

TEXT SERMONS - SERIES: PSALM SERMONS

**PSALM 1 – PART 1
THE BLESSED PERSON**

PSALM 1:1-6

- ¹ *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*
² *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.*
³ *He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.*
⁴ *The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.*
⁵ *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*
⁶ *For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

God wants us to be happy – happy with holy happiness! This first Psalm in the book of Psalms shows us the secret of true happiness and sets before us the model of the truly happy and blessed person. Of course, Jesus Christ is the perfect model, the ultimate pattern and fulfillment of the principles of blessedness in this Psalm.

The person who is called “*blessed*” is blessed by God. We want, we need, yes, we must have God’s blessings or our lives will be blighted. This opening word “*blessed*” means God’s blessings will be upon such a person as is described in the first four verses of this Psalm. Who, then, is the one who is God-blessed? The blessed person is the godly person; the eternally happy person. Why is he so blessed? There are several evident reasons in the first three verses of this Psalm.

How He Is Saluted.

Like the Sermon on The Mount, this Psalm begins with the word “*Blessed*.” The Hebrew word literally means: “Oh, the blessedness of the man...” It is used in Deuteronomy 33:29 where Moses says, “happy are you, O Israel!” And in 1Kings10:8 where the Queen of Sheba says to Solomon, “happy are your men, happy are these your servants!”

What is true happiness from God’s perspective? A chorus that I sang in my youth comes to mind that answers the question as well as I’ve ever hear it answered. The chorus is as follows:

*“Happiness is to know the Savior,
Living a life within His favor,
Having a change in my behavior,
Happiness is the Lord.*

As the psalmist declared, “... *happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.*” (Psalm 144:15)

From Whom He Is Separated.

“Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.” (Psalm 1:1)

The Psalm begins by stating what the blessed person does not do and consequently, in that manner, communicates to us who the blessed person is not. He is not:

- An ungodly person, for he does not walk according to ungodly counsel;
- A sinner, for he does not stand on the pathway of sinners;
- A scorner, for he does not sit with scorners.

Living sinfully is living on a slippery slope; walking according to sinful advice leads to standing where sinners stand and sitting in the scorner's corner. Sin and sinners go from bad to worse. Paul's warning to Timothy is: "But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (II Timothy 3:13) One step leads to the next, and one bad decision leads to another. "Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits." (I Cor. 15:33) The one who identifies with the sinning crowd goes from bad to worse. (Deut. 6:7)

Happiness is not entirely based upon negatives, but it can exist only where ungodliness, sin and scorn, have been excluded. Happiness, in part, is the result of choosing good friends. You cannot walk together with someone who is going in the opposite direction from you. The preservation and perpetuation of one's happiness requires the refusal of certain persons, philosophies, principles and practices.

Happy are those who do not imbibe the philosophies of the ungodly!

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly..." He will not allow the philosophies of the pagan culture to invade his mind, home, family or church! He is warned by Proverbs 4:15 & 16: "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on."

Happy are those who do not identify with the principles and practices of sinners!

Lot is a good example of identifying with bad people for "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly" (Genesis 13:13)

Happy are those who are not in partnership with scorners.

C. H. Spurgeon said, "Let others make a mock of sin, of eternity, of hell, and heaven, and of the eternal God; the blessed man has learned a better philosophy than that of the infidel and has too much sense of God's presence to endure to hear His name blasphemed." (*The Treasury of David*, vol.1)

To scorn means "to show indignant contempt for"; to scoff is "an expression of derision; to mock." Both are roundly condemned in scriptures: Proverbs 1:22 - "Scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge." And, Proverbs 19:29 - "Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and beatings for the backs of fools."

