

Prayers to Pray in the Mess of Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 June 2020

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

And so let us look there, Psalm 1, verse 1. Psalm 1, verse 1.
Psalm 1, verse 1.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. That's the Word of God, the only authoritative Word we have from God.

It's our privilege to give our attention to it. So may God bless the reading and the preaching of His Word. Michael Phelps approached every race and every opponent in the same way.

[1 : 52] Those of you who don't know Michael Phelps, he won 23 gold medals in different swimming competitions. For years before he won gold in 2008, 2012, 2016, Phelps did the same thing as he approached every race and every opponent.

He arrived two hours early. He stretched and warmed up in the same way. After warming up, he would dry off, put on his headphones and sit, never lie down on the massage table.

From that moment, he and his coach would not talk again until after he raced. 45 minutes before the race, he'd put on his race suit.

30 minutes before the race, he'd get in the warm-up pool and do another 600 to 800 meters. 10 minutes before the race, he would walk to the ready room, sit alone, goggles on one chair beside him, towel on the other.

He was practicing social distance before it was in vogue. And when his race was called, he'd walk to the blocks. If you don't know what the blocks is, that's what he would jump off of on the side of the pool.

[3 : 13] He'd do the same thing every time. He'd do two stretches, one with a straight leg, then one with a bent leg, left leg first every time.

Then he'd take his right earbud out. When his name was called, he'd take his left earbud out. He would step forward onto the block, left side first every time, dry off the block in the same way.

And then he would stand flapping his arms. If you ever saw him race, he would flap his arms like that so that they would flap and hit his hands. His hands would hit himself in the back.

And Mr. Phelps explains afterwards, it's just a routine. It's my routine. It's the routine I've gone through my whole life. Every stage of his career, every race, regionals, nationals, the Olympics, every opponent, the same thing.

And all of it would just settle his mind and body to focus on one thing, winning. In fact, his coach said, I just love this. His coach said, when asked what Mr. Phelps was thinking about during the race, he said, he's not thinking about anything.

[4 : 21] He's just following the program. He's just following the program. And they said when Phelps would get kind of discombobulated in practice or something like that, his coach would just say, remember the program, remember the program, remember the program.

And this morning, our text is pushing us to a similar predictableness to our lives. It's pushing us into a program. We're beginning in this new series on the book of Psalms, these first ten psalms about prayers to pray in a mess of life.

Because we're in a mess. We are a mess. We live in a messy world. This world is a tangled mess of bad news, disappointment, job loss, addiction, anger, backstabbing, restlessness, brokenness.

And in so many ways, these first ten psalms help us to think, feel, walk, sing, cry, pray when mired in mess. But the psalter doesn't go right there.

The psalmist doesn't go right there. He teaches us that what we need to face this mess is a predictable practice of meditation in our life.

[5 : 30] A routine. A program. Regardless of our age, regardless of our season, regardless of the specific trouble that's coming at us, this psalm wants to produce in us a predictable practice of meditation that dominates our life and produces blessing and joy.

You saw right at the beginning, blessed is the man. This psalm is trying to hold out true happiness. You know, not merely good feelings or good vibrations or something like that, but a deep contentment, a thriving, a fruitfulness to our life that comes from meditating on God's Word. So where we're going in a Word is the way to true happiness in a mess of life is meditation on God's Word. The way to true happiness in a mess of life is meditation on God's Word.

So the first point is this world never satisfies. This world never satisfies. You know, this psalm is often called a wisdom psalm.

You probably noticed that right out. It's kind of comparing two different paths. It's comparing the way of the wicked with the way of the righteous. The way of the wicked, the way of the righteous, just like the Proverbs were. There was a way that seemed right to a man, but in the end it led to death.

[6 : 40] And so it's kind of laying out before us two paths. And it begins by describing the downward descent of dissatisfaction of the wicked. The path does not satisfy.

It's easy to see in the text if you look down there with me. He says, 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.

So this progression is immediately there in the verse. He walks, he stands, he sits, he takes counsel, he walks in the way, he sits down. He's with the wicked, the sinners, the scoffers.

The idea is that he begins walking in the counsel of the wicked, accepting the advice of those who do evil. He continues, though, standing in the way of sinners.

Now the idea is standing is a symbol of allegiance. We know this all too well right now. Now what you stand for and what you kneel for says something. So where do you stand on the issue, we might ask somebody.

[7 : 40] That's what's going on there. He walks in the way of sinners. But no, he stands in the way of sinners. And then he sits in the seat of scoffers. So this downward descent is being described.

He's walking, he's standing, he's sitting. And sitting implies a settled position. Someone who sits down doesn't plan to get up. And when you get older, sometimes you wonder if you'll ever get up. I sat down in a chair last night that I didn't, I misjudged the distance between my hind parts and the chair and fell about four inches right when I landed in the chair. And I was fine, I got up.

