

True Happiness - Psalm 1

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[0 : 00] and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. 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 will perish.

Well, let's pray. Father, thank you for your word and we thank you for these psalms.

Real, true life experiences of people as they cry out to you. Expressing what is upon their heart.

Turning their devotion and attention to you. And Father, we pray that as we read through and think about this psalm together, as we meditate upon your word, that it would draw us to delight in you more and more.

[1 : 23] it would cause us to be full of joy, contentment, rest, and at peace with you.

Father, by your Spirit, speak truth into our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So, are you a happy person?

Do you think you're happy? Well, let me ask it another way. What do you need in your life to make you happy?

What if you could have it at the click of a finger in your life right now and would make you happy?

What would you want? Would it be more money so that you can afford that super holiday?

Would it be better health so that you don't have to deal with constant nagging pain? Maybe it would be to have someone in your life, a husband or a spouse or wife, so that you're no longer alone.

[2 : 38] Maybe you just look for stability in work so that you're free from worry and everything about the future is sorted.

What if you could have it would make you happy? Well, Psalm 1 not only tells us that we can be truly happy, it tells us how we can find true happiness.

Look at verse 1. It starts with this introduction, blessed is the one. Blessed is the person. Blessed simply means to be happy.

It doesn't mean that we're always jumping up and down with excitement. It doesn't mean that we have a permanent smile edged on our face. To be blessed, to be happy, is to experience a joyful contentment in life whatever our circumstances.

Let me just go through that definition again. To be blessed, to be happy, is to experience a joyful contentment in life whatever our experiences.

[3 : 54] So where can we find this true happiness? Well, Psalm 1 introduces us to two paths or two ways in which we can live. First there is the path that leads to happiness and that's described in verses 1 to 3.

Then we'll see an opposite path, a path that leads to sorrow which is described in verses 4 and 5.

And then these two ways are contrasted in verse 6.

So let's read verse 6. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish. As we go through the psalm we'll see there's a way that prospers and a way that perishes.

A path that brings true happiness and a path that brings unending sorrow. So let's together have a look at these two paths in our pursuit of happiness.

first the path of happiness delighting in God's word. The path of happiness is marked or is found by delighting in the word of God.

[5 : 10] So look at verse 1 again at the beginning. Blessed or happy is the one. Why are they happy? Why are they so joyfully content in life?

because verse 2 his delight is in the law of the Lord. The law refers to the scriptures God's spoken word to us.

So the happy person is joyfully content because they are delighting or they find delight in God's word. everything they need for life is found in God's word to us. God's word is fulfilling. It is satisfying. It is refreshing. It's like a tonic. It tastes good. Have a look at Psalm 19 briefly.

Just flick over to Psalm 19. Psalm 19. Verse 7 Here is a description of the delight in God's word. [6 : 21] How it brings joy and contentment. How we are to delight in it. Let's pick it up in verse 7. The law of the Lord is perfect reviving the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure altogether righteous.

They are more precious than gold than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned.

In keeping them there is great reward. Back to Psalm 1. So you see God's word satisfies and fulfills its refreshing.

[7 : 18] It's like drinking in a tonic. It tastes good. Now if we're to delight in God's word that means we must listen to it intently.

Look at the rest of verse 2 of Psalm 1. His delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.

Now modern meditation as I'm sure you've probably heard is often associated with emptying your mind. Take everything out of your mind and just have an emptiness a space and be quiet.

But meditation as far as the Bible is concerned is not about emptying our minds but rather filling our minds with God's word. Meditation means we are to be soaked in scripture.

We are to think upon it, reflect on it, talk about it to each other and apply it, work it into our lives. Meditation is an activity of thinking through God's word.

[8 : 29] And there's good reason for this meditation of thinking and reading through God's word. Because the person who meditates on it, look at verse 3, they are like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

Now we're used to in this country rain, lots of it, too much of it. But that's not the climate of Sam 1. It's written in a place where there's a desert and trees struggle to grow, where plants die because there isn't enough water.

So in a barren land, a tree that is planted beside the stream will not only survive, it is going to thrive. It like stands out amongst everything else.

It sends its roots deep down, drawing life into its branches. It will be, verse 3, fruitful. It will bring forth a harvest in season.

