

Great are His Works

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[0 : 0 0] As I was introduced, my name is Andrew Prentice. I know there's a lot of Andrews, so the way you can remember me is I'm the apprentice. All right, hey, Prentice, get it? Cool. Yeah, so as I was introduced, we're from the RMIT mission team, and I'd just like to first start off by just thanking you guys for having us.

I think it's just awesome. It's been an awesome week. It's been such an epic week. I've just seen the way that God's been working in the church, and also, yeah, we've grown a lot as well. So just to start us off, I'd just like to say that I'm actually here to talk to you about fear.

And I'm just going to start off by just talking about some of the things that we actually fear. There's one fear that I think most of you guys might be pretty familiar with, and this is the fear of not being able to use your mobile phone.

It's a phobia called nomophobia, and I swear this one just really cripples me. I don't know about you guys, but I used to have this phone called a Nexus 5, and the battery life was just absolutely terrible.

Every day at about 4 p.m., I've gone to this full-on mode of just anxiety. So I have no idea what to do. I think just anything and everything can be feared. We are fearful creatures.

[1 : 0 6] Today, a few more extreme phobias. There's chronophobia, the fear of time passing. There's panphobia, the fear of everything, fearing that everything and anyone is evil. The thing about fear is that it really causes us to react.

Our world, it seems, is run by fear. In the last 10 years, the frequency of terrorist attacks has increased, and with it, an escalating insecurity. You walk into any airport, and the amount of security you have to go through to get on a plane is amazing.

Why? What if someone brings a gun on the plane? There are even certain countries that it is even recommended not to travel to. People at times can be fearful. Our world at times is a fearful place.

And it was, however, no different in the time of this psalm. Their world was not a fluffy one. The stories about Israel and Egypt and the slavery they were under was no joke. So today, we're going to be looking at the approach of fear in Psalm 111.

A psalm of praise, with God's character as seen through his works as being the central idea for the psalm. So what we're going to be looking at is his faithfulness and his trustworthiness, and how that is reflected through his people, Israel.

[2 : 1 2] And how the God talked about in Psalm 111 is, in fact, the same God that we worship today. So as I talk, can I just get you guys to open your Bibles to Psalm 111, as I'll be referring to it.

So let's just start off by having a look at what Israel's story is in this psalm. So we know that this psalm is directly addressing the people of Israel, or at least a gathering. We look to the psalm in verse 1.

It is addressed to the council of the upright in the assembly. It is a collective address to God's people. The psalmist then declares in verse 2, that great are the works of the Lord.

And in verse 4, that God causes these works to be remembered. So the question must be asked, what did this mean for Israel? The people of Israel, God's people, the chosen one who are set aside by God for his purpose.

They have his promises. God has a covenant with them, a pledge to his chosen people. Remember that story we all learn in Sunday school? The one we have known for years? About Abraham.

[3 : 16] God made promises to him for descendants, for land, for blessing, for relationship. And what was it that God said to Abraham? That these promises are for all time.

The people of Israel have been given these promises that God would be with them, that his promises were for all time. And then what happened to them? They are put into exile in Egypt.

They succumbed to slavery for a few hundred years. The people of Israel, who had these promises by God, yet they are stricken. They are put to hard labor and they are held captive. They are worked to the bones, segregated and spat on as a people.

They live in a constant state of fear. I don't think we can really ever begin to imagine what it would be like to not only be persecuted as a people, but actually be driven into slavery.

Now, persecution is something that you may have experienced because of the way you are as a person, or maybe even due to race. It's hurtful and it's extremely degrading. Now, wonder that coupled with slavery.

[4 : 15] Forced to work, battered and beaten, left, deserted. And what is their response in this circumstance? Well, how can they do anything but fear? For surely God has left them.

They feel deserted as the people, deserted of the promise. Fearful of their circumstance, fearful of the future. Now, had God abandoned them? Had God left them?

Had God deserted them? Did his promises mean anything? Well, God heard their cry for help. God does not leave them in this pit. He has not forget them.

And he never did. And how do they know this? Well, he shows them. He leads them out of Egypt towards the land that they promised. Now, we look back in the Psalm in verse 6.

And it says that he has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the land of other nations. It is God who saves them. It is God who redeems the people out of this exile. He tells them that he has remembered his covenant with them, that all the promises that he made with them have not ceased.

