

Psalm 1 | May 29, 2022

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[0 : 00] Blessed is the man. Happy is the man. Oh, the deep-seated joy of the man.

Psalm 1 is a beautiful beginning, the Bible's hymn book. It opens up here telling us about happiness. Who of us, I mean, everybody wants to be happy. That's what everybody's looking for.

Nobody woke up this morning and said, man, I can't wait to be miserable today. No, we all want to be happy. And Psalm 1 shows us or tells us a little bit about true happiness.

And it does it in a unique way. It does it by contrasting two different types of people, two different people groups. My Bible actually has this title over Psalm 1 as the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked.

So we got two people. You have the blessed man. Blessed is the man. And you have the cursed man. Look at the last word. Perish. So the way of the righteous, the blessed man, leads to happiness.

[1 : 13] And then you have the cursed man on the way of the wicked that leads to perishing. It's cursed. It's actually kind of a common thing that you see through Scripture, this pattern of comparing two different people.

It starts all the way back in Genesis 3.15. You have the seed of the woman and you have the seed of the serpent. It goes from there to Abel and Cain, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Esau.

Even in the New Testament, Paul picks up on it and he says the old man and the new man. Every person on earth, every person who's ever lived will fit in to one of these two categories.

You're either the blessed man on the way of the righteous or you are cursed on the path of the wicked. So we're going to look at two people, two ways, and two ends.

And I think we have to ask ourselves the question this morning, which man looks most like us? Which man looks most like us? So we're going to start here in verses 1 through 3 and we're going to look at the blessed man.

[2 : 29] We'll look at what the blessed man doesn't do in verse 1, what he does do in verse 2, and then in verse 3 there's a built-in illustration for us. So verse 1, I'll read it again.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of the sinner, or sits in the seat of the scoffer. It's interesting, I think, that the psalmist begins his description of the blessed man by focusing on the negative.

It's kind of counter-cultural to what we want. Nobody likes to think about negative stuff. We all want to try to be positive. And after all, this is a psalm about happiness and positivity. But we start here with the things that he doesn't do, the things he avoids.

And if we look at them again, they sound similar. Walks in the counsel of the wicked, stands in the way of sinners, seats in the seat of the scoffers.

So they're really, really, really close. This is, in Hebrew poetry, this is called parallelism. It's where the writer will say the same thing, but he'll say it slightly different, adding to it. So we're going to step back and we're going to say the first thing the blessed man does is the blessed man avoids sin.

[3 : 43] The blessed man avoids sin. And how does he do that? How does he avoid sin? Well, first, he walks not in the counsel of the wicked. The blessed man is not influenced by the world.

He doesn't listen to the things that the world tells him. He's careful to protect his mind. Now, counsel is something that we all seek. It's just advice.

And I would encourage you in your life, when you have decisions, I would encourage you to seek out good counsel. The Bible tells us in Proverbs that there is safety in a multitude of counselors. So counsel is something we need to seek out.

We just need to make sure we're getting counsel from the right places. There's a lot of people in the world. They all have an opinion. They all have an agenda. And they want us to know it. And they want to keep it in front of us.

So it sounds really easy to say no to the wickedness of the world while we're in here. But as soon as we walk out that door, it's everywhere.

[4 : 46] It's everywhere. Every time you turn on the TV or social media, we're flooded with the world's influence. Anytime you listen to that song that makes sin sound so enticing, that popular pop song.

And if you're like me, it's not enough just to listen to it. It gets stuck in my head. And I find myself singing it over and over and over and over. And then it hits me one day, hey, this song you're singing is not a very good song.

And what I'm doing in that moment is I am meditating on sin. I am just letting sin run rampant in my mind. And it's taking over my mind.

And if I'm not careful, that'll start influencing my actions. That's why it's so important that we protect our mind. And the blessed man knows this. What influences our mind will soon influence our actions.

So we have to ask ourselves the question today. What influences us? When you have to make a decision, where do you go to? Is it Twitter and Instagram?

[6 : 03] Fox News or CNN? Where do you go? Hollywood, Nashville? All these people are pushing their agendas on you.

And we have to be careful. Secondly, the blessed man doesn't stand in the way of sinners. So first, he wasn't influenced by sin.

Now he's not identified with sin. The word stand here means to continue in or to abide in. So you could say that the blessed man doesn't continue in a lifestyle of sin.

