

## **THE BLESSINGS OF OBEYING GOD**

Psalm 112: 1-10 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Today we come to another “hallelujah” psalm that begins with those three powerful words, “Praise the Lord!” Immediately, the psalmist jumps into the deep water of his fixed heart—a heart of obedience, a heart full of blessings. He sings out, “Blessed is the man or the person who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments.” Many observers of obedient believers notice that the four-lane highway to destruction is full of cars as the broad road to hell is paved with beautiful oases along the way. They also notice our path is a narrow way. It reminds me of Sunlight Basin north of Cody, north of Nez Pierce “Dead Indian” Pass. Sometimes the road up Sunlight Creek becomes so narrow two vehicles cannot pass. Some of the curves in the road are blind curves where it pays to slow down to avoid a collision. On one stretch of the road, the drop off below is 4-500 feet below, and there are no guardrails. If you meet a vehicle, and there is no pullover spot, one driver has to back up to a pullover spot. Why should we limit our lives to the narrow road? Jesus spoke of the narrow road of love and obedience, or trusting and obeying. He said in Matthew 7: 13-14, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad/easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” Oh, the blessings of the narrow road and of obeying God, even backing up on the narrow road to help others move forward in their journey.

The path of trusting and obeying God includes the assurance of what Hebrews 11: 1 declares, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction or evidence of things not seen.” I was reading this week in the devotional book, “The Upper Room,” from a writer from Piedmont, Italy, Elisa Boetti. Her experience mirrors my own. Let me read her words. She writes, “We had planned a lovely walk along a footpath through the wooded hillsides. The signposts at the beginning of the footpath seemed crystal clear. Even so, we took a wrong turn. When we finally got onto the right path, we came up against a closed gate. Disappointed and resigned, we were about to turn back. But then we saw people coming toward us from beyond the gate. We had not noticed a very narrow path beside the gate that enabled us to skirt this obstacle and proceed without difficulty. Reflecting on this later, I realized how our failure to notice the way forward is similar to the way I live by faith. Sometimes, facing what I think are insurmountable walls of problems and troubles, and too busy scrambling for a way out, I fail to see the solution that the Lord has already prepared for me. I have come to see that instead of allowing anxiety and discouragement to hold us back, we can trust God’s ability to act in

situations where we see no solution.” I agree! Oh, the blessings of each of us who fear the Lord and greatly delight in obeying His commandments.

Turning to Psalm 112, remember it is a post-exilic psalm after the Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. The psalm, like Psalm 111, has eight doublets and two triplets—22 lines and it is 10 verses. Each succeeding verse follows the same pattern of psalm 111—of each line beginning with aleph, then on to tav, using all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. As we come to this psalm, let’s look at seven major blessings of being a man or woman, boy or girl who delights in the commandments of the Lord and obeys God and His Word. Are these blessings yours? They will be when you and I start delighting in reverencing the Lord.

**GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM WITH A FIRM, FIXED HEART.** (I.) Notice verses 1 and 7. “Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who

fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments! He is not afraid of bad news; His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.” Here is a blessing beyond compare—being a person who delights in doing what the Lord wants over all over things. Such a man is not tossed about by those who oppose him and by the bad news that comes his way. No, he stands firm in his faith, firm in his heart. To delight in God and in His commandments is life’s most blessed fixedness. What is your heart fixed on? Paul said in Colossians 3: 2, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” Not everyone reverently obeys the Lord with a firm, fixed heart. Remember Lot? He lifted up his eyes and fixed them on the Jordan valley down at Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 13: 8-11) His wife couldn’t turn her face away from that valley and she turned into a pillar of salt. Ephraim fixed his heart on pagan idols, and God said, Hosea 4: 17, “Let him alone!” The prodigal son fixed his heart on sinful lusts off in a far country. (Luke 15: 13) Remember the rich rancher/farmer who fixed his heart on building bigger barns. (Luke 12: 19) Judas was in love with money and he would have it even by betraying Jesus—Matthew 26: 14-16. Pilate fixed his heart on being known as a friend of Caesar—John 19: 12. The proud Pharisee in Luke 18: 11-12 set his heart on proudly defending and magnifying himself. Ananias and Sapphira fixed their hearts on lying and deception to try to impress the early church and the apostles—Acts 5: 1-11. Demas fixed his heart on this present world so he deserted Paul—II Timothy 4: 9. Diotrophes fixed his heart on putting himself first and gaining control of the early church—III John 9. David tells us the blessing for those who reverently obey God with firm fixed heart in Psalm 91: 15-16. “When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

**GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM WITH AN OBEDIENT HEART.** (II.)

Psalm 111: 10 and Psalm 112: 1 are similar. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it—or obey the Word have a good understanding. In v. 1 of Psalm 112—we read, “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments.” The second blessing is that a person who fears the Lord is obedient. A believer who is firm in his faith delights in God’s commands. This means that he finds the commands of God to be good and by obeying them, he wants to be an open Bible, an example to his spouse, his children and those around him. God’s wants our love of His word and our obedience to it to help others see Him by looking at Him through our eyes. When we reverence God with an obedient heart, it is because we have a close relationship to Him, reverencing Him, learning His will from His Word, and obeying what He commands. When learning God’s Word is our delight, doing His will is not a burden, or burdensome. Remember the blessed man in Psalm 1: 2—“His delight is in the law or word of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night.” Beloved, test yourself by this test. Are the commands and calls of God in His Word and from His promptings a burden to you, a vexing to your spirit, the beginning of an argument between you and God or you and others? Or are the commands and calls of the Lord on your life your delight to follow with an obedient heart.

While our desire to reverence God, obey Him and experience His blessings is very real in our life, and it may be intense, obstacles, not outside of us, but inside of us can make us resistant to obeying God. Until we face the fact that we have personal reasons for choosing something else over obeying God and experiencing His blessings in our lives, we will daily struggle to experience God’s power and to live with His blessing. Often the reason why we struggle with having a fixed heart and an obedient heart is due to baggage—besetting sins. Baggage keeps us from greatly delighting, v. 1 in the Lord and in His commandments. God doesn’t want us to let legal, moral, sexual, theological, or relational baggage keep us from greatly delighting in Him and obeying His commands. Thirdly,

**GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM WITH A MENTORING HEART.** (III.)

v. 2 -“His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.” This doesn’t mean all our children continually obey and respect us, never straying or that all those we mentor/shepherd never fall away. It does mean that we are known as men or women of God—believers who model firm, obedient faith, not rocked and tossed by every trial that comes our way, that in job difficulties, we still trust the Lord, when our children go astray, that we trust God to restore them, that when our wallet is empty, we still lean hard on God to provide for us, and that we allow God to be God—in control. This mentoring is not

just formal, but folk come to us to learn from our counsel. What a blessing of God that folks come to learn from us. What do our children and the upright come to learn? How are the upright blessed by our lives? (1) **They are blessed by observing our minds stayed on the Lord, unshaken by attacks and storms, as we cast our cares on God in prayer, finding peace.** (2) **They are blessed by learning from us how to be free from imaginary and unnecessary fears and worries.** (3) **They are blessed to find us without panic, believing God for the impossible.** (4) **They are blessed to find us anchored in the Rock of Ages in the face of calamities.** (5) **They are blessed to see in action a godly mentor acting out faith in trials and finding God’s grace sufficient for us.** (6) **They are blessed to see us trusting God and loving others when our hearts are broken by relatives and friends who have turned on us.** (7) **They are blessed to see us be courageous in the face of threats from cruel people with evil motives.** 4thly,

### **GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM WITH A BURNING HEART.** (IV.)

Don’t let Motel 6 get all the publicity. Let this dark world know that as Jesus tarries, in us who reverence Him, He has left the light on for this dark world. He has made us the light of the world—Matthew 5: 16. Notice verses 3-4. “Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.” Have you noticed how a room can light up when a man or a woman of God enters? There is a charming spirit, burning, gracious, compassionate, righteous and giving spirit in us that lights up our dark world. This blessing for those of us reverencing the Lord is a strong part of the wealth and riches in our house. The Hebrew word for wealth is **hown**. It means enough. We may not be lavish in 6, 7 or 8 figures, but we are blessed with enough to light up others’ lives as we share with them, our food, our garden veggies, our home, our tools, our toys, our expertise, and so much more. The Hebrew word for riches is **ashar**. This means what we have accumulated. When I think of a light in our dark world, I know part of God’s accumulated riches includes the courage to be a light and share our testimonies with our neighbors. Whatever others see, they know our light is on—that we are burning in my soul, burning in my soul. When we who fear the Lord come near, we are like those motion lights on our front porch—the light goes on. Fifthly,

### **GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM WITH A GENEROUS HEART.** (V.)

v. 5 - “It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.” A God-fearing, reverencing man or woman with a firm, fixed, obedient, mentoring, and burning heart also has the blessing of having a generous heart. We are pitchers—and this has nothing to do with baseball but with the willingness and delight of pouring out God’s grace wherever we go.

