

The Portrait of the Godly Man

Psalm 112:1–10

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Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. 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. It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. 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. The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish.

A King Who Feared God and Delighted in His Word

Before we open Psalm 112, we need to meet a man. He lived in Jerusalem around 640–609 BCE. He became king at eight years old — which means he was shaped not by a father who walked with God (his father Amon was wicked; his grandfather Manasseh was worse), but by something else entirely. Something the Scripture calls the fear of the LORD.

His name was Josiah. And 2 Kings 22–23 gives us one of the most compelling portraits of a godly man in all of the Old Testament.

At sixteen, we are told, Josiah “began to seek the God of his father David” (2 Chr. 34:3). Not the God of his actual father — his actual father had filled Jerusalem with idols. He sought the God of David. He went looking for the God of the psalms. At twenty he began purging the high places and the Asherah poles from the land. At twenty-six he turned his attention to the Temple, which had fallen into disrepair through decades of idolatrous neglect, and ordered it restored.

During those Temple repairs, the workers found something. They found a scroll. The high priest Hilkiah brought it to the scribe Shaphan, who brought it to the king: “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king.

When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. — 2 Kings 22:11

He tore his robes. This is the ancient gesture of grief, of horror, of repentance. The king of Judah heard the Word of God and it broke him open. Not because it offended him. Because it found him. Because somewhere in the reading of those words, Josiah recognized that this — this — was what he had been seeking when he began to seek the God of David at sixteen. The Word of God was not a legal obligation to him. It was a homecoming.

He sent immediately to inquire of the prophetess Huldah. He gathered all the elders of Judah. He stood in the Temple and read the entire covenant to the people. He renewed it before the LORD. He kept the Passover — the text says there had been no Passover like it since the days of the judges (2 Kings 23:22). He pursued the obliteration of idolatry with a thoroughness that exceeded every king before him.

What drove all of this? Two things. The same two things named in Psalm 112:1. Josiah feared the LORD — when he heard the Word, he trembled before the holy God it revealed. And Josiah delighted in God’s commands — the discovery of the scroll was not a burden but a gift. He did not receive the Law as a threat. He received it as treasure. He ordered it read aloud. He kept it. He built his reign around it.

Of Josiah the text says: “Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did — with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses” (2 Kings 23:25). The man who fears the LORD and delights in his commands. That is Josiah. He is, in the flesh, the man Psalm 112 describes.

Archaeological Moment: A Bulla from Josiah’s Court

In July 2025, archaeologists at the Temple Mount Sifting Project in Jerusalem announced the discovery of a tiny clay seal impression — a bulla — bearing the ancient Paleo-Hebrew inscription: “*Belonging to Yeda’yah (son of) Asayahu.*”

The seal dates to the late seventh century BCE, precisely the era of King Josiah. The name Asayahu appears in 2 Kings 22:12 and 2 Chronicles 34:20 as a member of the delegation Josiah sent to inquire of Huldah after the scroll was found — the “servant of the king,” a senior royal official and trusted confidant. Researchers at the Temple Mount Sifting Project consider it

highly plausible that this bulla belonged to his son, who would likely have held a comparable position in the Temple or royal treasury administration.

The bulla still carries a fingerprint. The literal impression of a human hand from Josiah's Jerusalem — a man who administered the sacred storehouses in the very years that Israel was rediscovering its Scriptures. Archaeology keeps pressing the same point: the biblical narrative is not myth. Josiah was a real king. Asayahu was a real official. The scroll was a real scroll. And the man who found great delight in God's commands — who tore his robes and gathered the nation and renewed the covenant — left a mark on the clay of history that survives to this day.

And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us." — 2 Kings 22:12–13

Twin Psalms: You Become What You Worship

Most people can tell you which passage of Scripture describes the godly woman. It is Proverbs 31. Fewer can tell you which passage describes the godly man. It is Psalm 112.

