

Psalm 1 and Matthew 7:13-29

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, everyone. It's delightful to be with you here today. I have strong connections to the church. My parents, about 30 years ago now, were married here. So, yeah, it's lovely to be with you all.

We're going to be looking at Psalm 1 today. Psalm 1 and 2 are an introduction to the book of Psalms, and they set the tone for the whole book. They cover two big themes that we see in the Psalms.

Psalm 1 talks about the Word of God. Psalm 2 talks about the Son of God, the King, or the Messiah. So, today we're going to be looking at Psalm 1. I'm just going to read it again so it's fresh in our minds. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked, or stand in the way that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked. They're like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. This psalm talks about two ways to live life. It talks about two different types of people. The ones who delight in God's law and the wicked. It has two metaphors. There's the tree that is strong and the chaff that blows away in the wind. And it talks about two end results on the day of judgment. There's being in the assembly of the righteous, or destruction. As we read this psalm, we might examine ourselves and wonder what category we're in. We're saved by faith in Jesus, that's true, but we might read this psalm and think, well, I don't meditate on God's law day and night. I don't always delight in the Bible. Sometimes I find it a bit boring. So where does that leave us? We might read this psalm and start being afraid of God's judgment, because we haven't lived this perfect life that meditates on God's law perfectly. Sometimes the way that psalms work is that they're first talking about Jesus, and then they act as instruction for us. So it's helpful first to think about what does this psalm say about Jesus, and then think about what does this psalm instruct me to do.

So firstly, it's Jesus is the blessed man. Jesus delighted in God's law. He delighted in God's written word. Remember that Jesus was fully God and fully man. He's a human nature with all its attributes and a divine nature with all its attributes united into one person. And because he's truly human, he had a human mind, and still does have a human mind. With his human mind, as he lived on earth, he meditated on God's law. He thought about the scriptures, memorized them.

He taught them, and he discussed them, and he chewed over them. He lived his life in perfect obedience to those scriptures. I think you guys have been doing a series in Matthew recently, so there's a few examples from that where we can see Jesus meditating and using scripture in his own life.

[3 : 44] In Matthew 4, the devil tempts Jesus, and he responds three times with, it is written, and quotes the scriptures. His meditation on the Bible and his chewing over of its truths enabled him to overcome the devil's temptations. In Matthew 26, as he approaches the time of his crucifixion, he said, the Son of Man goes as it is written of him. In other words, Jesus understood that he was going to the cross in obedience to the prophecies of the Old Testament that said the Messiah would have to suffer and die.

In fact, as he is dying on the cross, he quotes Psalm 22. He says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That's a psalm that starts off with seeming despair, but ends with rejoicing in God's salvation.

Jesus understood his own suffering through that lens of scripture. He knew that even though he suffered in those moments, he would be vindicated by his resurrection.

In Jesus, we see something quite amazing, that he is both the God who spoke to the prophets by his Holy Spirit and created scripture, but he is also the perfectly blessed man who, according to his own human nature, meditated, memorized, studied, delighted in scripture in such a way that his own human mind was profoundly and perfectly shaped by God's word. So therefore, as we read this about Jesus, we see that he receives the blessings of Psalm 1-2. In verse 3, it talks about the fruitfulness, it talks about eternal life, it says that the leaf does not wither, and it talks about prospering in everything he does. And though Jesus died, he lives eternally now. His leaf does not wither.

In everything Jesus did, he prospered. He succeeded in his work as the Messiah, and he resulted in the salvation of many. His suffering was fruitful. It brought about the salvation of many people.

[6 : 09] So this psalm firstly points to Jesus, saying that he delighted in God's law perfectly, and did not follow the counsel of the wicked. And as a result, he is a strong tree, planted by streams of water, fruitful, eternal, and prospering. But through faith in Jesus, we're united in him, and we receive these blessings through Scripture too. So that acts for us as instruction. There's two ways it instructs us today. It gives us a warning not to join in with the wickedness of the world, and also an exhortation or encouragement to delight and prioritize the word of God. So firstly, the warning to don't join in with the wickedness of the wickedness of the wickedness of the wickedness.