And in the same way as we delight in, as we meditate upon God's word, as we send our roots deep down into the waters of life, we will be fruitful because God's word is life.

[9 : 55] In fact, look at the end of verse 3. Whatever they do prospers. Now this fruitful prosperous life does not mean or does not guarantee that we'll walk through life full of health and full of wealth.

Lots of people, lots of teachers of the Bible, which I think are completely wrong, will tell you that, well, follow this and everything will go well for you. Nothing will go wrong.

Well, this is not a promise for success instead of suffering. That's not the kind of fruit or prosperity that is being promised. In fact, if you read through the Psalms very quickly, you will discover that as we journey and walk through life, we will go through all kinds of troubles and hardships and difficulties.

They are unavoidable. So, what's being promised to us? Well, the kind of fruit, the kind of prosperity that we're being promised is the fruit that comes as we are being nourished by God's word.

Fruit that will give us joyful contentment whatever our circumstances are in life. The kind of fruit it will produce is freedom from our guilt and shame.

[11 : 25] Forgiveness of all our sin and failure. Grace when we feel weak and low. Joy in times of struggle and suffering.

Assurance when we're afraid and in doubt. Confidence that God is working all things for good as we sang earlier. Absolute conviction that nothing can separate us from God's love.

peace in times of trouble and trials. Comfort when we lose a loved one. Hope when we are facing death. Eternal life when Christ comes again.

All of this wonderful fruit in abundance. This is what we are promised as we meditate on God's word. Joyful contentment whatever circumstance of life we face.

True happiness is found as we delight in God's word. So that is the path of happiness.

[12:29] But then in contrast we are shown the path of sorrow which is a rejection of God's word. That's the path of sorrow marked out by rejection of his word.

You see the happy person delights in God's word. Verse four not so the wicked. Look at the contrast between the path of happiness and the path of sorrow.

Go back to verse one. Blessed or happy is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, does not stand in the way of sinners, does not sit in the seat of mockers.

that's the happy one. But the person whose life ends in sorrow, in contrast, again look at verse one, does walk in the counsel of the wicked.

They do stand in the way of the sinners. They do sit in the seat of mockers. Can you see the progression that's unfolding? They start by walking in their counsel.

[13:40] They listen to what others have to say. Then they stop and stand in the way of sinners. They begin to reflect on it and engage with it.

And then finally they sit down with the mockers. It's what begins to shape and direct their life and how they live. It's a dangerous progression.

Walking, standing, and then sitting. You see, when we stop listening to the word, it's because we've started listening to the world.

And it can so easily happen to each one of us. We start listening to the counsel of the world. What does the world tell me? And then we begin to think like the world thinks.

And then in time over progression, we start to behave as the world. world. You see, the big message of the world is simply this, that there is no God.

[14:47] In fact, it's you who are God. We're all little gods. So listen to yourself. You know what you want. You know what's best for yourself. So do what pleases you and do what delights in you.

And that is the basis of this mindfulness or meditation that is so popular. other. It's about giving to yourself everything that pleases you. And if it makes you happy, you do it.

It doesn't matter the consequences to anybody else. Whatever you do, do not listen to God. Listen to your own voice. Listen to the voice of the world.

You are God. So do what you want and what pleases you. it seems very little has changed from the garden of Eden when the devil came to Adam and Eve and said after God had very clearly spoken to them, Satan says did God really say?

It's an undermining of what God has said. In fact, what does he say? You will be like God. It seems so attractive but in the end it will come to sorrow.

[16:04] Again, look at the contrast in verse 4. Not so the wicked. In other words, they are not like the fruitful tree of verse 3.

They're not like the tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit. Instead, verse 4, they are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Chaff is that waste that surrounds the grain, the kernel of the grain. It's of no value. If you were to go shopping down to Dunn's or to Super Value and you're looking for your favourite cereal, you won't find anything called chaffabix or chaff flakes.

Not very exciting and won't taste very nice. The chaff is the waste. waste. It produces nothing that lasts. Its only value is to be thrown out, to be put on a fire and burned.

And it's a terrible picture of one who listens to the world rather than the word. It's a life that ends in fruitlessness and all they produce is worthless, nothing.