But Psalm 112 cannot be read in isolation. It is the second half of a deliberately matched pair. Psalms 111 and 112 are twin acrostic poems — same number of lines, the same twenty-two-letter Hebrew alphabet governing both, similar vocabulary, and a deliberate mirroring of theme. They belong together the way a key belongs to its lock.

The organizing theology of the pair is simple and profound: you become what you worship. Psalm 111 is the hymn of God's character. Psalm 112 is the portrait of the person who has been shaped by worshiping such a God. One psalm describes the light. The other describes what happens when a life reflects that light — which is, as we have seen, exactly what happened to Josiah.

The Great Beatitude

The psalm opens with a declaration that functions as a great beatitude:

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!

Who is this blessed man? He is defined by two things.

First, he fears God. This is not a cowering, paralyzed terror — it is the posture of a creature who rightly understands who God is. God is holy, majestic, and powerful, and the person who fears him does not take him lightly. There is a reason Paul writes in Ephesians 5 that believers are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. The fear of the LORD is the beginning not only of wisdom, but of the entire shape of the godly life.

Second, he delights in God's commands. This of course implies obedience, but it is more than obedience. There is an echo here from Psalm 111:

Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.
— Psalm 111:2

In Psalm 111, the object of delight is the works of God. In Psalm 112, the object of delight is the word of God. To this psalmist, these are not separate things. The commands of God are themselves among his great works — and the man who is truly blessed does not merely comply with them. He treasures them. He is, in other words, Josiah: the man who heard the scroll read and knew he had found what he had been looking for all his life.

The Blessings of the Godly

What does it mean to be blessed by God? When most people hear that word, they tend to think in one direction — external blessings: health, prosperity, reputation, the visible signs of a life that is going well. But as we look at the blessings described in this psalm, something interesting emerges. They come in pairs. Outer blessings and inner blessings, coupled together, as if the psalmist wants us to see that these cannot be separated.

The first pair: Legacy and Uprightness

His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. — v. 2

“Mighty” here does not mean physically powerful. It carries the sense of recognized stature — the kind of standing that comes from character. The external blessing is that the godly man's children will be regarded as people of high moral standing. The inner blessing paired with that is the uprightness itself. The man who lives an upright life tends to pass that character on.

Children still make their own decisions, of course, but the legacy of a life of integrity is a gift to the generations that follow.

The second pair: Riches and Righteousness

| *Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. — v. 3*

Notice the connection with Psalm 111:3:

| *Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.*

There is a distortion of Christian faith called prosperity theology, which teaches that certain behaviors — often including financial giving to a particular ministry — will cause God to make you wealthy. We know from Scripture, and we know from the actual lives of God's people, that this is not how it works. Not all godly people are wealthy. Wealth can be a burden, a distraction, a barrier. In the wrong hands it can function almost as a curse. And there are many deeply righteous people among the poor.

But wealth is also a blessing — something to receive with thanksgiving when God grants it. Proverbs is full of this: honor and riches come from wisdom (Proverbs 3:16, 8:18, 22:4). And Jesus himself, speaking in Mark 10:29–31, promises that those who follow him will receive abundantly — homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, fields — even in this present age, and with them, persecutions. The point is not that wealth is guaranteed to the godly, or that poverty marks the ungodly. Wealth is no measure of godliness, just as poverty is no measure of ungodliness.

But here is something worth saying plainly: pursuing God, seeking his ways, living with honesty and integrity — these things tend to produce a life that works. Following God's wisdom about money, relationships, and work does have real-world consequences. This is not a hard thing to grasp. The man who fears the LORD is not managing his affairs with the chaos that so often marks a life lived apart from God.

The third pair: Light and Compassion

| *Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous. — v. 4*

The godly man is a light in the darkness — and that external brightness is paired with an inner quality of graciousness and compassion. These are not accidental companions. The person who reflects the light of God becomes, in the way he treats others, gracious and merciful — because that is what the God whose light he reflects is like.