The first thing you notice about the blessed man in Psalm 1 isn't so much what he does, but what he doesn't do. He does not walk in step with the wicked. The ESV is a slightly better rendering of this phrase. It says he walks not in the counsel of the wicked. It means that he doesn't believe what the world would have him believe. The counsel of the wicked is the advice or the wisdom of the world, which is against God. And the Psalm says that happy, blessed are the people who don't take that advice.

The blessed people meditate on and listen to God's wisdom in the world through Scripture. I think this is particularly important for us. At this cultural moment, you can listen to basically any opinion you like online. There are people on the internet that would advise you things like not treating women well, pick up artists, influencers like Andrew Tate. There are preachers that would tell you that the word of God is flawed and a fabrication, and that it doesn't really mean what it plainly means. That is the counsel of the wicked. The Psalm says blessed is the one who doesn't walk in it. We're quite politically charged right now as a culture too, and it can be tempting to take everything that certain influencers say without a pinch of salt. But Psalm 1 teaches us that there's a category difference between the advice of the world and the word of God. Secondly, it says blessed is one who doesn't stand in the way that sinners take. Someone's way in this Psalm is their walk of life, the way they behave. My way is what I do and how I do it. And the people with the blessed life don't behave the way the world behaves. This Psalm is imagining two roads. There's a road that the world takes, and the road that God says to take. And it says, but blessed is the man who doesn't stand in the road that the world takes and think, maybe I'll do this. No, they follow God's way.

Thirdly, they don't act like they belong in the world. Verse 1 says that the blessed one doesn't sit in the company of mockers. You might notice that there's a progression in the verbs in this verse.

It starts off walking in the counsel of the wicked, to standing in the way of sinners, and finally to sitting in the seat of mockers. By the end of the verse, they're settled. They're sitting down, not going to move again. This is speaking of belonging. God's people know that they belong to God rather than finding their belonging in the groups of the world.

[10:15] Mockers in this verse are arrogant people. They boast of their own successes. That's what it means to be a mocker. They also have a habit of deriding other people, especially those who are sincerely trying to serve Jesus Christ. Sometimes it can be quite stimulating to be part of a group of people like this. It can feel quite good to be one of the people who's making fun or poking holes in everything, delighting in the failure of others. This is saying not to be one of those people. Don't find your belonging in that sort of group. Instead, belong to God. So this is saying not to join in with the world.

Take what the world says with a pinch of salt, but receive the Bible as the word of God, not as the word of man. And what's the reason that we shouldn't do these things? Well, listen to verses four to six again. In contrast to the blessed man who is like a strong tree, not so the wicked. They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. Ultimately, there's no security with the wicked. This psalm is saying that however it looks to be someone who's against God and not following his word and following the way of the world, however strong and prosperous that might look, it's actually a very, very insecure position to be in.

They may look strong and rich and prosperous, but actually they're like chaff that the wind blows away. Chaff is dust, like husks of corn and wheat that falls off the plant when you harvest it.

It's very light. It's carried by the wind. Contrast that with the one who delights in God's law. A strong tree planted by streams of water.

There's a bit of an overlap in thinking with Psalm 73. Don't feel that you need to turn there, but I'll just read a bit to you. It says, The writer in Psalm 73 said that his steps had nearly slipped. He'd nearly had a crisis of faith.

[13:05] He saw the prosperity of people who didn't follow God's word. The prosperity of the wicked. They had no pangs. They're not in trouble as others are.

I'm sure you might find this quite easy to simpleize with sometimes. Of course, we're all sinners, but we know that there are people who commit such wickedness and get away with it.

Or even prosper because of it. It's difficult not to be frustrated or discouraged by that. We might see people like world leaders who are causing suffering for their own political and financial gain.

Dictators who trample on their people and they look so secure. Let this be a comfort for you if you're troubled by powerful corrupt leaders.

They will not stand in the judgment. They will be blown away like chaff unless they repent and follow Jesus. On a slightly more day-to-day level, perhaps it can be discouraging for our faith when we pay a price for having integrity.

[14:13] The writer in Psalm 73 says, All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. Sometimes it can feel a bit pointless to be a Christian if it's not making your life better.