We aren't biased or prejudiced. When our children or others we know want or need to talk, we pour out our time. We stop what we are doing to pour out a listening heart. People watch what we do. Our children see and so do others when we pass a stranded person on the road. They see our tears when we hear someone has died. They notice our eagerness to share the Gospel with those lost and dying without Jesus. They watch us lend as verse 5 states, and never get back what we lent out, without seeing our bitterness, anger or rejection come out. Generosity in our hearts means "mi casa es su casa." My house is yours. My tools are yours. My clothes are yours—I have too many in my closet. My car is open to take you to church. But there is a second part to this generosity.

A generous heart is a heart of generous justice, for v. 5 states "we conduct our affairs with justice." This Hebrew word is **mishpat**. Mishpawt not only speaks of rendering a just verdict. Mishpawt means discretion—meaning we are generous in guarding the rights of others—treating others better than ourselves. That means we refuse to promise others what we will not carry out. It means we refuse—especially us as fathers, we refuse to provoke our children to wrath by our words or actions—substituting punishment for discipline. Would you like to be raised the way you are raising your son or daughter? If you were a little baby or a small child, would you long to be looked at and spoken to the way you treat your child? Do you have a generous mishpawt heart? When you say something is out of bounds, do you fail to discipline your son or daughter for it, and just threaten them about doing it again. That is not discretion. Parents, do we make promises we do not fulfill when something we think is more important comes up? That isn't discretion. No, keep that promise you made to your wife or children. Parents, do we think it is right to make our children pay for their upkeep at home because they are teenagers? That isn't generous or teaching them discreet generosity. If it is a need, be a parent—whatever the cost. Supply it, as best you can. If it is a want, be discreet; then, they can buy it. If you go out to eat, do you let others always pay for your meal? No, a generous discreet heart says—"This time, it is on me." Sixthly,

**GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM WITH A STEADY HEART.** (VI.) Notice verses 6-9. "For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor." This steadiness first shows up in relationships, v. 6. The reverencing believer is unmoved—with God, we are to be consistent, steady. In marriage, we are to be unmoved, consistent, steady. We made a vow and we will not cast it aside. As the song says, "I shall not be, I shall not be

moved.” If we shook a hand on a promise, we are good for it. Those kinds of believers God says will be remembered forever—honored. That means we model what we teach and preach. We never privately bash another’s character. Never! It means the way we treat our wife or husband or children or friends in public, we treat them in private. We can destroy our reverencing of the Lord by our words to others. Even godly men and women can be cruel and use foul or coarse or rude or crude or cursing words. No, let’s be steady for God. We mentioned verse 7 in the first blessing—but let me add—our steadiness is tested by bad news and storms. Do we really trust in the Lord?

Notice the steady heart is a courageous heart in any battle for truth. We will not be afraid of being thought to not be politically correct. Truth is truth whether it is popular or not. Ultimately, God promises us that when we stand for truth, in the end, we will have the blessing of looking in triumph over our adversaries. But be honest with God here. These battles for truth are not little marital squabbles, little theological squabbles, or little money squabbles. No, let’s learn to be steady and know when a battle is a hill to die on. When Gospel truth is at stake—stand and stand steady for Jesus. Notice v. 9—Give faithful tithes and offerings in the house of God and add offerings to others God places on your heart beyond His church—when it is beyond your tithes and offerings. Distribute freely—that’s because of the blessing of God—give to the poor and never grow cynical. Then your righteousness will endure forever and God will exalt your horn—this relates to our light—horn comes from **qeren**. One of the meanings is the peak of the mountain and a ray of light above it. God is saying to us—“The sun will come up on your dreams and hopes as I give you the blessing of standing steady for me.” 7thly,

**GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REVERENCE HIM WITH A FULFILLED HEART.** (VI.) Notice verse 10. “The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!” This is amazing! God will let our desires be met as the wicked will perish cursing us and gnashing their teeth at us. Don’t think the wicked won’t see the blessing of God on our lives. They will and they will be angry. It pays to serve Jesus, and that payment is the awesome blessing of God in our lives. Repeat 1-7. Amen.