



Studies in the Psalms Keys to the Joyful Life 8

Summary: Those who fear the LORD and delight in His commandments experience blessing in their family and finances, develop a good reputation, and find confidence in trying times.

This morning we continue our study of the blessed life – the life offered to us by God, a life that is better, far better, than any we live on our own because it centers on the One who created life and this world and who tells us how to live on it.

Scattered throughout the book of Psalms we keep finding this phrase: “[Blessed is the man who...](#)” or “[Blessed are the people who...](#)” and then God fills in the blank, telling us how to live.

It’s like playing a video game with the primary game developer sitting next to you on the couch telling you how to play, where to go, and what techniques to use.

So imagine that were true, you’re playing a game you’ve never played before but *the game’s developer is sitting next to you*, giving you directions and tips, warning you of what’s coming up next, and you keep blowing him off, ignoring his guidance, playing the game ‘your way’ instead. Wouldn’t that be foolish?

And if people knew you had the chance to play *with the developer* but you wouldn’t listen to his guidance, wouldn’t your own friends tell you, you were being stupid?

It shouldn’t be surprising then to learn that many of the other blessings we find in Scripture hinge on the one we examine this morning:

[Ps 112:1 ... Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who delights greatly in His commandments.](#)

This morning we’ll see some of the very specific blessings that come when we put God first and allow Him to guide us through life. We’ll see that many of the things we want most are found by listening to Him, but that’s really hard to do, because it means trusting God with our deepest desires and greatest fears.

And yet, I want you to notice something – I skipped the first line of the Psalm a moment ago. It doesn’t actually begin with [Blessed is the man who...](#) How does it begin? [Praise the LORD!](#) And did you see the exclamation point? The Psalm begins by praising God *because* all these things are true: [fearing God](#) and [delighting greatly](#) in His commandments *really does* produce a blessed life, a manifestly happy life, just like being fed tips and tricks on how to play a game by someone who developed it makes play more successful and enjoyable.

So, let's see what it looks like to play the game of life while listening to God's guidance and commands. Read with me:

PS 112:1 Praise the LORD!

*Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who delights greatly in His commandments.*

*2 His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.*

The very first thing we see is that when we listen to God, when we esteem Him, when we put Him first in our lives, *we become a source of blessing to those who are closest to us*. Your walk with God becomes a source of blessing to others.

When you have a child, you begin to see the world in a whole new way. You have this tiny human, and you don't want to mess her up.

And then she starts growing up and you worry about what's going to affect her. Which kids should she play with? What toys should she have? What shows should she watch? How much time should she have in front of a screen? And it just keeps going as she grows up, *because you care*.

I think kids, of all ages, would be stunned if they realized how much time their parents spend thinking about them, worrying about them, trying to make the right decisions *for them* and how much guilt they carry for messing up, or how much anxiety they have over how things will turn out.

Parents want to do things right. And here is God saying: let Me tell you what that means. Let Me tell you how to live mom. Let Me tell you how to parent dad. And let Me shape your life, into something that *will* be a lasting legacy of blessing and benefit to your kids.

Follow what the Psalm is saying:

*Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who delights greatly in His commandments.*

*2 His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.*

Mom, dad, no matter how old your children are, and even those of you who aren't married or don't have kids yet, listen, because this is true for us all – when you **fear the LORD**, when you revere Him, when you put Him first in your life, and you **delight greatly** in His ways, you let Him shape the choices you make, the direction you go, the very first thing this Psalm says is, it *will* produce a blessing for your kids.

Following God, worshipping Him, serving Him brings a blessing to you, and part of that blessing is seeing your own children blessed. In other words, the best thing you can do for your kids, is to let God shape you into the man or woman He wants you to be. Growing closer to Him will make their lives better and that will be a blessing to you – it's a positive feedback loop.

So take note of this principle: Godly parents *are* a tremendous blessing to their children.

But, you have to notice something important here: the Psalm says *they will be blessed* when you fear God and greatly delight in His commands, but it doesn't guarantee that they will follow the same path or turn out the way you want them to. In fact, experience and Scripture show that there may be years of disappointment, heartache, and alienation, even though they've been blessed. Think of Adam and Eve in the Garden, they were deeply, richly, extensively blessed by their Heavenly Father, and they still chose to rebel.