[17:21] nothing. Now you might think well that's not actually true. Because I know lots of people who don't listen to the word and they listen to the world and they do their own thing and when I look at their life they seem to prosper.

Everything they do seems to be successful. And that's a theme that runs through the Psalms. If you look at it Psalm 72 I think is one. If you read through Psalm 72 that's the theme.

It's saying I looked and the wicked prosper. And the innocent well they seem to suffer. The one who seeks to do God's will ends up in more trouble.

It seems like the wicked get away with it. And that's the struggle and the tension in life. But when they stand before God as judge, when we all stand before God and have to give an account for our life, well their life will be like chaff.

There will be nothing. In fact, it will be an eternal judgment. Look at verse 5.

[18 : 33] Therefore, the wicked, those who do not listen to God's word, will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

The image that we are given in verse 4 of the chaff being blown away reflects the judgment that is pronounced in verse 5.

Pre-technology farmers would have to sort out the grain from the chaff. They would get their winnowing fork, as it was called, they would dig it in, throw it up into the air, the wind would blow through, and it would blow all the chaff, all the waste away, and then the heavy grain would fall to the ground, and they would store the grain and the chaff and everything would be blown away, gathered up, and burned.

Well, that's the picture of God's judgment that we have in verse 5. Those who reject the word, those who turn away from God, are like chaff.

When they stand before God in his judgment, they will not stand. They will have nothing to stand for. It is like the wind of God's judgment will come in and blow them away, and they will become nothing, they will perish.

[19 : 55] In fact, end of verse 5, they will not stand, the sinners will not stand in the assembly of the righteous.

The assembly is simply the gathering of God's people. It is where we get our New Testament word for church. Church are those who belong to God.

It is not the building. It is the people of God who belong to him today and will be with him for all eternity. And at the end of it all they will not stand, they will not have a place with God's people in his eternal kingdom.

Instead of eternal happiness, it will be eternal judgment, separation from him. So the path of sorrow is marked by rejecting this life-giving word and listening to the words.

So there we have two paths, the path of happiness and the path of sorrow. And the question is, what path am I going to walk?

[21 : 09] Now we all know which path we want to walk. But the truth is, with a little bit of looking inwardly, we actually know how we all walk.

So often we are not like the person in verse one. We do walk, in the counsel of the wicked.

We do stand in the way of sinners. And we do sit in the seat of mockers. And so often we are not like the person of verse two.

Our delight is not in God's word. We never seem to have time to meditate on it. We're so busy doing other things. And it's hard enough for me to do it once a week, never mind meditating on it day and night.

And as I reflect on my life a bit more, well, it's really not like the tree planted by streams of water. Sometimes I find it is fruitless.

[22 : 23] And the leaves do wither. water. So where does that actually leave us? Well, look at how the two ways are contrasted in verse six.

The Lord watches over the way of the righteous or the blessed, the person who delights in God's word, but the way of the wicked will perish. it's like verse six is a sting in the tail.

The psalm paints the picture of the person we all want to be. But as the psalm progresses and as we meditate and reflect and think upon it, we come to the terrible conclusion that we're not like this person.

We fail far too often. So is there any one of us who can actually walk the right path?

Well, there is one who has walked the right path for us. The God man, Jesus Christ.

[23 : 29] Listen to how John, the author in the New Testament, John's Gospel introduces us to Jesus. This is at the beginning of his Gospel. He says, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and from the fullness of his grace, we have received one blessing after another.

The Word is living. The Word came to us in a person, the person of Jesus Christ, and he walked this life and lived our life for us.

Where we rejected God's Word, Christ delighted in God's Word. Where we have disobeyed, he obeyed the Word fully and completely.

He lived a faithful and fruitful life for us. He is the person of Psalm 1, the blessed man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers, but delighted in the Word.

[24 : 52] But more than that, Jesus Christ is the one who walked the path for us and died our death for us. verse 6 of Psalm 1, For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Christ was treated like the wicked for us, so that we might be treated as righteous like him. He took our judgment upon us, so that we would not perish, but prosper.

As Christ died on the cross, he took upon himself all our sorrow, so that we might experience his happiness. Again, listen to the words of Christ, the living Word.

