

PSALM 112

This psalm is composed alphabetically, as the former is, and is (like the former) entitled “Hallelujah,” though it treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God, and whatever we have the pleasure of he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verse of the foregoing psalm, and fully shows how much it is our wisdom to fear God and do his commandments. We have here,

I. The character of the righteous (v. 1).

II. The blessedness of the righteous.

1. There is a blessing entailed upon their posterity (v. 2).

2. There is a blessing conferred upon themselves.

(1.) Prosperity outward and inward (v. 3).

(2.) Comfort (v. 4).

(3.) Wisdom (v. 5).

(4.) Stability (v. 6-8).

(5.) Honour (v. 6, 9).

III. The misery of the wicked (v. 10). So that good and evil are set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm we must not only teach and admonish ourselves and one another to answer to the characters here given of the happy, but comfort and encourage ourselves and one another with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.

PSALM 112:1-5

THE CHARACTER OF THE RIGHTEOUS

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them it comes from God, and must return to him; as he is their praise, so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord that there are a people in the world who fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people, both which are owing entirely to the grace of God. Now here we have,

I. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made.

1. They are well-principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not who cry, *Lord, Lord*, but who are indeed well affected to his government.

(1.) They are such as stand in awe of God and have a constant reverence for his majesty and deference to his will. The happy man is he *that fears the Lord*, v. 1.

(2.) They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He *that fears the Lord*, as a Father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, *delights greatly in his commandments*, is well pleased with them and with the equity and goodness of them; they are written in his heart; it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant, yoke; it is his delight to be searching into and conversing with God's commandments, by reading, hearing, and meditation, ^{ROM} Psalm 1:2. He delights not only in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy under God's government as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he does in religion is done from principle, because he sees amiableness in religion and advantage by it.

2. They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called *the upright* (v. 2, 4), who are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity; that is gospel-perfection.

3. They are both just and kind in all their dealings: *He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous* (v. 4), dares not do any wrong to any man, but does to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God, in the foregoing psalm (v. 4), *He is gracious, and full of compassion*; and here it is said of the good man that he is so; for herein we must be *followers of God as dear children*; be merciful as he is. He is *full of compassion, and yet righteous*; what he does good with is what he came honestly by. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and so does he. One instance is given of his beneficence (v. 5): *He shows favour and lends*. Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower both to

industry and honesty. He is *gracious and lends* (⁴⁸⁷⁶Psalm 37:26); he does it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity; he does it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

II. The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer to these characters. Happiness, all happiness, to *the man that feareth the Lord*. Whatever men think or say of them, God says that they are blessed; and his saying so makes them so.

1. The posterity of good men shall fare the better for his goodness (v. 2): *His seed shall be mighty on earth*. Perhaps he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure, as his seed after him shall for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to fix it firmly. When good men themselves are happy in heaven their seed perhaps are considerable on earth, and will themselves own that it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them. *The generation of the upright shall be blessed*; if they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them, *beloved for the Father's sake* (⁴⁸¹⁸Romans 11:28), for so runs the covenant — *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*; while *the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned*. Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

2. They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, v. 3.

(1.) They shall be blessed with outward prosperity as far as is good for them: *Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house*, not in his heart (for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns), perhaps not so much in his hand (for he only begins to raise the estate), but in his house; his family shall grow rich when he is gone. But,

(2.) That which is much better is that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. His *wealth shall be in his house*, for he must leave that to others; but *his righteousness* he himself shall have the comfort of to himself, it *endures for ever*. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition shall *still hold fast his integrity*, which many, who kept it in the storm, throw off and let go in the sunshine.

Then worldly prosperity is a blessing when it does not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family, and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of the father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's *righteousness endures for ever* in the crown of *righteousness which fades not away*.

3. They shall have comfort in affliction (v. 4): *Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness*. It is here implied that good men may be in affliction; the promise does not exempt them from that. They shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but, *when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to them*, ^{<3008>}Micah 7:8. They shall be supported and comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be lightsome when their outward condition is clouded. *Sat lucis intus — There is light enough within*. During the Egyptian darkness the Israelites had *light in their dwellings*. They shall be in due time, and perhaps when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when the night is darkest the day dawns; nay, at *evening-time*, when night was looked for, *it shall be light*.

