



Psalm 112 - Blessings of the Righteous

Introduction

This wisdom psalm joins Psalms 1, 37, 49, 73, 127, and 128, along with Psalm 34:11-14, in making themes from the Wisdom Literature the topic of prayer, praise, and instruction in worship. Psalm 112 is also a companion to Psalm 111, as seen in the acrostic pattern they both follow and in the links between their wording; refer also to the introduction to Psalm 111. Charles Spurgeon wrote this regarding the connection between Psalms 111 and 112: "It bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun; for, while the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above." This psalm focuses on the moral character of the faithful and on the benefits such people bring to themselves and to others.

- ¹ Praise the Lord!
Happy are those who fear the Lord,
who greatly delight in his commandments.

Psalm 112:1

Praise the Lord! Like Psalm 111, this psalm also begins with the simple declaration, *hallelujah!* It was as if the psalmist thought, "before I describe how I will praise him, let me simply declare his praise." The declaration also has the sense of encouraging others to do the same – "I will praise the Lord, you should also." Spurgeon commented, "The Psalm cannot be viewed as the extolling of man, for it commences with 'Praise ye the Lord;' and it is intended to give to God all the honour of his grace which is manifested in the sons of God."

Happy are those who fear the Lord. As with Psalm 1:1, the Hebrew word is masculine, and the psalm uses a particular man as a pattern of godliness, inviting women and children to make the necessary adaptations to their own

circumstances. The word translated happy in the NRSVA is more traditionally given as blessed.

Fears the Lord his links with Psalm 111:10, refer also to the comment made there, and shows that the two psalms belong together. Psalms 111 and 112 may have been composed together; they are certainly set together in the collection on purpose. Psalm 111 ended with the idea that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; now the psalmist explains the blessedness of the one who does fear the Lord.

Who greatly delight in his commandments. This blessed one does not fear God in a sense of misery and reluctant obligation. This psalm spoke of one who delights greatly in God's commandments. This shows that the fear is not craven terror but reverent love: <<*but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night*>> (Psalm 1:2), <<*but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night*>> (Psalm 119:97), and: <<*Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble*>> (Psalm 119:165).

Adam Clarke commented, "It is not enough to fear God, we must also love him: fear will deter us from evil; love will lead us to obedience." Think of the great measure of blessedness upon Jesus. No one feared the Lord as he did; no one delighted in God's commandments as he: <<*So Jesus said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realise that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me'*>> (John 8:28), and: <<*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love*>> (John 15:10).

² Their descendants will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Psalm 112:2

Their descendants will be mighty in the land. The godly person brings blessing to others, particularly to his descendants. The psalmist pronounced blessing on the descendants of this man, the one who is upright. Refer to the comment made on Psalm 109:13.

³ Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures for ever.

Psalm 112:3

Wealth and riches are in their houses. The psalmist also pronounced a blessing on the economic life of the one who fears the Lord. Their life of obedience and honour to God mean God's blessing will also come to their financial dealings. This is reflected in: <<*A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich*>> (Proverbs 10:4). The diligent is another name applied to the wise and the righteous. The paragraph context indicates that the diligence the Lord instils in the righteous is his means to provide for their material needs.

Spurgeon observed, "Understood literally this is rather a promise of the old covenant than of the new, for many of the best of the people of God are very poor; yet it has been found true that uprightness is the road to success, and, all other things being equal, the honest man is the rising man." and Clarke noted, "A godly man must save both time and money. Before he was converted he lost much time, and squandered his money. All this he now saves, and therefore wealth and riches must be in his house."

Their righteousness endures forever. In Psalm 111:3, this referred to God's righteousness, his moral uprightness and faithfulness to his promises. Now the same expression is used of the faithful: God's own character is visible in them: <<*Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature*>> (2 Peter 1:4). The godly, with their character genuinely reflecting God's image, will dwell forever under God's love and watchful care.

Adam Clarke had an interesting idea: that righteousness here and in v.9 refer to the giving of the one who fears the Lord. "Both *tsedakah* and *dikaionh* are often used to signify, not only justice and righteousness, but also beneficence and almsgiving; and this is most probably the meaning here."

⁴ They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.

Psalm 112:4

They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright. The psalmist recognised the darkness that often fills the world, but this upright one who fears the Lord will be blessed with light in the midst of the darkness: <<*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life'*>> (John 8:12). As in: <<*Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart*>> (Psalm 97:11), refer also to the comment made there, the image of light is that of God's guidance; here that

guidance makes the right path clear for those who pursue covenant faithfulness; refer to the comment made on Proverbs 4:18-19.