[5 : 22] He hasn't forgotten them. He is there to deliver them out of the stranglehold of slavery, to deliver them out of the clutch of their messed up circumstance. Let's have a look back in the Psalm in verse 9, which reads, he provided redemption for his people.

He ordained his covenant forever. The covenant he had with his people was not a temporary covenant, nor were the promises he made hollow. His covenant was ordained for all time, and his promises did not go away.

So that was Israel in the past. Yet now, at the time of the Psalm, whether the people were in trouble or whether they feel blessed, God has sustained and delivered them in the past.

He has shown his trustworthiness. He has shown that through his deeds, reading from verse 3 in the Psalm again, that his righteousness endures forever. He has shown that he is faithful to his covenant and that he is faithful to his people.

Remembering the deliverance and the promises made to the people, it can be said, and having a look back in the Psalm again in verse 4, that the Lord is gracious and compassionate.

[6 : 30] Gracious and compassionate in his faithfulness. If there is another layer to these deeds that the Psalm really points out, and that is that they are actually one in nature.

They are great. They are faithful. They are just. They are one in reflecting the nature of God. God is consistent. His character and his deeds remain steadfast.

Holy and awesome is his name. So now we can come to see the stance that the Psalm is written on. It really is a testimony to the people of Israel, which really reflects how awesome the name of the Lord is.

It reflects his faithful and trustworthy character for all to see. Now, how often do you stop to really wonder at how awesome God is? Now, when I was a kid, I remember going down to my grandparents' house down the coast, looking up at the night sky.

You see the stars, the moon, the glory that is creation, and you just marvel. You had a clear night, and it's just absolutely amazing. The handiwork of God is on show.

[7 : 34] Now, for those who follow me on Instagram, I have a bit of a go-to hashtag when I see these epic sceneries, and it's hashtag beauty. But you know what? God is a lot more awesome and amazing than our minds can ever seek to understand.

Just like looking at that clear night sky, we can't possibly expect to understand the full extent of the wonders of such a scene. Yet we want to know more. We stare longingly in awe of what stands before us.

How awesome is it the way that God worked through his people and the way this actually reflected the faithfulness and trustworthiness of God? How awesome is God?

Holy and awesome is his name. But I mean, seriously, is this the way that Israelites are supposed to respond? Are they there just to sit there and marvel?

So we unpack how such works are used to point to the character of God, that he is faithful, that he is trustworthy, that in a world of shifting circumstance, it is his work that remains steadfast in his character, which they could trust.

[8 : 44] Now, a deeper understanding of who God is leads to a fear that is not like the fear of our phone batteries going low, but a fear of reverence, a fear of the awesome nature of God.

The psalmist then concludes the psalm with verse 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, that all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

That in the midst of their situation, whether they're in the midst of battle or whether they're destined for exile, in having the hope of God holding to his covenant, trust God.

Why? For they were promised more, and God holds to his promises. Fear him above all other nations.

The nations which surround them are nothing compared to the power of God. He has shown that. Remember that. They are works which are worth pondering on.

[9 : 41] Fear God as his deeds are glorious and majestic. He is righteous. He has power. It's a fear that instead of leaving the nation crippled, it leads to following God's precepts, to trusting that the way that God is directing the nation is truly trustworthy.

Why? Because God is faithful. It is his nature. God is God. But you know what? It doesn't matter whether people trusted God in this way.

God's character is not dependent on these circumstances. He is steadfast and just. His works are one. So as Christians, what does this mean for us today?

I think we can really take comfort in how faithful God is. That the God of Israel is the same God that we worship today. The same awe that the psalmist has is the same awe that we can have.

That this God whose works are faithful, just, that this God whose works are good, this God who is trustworthy in upholding his covenant, we have that same God. Being born thousands of years after this psalm does not detach us in any way from the faithfulness of God as reflected through this psalm.

[10 : 59] The covenant that he had with Israel was merely a shadow compared to the plan that he had for his people. His true people to whoever confesses that Jesus is Lord to us.

We too have a covenant with God. A new covenant of which Jesus, God's own son, being in very nature God, came not to give us prosperity as we know it. We have not gone into a promised land as the Israelites did, but we go into a land and the life after, to a place in heaven with him.

We can now have a relationship with this living God. And he did this by dying a death on a cross. The things we do that drive a wedge between us and God.

