

The Leaf that does not wither

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Good to see you all this morning. And today's reading is from Psalm 1.

So it's a short Psalm, only six verses. And we'll take the whole Psalm. Psalm 1.

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drive it away.

Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

I was on my phone there a couple of weeks ago. And I think it was just messing around.

[1 : 36] And I was zooming in on maps. And I zoomed in over my own house. And I came down and zoomed in. And it said, you are here, there in the living room.

And I said to myself, well, that wasn't great information because I knew where I was anyway, hopefully. But a week or two after, I was out in the forestry in the car park.

And I drove up. And there was a map in front of me, the forestry. And when I looked at it, it said, you are here. And it showed me two routes I could take.

And, well, that was useful because one was easy and one was hard. But when it comes to the Psalms, we're entering into the Psalms.

And Psalm 1 is the entry point, really, into the Book of Psalms. And it really shows us two ways that we can go.

[2 : 36] So it's very useful, very important that we take stock of this Psalm. It is said that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, some say that it was originally the two together were one Psalm.

And that when the order of Psalms was put together, and again, some people, this is a view of some people, that it was Ezra who actually put them in the order that they're in.

And they're in the order, they're put in the order of five books. You have Book 1 of Psalms, which is from Psalm 1 to Psalm 41.

And it ends there at the end of 41 with these words. It ends with, blessed be the Lord God, amen and amen. And then it starts with Book 2.

It depends on your Bible, but it might say Book 1, Book 2, and so on. Book 2 starts at Psalm 42 and ends at Psalm 72 with the words, blessed be his glorious name, amen and amen.

[3 : 44] And then Book 3 starts at 73 and finishes at 89. Again, blessed be the Lord, amen and amen. And then Book 4 from Psalm 90 to 106.

Blessed be the Lord God from everlasting to everlasting, amen and amen. And then Book 5 from 107 to 150. And it ends in a psalm of praise.

That small psalm at the end is a psalm of total praise to God. We started off with Psalm 1, a 6 verse psalm.

And we finish at the end with Psalm 150, which is also a 6 verse psalm full of praise. And Psalm 1 starts off, blessed is the man, and Psalm 150 ends with praise the Lord.

And it is true that someone once said, it's really the blessed man that can really praise the Lord.

The man, a woman that knows that they are blessed by God, they have the real sense of praise to praise the Lord.

[4 : 55] And so the psalms have played an important part down through the church history, way back, all the way back.

From singing psalms as hymns, to reading psalms, to praying psalms, to the prophetic value of psalms. And the psalms, they cover almost every aspect of our life and every experience we have. And you know what it said, it's a saying, and I always have to think about a saying. It says, the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. But the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.

And that just means that the New Testament is there. The truths of the New Testament are there in the Old Testament. But they're sort of concealed. They're harder to grasp than the New Testament maybe.

But the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed. The truths in the Old Testament, they're revealed in the New Testament. We see them clearly. We can go to the New Testament.

[6:00] That's in the Old Testament and say, oh, I see that clearer now because the New Testament has revealed that little bit extra to me. And so psalms are mentioned more often as an Old Testament book than any other book in the New Testament, any other Old Testament book in the New Testament.

And the psalms, they speak about Jesus. And we see and read through the New Testament, we see that what happened in the Psalms, when we read them in the Old Testament, you might almost apply it to David.

But they're really speaking about the Lord Jesus. They're really speaking about the Lord Jesus. And we see that as well in the book of Acts on the day of Pentecost, when Peter stood up and preached. And he said, Christ has risen from the dead. And he said, you know, David spoke about his Holy One, that God's Holy One wouldn't see corruption. And he said, David is in the tomb.

And he said, David was not speaking of himself. He was speaking of the Lord Jesus. So he clearly says that David in the Psalms is speaking about the Lord Jesus prophetically.

[7:10] And we see Jesus on the road to Emmaus with the two disciples. And he said to them, you know, the scriptures speak of me from start to finish. And so when we come to Psalm 1, we can keep that in mind.

But Psalm 1, as I said, it's like you are here. There's two ways ahead of you. It's showing you the two ways. And it starts off and it says, blessed is the man.

And that's a very singular thing. It doesn't say blessed are the men. It's blessed is the man. It's a very singular word used for one man.

And it doesn't say blessed are they. And when it comes to the ungodly on the other pathway, it uses a very plural word to describe them. There's plenty of them.

But there's this one man. And he's a man against the many. And he's a man whom God has opened the book of Psalms with to show us and to describe us what that man is like.

[8:10] Now, I think we all like to see ourselves read into the Psalms, see how that affects me. But if I look into this Psalm, Psalm 1, and I compare myself to Psalm 1, the blessed man of Psalm 1, I would certainly say I have an awful lot of shortcomings.

