



Psalm 112

The children begged for a hamster but mom always asked, “OK, who’s going to feed the hamster and clean its cage every morning?” “We will, we promise mom, we’ll do it.” Against her better judgment, mom finally relented. She bought a hamster at the pet store and they named it Danny. Two months later, when Mom found herself responsible for cleaning and feeding the creature, she found a new home for it. The children took the news of Danny's imminent departure quite well, though one of them remarked, "He's been around here a long time--we'll miss him." "Yes," Mom replied, "But he's too much work for one person, and since I'm that one person, I say he goes."

Another child offered, "Well, maybe if he wouldn't eat so much and wouldn't be so messy, we could keep him."

But Mom was firm. "It's time to take Danny to his new home now," she insisted. "Go and get his cage."

With one voice and in tearful outrage the children shouted, "Danny? We thought you said Daddy!"

Yes, fathers are messy and they eat too much but I hope you’re willing to keep the one in your house. Even if you have a coffee mug or a t-shirt that says “World’s Greatest Dad,” there’s always room for improvement, don’t you think men?

This morning we will work our way through a Father’s Day Prayer from the 112th Psalm. The Psalm is short enough that we could read it together. I would like all of the men and boys to read this out loud with me.

Praise the LORD!

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

2 His offspring will be mighty in the land;

the generation of the upright will be blessed.

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

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

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

6 For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever.

7 He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

8 His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

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

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

I have drawn five principles from this Psalm but I want us to see them as not just principles but also prayers. I want us to join together in praying that these things would be true of every man in this room this morning.

1. Make me fear you.

Praise the LORD!

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

Many people don't like the Biblical idea of fearing the Lord. "The Lord loves us and we should love him back. We shouldn't be afraid of him," they reason. Is the fear of the Lord a mere respect or reverence or are we supposed to actually be afraid of the Lord? The answer is, "It depends."

Here's a real life example from WW2. In the summer of 1945, USS Indianapolis was struck by two Japanese torpedoes. The ship sunk within a few minutes. Nine hundred men survived the blast and fell or jumped into the water. These 900 men were stranded in the water for five days - many with only a life vest - all facing thirst, hunger, injuries and sharks. Nine hundred went in the water but only 300 were pulled out alive. They all came face to face with fear and their own mortality.

Edgar Harrell was one of the survivors and wrote about the fear of the Lord. "Clearly there were no atheists in the water that day. Gone was that damnable attitude of pride that deceives men into thinking that there is no God, or if there is, they don't need Him. When a man is confronted with death, it is the face of Almighty God he sees, not his own. We were all acutely aware of our Creator during those days and nights."¹

That was a fearful situation which could have induced a genuine fear of the Lord. But it could also have been merely a fear of dying and not a fear of the Lord. Listen to how Jesus spoke about fear in Luke 12.

“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!” (Luke 12:4-5)

Who casts people into hell? Satan does not do this. He does not have the right or authority. God alone possesses this right and for the unbeliever, your fear of God and the impending eternal consequences should far outweigh even someone who can take your life. But in the next two verses, Jesus seems to soften the level of fear quite a bit.

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows?

Now how could Jesus transition between a fear of being thrown into hell on the one hand and loving care of God which casts out fear in the very next verse? Are we supposed to be deadly afraid or not have any fear? The answer lies in the next verse.

And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

There’s the difference. A believer and an unbeliever should respond differently to the Lord. An unbeliever should be afraid of being cast into hell but a believer should never be afraid of being forgotten by God. But even here Jesus did not say, “Don’t fear God.” This is equivalent to the Matthew passage about not worrying about food and clothing. For the believer, our reverent fear of the infinitely holy, all powerful Creator and Sustainer should eliminate all fear of anything else in life.

I like how the writer of Hebrews put it. Quoting from Deuteronomy chapter four, he wrote: *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.* (Hebrews 12:28-29) God literally was a consuming fire on Mt. Sinai killing anyone who did not have a holy reverence for and obedience to God. But even for the believer living under the new covenant, God’s consuming fire can result in “acceptable worship.” We live the days and moments of our lives in a continual acknowledgement that he is God and we are not; that our life and breath come from him; that when we fear him we need not fear anything else.

