

PSALM 111

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 111

This psalm, though without a name, is thought to be penned by David; it is composed in an artificial manner, in an alphabetical order, each clause or sentence beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in course, till the whole is finished; this perhaps was done to recommend the psalm, to make it more observed, and to help the memory; the general design of it is to excite to praise the Lord, from the consideration of his great and wonderful works.

Ver. 1. *Praise ye the Lord*, etc.] Or “hallelujah”; this is the title of the psalm, and is expressive of the subject matter of it; and so it stands in the Targum, Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions; as it should, as appears from the psalm being alphabetical; for the first letter of this word is the fifth and not the first of the alphabet; it is wanting in the Syriac version, which gives the title in this manner, without a name, concerning the glorious virtues of

“the works of God; but it exhorts us to give thanks to Christ; and it is said in the person of the apostles.”

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart; the psalmist excites to praise God by his own example; the object of his praise is Jehovah, the self-existent Being, the Being of beings, the author of his Being, and in whom all men live and move, and have their being; the God of their mercies, temporal and spiritual, and therefore should praise him, even Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit; especially Jehovah the Messiah may be here intended, whose work of redemption is particularly attended to: the manner in which he determines to perform this service is, “with his whole heart”: which ought to be engaged in every religious exercise, even the whole of it, all the powers and faculties of the soul, without being divided between other objects, and distracted or drawn off from the Lord by them; the phrase is not expressive of perfection, which is not to be expected in any duty, but of sincerity and cordial affection. The place where follows,

in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation: which may signify one and the same; even the place where upright persons assemble and gather together for divine worship, the tabernacle in David's time, and the temple afterwards; and may point at any place of worship in Gospel times, and the people that meet there; who being for the most part upright persons, or in a judgment of charity so accounted, though every individual among them may not be such, are thus called; and that because they have the uprightness, righteousness, and holiness of Christ imputed to them; and have right spirits renewed in them, and so are upright in heart; and, in consequence of this, walk uprightly according to the rules of the Gospel. It may be rendered, as it is by the Targum,

“in the secret ^{f1584} of the upright, and the congregation;”

because here the secret of the Lord is made known to his people; the mysteries of his grace are revealed; and his ordinances, which are his counsel, are administered: or it may design some particular friends and acquaintance of the psalmist's, who privately met and took sweet counsel together, and communicated their secrets to one another, as the other word “congregation” may intend the public assembly of the people; and then the sense is, that he would sincerely praise the Lord both in private and public, and that because of his works; as follows.

Ver. 2. *The works of the Lord are great,* etc.] His works of creation are great, being made out of nothing, are the effects of great power, and the produce of great wisdom, and which greatly display the glory of their Maker; the works of providence are great, which are daily wrought, especially such as concern the church and people of God, for whom he does great things, whereof they have reason to be glad and praise his name; the miracles of Christ he wrought here on earth were surprisingly great, some of them such as had not been known from the creation of the world; and yet greater things were shown him, and done by him, particularly the work of redemption, a work which angels and men were unequal to, a work which none but the great God and our Saviour could effect, and is truly called the great salvation; the work of grace upon the heart is a great work, and requires the exceeding greatness of the divine power, and which is exerted in the beginning, carrying on, and finishing that work; and for all which the Lord is to be praised: and the rather since they are such as are

sought out of all them that have pleasure therein; or “sought out because of all the pleasures of them, or that are in them” ^{f1585}, which comes to much

the same sense: there is a pleasure in the contemplation of the works of nature and providence; to behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in them, and his care over all his creatures; and particularly how he makes all things to work together for the good of his people; and especially it is delightful to observe the works of grace, how the glory of all the divine perfections is displayed in them; angels themselves take pleasure in looking into them: now these are sought and found out by those who delight in them; the works of creation are to be sought and found in the book of nature, the works of providence in the book of experience, and the works of grace in the book of God; and indeed all of them are recorded there, which are searched with pleasure by those that are inquisitive after them.

Ver. 3. *His work is honourable and glorious*, etc.] Or “honour and glory”^{f1586} itself; there is nothing mean and trifling done by him; nothing unworthy of him in nature, providence, and grace; every work of his serves to display his glory, and set off the greatness of his majesty; the heavens and the earth are full of his glory; and he does all things well and wisely in the government of the world; and whatever he does in a way of grace is for the glory of it, and tends to make his people honourable and glorious, as well as manifests his own glory, and makes for the honour of his own name.

