

Blessed is the Man

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[0:00] Let's turn again to Psalm 1, the first Psalm, Psalm number 1. Read verses 1 to 4.

Psalm 1, verses 1 to 4. 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 is delighted in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and 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. Many think that the composer of this psalm is the same as composed Psalm 2, that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, although we don't know absolutely, but that it's by the same hand.

And if that's the case, then David is the writer, because we know that Psalm 2 was written by David, because Jesus quotes from that. We find that as a quote in the New Testament that David said, and quoting from Psalm 2.

[1:31] And if that's the case, well, that is the case, then Psalm 1, if the same pen wrote both, the same hand wrote both, then David is the one who penned it.

And you'll often find in the Psalms that the contrast, it's part of the way you find this contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous, between the godly and the ungodly, upon the upright and those who are wicked.

There is often this contrast running right through. Some of the Psalms struggle with the whole idea of how the righteous are suffering and of how the ungodly are prospering.

And while that is true, it is only for a time, because these roles always reverse. But often, we find in Scripture that the righteous are the ones that ultimately prosper, and we find in this Psalm, it is a Psalm that is very clear.

because it shows us two categories of people, it shows us two ways, it shows us two destinies. And it's very, very clear that one is a way of blessing, and the other is a way of ultimate calamity and disaster and judgment.

[2:56] And so we find that at the beginning it tells us, and it's like in the way of negatives, because it says blessed is the man, and there's three ways or three things that he doesn't do.

First, he doesn't walk in a particular way, he doesn't stand in a particular way, and he doesn't sit in a particular seat. And we see very clearly where it is that the righteous or the righteous believer is somebody who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked.

And it's worth highlighting at the start. It says walking, standing, and sitting. And there's a kind of a progression in that. Because when you're walking, if you're walking in a particular way, then it's quite easy just to turn around and to walk in another direction.

But once you've, as it were, stopped your standing, it's like you've said, well, this is where I am, but when you're sitting, it gives the impression of you're not moving anymore.

That is finally it. And there is a progression here in the downward spiral, so to speak, of those who are against God.

[4 : 10] And so there's this warning given to us that we shouldn't be walking. That's what it tells us. We shouldn't walk in the counsel of the wicked. In other words, as we go through life, now, of course, we interact with one another.

We're working with people who aren't believers. We work and we are involved with people who have no thought of God. We cannot escape that. That's the nature of life.

We are in the world, but not of the world. But we aren't to take our guidance, our counsel, our rule of living from what those people who are without the Lord, what they tell us, what they say.

That doesn't mean that we never listen to any of their common sense. Sometimes they can be full of common sense, people like that. But our ultimate guidance is not to be from them.

So we don't listen ultimately to their counsel. And you and I know that the world that we're living in has powerful influence. It's always telling us the media is full of things that are speaking of other ways and other philosophies that are completely against the Christian faith.

[5 : 24] So that's really what it is saying here. the Christian is someone who doesn't walk in that counsel and doesn't stand in the way of sinners. So that again we interact, we work with those who don't know the Lord, who don't love the Lord, but it's that this is not the direction we are going in.

There are two directions in this world. One is going to God and one is going away from God. Ultimately, in a sense you could say that everybody in this world is going in one of these two directions, either to the Lord or away from the Lord.

So it's very important that we find that as where we stand that it's not in the way of sinners, in the way that sinners are going. Even although it may appear to be right, remember what the scripture says, there is a way that appears right to a man, but the end of that way is death.

It's a very solemn thought, that. So you see it is possible for people, godless people, worldly people, to think that their ways, which are in opposition to God, are actually right.

But the word of God, which always has to be our counsel, will tell us otherwise. But then finally we come to this seat of the scoffers.

[6 : 48] That's a worst place of all. Because those who are scoffers are those who are mocking God, mocking the people of God, those who have an inbuilt almost hatred of the Christian and of the Christian faith.

And they will never miss an opportunity of having a go at them or trying to belittle them. And what I find very solemn is that you will, yes, scoffers have been saved.

But you will generally find that those that are saved are those who are being initially, like we all were, we were often taking our own counsel, we were listening to the voice, the ways of the world, we all did that before coming to faith.

And again, I'm sure we all stood in the way of sinners because we are sinners. But I'm sure there aren't many of us here that actually sat in the seat of the scoffer.

You were somebody whose kind of whole way was one of mocking the things of God. You had an inbuilt spite towards all that belonged to God.

[8 : 08] And it's a solemn place to arrive because very often the scoffer didn't maybe start out in that way. maybe the scoffer was once somebody who's like that who walked in the counsel of the wicked and they stood in the way of sinners.