But you know what I mean? And you're sitting in a settled position. But this is the seat of scoffers. The idea here is to sit with scoffers not merely means you're settled in what you believe is right, but you're settled in what you believe others are doing wrong.

It's a position of finger pointing, teasing, taunting, laughing. One commentator says there's no question while the scoffer may not be the worst man in the Bible, he is the man that's furthest from repentance.

[8 : 53] This verse warns us though, no one wrecks their life in one turn. It's a series of dead-end roads following the directions of others.

It's a series of downward steps conforming to the pressure of peers. Each step giving the appearance of friendship and satisfaction, but never delivering. The Puritan John Bunyan once said, I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company into all manner of vice and ungodliness.

I was the very ringleader. Sadly, that was true of me as a boy, even as a young man. And when I was young, I used to go to camp for two weeks straight.

I can't imagine sending my kids to camp for two weeks straight. My mom's probably listening to this, so sorry, mom. And each year, a kid named Robbie and his cousin, Tony, who we called affectionately Tony the Tiger, would come.

Robbie had a speech impediment, which sadly meant we mocked him. On camp out nights, I could imitate his voice right now, I'm not going to do it.

[10 : 06] I would imitate his voice and talk louder after the lights were out, and the counselor would yell, shut up, Robbie. And so we'd just keep doing it all night. And I would, along with others, treat Robbie unkindly.

And even sometimes I'd treat him kindly so that he'd think he's a part of the gang, just so I could trick him and turn on him the next moment. I remember one day during free time, Robbie, Tony, being careful not to incriminate my buddies, Jeff and I came upon an old unused cabin.

So the camp has a number of different cabins, and we began to dare Robbie to throw a rock through the window of this cabin that was unused. We said, do it, man. It'll be fun.

We'll do it next. We'll come in right after you. We'll throw a rock too. And you could tell he was wrestling with his mind. I can still get the mental image of his face wrestling with whether he should throw a rock too.

And in the end, he must have thought, this will settle it. I'll be kind of a part of these guys. I'll be one of the game. I'll be liked and accepted. And then he threw it through there. Of course, the next thing we said, you're an idiot, Robbie.

[11:12] What were you thinking? Why did you do that? And then we ran off and left him and Tony. You know, I would love to kind of reconcile with Robbie. But my point in telling that story is not just so that you think I was a bad person, but so that you'd understand the world is always trying to put us in Robbie's shoes.

The world is always trying to get us to ask, what can I do to look cooler? What can I do to fit in? What can I do to prove myself? What can I do to show how unsquare I am? The world is filled with peer pressure.

And it leads us to do so many other things we wouldn't do otherwise. It pushes us onto a treadmill to run hard to be accepted. It leads us to compare and think that if we were just as pretty or slim or successful or carefree or educated or wealthy as them, then we'd be happy.

But it never satisfies. That's what's going on in this psalm. It never satisfies. Whether you're 13 or 37, if you're honest, it's a struggle. I love the 104-year-old woman I saw this news article said that the best thing about her age is no peer pressure.

So maybe we just need to outlive it. But the psalmist gives us a better way. He says, the one who meditates on God's Word finds true happiness. Look at that. The blessed man is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord.

[12:36] And on his law, he meditates day and night. And unlike the advice of the wicked that all the other men are following, the blessed man's delight is the Word of God. It's mentioned twice, the law. Now, we're not meant to get tripped up on that.

What he means by that is just all of Scripture, all of what God has said about who he is, all of what he says about what he's promised to do, all of what he says that is true and how to live. And so the blessed man delights in the law and meditates on it day and night.

And this verse, actually this little phrase contains, if we do a little bit of a lesson, it contains the most common literary device in Hebrew poetry called parallelism.

And the idea is that parallelism is that the lines just run parallel. So they run beside each other.

They communicate meaning through their relationship.

And they're overlapping with one another. I think we may have a slide for you of a song called Nine Million Bicycles. I'd never heard it until yesterday. But this is a great example of parallelism.

[13:38] There are nine million bicycles in Beijing, China. That's a fact. It's a thing we can't deny like the fact that I'll love you till we die. Now, if you took those separately, they wouldn't make any sense, right?

I mean, I'll love you till I die. It would still make sense. But the point of nine million bicycles in Beijing, while the fact would be something that's important, wouldn't make sense. But you see, they come together.

They strengthen one another. Does that make sense? They add to the complement with an E to the meaning of what they're trying to communicate.

And so let's zero in on verse 2. I think we have it for you. His delight is in the law of the Lord. So this is parallelism. And on his law, he meditates day and night. His delight is in the law.

And on his law, he meditates day and night. His delight is in the law. But what does that mean? How does that look? It looks in meditation. So blessed is a man, and he's truly happy. The main source of his joy is meditation.

[14:38] So this delight produces this practice, this settled conviction of the Word of God that produces this delight and this meditation on it.