He looks different from everybody else. He acts different. He talks different. His internet search history is different. Everything about him is different than the world.

And it's different because he's on a different path. He's not on the path of wickedness. He's on the path of blessing. So everything about this man looks different.

[7 : 02] The world looks at him. And it's very obvious that he's not like them. His habits are different. Everything about him is different. You could say he's in the world, but he's not of the world.

The last thing the blessed man doesn't do is he doesn't sit in the seat of the scoffer. So a scoffer is like the worst kind of sinner, right?

He is openly opposed to God and openly opposed to the things of God. And I'm sure you all know there's some unbelievers out there who live in sin and they're peaceable about it.

You know, they let you go about your business. They don't mock you or ridicule you for your beliefs. But then you have those people who, when we go distribute Bibles on Sunday, those are the people who send us the nasty emails, right?

Who come out and they yell at you and tell you to leave them alone. Just openly rebellious and indifferent towards God. James Johnson calls the scoffer the missionary of wickedness.

[8 : 09] It's not enough for them to hate God and the things of God, but they recruit others in their calls. To come and mock God and persecute everything about God and His Word and His people.

So if you've noticed, there is a little bit of a progression here in verse 1. We go from walking to standing, now to sitting. So it is this downward progression of sin.

It starts with just listening. Listening affects our actions. And now we're all the way down to where we're seated in this open, rebellious lifestyle. To sin.

To where people laugh and mock at God and His Word. I heard somebody say, and you may have heard it too, sow a thought, reap an action.

Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a lifestyle. Sow a goal.

[9 : 12] And it all starts with our thoughts. So I got to ask, what thoughts are you sowing today? What are the thoughts you're sowing today, and what actions will you reap because of it in the weeks to come?

And when you sow those actions, what kind of character is it leading you to? And before you know it, you'll look back, and you'll notice you've laid out a life. You've laid out a path, a lifestyle that you're identified by.

Is that looking like the blessed man who avoids sin, or are you looking like the wicked who engages in it? So now as we go into verse 2, we're going to make that transition from the negative to the positive.

So we're going to look at what the blessed man does do, and we'll notice that he is biblically saturated. Verse 2, But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

So for the psalmist, the law of the Lord would have been, it would have been just the Torah. It would have just been the first five books of Moses. That's all he would have had, and he probably wouldn't have very much access to it.

[10 : 22] It wouldn't have been easily attainable for him. It would have had to have been something that he sought out. He would have had to try to find it, whether that was through his parents' orally tradition, you know, passing it down from parent to child, or when they would go to the synagogues.

But it wouldn't have been an easy thing for them to come by. So the word delight here means something desired, something worth looking for. So the psalmist and the blessed man, they seek out God's word.

They love it. They cherish it. When Sunday comes, they're excited to get up and go to church. It's not, man, we got to go there again today.

We'll be there till 1230. I know we will. We'll be there forever. He doesn't wake up in the morning and look at his Bible and say, well, I guess I need to check my religious obligation off the chart today.

I'll pick it up and read it. And then he just blows through it, just trying to morally check some kind of compass. No, the blessed man desires the word of God. He loves reading it.

[11 : 36] He soaks up every word. It's a joy for him. It's not a burden. Even the hard parts.

And by hard parts, I don't necessarily mean the parts that are hard to understand. I mean the parts that are hard to swallow. The parts that point out the sin in our lives.

The parts that make us feel ashamed and disappointed in our lives. Hebrews said, for the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of the soul and of the spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.

You guys know what I mean. You've been there. You've read the Bible and your devotions, or you've heard pastor or somebody preach, and it's just right at the sin in your life.

And it hurts. Sometimes it's not the most enjoyable thing. But the blessed man reads those words, hears those words, and trusts in its truth.

[12 : 43] And is delighted to be molded and made into the image of God by his word. And on his law, he meditates both day and night.

Meditates describes an active pondering, or a constant muttering to oneself in pursuit of understanding. It's almost like the blessed man's going around all day, having a conversation with himself, using nothing but God's word.

He's just talking about it over and over. He's just walking in a circle. Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scoffer.

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. Just over and over and over and over and over again.

And it's kind of like a cow. You guys know about cows and chewing on their cud. So this big 2,000 pound animal eats grass all day. Just goes around and eats grass.

[13 : 46] And then he'll go sit in the shade. And all that grass that he's ate that day, he brings it back up into his mouth. And he just starts chewing it again. He's already ate it. He's already swallowed it.