I'm in a bit of trouble there. I would prefer it to say something like this. Blessed is the man that rarely walks in the counsel of the ungodly.

Because I would at times look at the world and take my cue from the world. But this man, this blessed man, he doesn't do that.

He does not take his counsel from the ungodly. And I think it's something like my desire is to be like that man. But in practice, I cannot live up to the standard of Psalm 1.

It's sort of like this, that in Romans 7, the Apostle Paul, well, he said, you know, I want to do certain things. But I find myself doing something else.

[9:14] And who shall deliver me from this body of death that I find in my own flesh? And he said, thanks be to God who has given us the victory in Christ Jesus.

Because we walk not after the flesh, but we walk after the spirit. And, you know, great men and great women of the Bible, we only have to look at Abraham, that he lied about Sarah.

We have to look at Sarah, and she laughed when she was told she would have a child. We look at David, his sin with Bathsheba. We look at Jonah, he's going the wrong way. We look at Peter, he's denying the Lord.

But they all made it. They all made it. And the book of Hebrews gives a list of people who made it through their faith in Christ. And as we pass through Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, as I think are the pillars going through the gateway into the Psalms, I think it's like this.

Psalm 1 is saying this. Blessed is the man, and that is pointing us to Jesus. He is a blessed man.

And in Psalm 2, at the very end of Psalm 2, it says, Blessed are all those who put their trust in him.

[10:30] Blessed is the man, and blessed are all those who put their trust in him. And when I look at Psalm 1, I can apply Psalm 1 to myself. And I can take comfort from Psalm 1.

The verses are hard, yes. And I find it hard to live up to Psalm 1, to meditate day and night. I would say about myself, I meditate some days and some nights. But, you know, but in Christ, I can confidently apply this Psalm to my life and apply it to myself.

Because, as Ephesians says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

We are the blessed man, the blessed woman, because of Christ. Christ is the blessed man that sustains us and keeps us. And although the world affects us, and it's bombarding us day and night and phones and television and everything, of its own message, we do not walk and we do not stand and we do not sit in that message.

And the choice before us in Psalm 1 is two ways. There's the way of the blessed man, and there's the way of the ungodly. One leads to blessing, and the other one leads to judgment.

[11 : 54] Jesus said, I am the way. And the Psalm clearly shows us God's way is the only wise way to take in life. It's the only way that will lead to blessing and happiness.

Now, the other way is the wrong way to go. But I'm not saying that you may not feel happy on the wrong way. You might be happy without God, but it will not last.

And the end is destruction on that way. Now, at the start of Psalm 1, verse 1, we see, Blessed is the man who walks not, who stands not, and who sits not, but who delights in the law of God, and he meditates on that law day and night.

Because he's walking after the Spirit. His life has been touched by the blessed man, the Lord Jesus. He's no longer following the flesh. His joy is in the Spirit.

And what that verse is not saying, and we have to be careful here, what the verse is not saying is that we should isolate ourselves. We should have nothing to do with the people out there who are on the wrong way.

[13 : 03] We should isolate ourselves. We should probably set up in our house, if we're living in Skibbereen, move our way out to Calf Island, and, you know, have no touch with anyone, and then we could be all right.

That's not what the verse is saying at all. It's not telling us to buy a remote house. Because God's way is the hope for all people. And for those going the wrong way, there is a danger, and we must be ready to show them and to give them a reason for the hope that is in us.

So it's not about isolating yourself, but rather it's about this, which is very important. It's about insulating yourself. Insulating yourself from the world system and the message that you are being bombarded with day and night.

And get into God's Word and insulate yourself with God's Word and the love that it will put in your heart for God to strengthen that love for Jesus.

And, you know, there's an old Puritan saying that I came across, and it says something like this. It says, The skylark, the higher he flies, the sweeter he sings.

[14 : 24] So if he's down low, he's not singing very nice. It's something like a linnet. I often hear a linnet singing. And when they go up high, they sing lovely. The higher the skylark goes, the sweeter he sings.

And if you do well where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, you will be sweeter down here. You will be ready to give an answer to those who ask you for the reason for the hope that you have. Because we are in Christ, we're blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ in heavenly places. And the position that we've been brought into is that blessed position that God has made us blessed men.

Blessed is the man. Blessed is the woman. Blessed is the boy. Blessed is the girl. And we're a people to praise God from our heart and from our spirit. And we can apply this psalm to ourselves every part of it.

And we could never be blessed by our own efforts of what we could do. But it's only through him. And you know, when we see that, it puts new light and new life into us.

[15 : 31] That I want to live my life for the one who has given himself for me. I want to live my life and I'll be this. Not because I can say, didn't I do this?

