

Remembrance and Reverence

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[0 : 00] It's a short psalm, Psalm 111. Let me read it out loud for us. Praise the Lord. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart in the company of the upright in the congregation.

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever. He has caused His wondrous works to be remembered.

The Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear Him. He remembers His covenant forever. He has shown His people the power of His works in giving them the inheritance of the nations.

The works of His hands are faithful and just. All His precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever and ever to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. He sent redemption to His people.

He has commanded His covenant forever. Holy and awesome is His name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding.

[1 : 09] His praise endures forever. I've heard that a well-known pastor was once criticized by a member of his congregation, and that this member said to him, your sermons always sound the same.

And he wittily replied, well, they better sound the same, since I'm supposed to preach the same gospel every week. And the church members' criticism may have been warranted, but there's a lot of truth to what the preacher said, right?

Because like Paul writes in Philippians 3, verse 1, to write the same thing to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. So he talks about how it's safe to remind the Philippian church of the same truth that they had already heard and they already knew.

And there's a similar quality to that in the book of Psalms. There's recurring themes, you know, that emerge. It's like, and they're repeated exhortations to remember. Yeah.

So it's like a, and feel free to interact. I like that. I'm listening to the Bible in one year.

[2 : 19] Yeah. And every day they give you a song, a proverb. And, you know, the part of the Bible that they're getting us through. And David is like saying the same things in like different ways.

Yeah, exactly. The whole year. And I'm like, yep, then we have enemies. The Lord is going to protect us. If we mess up, Lord, forgive us. Yeah. Yeah. But I think, I think it's, it's taught.

At first I was so knowing I had to work. I'm like, all right, David, we get it. But then I was realizing like, no, like David is illustrating his dependence on God. And how like his repeated repetition reminded me that like, that's where I need to be.

Yeah. Like in terms of my dependence on God, like regardless of his power, we all know how powerful he was. Yeah. How blessed he was. That's good. He never forgot. Like he needed to turn to God to protect him and to forgive him.

Yeah. And his way of constantly reminding himself. Yeah. Exactly. He's keeping himself in check.

Yeah. Yeah. And I think that's really important, especially as somebody in a position of power in the world. You want to get like full of yourself.

[3 : 22] Yeah. Thinking that like, you know, you got, you put yourself there. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It means more. I'm on day like 84 right now. That's great. Yes.

Psalm 111 is no, no exception to that. So it is really, the main point is to, that we are supposed to remember the saving works of God. So that we can walk uprightly in reverence of him.

Um, so it's like, you see kind of two parts to the Psalm verses one to seven is about remembering God's works. And then the second half of seven to 10 is about revering God's word. Uh, and you can see, uh, that the trajectory there as we look at it.

So let's look at Psalm 111 together, starting in verse one. It begins with the mention of God's praise and ends with the mention of God's praise in verse 10. And then he gives us reasons why we ought to praise him and obey him.

Verses one to seven, the saving works of God. Uh, you may have noticed the word work repeated four times, uh, in this Psalm. In English, it's actually five times, but it's not the fifth occasion.

[4 : 24] It's not the same word. Um, and the Psalmist uses various adjectives to describe these works. You might have caught some of them. He says that God's works are great in verse two.

That God's works are full of splendor and majesty in verse three. He speaks the power of God's works in verse six. And the works of God's hands are faithful and just in verse seven.

So, um, you wonder what kind of works these are. These are, these are kind of general praises for the works that God has done. And he spells out exactly what kind of works he has in view in verses five to seven.

It says, he provides food for those who fear him. He remembers his covenant forever. He has shown his people the power of his works and giving them the inheritance of the nations. The works of his hands are faithful and just.

All his precepts are trustworthy. So, you, please remind you guys of anything, these descriptions. Verses five to seven.

[5 : 21] Provides food, covenant, power, inheritance of the nations, precepts, laws.

Please repeat the promises they gave to others. Yeah, right? So, these are, these are, these are Exodus allusions, right? It's the, it's Israel came out of their slavery in Egypt through the wilderness and into the promised land, right?

And, uh, he provided food for them in the wilderness with the manna from heaven. He gave them the inheritance of the nations. He gave them the land of Canaan, which belonged to the nations, the Gentiles. And then he also gave them his law, the precepts, right?

