

## **LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY PSALM 112:1-10**

The various ways some people live cause us to wonder if they have good sense. Many times people live their lives in a pattern they have seen in others. You've seen situations in which little kids have behaviors that you can recognize as being like that of their parents or even their grandparents. You can hear it in their speech by the way of voice inflections and certain phrases or words they use. A lot of what we learn about how to live life is by way of observing others. For those who are constantly getting into trouble and wind up ruining their lives, we might wonder, "Who have they been watching?"

As we get older and are able to think more abstractly, we will go through a process of values clarification and we will put priorities on attributes and behavior patterns that wind up influencing our lives. Even this process is influenced by what you observe as an adult. An important question for each of us is this: Where are we getting our inputs that go into the values clarification and setting of priorities in our lives?

If all our sources of input are from the secular world, then we will have secular values and secular priorities. They tell us that television programming simply depicts what is happening in life. Years ago programming tended to show us the ideal situations and gave us examples of how to successfully deal with problems that might typically come up in a family or community situation. You can think of programming like *Lassie*, *Father Knows Best*, and *The Andy Griffith Show*. There were usually lessons to be learned that were meant to improve relationships. Some of the programming on TV still does this. However, most of it simply shows us pictures of the seamier side of life and if art is imitating life and life winds up imitating art, then the direction for life will be toward the less than noble alternatives. We could describe it as a slippery slope and the direction is downhill.

The caution for all of us is that we should guard the inputs to our minds by filtering what we observe and by deliberately choosing inputs that are noble and uplifting and that will make us better persons. We need to choose our role models carefully. The ultimate source for good input is the Word of God and the ultimate role model is Christ Who has shown us the very character of God. The person who wrote Psalms 111 and 112 discovered this truth thousands of years ago. We will examine his insights into the nature of God and His words and see how it impacts our lives so that we can live in a way that is righteous. While our emphasis will be on Psalm 112, reference to the parallel truths from Psalm 111 will be mentioned.

Both 111 and 112 are "alphabetic psalms" meaning that each line of the poem begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In order to get 22 lines from 10 verses, we see that verses 1, 9 and 10 have three lines each. Some general observations (by Walvoord) about a person who fears the Lord found in psalm 112 are as follows:

- \$ He will enjoy prosperity as an individual and as a family. (Verses 2-3)
- \$ He will be given understanding and discernment (light). (Verse 4)
- \$ He will be granted "goodness" or graciousness. (Verse 5)
- \$ He will be solid in his beliefs and stand firm in the truth. (Verses 6-8)
- \$ He will be made strong and honorable. (Verse 9)

We can see that the psalmist starts out with an affirmation of God as the priority for our lives, we move on to verses two through five and discover how the influence of God and His word in our lives affects our relationship with others. Next (in verses six through 9) we see how walking with the Lord and trusting in Him strengthens us in the essence of our very being.

Finally, we are shown (in verse 10) the contrasting outcome of those who do not fear the Lord.

### **God - First Priority**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments. Psalm 112:1 (NASB95)

A good starting point in understand this first verse is to look back to the last verse of the Psalm 111. There we see that the fear of the Lord is the beginning or the chief cause of having wisdom. The psalmists continued to follow this thought with praise to the Lord in verse one. Having wisdom **is** a great blessing. Just think, would you rather be wise or foolish? Wisdom gives us understanding and understanding will lead us to follow God's precepts. (Or we could make the argument that following God's precepts leads to understanding.) The psalmist even gives us what to look for as evidence that a person has a good, healthy fear of the Lord: *He greatly delights in God's commandments.*

I used the words "good, healthy" as the description of the kind of fear we are to have. Is it possible to have an "unhealthy" fear of the Lord? Absolutely! Such fear can find a variety of expressions. Some might do everything they can to avoid God even to denying that He is. It just occurred to me that this may be the essence of atheism. Atheism is the ultimate expression of an unhealthy fear of God. Now there **are** more subtle expressions of an unhealthy fear of God. One might be the fear of dying. Another, even more subtle expression, is found in such statements as the following: "I don't want to do this, however, I know what the word of God says and so I am going to be obedient even though it galls me to do so." Where is the DELIGHT in God's commands? In 1 John 5:3 we see this related verse: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." If we find God's commandments grievous, then we have missed out on the wisdom and understanding that come from a proper relationship with Him.

The very first words in this psalm say that we are to praise the Lord. How can we logically do that if we find that the relationship we have with Him causes us grief? This kind of reaction is what you would expect of the "unregenerate" person. For those who are the "redeemed" of the Lord we need to be careful that our praise is not only with our mouths but also with our very lives.

### **Relationship Results of Godly Influence**

<sup>2</sup> His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed. <sup>3</sup> Wealth and riches are in his house, And his righteousness endures forever. <sup>4</sup> Light arises in the darkness for the upright; *He is* gracious and compassionate and righteous. <sup>5</sup> It is well with the man who is gracious and lends; He will maintain his cause in judgment. Psalm 112:2-5 (NASB95)

A life lived God's way benefits not only the person who lives it but future generations as well. Notice all the areas impacted: physical, mental, social, financial, and spiritual. How could future generations be influenced? We could argue that the cause is simply that God shows His favor to such people. Can you think of anything else that might be at work? The obvious answer is simply the power of examples. By the lives they live, Christian parents instill values in their children. (By the way, this works both positively and negatively.)