Didn't I do this? And tick off the boxes and say, I'm great. No, because of what he has done for me, I want to be like him. I want to reflect him to other people. I want to be like the tree that's planted by the streams of water whose leaf does not wither.

I used to collect leaves. I was mad into leaves when I was at national school, I think, in the national school.

And I used to collect leaves and I used to put them into books. Because I used to think, anyway, and I think it's some fruit, that the leaf would remain preserved in the book.

And you know, when I saw this tree in the Sam one, it reminded me of the production, how productive this tree was. And it produced fruit.

[16:35] But the amazing thing that struck me was that the leaf of that tree, any leaf in that tree didn't wither. And I asked myself why. And it's really because of the streams of water and the position of that tree and the roots of that tree were feeding that leaf there.

And, you know, I remember the words of the woman, of Jesus to the woman in the well, when he said, The water I will give him will be streams of water welling up into eternal life.

That that leaf had an eternal life from that tree. It couldn't perish. It couldn't. And the storms of life would come.

And they'd blow that wind at that tree. But that leaf would not wither. Now, the other trees around that weren't by the stream of water, they would let go of their leaves.

And they'd blow away in the wind. And, you know, it's easier in a way sometimes for not to be a Christian in this world. Because you'll have so much difficulty.

[17:42] If you're not a Christian, you almost blow away in the wind. But you'll end up just decaying on the ground and being trodden on. But the leaf that doesn't wither, it is sustained.

It holds on to that tree. It's holding on to the tree. And it can be difficult. You can go into a storm.

And because you're connected to the tree, your storm is even worse.

Because your leaf is holding on. And there is a sense that you're holding on. But really, it's the tree that's holding on to you.

You cannot go. You cannot leave that tree. Because it is eternal life that you have. And, you know, it's the one that's holding you.

And Jesus, some people in Jesus, they turned away. They weren't the true believers. They turned away. And Jesus turned to his disciples and said, will you also go?

[18:45] And Peter said to him, Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life. That was a good answer. And Romans 8, 35.

The Apostle Paul says this to us this morning. Romans 8, 35.

It's just on my mind this morning. Who shall separate us? Remember the leaf that wouldn't wither, that wouldn't let go from the tree.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, for your sake, we are killed all the day long. We have accounted as sheep to the slaughter. No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

[19:48] And he goes on to say, there is nothing can separate us. From the Lord. And you know, I have here a little something. Now I know you're going to ask the question, is this the leaf from back in my days in national school?

I'm sorry. It's not. I was out in the forest in the car park, and I picked it up. And it's a leaf from 2023. Obviously. It was on the ground with all the other leaves. Because they were all perishing. And they would all perish. They just blow around, and they come to nothing.

They're trodden on. And I just picked it up and brought it with me. But it reminds me in John 10 that Jesus said, My sheep hear my voice.

I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

[21:01] And I love that verse where he says, I know them. And it's the leaf that never withers. It's unlike that leaf. It's the leaf that stays green on the tree.

And the final verse of the psalm says this. The Lord knows the way of the righteous. Does that mean that the Lord does not know the way of the ungodly?

No, because he's going to judge them. But what it means when it says the Lord knows the way of the righteous is that he has that connection with the righteous, that relationship with them, with the righteous, that has been brought about through the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's an unbreakable relationship. Jesus spoke about the judgment, and he said, There will be a day when people will say to him, Lord, didn't we do this?

Didn't we do that? Didn't we do this? Weren't we great? But he will say to them, I never knew you. I never knew you. I never had that relationship with you.

[22 : 13] And, you know, the thief on the cross comes to mind. The two thieves on the cross, they were there, and they were cursing Jesus. And then one of those thieves suddenly saw the light.

And he said to the other one, You know, we are here because we've gone the wrong way. But Jesus is here, and he has done nothing wrong whatsoever.

And he just said to Jesus, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Today, I tell you, you will be with me in paradise.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous. It's that relationship that we have with him. It's not about what you do, but you can do an awful lot when you are insulated in the Lord Jesus, and you're not opened up to what the world is telling you.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous. And may our hearts be insulated with our love for him.

[23 : 26] The blessed is the man, and blessed are all those who put their trust in him. I want to finish with just the words of a hymn that came into my head this morning.

And it's a hymn you probably don't know, but it's a very old hymn, I'm sure. But it just says this, and it says, That man of Calvary has won my heart from me and died to set me free.

Blessed man of Calvary. Because he is blessed to us, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we can walk where we could never walk through the Spirit and through life that the Spirit gives us.

And we are not to be walking in the flesh or after the flesh, but we are to be walking after the Lord.

May the Lord bless these few words this morning. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.