He brings it back up and he just starts chewing it. And he just chews it over and over and over. What he's doing is he is getting every ounce of nutrition out of that grass that it can.

That's what the blessed man does with God's word. He chews on it. He rolls it over and over and over, squeezing every drop of truth, every promise of blessing, everything he can get out of it.

He keeps going over and over and over and over until he can't. And with that in mind, I think we need to stop and think about how blessed we are. We live in a unique moment and a unique place as far as church history goes about access to the Bible.

We have a completed Bible. The psalmist had the Torah and it wouldn't have even been very open to him or very accessible to him. We can go to any bookstore, Target, Walmart.

[14 : 55] You can get out your app on your iPhone and you have access to the word of God. I have right now probably seven copies of the Bible on me.

six right here. The psalmist would have loved to have had that. That easy access that we have. We have it on our phones, like I said.

There are brothers and sisters in Christ today in other parts of the world that would love to have the access that we have to it. It's outlawed or they're persecuted or thrown in jail for having it. And we have it at our fingertips.

The push of a button. And so many Christians in America are starving. They're starving. They have the word of God, the bread of life, right in front of them every day and they starve.

We don't have to. The blessed man loves it. Pick it up. Read it. Study it. Trust in it. Delight in it. Meditate on it.

[16 : 05] That's what the blessed man does. So we have to ask ourselves the question, do we? Do we? So now in verse 3, he transitions into a built-in illustration.

So because the blessed man avoids sin, because the blessed man is biblically saturated, he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither and in all that he does, he prospers.

First notice that this tree was planted. It's not a wild tree. This tree did not grow in this particular spot. No, it was picked up.

It was uprooted from wherever it was and it was taken and it was taken over here and it was planted. Somebody moved it and replanted it and they did so in a very specific spot.

They planted it beside the still waters. They put it in a place where it could flourish, a place where it's easily nourished, a place where it's easily watered, right beside these streams of water.

[17 : 17] It yields its fruit in its season. It's a productive tree. It has fruit. Now there are a lot of different fruit trees. Apple trees, pear trees, peach trees.

You can go on and on. What's important here is that it has fruit. It has fruit. What we don't want to get caught up in is comparing our fruit to everybody else's fruit.

Because the next phrase is it produces fruit in its season. So there's a specific time for each of these fruit trees to fruit. So it's not fair for the cherry tree to look at the watermelon and say, man, look at my little fruit and look at the size of that watermelon.

Look how big it is and look how little mine is. It's a cherry tree. It's supposed to be that way. Just like the watermelon looks at the cherry tree and says, look at all that fruit on the tree. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of little cherries and I've got four or five little watermelon on mine.

Don't get caught up in comparing fruit to fruit. Look for fruit. You need fruit. If you don't have fruit, it's cause for concern. As we'll see in the next verse about chaff, if you don't have fruit, that is cause for concern.

[18 : 32] But if you have fruit, be thankful for the fruit that God has given you. fruit, it's a tree. It's a tree. It's a tree. And its leaf does not wither. So this is an evergreen tree.

It doesn't matter if it's the scorching heat of summer with the drought or the freezing nights and snow of winter. this tree presses on.

It stays firm. It stays green. It continues. It perseveres no matter what comes its way. And all that he does, he prospers.

Now this is an interesting one. This is an interesting one. In all that he does, he prospers. There's people out there who take this verse to mean that if you are truly blessed by God, then you're going to get whatever you want.

This is the health and wealth and prosperity guys on TV. They take this verse and they say, if you're really the blessed man, if you're really blessed by God, then you don't have to worry because whatever you do, you're going to prosper so you can do whatever you want because you have God's blessing.

[19 : 40] That's not really, that's not really what this means. That's not what it is. So the word prosper here, it means to succeed or to accomplish the work that you set out to do.

To accomplish the work you set out to do. So now let's look at that in the Bible, what that means to accomplish your work. You don't have to turn there. You probably know it.

Isaiah 53. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see the offering and he shall prolong his days.

The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities.

This is the work that is set before the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. This is what his job was. John 19:30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished.

[20 : 53] And he bowed his head and gave up the spirit. That's prospering. Jesus prospered on that cross when he completed the work that the Father had set out for him to do.

The Father had set him to suffer and to die and he did that. And so, how then do we prosper? What is the work that God has set before us?