Six chapters later the Psalmist wrote: *Let those who fear the LORD say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”* (Psalm 118:4) That’s a great summary of what it means for a believer to fear the Lord. All aspects of being a man and being a father begin with a proper fear of the Lord. Pray that you develop this proper fear.

2. Bless my children

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

3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.

So if we fear the Lord, is this Psalm saying that we will have wealth and riches? This is why the evil prosperity theology is so common and easy to pull over on people. God does prosper us and the Bible is filled with promises such as these. Psalm chapter one is among the better known examples.

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

There's that word "prosper" again. Obviously, we need to take the teaching about prosperity in line with all of the promises about suffering and persecution. So what do we do? Should we add up all the prosperity verses and all of the suffering and persecution verses, mix them together in a pot, throw them in the oven and see what comes out? Do we land somewhere in the middle of prosperity and suffering. Half of us will suffer and the other half will prosper? Or is that half of our lives will be suffering and the other half will be prosperous?

Here is the straight up truth. God promises prosperity to those who fear him; for those who "greatly delight in his commandments" and "meditate on them day and night." Moreover, there is a promise here about the generations of a righteous man being blessed. Brian Larrington just buried his grandfather on Thursday. He came to know the Lord as an adult but his faith has now passed down to three more generations. Is Brian blessed by the righteous life of his grandfather? Is Brian in many ways more prosperous because his kids are the fourth generation of Christian faith? Sometimes this prosperity will be material blessings, the wealth and riches described in this verse. And that's OK if God blesses you materially. A righteous man with wealth is a powerful tool in the God's hands. Sometimes righteousness will bring about material prosperity but this same righteousness will always bring about spiritual prosperity. Dads, your righteousness will bless your children.

3. Grant me generosity.

*4 Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.
5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.
9 He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.*

Men tend to fall into one of two categories when it comes to money—either they are reckless with their money or else they are as cheap as can be. Bill Cosby tells a story about his cheapskate father.

Now that my father is a grandfather, he just can't wait to give money to my kids. But when I was his kid and I asked him for fifty cents, he would tell me the story of his life. How he got up at 5 A.M. when he was seven years old and walked twenty-three miles to milk ninety cows. And the farmer for whom he worked had no bucket, so he had to squirt the milk into his little hand and then walk eight miles to the nearest can. All for 5 cents a month. The result was that I never got my 50 cents.

But now he tells my children every time he comes into the house: “Well, let’s see how much money old Granddad has got for his wonderful kids.” And the minute they take money out of his hands I call them over to me and I snatch it away from them. Because that is MY money.²

Any man can be reckless or tight with their money but a man who is generous almost always has the right balance. You can be poor and generous or you can be rich and generous but the mere fact that you are generous shows that you understand that it doesn’t belong to you in the first place. You give it away because you are only managing God’s resources.

The longest section on giving in the New Testament is eight and ninth chapter of 2 Corinthians. This psalm on generosity factored heavily into Paul’s teaching on the subject. In that famous passage Paul quoted from Psalm 112:9—*He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.* Two verses earlier he wrote, *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Josef Tson is the president of the Romanian Missionary Society and lived under the brutal persecution of their communist leader. He knows what it is to live under extreme adversity of every kind, including economic adversity. Listen to his wisdom on the topic. “Ninety percent of Christians pass the test of adversity, while ninety percent of Christians fail the test of prosperity.”³ D.L. Moody said something very similar. “We can stand affliction better than we can prosperity. For in prosperity, we forget God.” Perhaps our lack of generosity is a reason we fail to prosper.

4. Build your legacy

6 For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever.

There are two ways to be remembered for a long time—either you do something really good or else you do something really bad. Abraham Lincoln and Adolf Hitler will both be remembered for hundreds of years but for vastly different reasons. One left a legacy of destruction and death and the other left a legacy of life and liberty.

This Psalm says that the God fearing man will be “remembered forever.” That’s a good legacy, a legacy of faith and obedience. Even as believers we can have the wrong idea of what a legacy should look like.