It's there at the bottom of the screen. I tell you the truth, Jesus said, whoever hears my word, believes him who sent me, has eternal life, will not be condemned.

He is crossed over from death to life. Life is found in the living Word, the person Jesus Christ. Now, the way we are to express our faith in Christ, and our dependence upon him, is delighting in his Word.

[26 : 20] Go with me, please, to John chapter 15. John's gospel chapter 15. Somebody got a page number?

1-0-8-3. 1-0-8-3. John chapter 15, and down in verse 7. Again, listen to the living Word, Jesus speaking his words to us.

Verse 7, chapter 7, verse 15, if you remain in me, and my words remain in you. So, he's talking in similar language to Psalm 1, if you meditate, as you delight in God's Word, as the Word remains in you, as you think about it, you dwell upon it, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. Now, again, that doesn't mean God is going to give you whatever you demand, health and wealth. No, as we are nourished by the life-giving word, we can ask God that he will produce fruit in us.

Look at verse 8. this is to my father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. It's really a prayer that we will become like the blessed, happy person of Psalm 1, that we will be like that tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

[28 : 14] as we delight, as we remain, as we express our faith in Christ by delighting in his word, he will produce a fruit in us that will bring glory to God.

So as we delight in the word, as we meditate upon his word, we will experience true happiness, a joyful contentment in life, whatever our circumstances are in life.

Now, I want to be very practical this morning and help us on that path and to help us on that journey. As we read through Psalm 1 and we're thinking, right, meditate, well, think upon, delight in God's word, how am I going to do that?

Well, turn back to Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the book of Psalms.

And you will see that it starts, it's kind of divided up into little sections of about eight verses in each one. Remember, verses were added a long time, they're not inspired by God.

[29 : 36] But what is inspired is, you'll see at the beginning, there's a little introduction, it's got a letter, it's not an English letter, but it's a Hebrew letter. So it's got, it looks like an X, don't ask me what it is, I should know that and look it up, but Aleph, right, so the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

And as you read through that, if you're reading the original in Hebrew, then the beginning of every line starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And then you go on to the next section where it says Beth, and it starts with the second letter of the alphabet.

So it's just little sections, that's just what I'm trying to get us to, is that Psalm 119 comes in little sections and it's all about God's Word. So my encouragement to you is, and to myself is, how do we start to meditate and think about God's Word and to delight in it?

Well, Psalm 119 is all about God's Word. So there you are, every day, or once a week, not going to be prescriptive, take that little section, take the first letter, read through it, meditate upon it, think about it, talk to others about it, maybe memorize one verse from it, something like that, to take in God's Word, praying that God will produce fruit in your life.

Tim Keller, who's a pastor in New York, has written a little book, and it's working his way through the Psalms bit by bit, and in his introduction, this is what he says, which I can't better it, I think it's

very helpful.

[31 : 21] He gives us three things that we can do as we read God's Word, as we read a section of a Psalm. If you're taking notes, then write this down. They all begin with A, so it's easy to follow.

The first one is, as you read a section, adore. And the thing after it, it says, what did you learn about God for which you could praise or thank him?

So adore, so as you read it, turn what you read into praise, say, what is there that will help me to praise God and thank him for? The second one is admit.

what do you learn about yourself for which you could repent? So as you read the Psalm and reflect upon it, maybe we see something that, well, as we read Psalm 1, I'm not like this person who delights in God's Word.

Help me that I would delight. So admit, what did you learn about yourself which you could repent of? And the third one is aspire.

[32 : 24] what did you learn about life that you could aspire to, ask for, and act on? That is what brings about the fruit.

What did you learn about life that you could aspire to, ask for, and act on? So three simple things, adore, admit, and aspire.

So my encouragement, very practical, just take a little section and work through those three things. Take you a few minutes, not long. Maybe you could do it with somebody else, or if you're married, why not do it with your spouse?

If you want somebody to do it with, I would be more than delighted, I would be so happy to come and sit with you, read a section, and work those things through.

So, in our pursuit of happiness, happiness is found as we delight in God's word, as we meditate upon it, as we run to Christ, the true and living word, who lived our life for us, so that he might take our sorrow, and we might share in his happiness.

[33 : 37] Let's pray together. Amen.