I don't know that I can answer that question. That's a hard one. I ask myself that all the time. What am I supposed to do? God, what do you want me to do? But, I think there's some people in here who can help us.

Got some theologians in training here. Kids, can you help us? Help us adults for a minute. Question number four. How and why did God create us?

God created us male and female. Female. God created us male and female. Glorify them. Right. God created us male and female.

[21 : 58] That's how. And why did he do it? To glorify him. That's why each and every one of us were created today. God created us to glorify him.

That's our purpose. That's how we prosper. By glorifying him. So now the obvious next question is, how do we do that? How do we glorify God?

That's right. We glorify God by loving him and obeying his commands and law.

Just like Jesus did. He was, he had a command. He had a plan to go to the cross. And he did it. He obeyed the Father's every word and every command.

And he prospered. So, that's how the blessed man prospers. He follows and trusts God. So now we're going to switch and we're going to move on and we're going to look at the wicked man here in the next two verses.

[22 : 59] But the wicked are not so. That one sentence tells us that everything that is true about the blessed man is false or it's untrue about the wicked man.

So, if the blessed man avoided sin, the wicked man would allow sin. Since the blessed man was biblically saturated, the wicked man would be biblically dry or maybe biblically barren.

Everything is completely the opposite. And so, where the blessed man was compared to a tree, the wicked man is compared here to chaff. Better like the chaff that the wind drives away.

chaff is, it's like the hull of a wheat or a grain. And so, what farmers used to do during harvest time, they would go up on the highest hill on their property and they would build a platform.

It was called a threshing floor. And they would harvest their grain and they would take it up to the threshing floor and they would first thresh the wheat and they would just crush it. They would just crush the hulls. And then they would move on to the next step which is called winnowing.

[24 : 07] And what they would do is they would take it, chaff is the hull and then the fruit inside of it and they would just throw it up in the air. The fruit inside would fall straight back down.

It's heavy. Fall straight back down to the threshing floor. They could pick it up. But the chaff, it's worthless. It's dry. It's weightless. Unlike the tree, it has no roots.

And so what does it do? It just goes wherever the wind takes it. It has no say. It has nothing to hold it in place. It's got no fruit to weigh it down. It just goes however the wind blows.

The fruit, I mean I'm sorry, the tree remained planted through everything. Summer, winter, everything. The tree stayed.

It had fruit. The chaff, nothing. It just blows. It just blows away. It's worthless. The farmer doesn't need it. He gets rid of it. As we go into verse 5, there's another interesting transition here.

[25 : 09] You'll notice that in verse 5, Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. The blessed man was described to us by what he does now.

He doesn't listen to the counsel of the wicked now. He doesn't stand in the way of sinners now. The wicked, they're described to us by a coming event.

By something that's going to happen in the future. He will not stand in the judgment. Now this phrase, will not stand in the judgment, does not mean that the wicked will not be in the judgment.

They will be there. Be very clear about that. The Bible's clear. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

So the wicked's going to be in the judgment. What that means is their defense will not stand. The wicked will stand before God one day responsible for all of his actions.

[26 : 12] Nothing they say on that day will make a difference. No remark, no excuse, no eloquent speech, no well-written rebuttal, no list of good deeds will be able to save them on that day.

They'll all hear the same words. Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. And we'll be on that day and many of those people we won't be surprised by. I mean, the secular humanist, the atheist, the mockers, the God deniers, they'll hear those words.

We will not be surprised. We'll be like, yeah, I saw that coming. But there'll be some in that day who we may kind of hesitate and we'll be taken aback by it a little bit.

Some people will say, they'll have a good excuse. Some people will say, hey, I went to church every Sunday. Some will say, I taught Sunday school.

Some may even say, hey, I gave a sermon on a Sunday morning one time. I went to foreign countries and did all sorts of good humanitarian work. I passed out Bibles.

[27 : 25] None of that will matter. The good works that you do will not matter. They'll still hear the same words. Depart from me, you worker of iniquity.

We find this in Matthew. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does, the will of my Father who is in heaven. And on that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, and do mighty works in your name?

We may be surprised at some of the people who God looks at and says, depart. Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. See, they were on the wicked path. They were on the path of the wicked.

They weren't on the path of the blessing. And then after, after the judgment, there becomes, there comes a separation. Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Right now, every person alive on this earth is experiencing God's grace. To be alive on this earth is to be a part and under God's grace.

