

Psalm 1

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[0:00] This past summer in India, there was an unprecedented heat wave from about May to June and temperatures over 100 degrees and hitting regularly 113 degrees Fahrenheit, 118 degrees Fahrenheit.

It's a withering heat. In God's mysterious ways, He oftentimes turns up the heat through various kinds of trials.

And it's possible to be in those trials and start to spiritually wither. An extended trial is like an extended heat wave.

It can take a toll. So when God turns up the heat, where must His people turn? Psalm 1 answers that question.

Psalm 1 presents two ways to live. The wicked and the righteous. The righteous thrive because they're planted by streams of life-giving water.

[1:16] The life-giving water of God's Word. They are blessed. They are joyful because they are depending upon God.

The wicked turn away from God. Not so the righteous. So when God turns up the heat, we turn to God's Word. So would you look at Psalm 1 with me right now and I'll read Psalm 1 for us all.

I'm reading out of the ESV. And so if you're reading out of the NIV, it'll be a little different. But you'll be able to follow along just fine. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season.

Its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

[2:22] Therefore, the wicked will 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 wicked will perish.

Psalm 1 presents us with two ways to live. The wicked who turn away from God, and the righteous who depend on God. And this psalm makes the case through three contrasts.

Contrast of companions, we see that in verses 1 and 2. Contrast in character, we'll see that in 3 and 4. Contrast in destinies, we'll see that in 5 and 6.

Psalm 1 presents us with two ways to live. Either turning from God in his word, or turning to God in his word. And especially when we experience heat, we must plant ourselves by the life-giving waters of God's word.

Christian, you want to thrive? Plant yourself by God's word. So let's look at this 1 and 2. This first contrast, the contrast of companions.

[3:43] This is 1 and 2, but I just want you to notice that word blessed first. You see that first word in Psalm 1, verse 1? Blessed.

It's literally the first word of the psalm in Hebrew, and it's the first word of the entire book of the psalms. It's no coincidence. It's very purposeful.

What does blessed mean? Last week, I sought to make a distinction for you between the words joy and happiness. And just very simply, joy is a settled contentment in God's unchanging character.

That's where joy is. Settledness in God's unchanging character. Happiness is seeking contentment in circumstances. Happiness is kind of rises and falls as you ride the roller coaster of life, going up and down.

So when the psalmist writes the word, blessed is the man, is he talking about joy or happiness?

He's talking about joy.

[4:58] Joy in God. Delighting in God. Being planted in God's word. Those who depend on God.

I'm not sure if you've experienced this before, but someone comes up, you go up to someone and you say, hey, how you doing? And they say, I'm blessed, man. I'm blessed. I'm blessed. We see where blessing is in Psalm 1.

And blessing is in our God. So he says, blessed is the man, and then he begins to make the contrast.

Contrast of companions. We see in verse 1, blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, and the psalmist tells us that the blessed man, the righteous man, he tells us the companions we're not to keep.

We're not to walk in the counsel of the wicked. We're not to stand in the way of sinners. And those words, wicked and sinners, they're virtually synonymous.

[6:10] They talk about people who are regularly turning away from God, not living for God. We're not to walk in their counsel and what they say.

We're not to stand in the way, in their lifestyles. We're not to stop in their lifestyles, be in their lifestyles.

That last word is a very interesting word. It says, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. A scoffer is a click down from the wicked and sinners.

A scoffer is not just someone who turns away from God and is living for everything but God. But what a scoffer does is he mocks or she mocks those people who are seeking to live for God.

So not only are they denying God and living for things other than God, but they mock the people who do. And the blessed man does not sit in the seat of scoffers.

[7:22] Some commentators think that this, what we see in Psalm 1, this not walking in the counsel, not standing in the way, not sitting in the seat, it's this picture of settling into ungodliness.

Walking alongside to stopping to sitting, you're settling into ungodliness. The righteous, those who delight in God, are to be discerning of who their closest companions are.

Do you know why? Because it has everything to do with influence. Everything to do with influence. Influence. Your companions influence.

You listen to them. Tell you what to live for. What to tell you to what matters most. You know you have companions, close companions, when you start talking like them.

You pick up their mannerisms. You start sharing their goals and their lifestyles. That's the effect of companions. And we're being told here that the blessed man, those who trust in God, they don't live that way.

[8:46] They're not influenced by the wicked, by sinners, by scoffers. So the first part of this contrast is that we see the joyful man or woman is not buying into what these people who don't care about God, what they're saying.

They don't buy into the latest pitch of where happiness is. Whether that's money or pleasure or prestige or power or possessions. Anything but God.

And just to be clear, this is not a call to remove ourselves from relationships with non-Christians, people who don't live for God. But it will become a call to delight in God as our closest companion. And might I add, Jesus lived this. He was able to influence sinners and yet he didn't walk in the counsel of the wicked.