The fourth pair: Goodness with Generosity and Justice

It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. — v. 5

Good things come to the person who is generous with others, willing to lend to those in need, and just in all his dealings. And notice how this mirrors what Psalm 111 says about God himself:

He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. He has shown his people the power of his works... The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. — Psalm 111:5–7

The generosity and justice of the godly man are reflections of the generosity and justice of God. This is what it looks like when a life is shaped by worshiping the right God.

The fifth pair: Stability and Faith

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. — vv. 6–8

We have been talking about wealth and blessing. So it is worth pausing to ask: what are the temptations that come with wealth? Greed, certainly. The abuse of the power that wealth brings. Indulgent decadence. And perhaps most insidiously — the fear of losing it all. What is remarkable about the latter section of this psalm is the way the godly man is described as protected from precisely these temptations.

Instead of greed, he is generous (vv. 5, 9). Instead of abusing the power wealth brings, he is just (v. 5). Instead of indulgent decadence, he is steadfast in his way of life (v. 6). And instead of living in fear that his security might be taken from him, he is fearless — because he trusts God (vv. 7–8).

Do godly people ever receive bad news? Yes. Do they have enemies? Yes. The psalm does not promise immunity from hardship. What it promises is something far more durable: a heart that is not shaken when the hardship comes.

Job is the great biblical portrait of this. Job had an enemy who is also our great enemy — Satan — who slandered him before God, claiming that the only reason Job loved and served God was that God had made him prosperous. It was not true. And in one terrible day, Job lost five hundred cattle, five hundred donkeys, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, all his servants, and all his children — when a tornado struck the house where they were gathered. What did Job do when the messengers brought him these disasters, one after another?

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship. — Job 1:20

It takes strong character and steadfast faith to praise God in the midst of disaster. But it is exactly this character — the character of the man who fears God and delights in his Word — that makes such a response possible. The blessed man of Psalm 112 is not someone who has never known darkness. He is someone whose heart is firm enough, whose trust is deep enough, that the darkness does not have the final word.

The sixth pair: Honor and Compassion

He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor. — v. 9

This verse is in many ways a summary of the entire portrait. The godly man's generosity, his righteousness, and his well-deserved honor — his "horn exalted," the ancient image of strength and dignity — are gathered here in a single closing line.

Paul quotes this verse directly in 2 Corinthians 9:

As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. — 2 Corinthians 9:9–10

What is interesting is that Paul, in the very next breath, also paraphrases Psalm 111: "*He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever*" (111:5). Paul sees the connection clearly: God's generosity and God's righteousness are the pattern from which human generosity and righteousness are drawn. We give because God gives. We are righteous because he is righteous. The two psalms are inseparable in Paul's mind, just as they are in the structure of the Hebrew psalter.

The Life of the Wicked

Verse 9 is a summary of the godly man. And it stands in immediate and stark contrast to the final verse of the psalm:

The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish. — v. 10

These are the two ways. The way of the godly and the way of the wicked. Psalm 111 was a hymn about God, and it closed with a verse that invited a response. Psalm 112 is a portrait of the life that accepts that invitation — and at the end holds up the image of the life that refuses it.

The wicked man sees the goodness, the stability, the honor of the godly — and he is angry. He cannot enjoy the good of another. He gnashes his teeth and wastes away. This image is not accidental. It sounds like hell — and rightly so, because the disposition of the wicked is a hell that begins in the present. The longings of the wicked come to nothing. They are never content. They are always hungry for what they cannot have and furious at those who seem to have it.

What life do you choose?

Psalm 112 and Jesus

One more word before we close. The blessed man of Psalm 112 is ultimately Jesus — the one human being whose righteousness truly endures forever, who scattered his gifts to the poor, who was not shaken in the darkness of Calvary, and whose horn was lifted high in the resurrection. We are not yet what this psalm describes. But in Christ, this is what we are becoming. The psalm is both a prophecy fulfilled in him and a promise extended to all who are in him.

Fear the LORD. Delight in his commands. And become, by the grace of the God Psalm 111 describes, the person Psalm 112 portrays.