[28 : 33] Everybody, whether you want to think it's that or not, that's what it is. We're all here together, living, alive, because God in His grace and mercy allows us to be here.

There's coming a day when that will be no more. It's after the judgment. Matthew, in his gospel, Jesus describes it as, again, wheat and tares.

Wheat is the good fruit. The tares are the weeds. They're worthless. So, the farmer bundles them up, takes the wheat to the storehouse, takes the tares to the fire, and he burns them up.

He also says it's like separating the sheep and the goats. There are two groups of people that live together now. God will not allow it after this judgment.

He will separate them out. Folks, it's important that though the blessed man lives different from the world, that we don't live isolated from the world.

[29 : 33] There are people out there on the path that leads to perishing, and we have the answer for them. Jesus is the answer. And if we don't act now, if we don't tell our loved ones now, our co-workers now, our friends and neighbors now, then they're going to be sifted out.

They're going to be separated, and they'll be cut off from God's grace forever. They'll stand guilty before their creator, and they'll not be allowed to be with you anymore.

And that leads us to the last verse, verse 6. We'll see there are two different destinies, or there are two different ends. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous.

The word know here, it's not an intellectual knowledge. It's not just knowing who somebody is, like I know who Joe Biden is. I know Joe Biden's the president, but I don't know Joe Biden.

No, the word know here, it means to enter into a covenant relationship with, to be personally acquainted with somebody. It carries the deepest meaning of a deepest knowledge of each other, and being involved in each other's life.

[30 : 50] Now we can get all the deep-seated joy of the man who is known by his creator. Blessed is the man that is personally acquainted with the God of the world, the sovereign king of the universe.

What comfort we have, the blessed man has, to have that security and that confidence that no matter where they're at, highest mountain they've ever been on, lowest low in their life, that the God of this world is right there with them.

He knows where they're at. He's not left their side. He is personally involved with their life. No wonder the blessed man is happy.

But, the way of the wicked will perish. Not much to elaborate on that. The wicked are cursed.

there'll be no escape on that day of judgment. They'll be held responsible for their actions in this life. So there are two groups of people in the world.

[32 : 07] The blessed man who perfectly avoids sin and is totally saturated in the word of God. And then there's the wicked. Do you guys see the problem?

The problem is who of us can say we've never been involved with anything evil? Who of us have never sinned?

Who of us desire God and His words like we should? Psalm 1 I think is to be seen as Jesus Christ is the only person who's ever lived up to the demands of blessing in Psalm 1.

He is the only person who has never walked in the counsel of the wicked. He never stood in the way of sinners. He never sat in the seat of the scoffer.

So where does that leave us? We've all sinned. Is this promise of blessing? Is this promise of happiness? Can it be achieved? Or is the psalmist just dangling something in front of us?

[33 : 11] You know like a dollar on a string that every time you go to get it it's just yanked away. You go to get it and it's just yanked away. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.

The old has passed away behold the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ. God making His appeal through us we implore you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

folks we receive the blessing of Psalm 1 through Jesus Christ. If you are in Christ today if you've trusted Christ with your life and He has saved you by His mercy and His grace then all these promises are yours because God gave you the righteousness and the blessings of Christ.

It's the only way we get it. We didn't earn it. There's nothing you did to get it. It was through the finished work of Christ on the cross. When He bore the wrath God's wrath of sin for you He took your sin and your filth and He put His code of righteousness on you that's how we get the blessing of Psalm 1.

[34 : 50] Nothing that we did but all because of what Christ has did. So today you can boldly stand before God today as a sinner saved by the grace of God.

But if you're here today and your life looks like more than that of the wicked you're on the path of the cursed there is hope in Christ this morning. You don't have to perish for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

God loved the world so much that He sent His Son to pay this weight to take this curse of sin. You don't have to perish. Come to Jesus today.

He's the only one who can save you. If you wait and you stand before God in judgment as an unregenerate sinner there's nothing you can say there's no amount of good works you can do to get there.

Your sin is too great. He is too holy. The only way to get there is through Christ as your atoning sacrifice. So come today.

[36 : 11] He will save you. It's for anyone whosoever will come. Anybody can come. There's no standards. There's nothing no caveats. You can just come.

He will save you today. So come before it's too late. Come before you're forced to stand in front of God as a sinner separated from his grace.

Amen. Amen.