

Pslam 1

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[0 : 00] Merry Christmas. We're almost halfway through. By this point, I think some of our Christmas gifts are...! I'm enjoying mine anyways, but the truth is that they're not going to have any lasting satisfaction.

! They're going to wear out and we're going to want more. We actually celebrate Christmas for Christ and Christ's coming. He came bearing gifts that will satisfy us eternally.

And I want to talk to you about them a little bit this morning through Psalm 1. So if you would open up Psalm 1 with me. It reads, 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 its season.

And its leaf does not wither. And all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor the sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

[1 : 19] For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Father, would you allow your words to come alive today for each of us.

And through this sermon, I pray that it would be clear what your gospel message is. I just pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So according to Psalm 1, there's only two kinds of people. There's the wicked and the righteous. And there's not really a third group. There's no exception to that rule. The not totally evil and not totally righteous.

The pretty good. The decent half group. I like to think sometimes, though, that I actually fall into that third group. Where I actually am relatively righteous.

I do good things. And therefore I'm blessed. But that's not really true of me. And it's not true of you either. And as we go through the psalm, I want you to ask yourself, like, who do you see yourself?

[2 : 29] Where do you see yourself in this psalm? The first mention is of the righteous person. To be righteous, there are things you must do, and there's things you must not do. You must not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the seat of sinners, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers.

He does not walk in the counsel, or stand in the way, or sit in the seat. There's a progression here from just hearing and listening, all the way through to participating, and being identified with them.

And the righteous person avoids these things. These are behavioral things. So these behavioral things, the righteous person avoids, but what must he do to be righteous?

You might logically ask yourself, now, in order to be righteous, what behaviors must you do? But his requirement next is not a behavioral requirement, it's an emotional one.

He requires satisfaction. The righteous delights in the instruction of the Lord. He delights in it so much that he thinks about it every day and every night.

[3 : 46] It's not really an unprecedented theme in the Bible, right? There's a familiar law, Deuteronomy 6, 4, it says, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

And there's pretty serious consequences to not doing those things. A little later in Deuteronomy 28, he says, Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, therefore you shall serve your enemies.

Delight, joy, and gladness in God is not really just a simple invitation to please have joy. This is a serious business. So it's kind of the downer part here, so I want you to stick with me because it's not going to stay miserable for the whole sermon.

But I want to ask you again, where do you see yourself in this sermon? Let's look at what the life of this person, of this righteous person, looks like.

I want to read from the parallel passage, Jeremiah 17, 8. You can follow along in verse 3 of Psalm 1 if you want, or flip if you want, but here we go. He is like a tree planted by water that sends out its roots by the stream.

[4 : 58] For its leaves remain green and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. The hardships, they come and they go, but this person remains on solid ground.

He is continuing to bear fruit regardless of the circumstances that he is facing. In all that he does, he prospers. Does this still sound like you and me?

So the wicked are not so. That's how he goes next. The wicked are not so. When our circumstances are unfavorable, then so is our behavior.

When hardships come, a rude word from our spouse or friend, often produces something other than good fruit. Have you been, had to make amends for relationships you've damaged or been frustrated by disappointment?

When hardships come, the leaf will wither and become fragile. So Jeremiah 17, 6 talks now about the unrighteous, what their life is like.

[6 : 09] He is like a shrub in the desert and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places in the wilderness, the unadheaded salt land. The fruit will be like thorns.

It's unhappy. And his welfare is as fickle as the weather. When the weather is good and there's rain, when our circumstances are good, then everything is well. And when the rain dries up or our circumstances are unfavorable, then we start acting with thorns rather than good fruit.

So that's what his life looks like. But his behavior and his desires, let's take a look at them. It says, does not desire God's instruction, because it is not a delight to him.

There's a range here of not desiring God's law, from complete rejection and hostility towards God's word to this benign reading of God's word, but feeling nothing.

And we face possibly our biggest challenge here, and that is that there's a mandate to delight in God's law, and yet we cannot make ourselves delight in something for which we do not feel.

[7 : 39] I'm going to use the wise words of Adele, who spoke this to me earlier this week. I can't make you love me if you don't. I can't make your heart feel something it won't.