Through Moses. And he revealed himself in Exodus 34 to them as a God who is, uh, gracious. Uh, and, uh, and, and that's, we see that gracious and merciful in verse four as well.

Um, and so this redemption that's in view, these are the great works that God has done. For Israel, Exodus is kind of the example, the perfect example of God's redemption.

[6 : 29] Uh, and for us, the Exodus is a foreshadowing of the ultimate redemption that we have in Jesus. Which is why in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul makes the explicit connection between the Exodus, going through the water out of the Red Sea with the baptism, uh, Christian's baptism.

And he makes a connection between the food that the Israelites had in the wilderness with the food that we have in Christ, that he is our, uh, he is our food, the heavenly bread, uh, for us to eat. And so, so Jesus is, in short, the one who leads us out of our slavery to sin and death and redeems us. And, and it's so easy as we're talking about this, like, to lose our sense of wonder, uh, at what God has done. Um, we take it for granted. We've heard it so many times. And that's kind of why we need these reminders of how wonderful God's work is.

And, and the story of Exodus was just as familiar for these Israelites as the story of Easter is for us. Uh, yet again and again in the Psalms, they rehearse the Exodus.

Comes out and again. And it says in verse 2, Those Old Testament saints who delighted in God's saving works, they made it their task to study the works of God.

[7 : 45] And that's a good exhortation for us. I mean, do you take time to study what God has done to save you? Uh, yes, we know the gospel, but do we study what Christ has done?

Do you investigate it? Do you search the scriptures for it? Uh, in fact, Psalm 111, as Nico is talking about before too, is itself an example of the study that, that the psalmist himself is doing.

He's recounting again the works of God to remind himself so that he might be marvel at it and wonder at it again. Uh, and, and so it's, it's, do we then, and a specific application of that might be since, because since scripture is the written record of God's revelation, and the written record of God's redemptive deeds, uh, do we diligently apply ourselves to reading scripture?

Um, do we, uh, diligently hear God's word in corporate worship, in the reading and preaching of God's word? Um, in fact, the very structure of the psalm is intended to facilitate our study of the works of God.

Uh, in the original Hebrew, uh, the psalm 111 is an acrostic poem. Uh, so you can't see it really in the English translation, but basically each verse is divided into two or three cola, like these poetic lines.

[9 : 02] Uh, and each of those lines begin with, uh, a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And if you go through the entire psalm, you go through the entire Hebrew alphabet. Uh, and, and, and of course, what's the point of that?

What's the point of an acrostic? It's, it's to aid memory, right? It's a mnemonic device. Uh, so even the very structure of the psalm tells us that this is something we need to study.

This is something we should, uh, labor to commit to our memory. In the same way, we use, like, the acronym for PEMDAS. You guys all know PEMDAS, right? The, the, the, the, uh, the, uh, order of operations.

You guys want to talk about it? In Canada, do you use something else? I, I think I don't want you to say. Yeah, yeah. Parentheses, exponents, like, multiplication, division. Yeah.

Yeah? No? No? Yeah, well, so it's, it's the same thing. So the, the point of it is that Psalm 111 was written to be memorized. It was supposed to be remembered even when you don't have your Bible in front of you so that you can rehearse it when you're writing the tea, when you're, you could rehearse it when you're taking a shower.

[10 : 11] Uh, you could, so that you could, um, and I think we should also endeavor to memorize scripture as much as we can to remember God's works all the time. And, and nowadays I think the need for this kind of memorization is diminished due to the availability of immediate fact retrieval through our phones and Google.

Uh, but it's not the same, right? I mean, it's, I think when you memorize something, you take it down to a deeper level of understanding. Uh, it becomes a part of you. Um, and when you're, I don't know, ministering to somebody or when you're reading something or you're taking on some kind of information from the outside world and assessing its truth, uh, what's going to function in that moment is what you know.

It's not going to be what Google knows, right? Um, yeah. And, and I think, uh, and something that, uh, I, someone that I think about often, like one of the most inspiring examples of kind of this discipline memorizing scripture that I've ever seen was my seminary professor.

His name was, uh, Gary Parrott. He's not well known, uh, but, uh, he had all, if not most of the New Testament memorized. He had, uh, large swaths of the Old Testament memorized, including, uh, most of the Psalms.