He didn't stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers. But he was able to be present in proclaiming the gospel. Joy is not found in the counsel of the wicked.

[10:05] Joy is found in the counsel of our closest companion. God himself.

And so let's see the contrast. Verse 2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. Blessed is the man or woman who takes pleasure in the counsel, in the words of his God, of her God.

That's the greatest formative influence in the blessed, righteous man or woman's life. What God says matters most.

And so joy is found in taking to heart what God says. But his delight is in the law of the Lord.

The law of Yahweh. That word law is literally the word Torah. And it's referring to the first five books of the Bible. The Pentateuch. The law of Moses. Genesis.

[11:10] Exodus. Leviticus. Numbers. And Deuteronomy. And so the psalmist is delighting in the Torah. Those five books. The psalmist is saying, I rejoice in knowing that my God is the creator of all and therefore all are accountable to him.

Delighting in the fact that his God is the promise-making God who promised to Abraham to bless all the nations. And mind you, that blessing is joy in God.

That this is the God who revealed himself in those first five books as a God who loved a people, not based on anything the people did, but on God's great love for them.

And he chose them out of the nations. Israel. And then he delivered them from captivity. And then he made a covenant with them.

He bound himself to them. And said, I'm your God. You are my people. All by grace. And then he gave them his law.

[12:15] Walk this way. Because I'm holy. And you, my people, are to be holy too. So what we see the psalmist doing here is delighting in the words of his God.

The God who made a covenant. The God who bound himself to him. The God who gives himself to us through his word.

He reveals himself to us. He makes known his ways. Joyful is the man or woman who delights in the very words of their God.

And you know what? We're just talking about five books of the Bible here. I mean, as Christians, we've got 66 books of the Bible.

66 books. I mean, the Pentateuch is a feast in itself. It's a great buffet. These 66 books that God has given us in which he reveals himself to us, it's like a rich banquet.

[13:25] It delights our souls. God's word is like this expansive mansion. And we go and explore all the different rooms and delight in them because God has good for us in each room we go into.

God continued to reveal himself. And so, not just in those five books, those first five books, but God has been making himself known for centuries, many times, in many ways, by different prophets, revealing himself progressively.

And so, the Scriptures is God revealing himself over time. But the ultimate revelation of God is when God became a man.

Is when God became flesh. The written word, the Bible, is all about the living word, Jesus. Jesus. The Bible points to Jesus again and again and again.

The Bible, the Old Testament, aims at Jesus. It's all about Christ. Because in Christ, God's plan for the fullness of time is focused.

[14:52] Riches upon riches. This book is riches upon riches to our soul. The Bible is God speaking to us.

God revealing himself to us. Our closest companion seeking to influence us in the way we should go.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord. True joy is found in believing the words of our God.

God making himself known in the words of this book, the Bible. And just a quick thing to mention here. God saying, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night. Meditate. To meditate is to mull something over. It's like to mutter. You ever find yourself talking to yourself? There's a couple ways in which we talk to ourselves.

[16:09] And a bygone pastor named Martin Lloyd-Jones points two out. Oftentimes we just listen to ourselves. And so we are aware of our circumstances and our hearts respond to our circumstances.

We get anxious. We get fearful. And we just stay focused on our circumstances. An old friend of mine said, well that's kind of stinking thinking.

What biblical meditation is, is not so much of a listening to yourself, but a speaking to yourself.

A speaking to yourself the truths about God. Speaking God's word to yourself. That's what meditation is. Constantly calling to mind what God says about himself.

Constantly calling to mind what God says about you. Constantly calling to mind what God has done for you in Christ. Constantly calling to mind what he calls us to as his holy ones.

[17:24] Constantly calling to mind that God is over it, that he's in it, that he's working through it. Constantly calling to mind that our God is a God of steadfast love and it never ceases. This I call to mind and therefore I have hope.

These are examples of meditating on the Bible day and night. It goes with you wherever you go. So who are you listening to?

Are you listening to yourself or are you speaking God's word to yourself? Mind you, there is this dynamic of delight that happens for those who meditate on God's word.

You remember who God is and then comes joy. Then comes hope. Then comes faith. And that feeds into more remembering who your God is.

Calling to mind who he is. And that has the effect of more joy. So we see this wonderful dynamic of delight for those who meditate on the words of Scripture.

[18:30] What God says matters most. And it has an impact on your heart at any moment throughout the day.

So what do you find yourself mulling over? What do you find yourself meditating on? What do you find yourself thinking about frequently?

Are you anxious? Are you fearful? Well, what are you thinking about? What are you calling to mind? Who are you listening to? Whose words are you believing?

This first contrast is a contrast of companions. Verse 1, wicked, sinners, scoffers. Verse 2, God speaking.