If you treat people right - honesty, integrity, respect, politeness – then those little ones who are watching you will learn and (in most cases) will adopt similar behavior. This works a lot more effectively IF (as a parent) you point out to the child (the future generation) why you did what you did. It is also important that we realize that children observe and learn from others beside their parents and grandparents. Those with whom a family associates will also influence

the lives of their children. That does not mean we have to isolate children from friends and relatives who might behave badly, but we must provide help in how the child interprets what he or she observes.

Just think of all the things that we do that will influence future generations: how we handle money, respect for learning, how we treat the word of God, our worship practices, and the list goes on. I'm not sure that most young parents realize the influence they have on future generations until it is too late. It is important also to stress the necessity of those being taught that they need to pass on what they learn to their children as well.

We see a reference to riches. This can refer to material wealth as well as emotional, intellectual and spiritual wealth. Maintaining good family relationships can certainly help a family's material wealth - divorce, legal problems, liability from irresponsible behavior will impact a family financially. Just think that the "riches of righteousness" endure forever so it is of utmost importance that the proper emphases are placed on spiritual education.

The phrase "light arises in the darkness" could be a reference to the historical happening that the Israelites experienced shortly before they left Egypt and the plague of darkness was upon the Egyptians but not on the chosen people of God. This also could be a picture reference of the dawning of a new day that dispels darkness as being a description of insight, hope, and guidance that those who are upright are given when things seem bleak and dark.

Notice the description of the "upright." He is gracious, compassionate and righteous. These ought to be evident virtues in our lives if we count ourselves as being among the upright. Some of the evidences of these virtues are found in the very next verse. Generosity and willingness to lend without charging are indications of being gracious and compassionate. The evidence of righteousness would show up when such a person is "judged" or when such a person is involved in "evaluating others."

### **Inner Strength for the Upright**

<sup>6</sup> For he will never be shaken; The righteous will be remembered forever. <sup>7</sup> He will not fear evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. <sup>8</sup> His heart is upheld, he will not fear, Until he looks *with satisfaction* on his adversaries. <sup>9</sup> He has given freely to the poor, His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted in honor. Psalm 112:6-9 (NASB95)

Knowing the faithfulness of God and being assured that the righteous will be vindicated, we can remain steadfast (not be shaken) even when troubles come our way. We may experience tribulation and persecution from the world and this can be discouraging to us; however, if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and see the great victory God brought in His life, then we are certain that we too can overcome through Him Who has overcome the world.

The second part of verse six seems to be somewhat out of place along side of the other things in the list. The idea of one's memory being preserved was apparently important to Israelites.

Why do you think that people remembering you when you are gone is important?

It almost seems as if having future generations of children and being remembered was related to the person continuing to live in or through his descendants or in the things that he accomplished. Notice that this was promised for the righteous and others (ungodly) are not mentioned as being remembered. As a practical matter, there are very ungodly people who are still remembered

even though they have been dead for thousands of years. We could also point out that there were many righteous people who have died and no one today knows their names. So, what are we missing here with regard to this promise? It could be that WHO is doing the remembering of the righteous forever is not man but God. After all, He is the one Who really matters in such cases.

I find it helpful in better understanding verse nine by making a point-by-point comparison with the parallel verse in Psalm 111. God is seen as gracious and merciful in providing a way of redemption for His people. While we can never be the source of redemption for those who are lost, we can show generosity and compassion by helping the poor and those in need. We see that God has established or commanded His covenant forever. We find a parallel benefit from this in that the righteousness that God imputes to us is eternal. Finally, the psalmist noted that God's name is holy and to be revered. For us, there will be honor because we have made the Lord our strength.

### **The Response of the Wicked**

<sup>10</sup>The wicked will see it and be vexed, He will gnash his teeth and melt away; The desire of the wicked will perish. Psalm 112:10 (NASB95)

In the final verse of this psalm we see the stark contrast of the righteous and the wicked. The earlier verses (1-9) express the results of generosity in the context of a life that is right with God and right in conduct which leads to honor. The tenth verse shows us that wickedness is self-destructive and ends in *nothing*, (lit.) 'will perish'. The apostle Paul echoed a similar thought in Romans 2:10 where he noted "but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The outcome for the wicked is that (in the judgment) he will see the vindication of the righteous along side his own condemnation and he will NOT be happy about it. The picture of "gnashing his teeth" shows extreme anger and bitterness because of the final outcome. However, all the raw human emotion that can be worked up will not matter because in the heat of the fire of divine testing at the judgment the wicked will be as wax that melts away.

In the final analysis, the wicked will not accomplish what they desire to do because it is always at cross purposes with what God is working to accomplish. On the other hand, the desires of the righteous will come to pass because these desires are aligned with what God wants to do. It seems quite clear that those who fear the Lord have a better outcome than those who do not.