It might feel like things would be better if you're on the other side. If you didn't have God's law weighing upon your conscience. Maybe people poke fun of you for your Christian beliefs or practices.

Or you're maybe held at a bit of an arm's length because of your beliefs. Psalm 1 points us to the ultimate end of those who don't hear, believe, and do what Jesus says.

It says in verse 5, Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. Though it might look like a great position to be in, to fit in with the world, it's actually like being chaff.

Someday the wind will blow. God's judgment will come. And they'll be gone. So that's the warning for us to avoid the ways of the world.

[15 : 25] The other application of this psalm is a positive encouragement. That God's word will make you fruitful. And keep you safe. And if you're a believer, there's so much to gain from paying close attention to God's word, the Bible.

So that's the second point. We've just talked about what the blessed one doesn't do. And now this is what the blessed one does. In verse 2 and 3 it says, But whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers. Instead of listening to the world, the blessed one delights in the law of the Lord.

And when it says the law, it means all of God's word. The New Testament and the Old. If we really love Jesus, we will love his word. We'll love his book.

We'll love his instructions. Perhaps for some of you the Bible is an important part of life. But it's not beautiful to you. But in Psalm 1 we see that the Bible is a source of delight to the one who meditates on it.

[16 : 38] Who chews it over. Who thinks about it. Meditate as a word also can obscure the meaning a little bit. We might think now meditation is clearing your mind.

Breathing deeply. Sitting in a certain position. But meditation here in the Bible is to think deeply about God's word, the Bible. I heard someone explain it like this.

That if you know how to worry, you know how to meditate. When you're worried about something, you turn it over in your head. You can't stop thinking about it. You look at it from every angle.

You think about what areas of your life is going to affect. In meditating on God's word, you're not thinking about a problem. But you're thinking about God's message to you.

It means to take time to think about the Bible. To think about the areas of your life a particular passage might affect. Maybe you're reading a passage like Romans 8 that has great assurance.

[17 : 44] That says there's no condemnation for those now in Christ Jesus. And to meditate on it, to think about what areas of my life do I need to hear that message.

Maybe I'm feeling guilty about some past sin that I've repented of, but I still feel rubbish about it. Well then Romans 8 applies to you.

Maybe you'd be reading another passage like Colossians 3 that reminds us that sinful habits are something that belongs to the old self, not to the new.

You might think about that passage and think about, well, there are some sins that I'm holding on to. Or I feel like I don't want to let go of. But you think about that passage and you recognize that Jesus says, I need to stop.

Maybe you're anxious about the state of the world. It seems uncertain. And you're wondering if we'll go to war in a number of years or if we'll have massive societal problems.

[18 : 47] But remember a book like the book of Daniel where God's people lived through the destruction of their land. And God was in control. And he kept them.

So Sam 1 encourages us that there's much to be gained from chewing over and digesting God's word. There's a lot of peace of mind, a lot of wisdom for life, and a lot of joy to be gained.

It also says that God makes his people fruitful through their obedience to his word. Listen to the description of the tree in verse 3.

It says, that tree is planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. And whatever they do prospers. The tree is planted by streams of water.

It's a very secure metaphor. Its roots are deep in the ground. And because it's by a stream of water, it's not reliant on things like chance, like the rain.

[19 : 50] It has its own supply. Planted talks of stability and nourishment of God's people.

And spiritually speaking, God's word keeps you stable and healthy and nourished in your soul. To keep our bodies healthy, we need to eat good food and exercise and take medication where necessary.

But for our souls and minds to be nourished and kept healthy, we need to chew over God's word. Secondly, the tree is fruitful. It yields its fruit in season.

We might wonder sometimes, how can I develop and grow as a Christian? How can I get more of the character of the New Testament?

Well, Paul picks up this fruit metaphor in Galatians. He talks about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control as the fruits of the Spirit.

[20 : 58] And this psalm says that those things will come naturally as you delight in and depend on God's word. This psalm is promising that by cleaving to God's word and meditating and chewing it over, God will bring about that growth as a Christian that you hope to see.

We can simply trust God that he will make us grow more and more Christ-like as we keep chewing over and digesting his word. As well as individually, we might think about how to do well as a church, as a church community.