And the difference is whose words are you believing? It's a contrast. Two ways to live. Whose words are you delighting in?

[19:45] So, we've seen a contrast in companions. Let's look at the contrast in character. verses 3 and 4 we read, He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season and sleep does not wither.

And all that He does, He prospers. The wicked are not so. In verses 3 and 4, the psalmist uses some very vivid imagery, doesn't he? He's, again, driving this two ways of living, two ways to live. He's pushing it. One way is the righteous, the one planted by streams of water. The other is the wicked. They're like chaff blown by the wind. I want you to notice something about this tree in verse 3.

This is an image, a picture of someone who is planted him or herself by the Word, who's meditating on God's Word. He's like a tree. Four things to notice.

Where they're planted, what they produce, that they're protected, and that he or she prospers. First notice, they're planted by streams of water.

[20:57] Now, when I have thought about this verse, I'm not sure if you are like me, but I imagine kind of an Israel kind of mountain brook with a nice tree by it.

Well, that's not what's going on here. The streams of water are actually irrigation canals. That's what that means. Those are the streams.

Water is lacking in Israel. It's an arid and dry, hot place. And so water is in huge demand. And so what we see going on here is God is like this gardener.

And He plants us by these irrigation canals, these streams of water. And what's true about an irrigation canal is it ensures a constant and abundant flow of life-giving water.

God plants us there. We have a tendency of pulling up our roots and moving up elsewhere. I know that. But God intends for us to be by the stream of water.

[22:06] That stream is our life. God's Word gives us life. The water of God's Word. And God has designed us to be dependent on His Word.

To live by His Word. He's like a tree planted. He produces fruit in season. The idea there is one of consistency, regularity, consistently bearing fruit.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. The fruit of the Spirit. It ends up blessing those people around you as we are planted by God's Word.

God yields fruit in our life that blesses others. We're fruitful. We produce. And notice also there is protection.

His leaf does not wither. Again, Psalm 1 is written by someone living in a hot and arid climate. They know drought. They know heat.

[23:20] And we've been going through some heat as a church. A heat that's been effective in me. Exposing things in me.

For which I am so grateful, yet grieve. What we see here though is a picture of the blessed man. Planted by God's Word. and enduring heat. Its leaf does not wither. Why? Because the tree is planted by streams of water.

Their source of life, despite the heat, has not been cut off. Planted by streams, produce fruit, protected, endurance from the heat.

Its leaf does not wither. He prospers. In all that he does, he prospers. Now when you hear the word prosper, you might go immediately to material prosperity.

[24:21] Don't go there. Think spiritual prosperity. Spiritual thriving. Growing. Growing. In all different areas of your life.

Joyful, living for God, despite circumstances. Thriving. Why? Because you're planted by the streams of water.

Verse 3 points to the character of the one who is trusting in God's word. And when you look at it and you notice that this person is stable, this person is fruitful, this person is enduring, that they're thriving, it starts down a little bit like Jesus to be honest with you.

What a Savior we have. This is contrasted in verse 4. We've got the character of the righteous in verse 3 and then the character of the wicked.

The NIV says, not so the wicked. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind blows away. We've got to understand what threshing means.

[25:45] The threshing process. In an agricultural culture like this psalm when it was written, there would be harvesting of grain. And that grain would be brought to a threshing floor. And usually that threshing floor was elevated to take advantage of afternoon winds.

And so the threshing process would go something like this. Grain would be spread out on the threshing floor. You take a pitchfork-like tool, you throw it into the grain, and you throw it up in the air.

Go up in the air and fall down. And when it hit, it would start to dislodge the husk from the seed. And so you're threshing. And you keep on doing that.

And as you're doing it, the wind is blowing, and you know what happens? As the husk becomes dislodged, as straw gets kind of put, freed up, debris, the wind blows it away.

And so all the husk and the straw and the debris, that's called chaff. It's useless. And it's blown away by the wind.

[26:53] And that's the point of the contrast. We see the righteous planted by streams of water. Solid, growing, thriving, enduring heat, and the wicked are compared to chaff, empty, blown about by the wind.

Two ways to live. Contrasting characters. We've got the tree planted by the stream, the righteous, and we've got the chaff blown away by the wind, the wicked.

And you know what it depends on. Whose words are you living by? Whose words are you trusting in?

Brother and sister in Christ, if you want to thrive, you must plant yourself by the streams of God's word. So let me ask you a question.

As you think about your own self, is your character more like the tree planted by the water, or is it more like chaff blown by the wind?

[28:08] Is your leaf withering? Where are you planted? Whose words are you believing? What are you meditating on?

So we've seen two contrasts. Contrasting companions, whose words are you listening to?

Contrasting characters. What are you made of? And now, the final contrast.

