

The Contemplation of God 9-24-00

Going through this series on the attributes of God has affected the way I think of Him. It has also affected my attitude toward daily life. I have studied the attributes of God before, and read about them, as many of you probably have, and each time I do, I step a little deeper into the wonder of Who He is. We could probably spend a year on each attribute and still have just scratched the surface. Here is one subject to which you can devote your life. Here is one subject that will keep you in awe through eternity. You'll never reach the end, never get bored with, never find lacking, the wonder of God.

C.H. Spurgeon wrote in a sermon on Mal 3:6 "The proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the doings, and the existence of the great God which he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can comprehend and grapple with' in them we feel a kind of self-contentment, and go on our way with the thought, "Behold, I am wise." But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumbline cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, "I am but of yesterday and know nothing."

As Providence would have it, this week my meditations included Psalm 111. It is the first of a trilogy of psalms that begin with "Praise the Lord" which is in Hebrew, Hallelu – Yah. It is a plural imperative in almost every usage including this one. Amplified into its full meaning we would say, "We must begin to sing, and shout, and boast, and act like a fool to Jehovah!" ¹ "I will extol the LORD with all my heart ..." His greatness deserves our wholehearted response of thanks. Complaining and murmuring are so out of place when we understand the goodness of the God we serve.

² "Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them." As the Sovereign One who is over all, nothing gets by Him that He does not use to bring Himself glory. Even the wrath of man will praise Him. Do you ponder and delight in his works? Your everyday is filled with His works. Are you interpreting the events of the day in the light of His awesome attributes or with a doubting heart that thinks the world is filled with coincidence and chance? Or worse yet do you see things as conspiring against you, instead of lovingly for you?

As God allows hardship and difficulty into my life do I see Him bringing me to a greater revelation of trust in Him, of his power to turn me from self to the wonder of his love? If you do you will begin to ponder and delight in his works.

³ "Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever."

The psalmist tells us to praise Him with all our heart, to think about his great deeds and delight in them, and now He begins telling us why. All the 'whys' include his attributes. His deeds are great because He is great. He is great because of his attributes. His deeds are glorious and majestic because He is full of glory. He is majestic because He is Sovereign

over all. He is righteous and immutably so. That perfect righteousness will never change, or it would be less than perfect.

⁴ "He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate." There is a wonderful record of his gracious and compassionate acts that He himself has preserved over the onslaughts of hell against it. Satan does not want us to have the Word or read it because in it we learn of the acts of God, and we see how compassionate and gracious He is.

⁵ "He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever." Do you have a healthy fear of God? Then He will feed you the bread from heaven. Those who have no fear of the wrath of God do not turn from their sin. Without repenting of sin, we will find no spiritual food for our souls. We might plead for it but our stubborn clinging to sin prohibits God from answering that request. The covenant He remembers is the one that was repeated, the one based on Himself. This is the covenant that says through the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, the world will be blessed. He did not forget, but blessed the world in Himself, in Jesus. Jesus is the bread from heaven to those who fear God around the world.

⁶ "He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations." God has shown us in history, more than once, that He can provide a place for his chosen people, and give them fields they did not plant, and homes they did not build. He has prepared the ultimate land for us, where we have a home prepared for us, and the marriage feast of the Lamb, which He prepared for us.

⁷ "The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy." Everything He does is faithful and just. Do you see everything that way? Interpret life according to the reality of His attributes! All He has told is completely trustworthy. He cannot lie. Then how do you see your experiences of life? In the light of that truth? When you look at all your circumstances, do you think, "faithful and just, He can be no less!"?

⁸ "They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness." Again, immutable is his word as well as his character. Every action of God is done in faithfulness, in uprightness. If everything God allowed in your life you recognized as faithful, from His perfect character, how would this change your attitude toward those things and events? What a peace we should have knowing this is our Lord and his actions are consistent with who He is.

Are you learning a tough lesson? His faithfulness teaches us the cost of sin. Humbly bow and learn. Are you suffering from another's sin? Does that make God less than faithful and just? No! He will see you through and work it for good in your life. Do you have to see the good to believe? Not if you walk by faith and not by sight. It is a matter of trusting that He is who He says He is. Life is like this giant chess game with 5 billion pieces. Satan is running around doing his best. His first move was a doozy. But God let him do that because he has an awesome plan. You see not being bound by time, He sees every move Satan will ever make, not might, but will make. He's there now as well as here. That's why He can tell us how the match of eternity will come out. And here we are on the board, looking up

and asking, "why"? He doesn't get upset with your 'whys' because He has been where we are in Jesus. But He does say, "Trust me child. See who I am and be at peace." He kept telling his disciples, "Peace be unto you." You see, when He walked out of the tomb He already said "Checkmate" -

⁹ "He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever-- holy and awesome is his name." And the great work of God done in the glory of all his attributes is our redemption. This is the goal of the covenants and the nature of the New Covenant - and over it all, we say He is HOLY and AWESOME. That is all you can see when you put them all together, GLORY!!!

¹⁰ "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise."

Understanding his holy awesome nature should cause one reaction - the fear of the LORD which is the beginning of realizing you are a creature that owes all obediently to Him. If you get that you are starting to become wise. Knowing who He is and how He acts should cause us to recognize the only wise thing to do is follow his instruction. Then you know ETERNAL praise is due - (this bill is due in full upon receipt) HIM, for all He is and all He does. Today and tomorrow and forever we owe Him praise. It is our privilege to be the recipients of his attributes and the appropriate response, the response due, is praise.

The psalmist was declaring that all God's works were consistent with his attributes. What a comfort to us who fear and obey Him! What praise this should cause to well up in our hearts! But for the rebellious what dread and trepidation. No wonder they don't want to know. No wonder they want to pretend He doesn't exist or does not care. For if this God we have begun to described is indeed God, eternal praise is due, now and forever.

The next Hallelu – Yah psalm 112 then tells us these attributes should be reflected in our lives. It gives us promises of blessings that will be in our lives when we reflect those attributes. It promises freedom from fear for we who fear the Lord will trust Him to be consistent with his attributes. ⁷ "He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD." - Bad news does not affect who He is or that fact that He will use that situation to express the wonder of who He is to us. He trusts in who He knows God to be. I encourage you to look at those blessings and consider that God desires to pour them out on you.

As we begin to learn of what a mighty God it is that we serve, we walk deeper and deeper into the truth that all we experience is connected to, is dominated by, his awesome attributes. Peace and joy are the natural result of knowing this loving Father is so involved in changing us into his image. As we ponder his works we delight in obeying this loving Father who is holy and just. We fear to step out of his will. We delight to obey his leading and see Him touch others through us. We cooperate with his transforming work in us. And we want to shout, Hallelu – Yah! In Him we live and move and have our being. Praise Him, for eternal praise is due Him!