And his righteousness endureth for ever; his justice and holiness, which appear in all his ways and works; for there is no unrighteousness in anything done by him, just and true are all his ways; there is a constant tenor of righteousness in them all; his faithfulness in fulfilling every word of promise, in making his words good by his works, is to be seen in all generations; and true evangelical righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, which is so considerable a branch of the work of redemption and salvation, is an everlasting one; it can never be abolished, it will answer for the saints in a time to come.

Ver. 4. *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered*, etc.] All his works are marvellous ones; his works of creation, that they should rise out of nothing at a word of command; his works of providence, which have such a depth of wisdom and knowledge in them, are unsearchable and past finding out; and his works of redemption and grace; and these are so wrought by him, and such methods taken to continue the memory of them, that they cannot well be forgotten: all things in nature are as they were from the beginning; the sun, moon, and stars, keep their course and station;

cold and heat, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, are as they always were; remarkable providences have been carefully recorded, and memorials of them handed down to posterity. The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was annually remembered in the passover; the feeding of them with manna in the wilderness was caused to be remembered by a pot of manna preserved in the tabernacle and temple; and the great work of our redemption by Christ is brought to remembrance in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, appointed for that purpose.

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; so he was in eternity, and is in time; this appears in all his works, and especially in our salvation by Jesus Christ; (see ^{<B98B>}Psalm 86:5,15).

Ver. 5. *He hath given meat to them that fear him,* etc.] Or a “prey” ^{f1587}, alluding to the spoil of the Egyptians; or to the manna; corporeal food, daily bread, which they that fear him shall not want, (^{<B98B>}Psalm 34:9) spiritual meat, such that endures for ever; the flesh of Christ, which is meat indeed; the word and ordinances, in which are milk for babes, and meat for strong men; savoury meat does God give his people, such as their souls love, and the world knows nothing of; all is given, and freely given, and in plenty.

He will ever be mindful of his covenant; made with Abraham, and that at Sinai; and especially which he made with his people in Christ before the world was; and which is the ground and foundation of all his works of grace and redemption, and the reason why he gives food unto them; he never forgets that, his promises in it, nor the blessings of it, nor the people for whom they are made and provided, nor his love unto them; he is a covenant keeping God.

Ver. 6. *He hath showed his people the power of his works,* etc.] Or his works of power, his mighty works, in which his great power was shown; as to the people of Israel in Egypt, at the Red sea, in the wilderness, and in bringing them to and settling them in the land of Canaan; these he showed to them in fact, they saw them with their eyes; and he showed or declared them to them in prophecy, before they came to pass, as Kimchi observes, that it might not be said they came by chance. So he hath showed his works of power to his people in Gospel times, as the miracles of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, redemption by him, and the work of grace on the hearts of men in all ages.

That he may give them the heritage of the Heathen; the Lord did the above works of his power for the people of Israel, that he might put them into the possession of the land of Canaan, inherited by Heathens; that it might become their inheritance, and they might enjoy their houses, vineyards, and fields; and he wrought powerfully through the ministration of the Gospel, by his Spirit and grace, upon the hearts of men in the Gentile world; that the Christian church might possess the dominions of it, as it did in the times of Constantine and of others, and as it will more largely in the latter day; (see ^{<9118>}Psalm 2:8 ^{<1026>}Revelation 2:26).

Ver. 7. *The works of his hands are verity and judgment*, etc.] His works of providence are just and true, particularly these which respected the driving the Canaanites out of their land, and settling the Israelites in it; these were done according to the truth of the divine promises and prophecies, and so were “verity” or “truth”; and for the sins of the Heathen, and by him who has a right to dispose of the earth and the fulness of it to whom he pleases, and so are “judgment” or righteous; and this holds good of his work of grace upon the heart, which is the work of his hands, and is “truth in the inward parts”: and is created in righteousness and true holiness; and of all his acts of grace in election, redemption, etc. which are according to the truth of the divine nature and its perfections, and in which there is no unrighteousness. Some interpret this of the two tables of stone, which were the work, writing, and engraving of God, and on which were inscribed the judgments of the Lord; and are “true and righteous altogether”. Aben Ezra understands it of the law implanted in the hearts of men.

