

Psalm 111

Have you ever felt like the person who just can't seem to summon the level of praise that this psalmist had? How do we get out of our mundane mindset? How do we bring our hearts and minds to rest when it comes time to sit still with our bibles? This psalm is about an enthusiastic worshiper of God; gathering with like minded believers to study God's word; and reminisce about his goodness. This is the picture of health for a believer. Some believers are like this enthusiastic psalmist; who is looking for more and more from God. Other believers keep more distance; and they just want to stay out of trouble.

The church is filled with anemic Christians; who are just barely making it through life. They try to find satisfaction in their life as it is naturally. Then they come running to God when they do not find it. The problem is that they are not in the habit of going deep into God's word and prayer every day. This perpetuates their weakness. We really cannot thrive at that low altitude. Solomon had it all; and he became a manic depressive. It can never be about us. It has to be about him to enjoy it.

This is a psalm written by someone who absolutely adores God. We can divide the believers into groups, depending on our relationship with him. There are people who believe that God is real; and they respect him. There is another group who have a heart to get in closer still. They want to check him out and become his friend. It is easier to become indifferent if God is just our schoolmaster and provider. To that person, God is a component to a system of rules. It is better to go deeper, and hear his heart on matters.

The more that we minimize our faith, the more boring it becomes. It is ironic that people bored with church push away further to find satisfaction. That is the opposite of the solution. People do not know that we lie to ourselves more than to anyone else. We re-cast events to make ourselves the hero in every situation.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, And [d]esperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the [e]mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. (John 15:14-15)

Read Psalm 111:1: The ultimate state of worship is to worship God with our entire being, in the presence of the body of believers. Covid changed the way that many people go to church. It became necessary to watch church on TV for a while. Sadly, many people have not gone back into the pews. Many people see church as a place to get recharged, and hear an inspiring message. There is a missing component to Lone Ranger Christians. At some point we become deficient as a functional part of the body of Christ. Why? Because it is not about us; or what we want to do. It is about helping them.

Foregoing christian fellowship is like foregoing adult baptism. You can get by without it; but you are missing out. More importantly, you are not as available to those believers who need you. Problems can become compounded if you have not been able to find a solid bible-teaching church. We also need to be in small groups.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:23-25)

God has shown me that I can have all things outwardly; and still feel empty. I have to get onto his page every morning. Then the outward circumstances become secondary.

Worshiping God with our whole heart even while we are with other saints can also be a challenge. Many times I am in *my own little world* as the church service is going on. I am making observations of others around me; and getting way off track. I really need to prepare my heart in advance, and pray to meet God. Otherwise, I can end up thinking about everything except God. Nothing really works in church or out of church if I am not prayerful about it.

How do we approach our quiet time in the word each day? Do we just knock out a little daily devotional; or are we diving deep? Is our pastor or our favorite radio bible teacher the source of most of our learning? I like to follow the full counsel of God. That means that I prefer the book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse approach. Topical studies can be beneficial; but that puts me in a place of setting the agenda. It is amazing how God's Holy Spirit shows up when I do not control what portion of scripture that I am in. In addition; we should always study the word in context. Bible roulette or just lifting a verse out here or there can be misleading. A disciple is a dedicated student, who is essentially an apprentice.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Read Psalm 111:2: How would I know that God's works are great, unless I study his word? Some believers are very worshipful; but they do not know the details of what God has said. They only go an inch deep into scripture. Sometimes they can become deceived by false doctrine.

How can I be thankful for God's works in my own life unless I am taking a daily inventory; and expressing thanks? Unfortunately I have the capacity to look past yesterday's blessings. I need to memorialize God's goodness by savoring the blessings afterwards. We can be forever longing for answered prayers without ever savoring the answered prayers. I can worry about something for weeks; and then have two minutes of satisfaction when it comes to pass.

This psalm is about praising God with *our whole heart*. That is not limited to an internal private worship. We need a daily quiet time; but church attendance is a necessity too.

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? (Romans 14:7-10)

God requires that we share what he has done with each other. In fact, it is not possible to be complete as an isolated individual. My completeness is found in building up others. It may be inconvenient or unpleasant at the moment. God has shown me lately that he really wants us to share what God has done for us with others. Others may need to cling to our witness for their own survival. Christian unity requires that we become what others need us to be for them. Some things that seem trivial to me really trip up others. Likewise, I have always benefitted from my alliances and helpers.