Not even the genies, Aladdin's genie can make somebody love. It's something that requires a power far greater, where the law cannot simply tell us to do something and expect our hearts to follow suit.

Rather than love our creator, we tend to love his creation, right? That's where our hearts tend. So that's the desires.

And what's wrong with the behavior, though? The behavior is a direct link to where his desires are. He is not seeking the instruction of the Lord.

Rather, he's pursuing, frankly, the instruction, the wisdom of our world, and that's where he's finding his hope. So I want to contrast, or I actually want to just bring to light a couple of the things that we in our culture sometimes hear, and even as Christians sometimes believe is true.

[8 : 57] And things we hear and then we try out, eventually we become identified with them, right? Just like the unrighteous person.

So here's the first one. Jeep's slogan, the things we make make us. The things we do define who we are. That's pretty pervasive in our culture. What defines who you are?

Wealth is a path to meaning and significance, right? I'm valuable because I make a lot of money. I'm valuable because I contribute a lot to society.

Are you depressed? Recommend cultivating your self-esteem. All right, what does social media tell us? Social media is a platform for comparison, right?

Are we measuring up to the next guy? Are you feeling the pressure of seeing somebody else's awesome posts? Your life just isn't as awesome.

[9 : 59] Or maybe your life is way better than theirs because they're being honest. And so, like the wicked person, we go from hearing to actually participating in a lie.

Everything that is not the counsel of the Lord is wicked, according to Psalm 1, right? That which is not the counsel of the Lord.

So, every evil does not have to be criminal in order for it to be evil, right? Anything, frankly, that is a distortion of the truth of God's law is essentially evil.

And we're prone to find this world far more delightful, right, which is an evil, finding it more delightful than God.

And that is finding comfort in our circumstances alone, right? I'm comfortable. I'm wealthy. I'm secure. I do cool things.

[11:08] Or if you're my three-year-old, you do dangerous things. Like, this defines you. And if after hearing my examples here, you don't feel like you're in the group of the unrighteous because you are actually finding delight in God's word, you're doing good things.

I want to discourage you with this before we get going. And that is the law requires perfection, right? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about, he raises the bar.

He raises the standard. And he says in Matthew 5, 48, he says, be perfect like your Father is perfect. Perfect. So good luck to you in your perfection, right?

There's no rest. You can't quit. You have to continue trying. And every moment in perfection is lurking at your door, right? You cannot do this.

You cannot do this on your own. None of us can. So actually, I'd like to pray for you, and then we'll close here. I'm just kidding.

[12:18] My wife put me up to that. So thankfully, there actually is good news for the rest of us, right? There is one blessed man who walked this earth, right?

And he did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, and he did not sit in the seat of scoffers, and he delighted perfectly in God's law.

He fulfilled the law for us so that we could actually participate in the blessing that is promised in Psalm 1 without having to work for it, right?

It is a gift from God completely. So in Christ, this blessing is ours. And we face another problem, and that is that my life is not always reflecting the fact that I'm blessed and happy in Christ, right?

Sometimes, frankly, my heart does not feel wonderful things towards God. And so we still face struggle and produce thorny-like behavior, right?

[13:29] So how do we cultivate a delight in God so that we can experience this gift that he has given to us freely? I want to offer you three ways that we do this, like three ways that God helps us, or three ways in which God has gifted us a delight in his law.

He gives us a counsel that is sufficient for our entire lives, right? God's word is good for all our life. A second is that he gives us himself, right?

His presence through his law. And in him, we can find satisfaction. And the third is he doesn't just give us the instruction, but he gives us his spirit, right?

He gives us the ability to actually feel and to think the way that he desires for us to do. So the gift is sufficient for counsel in everything that we're doing, every struggle that we face, every desire that's now placed.

God's law is good for it. It says that in all that he does, he prospers. This individual, in all that he does, he prospers. So where else do you need to look if you desire to prosper?

[14:56] Remember, God's law, God's instruction is there. I want to contrast now some of the lies of our culture and our world with what God is saying.

And it's only a sample, frankly, of the vast glory of God's word here. But if you feel inadequate, you know, from social media's browsing, you need to do better or be wealthy or be smart or prove yourself, right?

