;
Let all revere His holy Name
In Heav'n above and earth below.

7 In reverence and godly fear
Man finds the gate to wisdom's ways;
The wise His holy Name revere;
Through endless ages sound His praise.

— Author unknown

5.0 Praying Psalm 111

- With all my heart, Lord, I give thanks to You. [v. 1]
- Father, enable me to see Your works and to delight in them. [v. 2]
- O God, You are gracious and compassionate. [v. 4]
- Make me a doer of Your precepts and not just a hearer. [v. 10]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 111

- We can find evidence of God's wondrous works everywhere.
- No one rises higher than his or her concept of God.
- God's works and Word produce "the fear of the LORD."
- Obey what you know in Scripture and you will come to understand what you don't know in Scripture.

The Essence of Wisdom

Early in the book [of Proverbs] the assertion is made, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning (or essence, Heb. *rēšît*) of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (1:7). This becomes almost the leitmotif of the book (cf. 9:10; 15:33; Ps. 111:10), a thread that ties together its parts but that also provides the secret to true wisdom. It comes not by education, observation, philosophizing, or introspection but by recognizing and submitting to the sovereignty of God in all areas of life. To fear him is to obey him, and in obeying him one chooses the true path to wisdom. To choose not to fear the Lord is to despise knowledge (1:29), but to fear him is to find it (2:5).

This kind of wisdom cannot be divorced from proper attitude and behavior. In fact, only the righteous are said to be wise because only they can fear the Lord in truth. . . .

— Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament*
(Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 623