Christian health requires that we dive deep into the word. This psalm tells us that people who are serious about God study what he has written. I have made observations over my life, as I spend time with different believers. The saints that are deeply committed to the word; and dive deep every day tend to have a more stable life. There are others who

watch a motivating sermon on TV; but spend very little time breaking down what God has written in a daily quiet time. Some only listen to their favorite radio preacher. That is the equivalent of fast-food faith. You can end up unhealthy after a while. These things are all good; but we need to sit with God on our own. These people who do not have a daily bible regimen often go from one crisis to another. They are less stable emotionally, when life throws them curves. They get serious about God when things fall apart; but they have no consistency to a morning quiet time. Pastor Ray Bently said that it is not just about going forward at a special event. It is about *continuing to walk forward*. Many who walk forward at evangelistic outreaches (statistically) do not continue on with God. They just memorialize that moment as if that memory is some kind of relationship.

We have had people over the years in our bible study group who have fallen prey to drug abuse. They will repent, and turn to God and his word. Once they get back on their feet; they fall again. It is because they do not have a morning quiet time. To get strong and mature in Christ, we need to take a book of the bible and study it carefully. If we only live off of other people's sermons we are like babes in Christ...because other people are still feeding us.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:19)

Read Psalm 111:3-5: Our view of world events can be nothing more than a conclusion of how it ultimately affects us. Can we see God's hand in the good and bad things going on in this world? Cesar's original worldwide taxation probably upset every Jew. It was a tool to move Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. We have to dwell on things longer to see God's hand in it.

God's attributes can become a meaningless cliche. These verses tell us that God is: honorable and glorious in his work, has a righteousness that endures forever, has works worthy of being memorialized, provides food and sustenance to his people, and he remembers all of his promises. Those wonderful things get lost if we do not process them. We can accumulate a mountain of blessings at will-call; and never pick them up. They require participation through steps and actions of faith.

Our partaking of God's benefits is partially based on how real and special he is to us. If we speed read our daily devotionals it is not the same experience as prayerfully meditating

on God's word. It is not as transforming. It is like a pop tart instead of a full breakfast. There is a tug of war when I am taking my time to consider what God has done and who he is. I have a competing urge to get out the door, and get to my next task. God tells us here that he feeds and guides those who honor him. In other words, am I better off short-changing God and rushing out the door in taking on my day...or letting the world stop a little longer while I receive *God's full briefing*? What could be more important than to spend time with the one who holds the universe together and is keeping my heart beating? Any assumption about my importance to be somewhere over God's ability to create a paradigm shift is wrong.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also..... "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6: 19-34)

Read Psalm 111:6-10: God has given us his word; and recorded history. Architects and physicists and scientists have tried to disprove the Bible over and over. Even some

seminaries try to diminish the word of God. God always wins; and the intellectuals look like fools .

The bible is very important because it is an accurate recording of what God has done. We need to understand the things that God has done; to really know who he is. Creation, the flood, the formation of Israel, the exodus and wilderness experience, the return to Canaan, the effects of idolatry, the messiah Jesus being born as prophesied, Jesus' sermons, the cross, the resurrection, and the prophesies to come are all in one book. God has declared it, but who is listening?

This psalm is telling us that our real job is to buckle in and draw close to God. All of the competing interests are a waste of time by comparison. If we put our energy into our vertical relationship (with God) we will find that our horizontal issues (our lives among men) will be taken care of. God told Israel that they will have the heritage of nations. In other words: Everything that the unbelievers are working so hard to achieve will be given to us.

God does not use questionable methods to arrive at a holy objective. Everything that he does is above board and pure. You can judge a tree by its fruit. Some that claim to represent God can end up doing some questionable things. We have to see past the pastor or teacher and see where God is in the picture.

Sometimes my objectives for the day seem to hit a roadblock. I can become frustrated. Becoming overly invested in my plan can make things too personal. Being prayerful makes me more flexible. Taking desperate short cuts can take an otherwise good plan and make it a bad plan. I have to realize that I am not driving.

God's plan works. It always has. Man's alternatives never work for long. There is something inside of us that says "I can do it by myself". That is the problem. When I think that I can it is till God making it possible.

We begin to become more wise when we step down out of the driver's seat; and give the wheel back to God. We begin to understand things when we do what he told us to. The catch 22 is that if we are afraid to do what he told us, that we will never understand. The one thing that we do have control over is making the right God-honoring choices.