The psalmist is not talking about isolation. He is speaking of insulation. Christians are not to be isolationists, hermits, avoiding contact with the unsaved. That is true generally. However, scripture speaks specifically about those who are avowed reprobates and who peddle untruth: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (II John 1:9-11)

“Blessed” or “happy” are the persons who have learned the necessity of protecting their lives from some practices and even certain people. An unguarded life is a no-man’s-land, an open invitation to mental and spiritual polluters to dump their godless philosophies into at will. This type of pollution is more deadly than environmental pollution. Genuine God-given joy cannot co-exist with it. Joy has its roots in clean soil, the by-product of a life in harmony with God. It is disastrous to “join the crowd,” for Jesus clearly declared that the majority are on the broad road to destruction! I have counseled with people in serious difficulty because of their sin. Frequently they have confessed that they became involved because “everybody else was doing it.” What a poor reason!

Verse 1 tells us what the godly person does not do. Some are content to testify only about that which they do not do and thereby cultivate the inclination to be prideful because they refrain from such sinful conduct. Jesus condemned the Pharisee who said, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.” (Luke 18:11) He added, “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14)

How should we Christians conduct ourselves toward unsaved individuals? The first Psalm makes it clear that we must not be guided by their improper principles, embrace their warped social attitudes or conform in any way to their God-dishonoring conduct. Having said that, it is necessary for us to note that we ought not to withdraw from society altogether. Jesus mingled with publicans and sinners, and even went so far as to eat with them. He showed loving friendship toward them, yet never compromised His holy principles!

We are not to be “unequally yoked” together with unbelievers in such things as marriage or joint, intimate business associations, etc.; we are, however, to bear our testimony and live godly lives among them. By example and precept we should reveal the love of God to them, humbly and compassionately seeking to point them to Jesus Christ Who can bring them forgiveness and peace. In living the Christian life, an ounce of illustration is worth a ton of talk!

*“O strengthen me, that while I stand
Firm on the Rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers within the troubled sea.”
- Frances R. Havergal*

Only the person who chooses to stand on the Rock Christ Jesus, can stretch out a hand to wrestlers in the troubled sea of sin. Christians who maintain their bridges with the non-Christians have a duty to see that infection with their sin is not the result.

With What He Is Saturated.

“... his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.”

To refrain from sin is always right. But dwelling only upon the minus side of the ledger and making no entries on the plus side is an unbalanced life. The blessed man balances the account as is seen in the following statement: “But his delight is in the law of the LORD....” What we refuse will identify us, but so does what we choose!

The blessed person has discovered the Word of God.

This happy person has discovered the Author of the Word; the values, principles, wisdom and strength derived from the Word of God. He has discovered that the Word of God is more than text, it is truth; it is more than mere literature, it is life; it is more than a book, it is bread. The Bible is meant to be bread for our daily lives, not cake for special occasions!

*“Precious Bible, what a treasure
Does the Word of God afford;
All I need for life and pleasure,
Food, medicine, shield and sword.”*

The blessed person delights in the Word of God.

“His delight is in the law of the LORD.....”

What one delights in, he usually thinks about; what he thinks about, he pursues; what he pursues, he dedicates himself to; what he dedicates himself to, he is fashioned by; what he is fashioned by, he becomes. In that sense, delighting in the “law of the Lord” molds and makes the blessed man who he is!

In order to delight in something we must recognize several basic things about it. For example: it's worth, its power, its durability, its beauty, its functionality – all of this we find in one volume which is the Word of God.

Why do some Christians not delight in the “law of the Lord”? Because they do not delight themselves in the Lord of the Law! *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* (Psalm 37:4)

The blessed person dwells in the Word of God.

“And in His law he meditates day and night.”

The blessed person delights in the diet of the “*law of the Lord.*” By “*law*” the psalmist does not mean the rules of the Law of Moses; rather, this refers to the entirety of Scripture, the whole body of revealed truth, as we have it in the written revelation of God – His Word. In God's Word the blessed person “*meditates day and night.*”

Meditation is a lost art in our times. Too often our times in the Bible can be characterized as “skimming” instead of “studying.” We live in a hurry-up society. We can't wait for the next section of the revolving door so we push our way through and run up the escalator! We must not run through the Word!

The purpose of “meditation” is revealed in Joshua 1:8 where the Lord tells Joshua, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:8) In God's economy, no time is lost which is spent in meditating in His Word. When it results in our obedience, God promises prosperity and success. There is nothing so rewarding as being in a nook, with The Book, taking a good look!