Two ways to live, a contrast of destinies. This is 5 and 6. And what we see in 5 and 6, we see some words repeated. The wicked, the righteous.

Again, it's bringing apart this contrast. Two ways to live. If you look at verse 5, it reads this, therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment.

We're talking about final destiny here. The great final judgment when every human being will come before God and give an account for their life.

[29:07] God is just, He's holy, and He's going to hold each of us to account. Just to make this a little bit more concrete, imagine God the Father has a calendar.

calendar. And on that calendar, He has a date set. Permanent marker. The day of judgment. We don't know when that is, but He does. It is set. Judgment is coming. We're not one day farther, we're one day closer to that day.

And what we see here in verse 5 is that the wicked will not stand in the judgment because they have nothing to stand on.

They will have nothing to say in their defense when they stand before the judge. Rather, their sins will stand against them. Their sins will condemn them.

[30:10] They will weep and they will wail because God's judgment is just and true and His recompense is deserved. He is going to judge. The day is set.

We go on to read that nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. It's a picture, further picture of judgment.

On that day, Jesus will separate out the wicked from the righteous, like sheep from the goats. If you will turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 25.

Jesus is teaching about the end times and He's talking about final judgment and in verse 31 He says this, When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Jesus is saying, I'm the judge. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, both righteous and wicked, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats and He will place the sheep on His right but the goats on His left.

[31:33] Sinners will not stand with the righteous in judgment. They will be separated out. So verse 5 in Psalm 1 is a picture of judgment.

And what follows in verse 6 is a picture of punishment, of destruction. destruction. But the way of the wicked will perish.

The NIV says, but the way of the wicked will lead to destruction. If you look back at Matthew 25, 46, speaking of the wicked, and these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

judgment is coming. The day is set. God is just. He knows all.

He knows everything about you. So do you fear that day? Do you fear the coming judgment? Do you fear having to come before God and to give an account?

[32:42] Do you fear that your sins stand against you? Well, I have some wonderful news for you. Jesus, who will be your judge on the last day, He is your Savior today.

God has made a way. Only in Christ can a sinner be delivered from the judgment to come. Only in Christ. Jesus' death on the cross is able to pay for all of your sin.

Wipe your slate completely clean. But it's more than that. When a sinner puts their faith in Jesus, not only are they forgiven of their sin, but Christ's righteousness is credited to your account.

It's like God clothes you with the righteousness of Jesus. All of Jesus' right living for His 33 years imputed to you.

The Bible calls this justification. That God declares a sinner righteous in His sight, fully forgiven, fully accepted, forever. And so if you are afraid of the judgment to come, run to Christ, your Savior, and you will not fear Christ when you face Him as judge.

[34:18] The destiny of the wicked is judgment and destruction. Not so the righteous. The wicked are not able to stand in the judgment, but it's implied that the righteous are.

We can stand in the judgment. judgment. How is that possible? What was I just telling you? Here's why it's possible that we as those in Christ don't need to fear judgment.

We will stand. The moment we believed in Jesus, at that moment, God declared us righteous and God imputed to us.

He gave us the righteousness of Christ. And the moment He did that, it was immediate, it was complete, it was unchanging, it's forever. You've got as much of the righteousness of Christ now as the apostle Paul did.

Because it's God who declares you the righteous in His sight with the righteousness of Christ. So Christian, here's how I want to encourage you this morning in terms of judgment to come.

[35:28] The same righteousness that makes you acceptable to God now, Christ's righteousness. righteousness. That is the same righteousness on which you stand at the judgment.

So you don't need to fear. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We don't fear being condemned because Christ paid for it and we've been given His righteousness. righteousness. The Lord knows the way of the righteous. The Lord knows the way of those He's declared righteous.

The Lord knows that you are a sinner. The Lord knows you cried out to Him for forgiveness. The Lord knows what He's done for you in Christ. The Lord knows the way of the righteous.

We have the promise of eternal life. our Savior is also our judge. And we rest in that.

[36:32] So we've looked at two ways to live. Contrast and companions whose words are you going to live by? Contrast and characters is your leaf withering?

Who are you trusting in? Are you like the tree or like the chaff? Contrasting destinies, do you fear judgment or do you have a settled confidence that your Savior today will be also your judge on the last day?

He knows the way of though He's made righteous. Brothers and sisters in Christ, the righteous thrive because they're planted by the life-giving streams of God's Word.

Where are you planted? Let's pray. God in heaven, we turn to you, we look to you, you are our God, you are our close companion, you've bound yourself to us in Christ.

You have the words of eternal life, where do we go? We plant ourselves by your Word again and again and again. we trust in you and God, we trust that you'll cause us to thrive even when you bring on the heat.

[37:52] In Jesus' name, amen.