No longer is there that wedge. There is no divide. Now we can read in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 that Paul tells us that he will also keep you firm to the end so you'll be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are now blameless in judgment before the Lord. And if you have accepted Jesus as our saviour in recognizing this new covenant, we have the very spirit of God living inside us.

[12 : 15] We are blessed. Paul goes on to tell us in 1 Corinthians that for in him you have been enriched in every way. For all kinds of speech and with all knowledge.

And God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly await for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. In having his spirit we are promised that.

And then again Paul goes on in verse 9 to say that God is faithful who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. God has us.

He keeps us firm. To those who are in fellowship with him he is faithful. As God's people he is faithful to us. So when we consider our circumstance sure we haven't been slaves and we really can't identify with Israel in this way.

Here in the West in Australia we are not being physically attacked for our faith. As Christians we still seem to have this fear that doesn't reflect the confidence we should have in what God has done for us and who God is.

[13 : 23] So often we fear situations that we shouldn't. We worry about our jobs our finances our relationships and at points we are crippled with fear.

We won't tell people about our faith because of how fearful we are that our friends will think less of us. We won't give money to the church because we are afraid we won't be able to save. Now these are all things in my life that I have really struggled with and it really changes the way that I would act.

I wouldn't give money to the church I wouldn't share my faith with others or be so concerned about the work that I was doing that I wouldn't prioritise reading the Bible and these are things that we all struggle with yet really this is a fear without knowing the God of this psalm.

So here we are as Christians we have this new covenant we have the hope of eternal life we know that our fate is sealed it is sealed with Jesus that we can have a relationship with the living God and God holds to his promises he is faithful we can do nothing other than be fearful of God our creator the one who is glorious and majestic in works we no longer need to be fearful of what lies ahead God has us in his hands he is faithful to his promises we do not have a blind faith and it is through this reverent fear that we are driven to come before him in awe of who he is and what he has done for us the faithful and trustworthy God of the universe made us to be in a relationship with him he has proven that in faithfully giving us his spirit but do we delight in who God is that he is faithful to us that he sent

Jesus for us now I find this a huge challenge and I was really reminded of this during the year now I was meeting up with this non-Christian friend and every now and then we would just chat about religion he would ask me questions about my faith and when I would talk about the gospel to him he would come to these little conclusions about how awesome God is if what I was saying was true and this is coming from someone who doesn't even believe when was the last time that you sat down and truly pondered on what Jesus meant to you so often we so easily shirk off the gospel we know it all we know Jesus yet it is through Jesus that we can see God's faithfulness to us let us become a people who are truly changed by God through his word that he gives us a challenge for all of us is this to study the word and to study it daily to dwell on it and to ponder it in our lives we read from verse 2 in the psalm greater the works of the Lord studied by all who delight in them do we delight in what God has done for us and who he is how much more should we ponder on his works to study his word and to make it living in our lives for how is it that Israel deal with their fears by looking to God and how is it that we can deal with our fears by looking to God and how do we do this ponder on the hope that we have in the cross study the word get deep into it allow it to engulf our lives to become our truth to have the fear of God the awesome nature of God overcome our fear of anything that the world throws at us because we have nothing to fear when we find our hope in God so how about when we are fearful and when we are uncertain of our circumstance because we are people who are affected by circumstance just like the Israelites we are tempted to forget about the promises that God has for us we are tempted to forget about the gravity of what Jesus did on the cross we can take this psalm as a reminder for what God does shows who he is and he is awesome holy and awesome is his name read his word read this psalm remember who God is trust in God for he is the one that has done all this for us he is the one who sent Jesus he is the one who is faithful and he is the one that we can trust so as Christians we no longer have to have this fear that the world does the only thing we fear is God our hope is secure in a God who is constant as he was faithful to Israel he is faithful to us he is the same

[18 : 24] God his works are good he is faithful and just we can trust in him holy and awesome is his name I would just like to respond in prayer please bow your heads dear Lord Jesus thank you so much that we have this psalm that we can reflect on Lord I thank you for the way that we can see how you worked in your people Israel and just the way that you are so faithful and so trustworthy to them Lord I thank you that you are a constant God and you are a God who is faithful and trustworthy to us Lord and I pray that we really recognize our situation as being saved through this new covenant that you have with us Lord pray that we might always seek to ponder on what Jesus has done for us Lord and I pray that that might really just impact who we are as people and the outlook that we have on life Lord and I pray that in whatever situation that we are in we might not fear as the world fears Lord but we might fear you

Amen