The Bible teaches us we live for something totally different, right? What are we living for? Isaiah 6, 3 says, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory, right? We actually live for a whole different reason, a whole different purpose. If you feel dirty or ashamed, Colossians 1 says, you're redeemed, right?

If you're a sinner, you're forgiven. What makes us, what we make makes us, right? The finding our identity says, your identity is not found in what you make, but by your maker.

[16:15] If you need more likes in your posts, you have the like of the creator of the universe. Is that enough? His instruction is worth dwelling on day and night.

So the second thing is we have the gift of his presence, right? The law and the instruction actually are a reflection of him and his character, right?

And John, it says that in the beginning, there was the word and the word was with God and the word was God, right? He is alive. His word is alive.

And by engaging with his word, you're actually engaging with the person. And in his presence that we have access to, now because Christ came at Christmas, we can finally rest with him in his arms. Our father is our refuge. And he is worth dwelling with day and night. And he is worth dwelling with day and night. The gift of the spirit also enables us finally to feel the emotion of satisfaction with his words, right?

[17 : 34] And he gives us this gift over and over and over again. Every time that we fail to feel satisfied in his word, right, he gives us the ability to love his word, love his presence rather than his creation.

So I want to tell you a story now. And I'm hoping my whole family is sweating in their seats. But the story is actually about me.

And I call him a forgetful saint who sat on the seat at Glenn and Brittany's house on their couch after a long run. I was sitting there reading my Bible and watching my voice play happily. And my circumstances were excellent. I was happy and I was content. I was joyful. And then Tasha crushed my world with the words, would you please make breakfast? Right? They shouldn't shatter your world. But in that moment, we exchanged a few unkind words and I was furious. I was furious.

[18 : 42] And everything that came out of my heart was ugly. Right? Everything that came out was unkind. And I damaged a relationship that we have made amends now, but it required making amends to this relationship.

And so I tell you that because I told this story one evening to some of my friends. And the next morning, the same scene played out.

I laid in my bed one morning and Gideon needed my help in the middle of the night twice. And it was very disruptive and it destroyed my sleep for the whole night, essentially.

And so now I'm grumpy from lack of sleep and all I wanted to do was sleep in. But Tasha had told me the night before she wanted me to make pancakes and make breakfast for everyone.

So I had to get up to go do that. There's no sleeping in for someone who's making pancakes. And my heart's desire was to serve myself.

[19 : 52] But I knew that man. I'd seen him before. And I laid in my bed that morning and I asked God three things.

One is to give me a joy in just being his son. Let me just rest in your presence.

I asked him to teach me what it is. What is his word saying about this situation? How is he entering this moment of misery? And I asked him to give me his spirit to actually get up and do the simple tasks that I needed to do that day.

And so the end of the story is that I got up and I made pancakes. It was a mundane moment, right, wrapped in the grace of God. The fact that I was able to get out of bed and go do that happily.

So I want to encourage you as you're considering maybe New Year's resolutions, unless you've made a resolution to not make resolutions for the new year. And that is first to admit that our affections for God are weak.

[21 : 21] That we don't love God's instruction first and foremost. Don't approach him with a righteousness of your own. And the second is when you face frustrations and hardships, I want to challenge you to consider how God's law speaks into that moment.

I think a huge challenge for us is actually seeing God's law as relevant right now. His instruction is relevant for the individual moments in our life, right? When we're struggling with anger or whatever it is, we don't see God's law as sufficient, but it is.

And so I challenge you if you don't see it, go to your community group leader, go to your community group or just a friend and discuss it. Ask each other, how does God's instruction apply here?

Because it is sufficient. And then remember that in his presence is found satisfaction. That a lot of the wisdom culminates in his presence, right?

And then fourth is to seek the Holy Spirit. These are the three gifts that I talked about. It's like, seek the Holy Spirit to actually transform our affections. Do what Adele can't and the genie can't.

[22 : 46] Ask him to inject himself into your life's mundane moments. So if you've made a resolution to actually read your Bible this year or do a devotional or something of that nature, I want to encourage you to do it, but as your energy to that fades, I don't want you to try to do it on your own power.