There is a painting that depicts a Christian farmer who has left off his plowing and is seen

kneeling beside it in the early glow of the morning light to pray. The outstanding thing about the picture, however, is that while the farmer is talking with God, an angel is going on with his plowing for him! It is a “parable in paint” which imparts the truth that the moments we spend in meditation and prayer are not lost time!

Meditation slows us down. We need to stop and smell the roses in the Word. We should not feed on it as though it were fast food!

By What He Is Symbolized.

“He shall be like a tree.....”

The blessed person is said to be “*like a tree.*” What are some of the characteristics of a tree? The parts of a tree - leaves, bark, tree shape, fruit and even its location (cold climate, tropical climate, mountain or desert areas) can all be different depending on the tree species. Each of these characteristics are unique to certain species - and in combination - can make quick work of identifying a tree.

A godly person is recognizable in similar ways:

- Is there evidence of life? *“The trees of the LORD are full of sap.”* (Psalm 104:16);
- Is there foliage of mere profession only or is there also fruit? Jesus, walking one day, *“seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves.”* (Matt.21:19) Fruitlessness is not evidence of godliness among the Lord’s trees.
- Is the life straight and upright? *“The upright shall flourish.”* (Prov.14:11)
- Are the roots healthy? *“The root of the righteous yields fruit.”* (Prov. 12:12)
- Is the tree-like life a blessing? *“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon.”* (Psalm 92:12) A good, strong tree withstands the trials of life, gives comfort and nourishment to others.

The Christological prophecy in Isaiah 61 contains this enlightening phraseology: “.... trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3) We must ever be mindful that we Christians are “the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” Are we righteous trees that bring the Heavenly Gardener glory?

Where He Is Situated.

“..... planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”

This statement is suggestive of several traits of the blessed person. Note carefully each phrase:

Purposefully planted. *“He shall be like a tree planted....”*

The godly are likened to a tree which is purposefully planted. It is not a wild shoot that springs up the result of self effort but is a purposeful planting by God the Gardener. God places us individually in the Body of Christ: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” (I Cor. 12:27) He has a place and a purpose for each of His “trees.” Let us be content with where He has planted us and be productive there.

Plentifully provisioned. *“by the rivers of water.”*

“Rivers” – plural! - a plentiful supply of life-giving water. God’s children have an inexhaustible supply of grace-growth-producing-means. The same Word of God that purifies us - *“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word”* (Ephesians 5:26) – is the Word that waters the soil of our souls providing nourishment and refreshment.

Perennially productive. “...brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither.” Psalm 92 says, “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.” (Psalm 92:12-14)

Our Lord expects plentiful fruit. What He expects, He inspects! One day Christ came upon a fig tree that was not bearing fruit. He pronounced a curse upon it and it dried up. (Mark 11:12-14, 21). What does He find when He looks for fruit in our lives? He is still displeased when He finds none.

CONCLUSION

Jeremiah did not write Psalm 1. No one knows who did write the Psalm. However, Jeremiah wrote similar words that are recorded in Jeremiah chapter 17. This is what he said:

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (Jer.17:7-8)

Keil & Delitzsch in their Commentary on The Old Testament, comment on Jeremiah 17:7-8 saying that this is: “The portrayal of the prosperity of him that trusts in the Lord and is an extension of the picture in Psalm1:3-4, of the man that has his delight in the law of the Lord.”

This brief Psalm summarizes the alternative roads which are before us. Oh, the happiness of the person who makes the right choice and continues along that road.

As Christians, this speaks to us as follows:

- We are blessed because we are in Christ;
- Christ is our Counselor – *“wonderful counselor....”* We walk in His counsel;
- We stand with Christ’s crowd in truth and for truth;
- Our company is Christ’s company;
- We delight in God’s Word;
- We are the planting of the Lord - our roots are righteous roots (Prov. 12:3).
- We drink deeply of the water of the Word;
- We bear the fruit of the righteous.

It comes down to the question: how will you live? It is a matter of making the right choices. Have you chosen the high road to heaven or the low road to hell?

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