Gayle Irwin is a popular author and speaker tells about the legacy his father left to him.

When I was six years old, my father was severely injured in an airplane accident and was left partially paralyzed and brain damaged. My mother then became the breadwinner of the house. Since my mother was often 'not there' as she attempted to make a living and my dad was 'not there' physically or mentally, the stage was set for family failure. But our family did not fail! Through difficult times, both parents stayed faithful to God and to us. Prayer, belief, steadfastness and love surrounded us -- money and fine homes didn't.

When my father died, my two brothers and I stood in front of his casket and made the following statement to the friends who had gathered for the funeral service: "Our father did not leave a financial empire for us to carry on. Many things that a dad normally does with his sons, ours' was unable to do. He was unable to teach us many things that a dad normally teaches. But he did leave us something that he had. He left us with a love of God, a love for the Bible, a love for people, an understanding of worship and an inability to hate. We feel that he has left us only those things that will last. So we stand here before you as his sons and declare publicly that we will follow his God."⁴

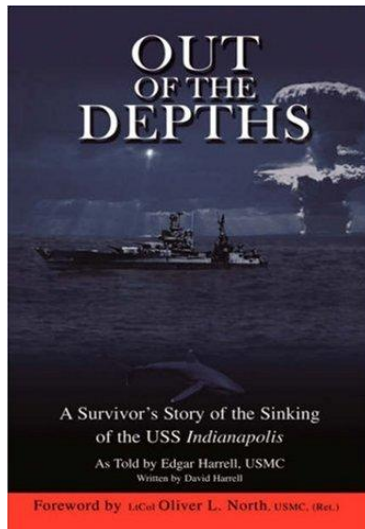
Men, pray daily that you can build such a legacy.

5. May I rest in you

7 He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

8 His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

This goes hand in hand with the first principle. Those who fear the lord need not fear bad news or anything else that comes their way. This is not to say that a truly righteous man will *never* have nay fears.



Edgar Harrell, the survivor of the USS Indianapolis probably dealt with some fear while he waited to be rescued. Thankfully, he was also able to see this tragedy through the lens of Scripture. In his book, *Out of the Depths*, he writes:

“I hope readers will come away with a renewed appreciation for the high cost of our freedom in the United States and a glimpse of the power of God to sustain His own in the midst of unspeakable suffering. Why? Because God's saving purposes are inevitably concealed in calamity that He might save sinners and bring glory unto Himself.”⁵

What is there to fear? What's the worst that someone can do to you? Kill you? *Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.*

Adoniram Judson was a missionary to Burma, which is just north of where Chloe is serving in Thailand. He spent 17 months in a prison. At night, the jailers would bind his feet and hang him upside down. His wife would walk four miles every day with a newborn baby to plead for mercy. He ministered for twenty years in this pagan land and the result was a mere handful of converts. He buried two wives and many children in this land. Despite his immense suffering, he rested in the Lord and in his future.

A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated for eternity. The same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone forever. All the marks which we put upon it, will exhibit forever. Each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but

will affect our everlasting destiny. How shall we then wish to see each day marked with usefulness? It is too late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power. Let us then each morning resolve to spend the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever. And at night, let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone indelibly marked.⁶

Fathers, momentary failure is inevitable but a lifetime of failure is not. We have all lost days to influence our family. Those days are gone forever but today and tomorrow stand within our reach. With the fear of the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit, I urge you to pray through these five prayers.



Rich Maurer
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¹ David Harrell, "Out of the Depths," Xulon Press, 2005, 112-113.

² Bill Cosby's book, *Fatherhood*.

³ Josef Tson, president of the Romanian Missionary Society, who survived tremendous persecution

⁴ Gayle Erwin in his personal testimony. (Erwin, Gayle D., "The Jesus Style," Word (1988) page 63)

⁵ <http://www.xulonpress.com/press-release/24776-David-Harrell-Out-of-the-Depths.php>

⁶ Adoniram Judson, in E. Judson, *The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Anson, Randolph & Company, 1883), pp. 13-15.