Uh, and, uh, and he, in his class lectures, he would cite from memory these really, really long passages and often in multiple versions, multiple translations. And, uh, and so it was amazing.

[11 : 34] That's when I started actually doing scripture memory in earnest after his example. Uh, and, uh, and in 2010, he was traveling to offer some pastoral training to people in South Korea and Sri Lanka. But then a bus that he was riding on drove off the elevated road, uh, and it, uh, it killed 13 passengers and injured 11, including him.

He was in a coma for several days and he suffered brain damage. Uh, and when he woke up from his coma, he couldn't remember his wife's name. Uh, but even though he couldn't remember his wife's name, he remembered the Psalms that he had memorized.

And he was rehearsing those truths of God to himself on the hospital bed. Really inspiring example, right? I mean, that's how scripture is supposed to function. We study the works of God in it and it fills us with wonder at his mercy.

Uh, and, and that's what's supposed to spur us into obedience and to reverence for him. Uh, and, and so we should strive to be a church that does the same, that studies the works of God and commit his work to our memory.

And so that leads us to the second half, seven B really second half of verse seven to verse 10, uh, we are to remember God's work so that we can revere God's word. Um, there, there's a turn to the, in that, uh, that kind of thematic turn at the second half of verse seven.

[12 : 48] Uh, so verse seven says the works of his hands are faithful and just. All his precepts are trustworthy. So these are related clauses, right? So it's only those who recognize that God's works are faithful and just, who also recognize that God's precepts or his laws or his word are trustworthy.

Uh, so only those who remember God's works revere God's word. Uh, and then verses seven to 10 continue. All his precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever and ever to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

He sent redemption to his people. He has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good

understanding.

We're to perform the precepts. We're, uh, in faithfulness and uprightness. We are to practice the fear of the Lord and obey the commands of his covenant. So these are all action words, things that we ought to do, our obligation to God's gracious, uh, initiation.

And, and twice in this passage, the word upright is used to describe our proper response to God. We are to perform, practice these things uprightly. Verse one says, the worshipers of God are the company of the upright.

[14:00] Uh, and the word upright means straight as opposed to crooked. Um, we should be able to draw a direct straight line from God's precepts and our practices, the way we live.

And can we do that if we examine our lives? If someone else were to examine our life, in the way we live and what we say, every aspect of our lives, can we say that our life is a straight and upright way according to the ways of God and not bent or crooked according to the ways of this world? And, and we can't, uh, uh, and, and, and, but sometimes, right, people, and sometimes we have trouble, uh, accepting the teaching of God's word.

Um, um, and because it demands something that seems to contradict our own desires and our own instincts. And, but ultimately, that trouble comes down to lack of trust, right?

Uh, only those who remember the faithful and just works of God trust his precepts. So the demands of God's word may not seem right or reasonable to us, but if we know, if we remember how gracious and merciful he has been toward us, how just and faithful his works have been, then we can't trust him and we can submit to him in spite of our misgivings and uncertainties.

[15:16] Uh, and that's why verse 10 says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding. So true wisdom begins with the fear of God, uh, which does not mean being terrified of God.

Uh, but to revere in God. Uh, it's a reverence for God that constrains our obedience. Um, that, a reverence that makes us submit to his word instead of presuming to know better.

Uh, reverence, uh, for God that makes us order our lives according to his purposes and priorities instead of according to our own purposes and priorities. And, uh, and, uh, and so then this is a good diagnostic for us.

If we find that we don't revere God, um, enough, if we find that we're not obeying God, uh, then we should check to see if we have been remembering his works.

Because when we remember the works of the Lord, we remember that he's a faithful God who can't lie. Uh, we remember that he's someone who always keeps his promises. And when we remember the works of the Lord, we remember that he's gracious and kind, uh, and that, uh, and so he's worthy of our trust for that reason.

[16:23] And that functions when our life is full of suffering, we remember that he's good, he's sovereign, and so we trust him. And when the world around us lies about him, uh, and his word, we remember that he's truthful and reliable, and so we trust him.

And so we have to remember his works so that we can walk in reverence, uh, of him and obedience to him. Um. Um. So let's, uh, sing another song and, uh, let's pray.