But then eventually they arrive in the seat of the scoffer. And as I say, that is a solemn, solemn place to arrive in. Because of course it's only God's grace that will save anyone.

But I would say that that is the most dangerous, that is the worst place that a person could find themselves. And I would also say that for the Christian, sadly, but it's true, is it not, that there are days that we do end up walking in the counsel of the wicked.

In other words, there are days that we listen to the wrong things. There are days that it's the wrong things that are going on in our head and pull us aside. There are days maybe that we do stand with the sinners and that we maybe walk along the way with them.

But you know, I don't believe we'll ever find ourselves as a believer sitting in the seat of the scoffer because that has taken you to another, takes a person to another level.

[9 : 29] So that's the negatives, but then we turn around to the positive and it tells us, for the Christian, his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law, he meditates day and night.

God's word. And you and I know that that is true, that there's nothing in this world that equals God's word. And just take it in its simplest form.

If all of a sudden something in your life goes wrong and you're thrown into confusion and you don't know what's what, it's not to the TV, it's not to the newspaper that you go, it's to God's word.

Because there's an automatic desire within you to see what God is saying to you. And it's so often that we find ourselves and sometimes sadly, it is through these things that we are reminded that we're not in God's word in the way that we should.

But there's this instant, what is God saying here? What message has God got for me? What is happening here? So there's this turning to God's word.

[10 : 40] Because God's word is so many different things to the Christian. When we started out, it was milk. Just the same way as a baby starts out with milk. Peter tells us that we have the milk, the sincere milk of the word.

And so we begin to enjoy it. And you look back at your Christian life and you remember when you started out just how vital, how important, how essential God's word was to your life.

Then you move from the milk and it becomes meat. And it strengthens you and it gives nourishment to you. And you need this for the journey. It's essential.

And you find again God's word in the Bible, it's defined as bread. And again, that's part of our diet. And again, it's spoken of us honey, which is sweet.

So you have milk and meat and honey and we have bread. And again, the word of God is spoken about us being light.

[11 : 48] It's a light which guides us in the way to go. The word of God, we're told is truth. This is the real truth. We're also told the word of God is like a mirror, where it shines into our life and reflects, shows us how things really are.

The Bible shows us that the word of God cleanses, refreshes, sanctify them through the truth. Your word is truth, Jesus is saying. So the word of God is absolutely key and essential to our lives.

And we're told what to do with the word. It tells us here, his delight is in the law of the Lord. Now that word delight means pleasure.

Like it's real pleasure. This is like an intense delight. And you and I have, maybe we don't say that every day, but there are many days when you pick up God's word and you're given the faith to lay hold upon what you're reading.

Here's this verse or this portion and it's like it comes to you and you say, oh Lord, thank you. it really you're saying this is mine today and it stirs you up, it excites you, it brings a joy into your heart, a delight.

[13:13] It sort of lifts you in the way. And so often we find God's word as we read it, sometimes we're rebuked by it and all of a sudden it's like God is through his word, he's putting a stop in front and you think, Lord, I've been stupid here, I've been ignoring you, I haven't been listening.

Lord, I knew all these things but I needed a fresh rebuke. Sometimes you come to God's house and that's exactly what happens or you pick up God's word and that's what happens.

We need that or we need the instruction, we're not sure what to do or where to go. So God's word is working like this and it is a joy, it is a delight to us all the time.

And then it tells us here, on his law he meditates day and night which simply means all the time. And again, meditation which we know is just digesting God's word, it's sometimes the idea is to mutter to oneself.

It's like we might be even speaking aloud on it. But what we're doing, and I've so often said that it is something which I have benefited from, is just to take a wee bit of God's word and to really think on what it is saying.

[14:37] Do that every day. Get a wee, maybe it's a verse or two or three verses, a wee portion, and just sit and think, what is this saying? And ask God to help you to understand and to lay hold upon so that it becomes part of your thinking.

And it is a very subtle, but a good subtle way of guiding you, of influencing you, of becoming part of you.

Remember how Joshua, when he was leading Israel over the Jordan, and prior to them crossing, God had said to Joshua, make sure that this word, that the law of the Lord is your portion.

Meditate upon it day and night. so that, this is what it says, so that you will make your way prosperous and you will have good success. That's what it says there.

And in a sense, that's kind of what it's saying here, because in verse three, and in all that he does, he prospers. So you see, this is what God's word is saying.

[15:47] if God's word is at the heart of our life, if we make it to be the chief rule of our life, then we will find that the Lord is guiding us in the right way.

Now, when it says, you shall make your way prosperous and such like, that doesn't mean, although there are many times that God will bless your life providentially, you will find God doing things for you and opening doors, making provision, but even in the difficult things, in the painful things, in the crosses, in those things which you just don't understand, God is ultimately going to bless you through these things.