How can we keep growing steadily and keep developing? We might first think about things like strategy and vision and having good management.

But regardless of those things, the church will be doing well in God's eyes if they are depending on God's word. And keeping the preaching and teaching and living out the Bible as the priority.

Strategy and vision are good things, but there's no point strategizing on a sinking ship. And that's what we are if we're not depending first on God's word.

[22 : 19] The verse also talks about, it says, whatever he does prospers. This might sound a bit hard to get because prosperity in our common language now is about being rich and having all your work projects succeeding and achieving what you want to achieve in life.

I think Joshua chapter 1 is a helpful passage to understand this. I'll just turn that quickly. Joshua 1 verse 8.

Where God is commanding Joshua as he takes on his task to take over the promised land. God says, keep this book of law always on your lips.

Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you'll be prosperous and successful. And then slightly, yeah.

So the point there is that for Joshua to be prosperous is for him to succeed in the task that God has given him. As opposed to Joshua becoming personally rich.

[23 : 28] And it's the same for us. For us to be prosperous and to succeed in our lives, it's for us to carry out the task that God has given us and succeed in that.

The task of obedience to him. The task of glorifying him in our lives. You might want to think about Jesus. Did Jesus look prosperous in a worldly way?

I don't think he did. He wasn't rich. He wasn't accepted by the world. But did he glorify God in every part of his life?

Yes, he did. Did he succeed in his mission as Messiah? Yes, he did. So when you see this promise that whatever you do will be prosperous, think about it in terms of God.

Ultimately, this prosperity refers to the ultimate blessing in the end for those who take refuge in God's Son and delight in his word.

[24 : 31] And we see this in verses 5 and 6. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

It says that the wicked will not stand in the judgment, but by implication, God's people will. If you've taken refuge in Jesus, when God comes on the day of judgment, he will have no condemnation for you.

He will not have a guilty verdict for you. And in fact, this lack of condemnation is a present experience too. Paul says in Romans 8, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Not only that there will be no condemnation, but there is at this very moment now no condemnation. If we've taken refuge in Jesus and we delight in his word, we have nothing to fear from that day.

The big problem in our life, our rebellion against God, our unrighteousness, has been dealt with and will not be counted against us. What awaits believers is everlasting joy that will never get boring and will never be taken away.

[25 : 45] We'll never be tainted by suffering or death. We will rejoice forever in true love for God and true love for each other. So to conclude, Psalm 1 is firstly looking forward towards Jesus, whose mind was perfectly shaped by God's word, and who lived a life perfectly obedient to God's word.

And God made him fruitful and eternal and caused him to succeed in his task as Messiah. But it also acts as instruction for us about how we ought to behave, not as the world behaves, but as people who delight in God's word and desire to follow it.

Father, we thank you for the gift of your word.

We thank you that it makes us strong. We thank you that it gives us assurance. It challenges us where we need to be challenged. We thank you that through obedience to your word and meditating on it, taking it seriously and thinking about it, that we can be like a tree planted by streams of water, who is fruitful in season, whose leaf does not wither.

We pray, Father, that you'd help us to do so as individuals, that we'd rely on your word and study it carefully and to love it.

[27 : 15] And we pray that we'd do that as a church, that your word would be the priority and that it would shape what we do as a community. In Jesus' name, amen.

I think we're going to, well, now that we've read this and been taught it, we're going to sing Psalm 1. So please stand to sing as the man gets up.

Amen. How blessed the one who does not walk Where wicked men would guide his feet
Who does not stand in sinners' paths Or sit upon the scornous seat The law of God Is his
delight His meditation Day and night He prospers like a tree

Which has been planted By a flowing stream And in its season Yields its fruit Its leaves
Are always Fresh and green In every act And every word He knows The blessing Of the
Lord Not so The wicked They are like Like the chaff The wind

Will blow The wind Away They will Not in the judgment Stand Nor sinners With the
righteous State God knows God knows The way The righteous Go The wicked He'll Over
He'll Over Throne The grace Of the Lord Jesus Christ And the love Of God And the
fellowship Of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Amen Let's takeise