They are gracious, merciful, and righteous. The upright is plural; now the verse speaks of each one of them. They show the character of the Lord himself: <<**He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the Lord is gracious and merciful**>> (Psalm 111:4). Particular aspects of this character include generosity and fair dealing.

⁵ It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.

Psalm 112:5

It is well with those who deal generously and lend. It is well with such a person because he or she works for the good of God's whole community: <<**A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water**>> (Proverbs 11:25).

Who conduct their affairs with justice. The one who fears the Lord is blessed with wisdom that flows from their godly character: <<**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practise it have a good understanding. His praise endures for ever**>> (Psalm 111:10).

⁶ For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered for ever.

⁷ They are not afraid of evil tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord.

⁸ Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

Psalm 112:6-8

For the righteous will never be moved. Because of his character and wisdom, the one who fears the Lord will be firmly established. Their remembrance will last, with nothing to fear from evil tidings. As they trust in the Lord, their hearts are firm and will in the end see victory over their enemies and their security is described. Refer to the comment made on Psalm 15:5.

They will be remembered for ever. By the people, just as they remember the Lord's own wondrous works: <<**He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the Lord is gracious and merciful**>> (Psalm 111:4), and perhaps by the Lord himself, who remembers his covenant forever (v.6). Spurgeon observed, "The

righteous are worth remembering, their actions are of the kind which record themselves, and God himself takes charge of their memorials.”

The righteous are **not afraid of evil tidings**, because they fear the Lord (v.1). Evil tidings are all around, and come to people every day. Evil tidings may come to them from their family, from their health, from business, from the unfaithful, from the culture around them, or from politics. Yet the one who fears the Lord will not be afraid: <<*do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand*>> (Isaiah 41:10), <<*My spirit abides among you; do not fear*>> (Haggai 2:5b), <<*But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, ‘Do not fear, only believe’*>> (Mark 5:36), and: <<*I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!*>> (Luke 12:4-5).

- 9 They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures for ever;
their horn is exalted in honour.

Psalm 112:9

They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures for ever. Paul quotes from this verse in 2 Corinthians 9:9, encouraging the Corinthian Christians to give generously to the collection for poor Jewish Christians in Judæa. The psalm shows why they should not fear because God will honour and care for them; it also shows a lovely community orientation that provides a stark contrast to the ugly selfishness that Paul had to correct in First Corinthians. The NT community now transcends national and ethnic boundaries, including people of all kinds who believe in Jesus.

The profile of this man or woman who fears the Lord is remarkable. It is a reflection of the character of God himself, even as the moon reflects the sun’s light. It is generally fulfilled in the godly man or woman, and perfectly fulfilled in the man Jesus Christ:

- They are a God-fearing person, one who fears the Lord.
- They are lover of God’s Word, who therefore delights greatly in his commandments.
- They are a prosperous person; they have wealth and riches.
- They are a loving and kind person being gracious and full of compassion.
- They are a home-making person seen by the references to their descendants and house.
- They are a helping person who deals graciously and lends to others.

- They are a wise person who guides their affairs with discretion.
- They are a strong person who is not afraid of evil tidings.
- They are a generous person who has dispersed abroad.
- They are a person who does not abuse power, the meaning of ‘their horn is exalted with honour’.
- They are a hated person for the wicked will see it and be grieved: <<*If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you*>> (John 15:19), and: <<*Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you*>> (1 John 3:13).

Their horn is exalted in honour. The horn is a reference to person’s strength or authority. Clarke commented, “His power and authority shall be exalted with honour. He shall rise to influence only through his own worth, and not by extortion or flattery.” As noted above, the Christian placed in this position should never abuse their power or authority but use it in accordance with God’s will, for it is his gift to them and not something they have earned or deserve.

¹⁰ The wicked see it and are angry;
 they gnash their teeth and melt away;
 the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

Psalm 112:10

The wicked is the person who despises the covenant; here he is probably an Israelite. The desire of such people will not bear fruit: <<*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing*>> (John 15:5); instead it will perish, because the God who made and rules the world delights in those who fear him.

The wicked see it and are angry. In contrast to the enduring blessing upon the upright man, the wicked will melt away. Their misery will be all the worse as their desire is frustrated and they see the blessings that come to those who fear the Lord. The wicked may not gnash their teeth in this life, but they certainly will in the age to come: <<*There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out*>> (Luke 13:28).