It is possible that your children, even some of the children in here with us right now, will resist and rebel and go their own way, no matter how much you seek to bless them. But, there's also the very strong possibility that at some point your faithfulness, concern, and love, the blessings you poured out on them, and continue to pour out as you [fear God](#) and [greatly delight in His commands](#) will yield fruit in their lives.

Think of the story Jesus told of the Prodigal Son. He was blessed by the righteousness and prosperity of his father, but then he went out and squandered it all and used it for his own purposes. His father's heart broke. But then one day, after the money ran out, he hit rock bottom and while he was trying to figure out what to do with his life, he thought about the home he had been raised in, and he realized what a blessing it had been and if he could only be a servant for his dad, not even a son, it would be a better life than the one he was living and so he returned to what he had known in his youth.

It's a sad story in many ways, to see a young man who had so much potential go through so much stupidity and pain and to put others through it as well. But imagine the alternative – what if life at home had not been good, what if, as he sat there eating the slop left behind by the pigs he was feeding, he couldn't imagine going back home because it had never really been much of a home in the first place. What then?

Listen, as a parent myself, I understand the strong desire to control outcomes. We want guarantees, and we are willing to give almost anything, sacrifice almost anything, to give our kids the future and life we imagine for them – tell me what will produce the results and I will commit to the process. Unfortunately, there are no guaranteed outcomes. I can't promise you the end-product in concrete terms.

But I can promise you this: you can be a channel of blessing to your kids. They can be, and will be, blessed as you fear God, as you allow Him to shape your life, as you allow Him to direct your family, guide your decisions, shape your parenting. Allow God to affect what you say yes to and what you say no to. Allow God to shape the way you respond to their

failures and their faults. Allow God to use you to cultivate their gifts and personality and put the right opportunities in front of them to explore and grow, and yield fruit.

They *will* be blessed because God is directing you, and hopefully, prayerfully, they will respond with gratitude and grace themselves. And if not now, don't give up hope – you have been and can continue to be a source of blessing to them as you [fear God](#) and [greatly delight in His commandments](#).

Well, we move on and notice additional evidence of the blessings that come to us when we put God first in our lives:

[3 Wealth and riches will be in his house,
And his righteousness endures forever.](#)

In many ways, finances are like parenting. There are principles that you can follow, but past performance is no guarantee of future results. There is no guarantee that if you follow God and put Him first that you will have a healthy bank account. We can't go out into the parking lot and determine who's the most godly among us by what you rolled up in. Or, if I can break that down for the younger generation, your *whip* is not a reflection of your *walk* with God.

There are very godly, pious, people who live in poverty and very carnal Christians who seem like they've got it all together if you judge by the clothes they wear, the cars they drive, and the house they've mortgaged. So, it's easy to get this wrong and, like with parenting, all kinds of factors can affect your personal outcome and experience, but in general, all other things being equal, [fearing God](#) and obeying [His commands](#) will produce a degree of wealth and prosperity in your home.

In general, God commends hard work, diligence, drive and determination as we do all that we do as unto the Lord. There should not be two spheres to our life – who we are work and who we are at home and church. All of life should be united as one, whole, completed, God-oriented, God-directed, act of worship. Christians should be serving God as much on Tuesday morning as they are on Sunday morning.

And that commitment to Him, involving Him in your work, praying about your projects, praying for your personnel, asking God for strength and direction at work will, generally, result in good performance which is recognized by promotion, bonuses, and financial gain. Wealth and prosperity are never the goal, but they are often the byproduct of a life lived for God who not only affects your income, but also your expenses.

People who do not serve God, and even some who do, try to find joy, happiness, identity, or release in other areas and often spend their money in the process. How much money is spent on alcohol and cover charges at night clubs to say nothing of the money spent on an outfit to wear to the club and the money spent to get there and get home?

Or how much money is spent by people trying to find themselves? Buying this or that new thing in the hope that it will make them happy. Whether it's a new pair of boots or a new boat people spend money on things they *think* will change their lives and many of those things are unnecessary when your life is grounded in Christ.

So, again, the wealth and riches that come your way are affected by two things – first, the Lord generally teaches you to be more productive and upright in your professional work leading to increased financial gain, but also, He teaches you to avoid foolish expenses which keeps you from squandering what you have. Remember the flow of the Psalm: when you **fear God** and **greatly delight in His commands**, it brings a blessing to you, and one form that blessing will often take relates to material and financial gain.