It's a test to our faith, but there'll come a day when you'll see, Lord, even in that, you are working. I couldn't see at the time, but you were. And so this is how the believer lives.

And then we see in verse 3, it's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its seasons, and its leaf does not wither. So here's this tree, and it's beside the riverbank, and it's got the great fact that there's a lovely stream flowing by, and so it's well watered.

There might be other trees further inland, and they're not near the water, and in times of drought, they might be struggling. But not this tree, because here's this stream running by it all the time.

[17:24] And that's how it is with a Christian who has God's word like a river running through them, because they will constantly be nourished and fed.

And even when there is a spiritual drought, they will still be getting from the Lord. God's word. And you know, we've gone through, to a certain extent, a spiritual drought in these last two years.

Although we've had provision made, and it's been wonderful, and we thank the Lord for all the provision that has been made, particularly in our times of lockdown, it's not the same as being able to meet together.

together. And it's still we're meeting together, it's still restrictive, because we like to be actually side by side. We don't like social distancing, because that's not part of our being Christians.

We love being together. And we like, we're family, and we enjoy interacting and being part one with another. So it's been difficult.

[18:31] These have been strange times. And yet, even although we can be in isolation, and although we can be separated away, yet the provision is still there.

So that if the word is central to our lives, if we are feeding upon it, if it's our daily diet, even in the drought, the Lord is able to make fatter bones.

Even in the drought, he's able to bring refreshing and renewal through the spiritual water that is flowing through us. And its leaf does not wither.

So, you know, sometimes you see Christians, and write into us, it says in the psalm, and in old age, when others fade, they fruit still forth shall bring. In fact, that's what this psalm says.

It yields its fruit in its season. Because at the end of the day, remember, that's what God is looking for from your life and my life. Fruit. Remember what Jesus tells us in John chapter 15?

[19:35] This is what God is looking for from the vine, from the branch, and if there's no fruit, it's cut down. He's looking for fruit from your life and my life.

You ask the Lord, and I need to ask the Lord, that we will be fruit-bearing Christians to his glory in such a way that our lives will impact others for good.

We could go on and we see that in verse 4, total contrast. But the wicked are not so. They are like chaff that the wind drives away.

How different to the tree that's planted by a stream. There's this tree, and it's solid, it's upright, come what may, it stands there. But the chaff, they're not grounded into anything.

They're just blowing. You don't need a gale to blow the chaff, just a tiny little breeze, and it's gone. And you know, that's unfortunately and sadly how it's going to be for those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ, because you see, that's not what we're looking at just now.

[20:52] But verse 5 tells us the wicked will not stand in the judgment. So those who were standing in the way of sin, they won't stand in the judgment. In fact, in verse 5, we see that there's judgment and there's expulsion nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

And we see the doom, the way of the wicked will perish. You know, there are many people today and they give no thought to the Lord, and they think we're mad.

And they think that their way is right. But you know, the sad thing is that irrespective of how prosperous their way may appear, this is the end.

It's chaff. That's how it's going to be. Unable to stand in the judgment. You see, in verse 3, here's the tree, and it's standing firm.

but in the judgment, the sinner without Christ won't be able to stand. But you see the beautiful thing it finishes, for the Lord knows the way of the righteous.

[22:01] And as we know in the Bible, when it says to know, it means just far more than knowing, well, that's you and this is me and so on. This is our knowledge that cares for.

It's a knowledge that actually speaks about belonging, that you belong to the Lord. It's intimate. So the Lord knows the way of the righteous.

And isn't that good? Just as was prayed tonight about how some here tonight may have a calm exterior, and yet inside, there's all kinds of things going on.

So providence as difficulties and things that maybe others don't know about. God does. He knows the way of the righteous. You're not on that way by accident.

You're not on that way alone. He's with you. He's with you every single step. He's behind you. He's in front of you.

[23 : 04] He's encircling you. He knows the way of the righteous. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks that you are our God. We give thanks, Lord, that you know our way.

And we pray that as we go this way, that we will go with our hand in your hand. Oh, Lord, bless us, we pray. We need you at every turn. We have come so often to realize that we can do nothing of ourselves.

Yet we give thanks for your patience with us. We give thanks, Lord, for your grace, the abundance of that grace. grace. And we give thanks, Lord, for your mercy. And we pray that your goodness and mercy will indeed follow us all the days of our life and that we will all, each and every one of us, dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Bless, Lord, those whose hearts are sore. Bind up the brokenhearted, we pray. You alone are able to do this. Take us to our home safely and take away our sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude singing.