4. They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, v. 5. He that does good with his estate shall, through the providence of God, increase it, not by miracle, but by his prudence: *He shall guide his affairs with discretion*, and his God *instructs him to discretion and teaches him*, ^{<3335>}Isaiah 28:26. It is part of the character of a good man that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving, that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity: *He shows favour and lends*; but then it is with discretion, that his charity may not be misplaced, that he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him who thus uses discretion that God will give him more. Those who most use their wisdom see most of their need of it, and *ask it of God*, who has promised to *give it liberally*, ^{<3005>}James 1:5. *He will guide his words with judgment* (so it is in the original); and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom than in the government of the tongue; blessed is he to whom God gives that wisdom.

PSALM 112:6-10

THE MISERY OF THE WICKED

In these verses we have,

I. The satisfaction of saints, and their stability. It is the happiness of a good man that *he shall not be moved for ever*, v. 6. Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm and he shall never be moved, at least *not moved for ever*; if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again quickly.

1. A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, a name for good things, with God and good people: *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance* (v. 6); in this sense *his righteousness* (the memorial of it) *endures for ever*, v. 9. There are those that do all they can to sully his reputation and to load him with reproach; but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some that have been eminently righteous are *had in a lasting remembrance* on earth; wherever the scripture is read their good deeds are *told for a memorial* of them. And the memory of many a good man that is dead and gone is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever, with the reward of it, in the *crown of glory that fades not away*. Those that are forgotten on earth, and despised, are remembered there, and honoured, and *their righteousness found unto praise, and honour, and glory* (~~1~~ 1 Peter 1:7); then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man *be exalted with honour*, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men, now in their pride, *lift up their horns on high*, but they shall all be *cut off*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 75:5, 10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have *defiled their horn in the dust* (~~Job~~ Job 16:15); but the day is coming when it *shall be exalted with honour*. That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men is their liberality and bounty to the poor: *He has dispersed, he has given to the poor*; he has not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for, but he has dispersed it, *given a portion to seven and also to eight, has sown beside all waters*, and by thus scattering he has increased: and this is *his righteousness, which endures for ever*. Alms are called *righteousness*, not

because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are bound to perform; so that if we are not charitable we are not just; we *withhold good from those to whom it is due*. The honour of this endures for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day. *I was hungry, and you gave me meat*. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, ~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 9:9.

2. A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for *so shall a man have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another*. *Surely he shall not be moved*, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty or from his comfort; for *he shall not be afraid; his heart is established*, v. 7, 8. This is a part both of the character and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm, and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so and grace to do so. Observe,

(1.) It is the duty and interest of the people of God not to *be afraid of evil tidings*, not to be afraid of hearing bad news; and, when they do, not to be put into confusion by it and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse, but whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say, with blessed Paul, *None of these things move me*, neither will I fear, though the earth be removed, ~~2~~ Psalm 46:2.

(2.) The fixedness of the heart is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and ourselves masters of them, our wills resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even, under all the unevenness of Providence, we are well fortified against the agitations of the timorous.

(3.) Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the word of God, and so return to him and repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where, to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing.

(4.) Those whose hearts are established by faith will patiently wait till they have gained their point: *He shall not be afraid, till he see his desire upon his enemies*, that is, till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies, trodden under his feet, and, as Israel saw the Egyptians, dead on the sea-shore. *Till he look upon his oppressors* (so Dr.

Hammond), till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints, when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured (^{<BIB1>}2 Timothy 3:11), *But out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

II. The vexation of sinners, v. 10. Two things shall fret them: —

1. The felicity of the righteous: *The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour and shall be grieved.* It will vex them to see their innocency cleared and their low estate regarded, and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought and hoped to see, the favourites of Heaven, and advanced to have *dominion over them* (^{<BIB1>}Psalm 49:14); this will make them *gnash with their teeth and pine away.* This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the *rotteness of their bones.* But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners *gnash with their teeth, to see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in him bosom, to see all the prophets in the kingdom of God and themselves thrust out.*

2. Their own disappointment: *The desire of the wicked shall perish.* Their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore, when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off, to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.