All things being equal, the Lord wants you to have more money and wealth...but, take note of this: it's not all for you, it's so that you can do *more good* with it, as we'll see in a moment.

First though, notice this:

**4 Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness;
He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.**

OK, there's a little disagreement here about how to best understand this verse but it can all be resolved pretty easily. The question is: who is the subject? Who receives the light and who is full of grace, compassion, and righteousness? There are two possible interpretations: first, we could say that this is all about the person who **fears God** – even when he or she goes through a period of darkness light shines on them like a beam coming down from heaven.

The other way of seeing it says, when darkness and difficulty fall on the land, the man or woman who **fears God** and **delights in His commands** becomes a source of light for everyone else, his or her graciousness, compassion, and righteousness provide hope and contagious encouragement to others.

Personally, I'm happy with either view because I think both are true and we'll see them both unfold in the rest of the Psalm. Those who fear God *do* go through hard times but they experience them differently because they know God *and* that makes them a source of hope, help, and encouragement to others in need. Let's continue on and see what I mean by going back and looking at how they use their wealth:

**5 A good man deals graciously and lends;
He will guide his affairs with discretion.**

So, here's part of the reason for your wealth. It's to be a source of help and strength to others. Remember, we talk all the time about receiving and then reflecting. First we receive from God personally, and then we reflect from God to others. Well, that includes financially. If God has brought you prosperity and wealth, how can you reflect that to others? How does God want to use you to be a distribution mechanism to the needs of others?

Later in vs 9 we'll read that the God compels us to [disperse our wealth abroad](#) and [give to the poor](#). Put all of that together with what we've already seen and it gives us four different ways to consider using our resources.

First, your wealth and money should be a source of provision and blessing to your own family. God is giving you what you need to take care of them. But it's not just about you and them, it's also about [dispersing abroad](#) – you give charitably to people who are not your family. Some amount of your wealth should be scattered outside your home.

And notice, the Psalm describes both [lending](#) here in vs 5 and [giving](#) down in verse 9. Both are valid uses of the resources God has entrusted to you. Sometimes He wants you to loan someone something to help get through a need – that could be money, or it could be sharing use of some material good – let someone borrow a tool, a toy, a car, whatever will be a blessing to them, and do it with kindness, generosity, and enthusiasm knowing that if you don't get it back or if it comes back in worse shape, that's OK because you're doing it for the LORD who is teaching us to love people and use stuff, instead of loving stuff and using people.

Sometimes God actually gives us stuff *so that* we can give it away or lend it out and learn something valuable in the process. He's teaching us, training us, growing us, blessing us.

And that's important because hard times will still come, even as we [fear the LORD](#) and [delight in His commands](#). Look at what we come to next:

[6 Surely he will never be shaken;
The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.](#)
[7 He will not be afraid of evil tidings;
His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.](#)
[8 His heart is established;
He will not be afraid,
Until he sees *his desire* upon his enemies.](#)

There's a note in my Life Application Study Bible that puts it this way: "the fear of God can lead to a fearless life."

We are all going to go through some rough patches. In your individual life, in your family, as a nation, or even as a citizen of the planet – things happen that you cannot control.

Personally, I think it's a problem that is getting worse driven by our little pocket computers which help us see more things and know more things that are happening, but do very little to help us really affect them. Last week we learned of the crisis in Afghanistan, the earthquake in Haiti, and flooding in Tennessee. We saw pictures, we heard reports. You learned how big the issue is, but what could you, personally, do about everything you're aware of as you were getting ready for school to start back up again here in Fairfax?

You know of all the things that *have* gone wrong, and many other things that *could* go wrong, but what can you do about it? How can change it? How can you stop it? And, how can you care about and react to it *all*? You can't. Which usually makes us either withdraw and go numb or feel distraught and overwhelmed, or makes us cynical. None of which are good, Godly, options.

So, what's the answer? It's to **fear God** and **greatly delight in His commandments**. Trust God more than whatever you're worried about, concerned about, or afraid of. And, as we have said before during this summer in the Psalms let your doubts, your fears, your concerns, your heartache, your anger, magnify your God. Look straight at the things you're facing, appreciate them for all their terrible potential, and then say, yes, that, all of that, that's exactly what I'm trusting God with, that's exactly what I'm believing God for, that's exactly what I'm counting on God to carry me through.

