

GREAT ARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD Psalm 111:2,4,6

"The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein . . . He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion . . . He hath shewed his people the power of his works . . ."

In a preceding chapter the Psalmist has stated four times, "O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:8,15,21,31). God's works are great, they are to be remembered, they are done in power, in truth, and in uprightness (Psalm 33:4; 145:17). God's works are magnificent and great like Himself, they are products of His infinite wisdom and power. God's works are spoken of as one for such is the beauty and harmony of Providence. His works are honourable and glorious.

The interpretation belongs to Israel in remembering their deliverance from Egypt, the provisions for them in their wilderness wanderings, the defeat of their enemies, and partaking of the spoils in the promised land. There is much application for us today. The works of God in creation, redemption, and providence are great in our behalf as well (Philippians 4:19).

The believer highly values God's works when others never regard them or instantly forget them. The best students are those who study God's providential and redemptive works. They diligently search them out to discover their greatness and glory. "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day . . . The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Psalm 25:4,5,14). It is a bad thing if we fail to diligently consider the work of God. All that truly love God have pleasure in His works, and their thoughts never dwell on any other subject with more delight. The more we inquire into the works of God, the more pleasure we have in them. Through diligence our study is turned to the wonders of what God hath wrought.

A greater part of piety consists in cherishing and treasuring up the memory of God's mighty works. He has done that which is worthy to be remembered, and He has given us His Word as the means of keeping His works in remembrance. "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses" (Isaiah 63:7). To be remembered is that God has spared us, pardoned us, is restoring us, and is preserving us when we deserved to be utterly destroyed. That God pardoned our sin is the most wonderful of all His works, and ought to be remembered to His glory. Every conversion from death to life, from sin to holiness, and from darkness to light, is an illustrious display of the power, wisdom, and grace of God.

I would like to consider the great works of God from Paul's revelation and bring to our remembrance the grace, mercy, and power of God.

A. God's great work in creation.

One cannot study the mighty acts of God in the account of creation without wonder and amazement. Above, beneath, within, and all around us, in nature, in providence, and grace, we behold the unspeakable wonders of God. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; . . . The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:3,8). "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together

as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:6-9).

See also Psalm 104; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:16,17. All speak of the creative work of Christ. The creative work of God is one of the ways in which He has shown His eternal power and Godhead (Romans 1:19,20). Psalm 19 reveals the two ways in which God reveals Himself to mankind. In creation (vs.1-6); and through His written Word (vs.7-11).

B. God's great work in the incarnation of Christ.

Some of the works of God cannot be explained, but must simply be believed by faith. The incarnation of the Son of God is one of them. However this work of God was accomplished it is a glorious work. The union of the Divine nature and the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is a mystery (1 Timothy 3:16). We find this glorious work revealed in Psalm 139, Luke 1:26-35, Hebrews 10:5. A body was prepared for the inhabiting of the Son of God. It is a work of God which is carefully guarded by the Holy Spirit as recorded in the Scriptures to assure us that Christ is the Son of God and His human nature was not tainted with Adam's sinful nature (Genesis 3:15: John 1:1,2,14; Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:7,8; Hebrews 2:14-16). This important work is necessary to all the other great works of God as found in Paul's revelation.

C. The great work of redemption.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Man cannot not redeem himself. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psalm 49:6,7). "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (1 Peter 1:18).

The blood of bulls and goats could not redeem man. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). God was not pleased with the sacrifices under the law (Hebrews 10:6). The purchase price needed for man's sin was much greater than all the animal sacrifices together.

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) [Psalm 40:6-8], to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). The only satisfactory sacrifice acceptable to God was the shed blood of His only begotten and beloved Son. "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; . . ." (Isaiah 53:10,11).

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:25). The duration of our redemption is eternal (Hebrews 9:12). The purpose of the redemptive work of Christ was to purchase back those who were in bondage to sin, to pardon them, to bring out those under the curse of the law, to cleanse them from all iniquity, and to forgive their sin. In this redemptive work

the vile and wretched sinner is set free from the guilt, the power, and the penalty of sin, and declared righteous in God's sight. What a great work of God to be known and remembered.

D. The work of reconciliation.

Through the redemptive work of Christ we have been reconciled to God. To reconcile means "to conciliate, or make peace." This truth is often overlooked, but should not be. In our Adamic nature from birth we are at enmity with God. In order for that enmity to be removed God moved on our behalf. God is never said to be reconciled for the enmity was alone on man's part. It was man who needed to be reconciled to God, not God to man, and it is through the propitiatory blood of Christ, which righteousness and mercy have provided (Psalm 85:10), that makes reconciliation possible to those who receive it. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, . . . To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, . . . Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, . . . And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:13-16). "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight" (Colossians 1:20-22).

E. The work of justification.

Through the redemptive work of Christ we have been justified. Justification means "to be acquitted or accounted righteous." In Job these questions are asked, "I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just before God?" (Job 9:2). "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25:4). Solomon states, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20).

These questions remained unanswered until after the redemptive work of Christ. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, . . . To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:25,26). Through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, God can be just and the justifier of them who believe in Jesus.

Paul's revelation gives us the complete account of the justification of wretched filthy sinners being declared righteous in God's sight. Our condition before we were declared righteous is described for us in Scripture. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:2,3). "For we ourselves also were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

God, through the blood of Christ, declares the sinner to be acquitted from his guilt, and imputes the righteousness of Christ to him. "Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not imput sin" (Romans 4:7,8). "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33).

This justification is a free gift from God (Romans 3:24; 5:16,18). "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9). "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

F. The work of sanctification.

Justification is God declaring the sinner to be something he is not, and sanctification is God making the sinner to be what He has already declared him to be in Christ. Sanctification is twofold, and both are seen in these verses. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth . . . And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:17,19).

(1) Separated, or consecrated unto God. "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, . . ." (John 10:36). "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16). "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, . . ." (1 Corinthians 1:2). "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). " . . . because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess.2:13). (See also Hebrews 10:10,14).

(2) Being set apart unto God we are to live our life in separation from the world of evil things and ways (Galatians 1:4), and live our life in obedience to the Word of God. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth" (John 17:17). "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26,27). "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess.5:23). "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

G. The work of glorification.

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:30). The called and justified ones are spoken of as already (in the Divine purpose) in Christ glorified. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that

we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, . . ." (Ephesians 5:27). "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:21).

H. The summary of the work of God is salvation.

One great work of grace through our lovely Saviour and Lord. " . . . But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20,21). "For by grace are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared . . . Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4,6).

Sought out with pleasure.

These great works of Jehovah are sought out of all those who have pleasure therein. Do we take pleasure in them? "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). " . . . sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10). We seek them out through our study and meditation. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

To be remembered.

They are also to be remembered. To remember is to bring back into our mind something we have already known. To exercise our memory and rehearse in our mind again. Without doubt these are fundamental truths which we already know, but we are not to forget them.

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel" (2 Timothy 2:8). "Wherefore remember, . . ." (Ephesians 2:11). "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained" (1 Timothy 4:6). "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, . . ." (2 Timothy 2:14).

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance: . . . Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2 Peter 1:12,13,15). "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Peter 3:1,2).

Lord help us not to forget thy great and wondrous works, and to seek them out with much pleasure.