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Great are the Works of the Lord! (Psalm 111)

We greatly admire the work of people who are extremely skilled and tremendously talented in their field of endeavor. We look at our grand capitol building and appreciate the skill and talent of its architect, Cass Gilbert. We are amazed by the skill and talent of craftsmen – those who create beautiful or useful objects out of wood, metal, or paint. If we are sports fans we may be awed by the skill and ability of a great athlete.

If we have an interest in any of these areas, we are likely to spend time studying the work of those who excel. We stop and admire the grandeur of our statehouse. We appreciate the detail and handiwork of a craftsmen or artist. We watch replays and admire the skill of an athlete.

Psalm 111 encourages us to remember, study, and admire the great works of God give Him praise for what He has done.

Psalm 111

¹*Praise the LORD!*

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

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

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

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

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

⁶*He has made known to His people the power of His works,
In giving them the heritage of the nations.*

⁷*The works of His hands are truth and justice;
All His precepts are sure.*

⁸*They are upheld forever and ever;
They are performed in truth and uprightness.*

⁹*He has sent redemption to His people;
He has ordained His covenant forever;*

Holy and awesome is His name.

¹⁰*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do His
commandments;
His praise endures forever.*

Psalm 111 is the first of three “hallelujah” Psalms in a row, each beginning with “Praise the Lord” (‘hallelujah’ in Hebrew). It is also an acrostic Psalm, as is Psalm 112. We cannot see it in our English Bibles but in the original Hebrew there are 22 lines, each beginning with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is the most well-known acrostic Psalm. Authors used this acrostic form both for poetic beauty and emphasis and to help with memorization.

¹Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, In the company of the upright and in the assembly.

This Psalm was likely used in the worship services as believers gathered together at the temple. The writer exhorts believers to praise the Lord and expresses his own desire to worship God with all his heart. This should be our desire as we gather with any group of fellow believers and as we meet together in our local church.

Great are the works of the Lord; they are studied by all who delight in them. (vs. 2)

When the Cavendish Physics Laboratory at Cambridge University in England was built in 1874, this verse was inscribed in Latin over the great oak door. Amazingly, in 1973 when a new lab was built, a PhD student suggested that the verse be placed over the entrance to the new facility. It was agreed and there the English inscription still reads:

*"The works of the Lord are great,
sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."*

At least some of those scientists recognized that all creation is the great work of God’s hand and should be studied by those who delight in them. Many groundbreaking discoveries came out that laboratory as scientist diligently studied, experimented, and researched. This Psalm calls upon us to give such diligence to study all of God’s works.

The greatness of God’s work invites close study. This invites the scientist, the historian, and the theologian to do their work with all their strength and to take pleasure in how God’s wisdom and power are revealed through His honorable and glorious works.

(Guzick, David. *The Greatness of God’s Works*.
www.enduringword.com)

When we contemplate God and His awesome works, we want to study them and learn more about them. The word “study” means to “seek with care”, to “study and interpret”, to “investigate”. Let’s seek with care and investigate the works of God shared with us here in Psalm 111.

God’s Works Show His Character

See how all of God’s works are expressions of His character. As we study what He has done, what do we learn about Him? Verse 3 tells us “**His righteousness endures forever**”. Verse 4 reminds us “**The Lord is gracious and compassionate**”. Verse 7 tells us His works demonstrate “**Truth and justice**”. We learn of God’s faithfulness as He will “**Remember His covenant forever**” (vs. 5) and “**Ordain His covenant forever**” (v. 9).

God’s Work of Creation

The word “works” in verse two is often used to refer to the things that God has made. In verse 3 when “splendid and majestic” are used to describe God’s work it reminds us that all of creation demonstrates His power and His glory. In Psalm 8 David wrote, “**O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!**” (v. 1) and “**When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained...**” (v. 3).

Those who have believed God, repented from their sin, and placed their faith in Jesus Christ delight in the great works of God. Those who reject God can look at the beauties and glories of creation yet deny the truth they are the works of Lord.

While this Psalm certainly references the work of God in creation, as noted by the scientists at the Cavendish lab, its focus is really on God’s work in the redemption, provision, and providence for His people.

God’s Work of Redemption

In verse 9 the Psalmist writes, “**He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever...**” Whenever we read of redemption in the Old Testament, it usually refers specifically to God redeeming the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. We are reminded of the plagues God sent upon Egypt culminating with the Passover. The firstborn sons throughout the land of Egypt were killed except for the those who had the blood of the Passover lamb upon their doorways. This points us to Jesus who would redeem His people from their sin as He suffered and died for us.

God will “**remember and ordain His covenant forever**”. God’s covenants are promises or agreements He made with His people such as His covenants with Abraham, Moses, or David. As a faithful God He will keep His covenants. All these point us to the “New Covenant” made by Christ with all those who trust in Him (Luke 22:20). Jesus would come, live a perfect life, suffer and die for sinners, and rise again from the dead. All those who repent and put their trust in Him will be given eternal life.

God’s Work of Providence and Provision

We are reminded in this Psalm of God’s providence and provision for his people. “**He has given food to those who fear Him...**” (v. 5). Think of how God miraculously provided for His people in the wilderness. He provided manna from heaven. He gave them water from the rock. He made the bitter water sweet. All these were the gracious, compassionate work of God. We read in the New Testament of how all these events were pictures of how God would provide for us in Jesus Christ.

God’s Work in the Future

This Psalm encourages us not only to remember God’s wonderful works in the past, it also pointed to the future with five “forevers”.

His righteousness endures forever (v. 3)

He will remember His covenant forever (v. 5)

His precepts are upheld forever and ever (v. 8)

He has ordained His covenant forever (v. 9)

His praise endures forever (v. 10)

These “forevers” remind us of God’s great works which are yet to come and as we study them we will find great joy, comfort, and assurance.

(Rigney, Joe. *Psalm 111: Delighting in the Works of God*. www.desiringgod.org)

Studying and Remembering God’s Works

“**He has made His wonders to be remembered...**” (v. 4) God gave the people of Israel memorials, festivals, and holy days as reminders of the wonderful things He had done for them. He has given us as believers reminders as well. The celebrations of baptism and the Lord’s supper remind us of what He has done for us through Christ. We gather each Lord’s day to study and remember His works on our behalf and to worship Him.

The Result of Studying God’s Works

The writer tells us the results of studying God’s works:

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

As we study and delight in God’s splendid and majestic work, we grow in our reverence for Him and in our desire to obey Him. And we certainly grow in our desire to praise and worship Him!

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays 12:00 Noon

McManus Conference Room

(M252 Located by House minority offices)