Invite God into your fears and frustrations, listen to Him through His Spirit and through His Word, He promises to be your guide, your comfort, and your source of strength for whatever you face. Let your fear of God produce a fearlessness in you and it will be a blessing for you. You can rest in Him when other people have nowhere else to go. Look at how the Psalm ends:

9 He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted with honor.
10 The wicked will see *it* and be grieved;
He will gnash his teeth and melt away;
The desire of the wicked shall perish.

We have here a comparison of how life ends for the man or woman who **fears God** and the man or woman who persistently rebels against Him.

Those who **fear God** are known by their generosity, they are a blessing to their family and their community by their example, their conduct and their giving, and they have created a noble legacy. Did you notice that was mentioned *three times* in the Psalm? Vs 3 says, **his righteousness endures forever**. Vs 6 says **The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance**. And now this in vs 9: **His righteousness endures forever**.

God is eternal, when you allow Him to shape you and guide the direction of your life, His eternal glory breaks through a little crack in you which is displayed to the people of this world.

Meanwhile, the wicked have freedom to be and become whatever they choose and it all comes to nothing – they simply melt away and perish.

The general outline of life looks the same for most people here on earth. Both the Christian and the non-Christian have children. Both the Christian and the non-Christian have jobs

and make money. Both the Christian and non-Christian are in relationships and community. Both go through dark and difficult times. But how they experience it all, what they produce through it all, and what they have left to show for it all after they're gone is radically different.

So, which path are you on? And where might you need a little course correction today? I want to remind you of how the whole Psalm started: [Praise the LORD!](#) It's a song of reflection on all the blessings that come from [fearing God](#) and [greatly delighting in His commands](#) – it's the joy that comes from letting the game developer guide you through the game. My friends, God is speaking. He wants to be heard. He wants us to come closer. And, He wants to guide us, direct us, and bless us in the process.

If you have never asked Him for that, I hope today is your day. If God has been speaking to you this morning, pointing out some area of your life, or maybe that your entire life, is out of alignment with Him and His commands, then I encourage you to talk with Him about that in prayer. You don't need fancy words, just a heart that is willing to respond to what He's pressing on you. Say God, you're right. I'm sorry. Please forgive me through the cross of Christ, and teach me, by Your Word and with Your Spirit to live according to Your commands from this day forward, bless me that I might become a blessing myself.

Let's pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Studies in the Psalms Keys to the Joyful Life 8

Summary: Those who fear the LORD and delight in His commandments experience blessing in their family and finances, develop a good reputation, and find confidence in trying times.

- How has your family affected your life? What difference has being born into your immediate and extended family made on you?
 - What kind of spiritual legacy did you inherit from your family?
 - What kind of material legacy did you inherit – do you have family land, did you ever receive an inheritance, did anyone ever give you something important?
- Even if you don't have any yet, how do you hope to affect your children?
 - What are your greatest fears regarding your children?
 - What are your greatest hopes?
 - How do you think a parent's relationship with God affects their children?
- Consider the following quote from NY Times Columnist David Brooks and ask: how does it relate to the message of Psalm 112 and the value of delighting in God's commands?

I've been thinking about the difference between the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the ones you list on your résumé, the skills that you bring to the job market and that contribute to external success. The eulogy virtues are deeper. They're the virtues that get talked about at your funeral, the ones that exist at the core of your being — whether you are kind, brave, honest or faithful; what kind of relationships you formed. Most of us would say that the eulogy virtues are more important than the résumé virtues, but I confess that for long stretches of my life I've spent more time thinking about the latter than the former. Our education system is certainly oriented around the résumé virtues more than the eulogy ones. Public conversation is, too — the self-help tips in magazines, the nonfiction bestsellers. Most of us have clearer strategies for how to achieve career success than we do for how to develop a profound character.¹

- Compare the blessings, attitudes, and actions found in this Psalm with those found in Proverbs 31:10-31
 - What does each say about family?
 - What does each say about concern for others?
 - What does each say about reputation and character?
 - What does each say about prosperity?
 - What does each say about facing difficult times?
- Psalm 112 is strongly connected with Ps 111. Read Ps 111 and note: how many of the characteristics of the blessed man in Ps 112 actually begin with the character of God in Ps 111?

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/12/opinion/sunday/david-brooks-the-moral-bucket-list.html>