All his commandments are sure: firm, and to be believed and complied with, either to destroy the nations, or to possess their land; or rather the commands of the moral law, which are firm and sure, one jot or tittle of which shall never pass away; all have been fulfilled by Christ, and remain with him a rule of walk and conversation; or the word which the Lord has commanded to a thousand generations, (^{<9438>}Psalm 105:8) the covenant which is ordered in all things and sure; the promises of which are yea and amen in Christ; and the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David; and even the doctrines of the Gospel are the commandments and testimony of the Lord, which are sure, (^{<9438>}Psalm 19:8) and to be believed, being the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation, and coming from God, who cannot lie.

Ver. 8. *They stand fast for ever and ever*, etc.] Not only the covenant and its promises do, but both law and Gospel, the commandments of the one and the doctrines of the other; the law is an eternal law, as to the matter of it, and is not made void by faith, but established; and the Gospel is an everlasting Gospel, which lives and abides for ever, being established upon the word of God, which cannot be broken; and is continued in the church, the pillar and ground of truth, from whence it can never be removed.

And are done in truth and uprightness; either made by the Lord according to the truth of things, the moral perfections of his nature and will, and the rectitude of it; or observed by men that truly fear the Lord with great truth and sincerity.

Ver. 9. *He sent redemption unto his people*, etc.] Or one to redeem them, who effected it; Moses to redeem Israel out of Egypt, and Christ to redeem his people from sin, Satan, and the law, and who has done it; and having obtained eternal redemption, he sent his ministers to publish it in the world, and his Spirit to apply it, and to show his people their interest in it; and make it over to them, and the blessings of it, that they may enjoy it, and all the comforts and advantages arising from it; temporal redemption, as typical of the spiritual and eternal one, is here meant.

He hath commanded his covenant for ever; which cannot be the covenant of circumcision, or that at Sinai, neither of which were for ever; but the covenant of grace made with Christ, and which stands fast with him for ever; it is everlasting, sure, and can never be removed; its blessings and promises are for ever; and it is so made and framed, and so kept and observed, as that it shall always continue, which is meant by its being “commanded”: as well as it may denote the decree and resolution of God never to break and alter it; (see ^{<98B>}Psalm 89:3,28,34).

Holy and reverend is his name; the name of God is “holy”; it is his nature, and appears in all his works; and in which he is glorious, and so is reverend; he is to be feared and revered by all his creatures, and among his saints, as he is by the angels in heaven.

Ver. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, etc.] The fear of the Lord, whose name is revered, is not a fear of his judgments here or hereafter, but of his goodness and grace; it is a reverential affection for him, a fiducial fear of him, a fear of offending so good a Being as he is; and it includes all religious worship of him, inward and outward, private and

public; and at this true wisdom begins; a man begins to be wise when he fears the Lord, and not till then; this is his highest wisdom, and this is, as it may be rendered, “the chief of wisdom”^{f1588}, the principal part of it; (see ~~3190~~ Proverbs 9:10).

A good understanding have all they that do his commandments; or “that do them”^{f1589}; the fear of the Lord and wisdom; that exercise them, that do as they oblige and direct to; so R. Moses in Aben Ezra connects the words; such have a good understanding of the Lord, know him as the object of their fear and reverence, and of their duty to him, and of their own interest, it being their wisdom to fear him; since by attending to their duty, to the word and ordinances of God, such arrive to a greater degree of knowledge and understanding of divine things. Some render it “good success”^{f1590} or “prosperity”, as Kimchi; such usually have prosperity in soul and body, in things temporal and spiritual; (see ~~6008~~ Joshua 1:8).

His praise endureth for ever; or “its praise”^{f1591}; the praise of the fear of the Lord, of divine wisdom, and of a good understanding; just as of circumcision in the heart, (~~6129~~ Romans 2:29) or the praise of him that does the above things, that does the commandments of God, or acts under the fear of God, and as a wise man, (~~4005~~ 1 Corinthians 4:5) or rather the praise of God, which shall be given him by angels and men now and for evermore, as it ought to be; and to stir up to which is the design of the psalm throughout; and which men are encouraged to from the works and word of God, from his name, nature, and covenant, and from his blessings and acts of grace and goodness.