Now, meditation here just refers to something more than reading. It refers to like murmuring or muttering. I don't know if you've ever noticed somebody who reads out loud.

Maybe reads the paper out loud or something like that. That's kind of what's going on. It's a continual talking under your breath. Which is a funny little phrase that we use often. It's a continual talking under your breath.

A way of life of continually mulling over the Word day and night. Continually aligning yourself with the Word day and night. That's what it means to be the blessed man.

To meditate on it day and night would just mean all the time. When he sits at the house. When he walks by the way. When he lies down. When he rises. When he eats with his friend. The blessed man has a daily obsession and preoccupation with the Word of God.

[15:38] And what we need more than anything else right now is not more social media. More news and more opinions. When the world gets loud. The Word must get louder. When social media gets loud.

The Word of God must get louder. When the news articles get loud. The Word of God must get louder. In our hearts. Hearts aren't just an echo chamber for the news.

But they're meant to be the delight of. And the place where the Word is cherished and loved. I read this story. This week. King James VI of Scotland.

Was infamously rude when attending church services. On one occasion. He was seated in the gallery with several of his men. While Robert Bruce preached.

In his usual form. James began to talk to those around him during the sermon. We got some of those. You know. Mr. Bruce paused. And the king fell silent.

[16:42] Mr. Bruce resumed. And so did James. Continuing to talk back there. Mr. Bruce stopped a second time. Same result. King James fell silent.

When the king began talking again. While Mr. Bruce was talking. Mr. Bruce turned and addressed him. And he said. It is said to have been the expressed.

It is said to have been expressed to the wisest of kings. When the lion roars. All the beasts of the field will be quiet. Well the lion of the tribe of Judah. Is now roaring in the voice of the gospel.

And it becomes the petty kings of earth. To be silent. Isn't that a great line? Just roll that out. I pray we are not like that king. That we are silent.

Before the word of God. Let us shut our mouths sometimes. Do we meditate? On this word. The point of meditation is not.

[17:38] It is not that we would. Kind of go become monks. And go move away. And quit our job. Or something like that. The point is that we do it. As we do everything else. It is like a muttering. Of the word.

A chewing of the word. That we do. When we do everything else. That is what it is getting at. And so this word is calling us. To do it all the time. But I think especially to do it in the morning.

And I would just encourage you. If you find yourself. Not having a pattern. Or maybe pattern is not what one would use. To describe your relationship with God's word. Well then today is a great day to start.

I think a modest goal. Just aim for 15 minutes. 5 days a week. You can do it. I believe in you. 15 minutes. 5 days a week. Read one chapter. If you can't begin with the Psalms.

It is great. 6 verses. You can do this. Or one of the Gospels. Read it over several times. I think so many times. This is my practice. Every single day. Or most days.

[18:34] Is to get in there. Read it over. I mean if I read it once. I don't get anything. Because I am used to just skim reading. Everything. Which is what Google has taught us to do.

And so read it several times. Note the repeated words. The transition words. The most important word in there. Righteous and justification. Words like this. And then pray over it. Kind of work through it.

Pray over it. Until it sinks. And that is the source of joy. George Mueller says it like this. We know him. We know him as a great man of faith.

And a great man of prayer. But he said. I saw more clearly than ever. That the first business. And primary business. To which I ought to attend every day. Is to have my soul happy in the Lord.

In so many ways. Our personalities are different. As Tim was talking about. You may be. This like. Buy a commentary type of guy. And a study Bible type of guy. And you can do that.

[19 : 28] How you can go is. Whatever depth you want to go. But the goal is. Just to be happy. The goal is. Get your soul happy. And direct your soul. To the Lord. And so.

I want to challenge you. One way this week. Is to read Psalm 119. In its entirety. You can do it. It's the biggest chapter in the Bible. But you can do it. I believe in you. And we should read it together. It's just wonderful. In its exaltation.

Of the word of God. So the way to true happiness. And the mess of life. Is meditation. On God's word. And we need it. Point two. This word never strengthens. Or this world never strengthens. This world never strengthens. The blessed man is like a tree. And it lays out actually. The result of the two paths.

And two vivid images. A tree. And chaff. The blessed man is like a tree. Look down there with me. In verse 3. He's like a tree planted by streams of water.

[20 : 23] That yields its fruit. And its season. Its leaf does not wither. And all he does. He prospers. It's a metaphor. Right? It's like a tree.

The man is like a tree. The idea is. The tree is stable. In the hot climate of the Middle East. The only tree. That would continually bear fruit. Is one beside water. And that's where this tree finds itself.

And I love the way it's emphasized. It's planted there. It's not a wild tree. The Lord planted it there. And so it's planted. It's stable because of this water.

And then it's strong. You know. The psalmist. And the way it's laid out in the original text. It emphasizes health in every aspect. After that. It said. It's fruit in season.

It's leaf never withers. In all it prospers. I just love it. It's fruit in season. It's never delayed. It's leaf. It never withers.

[21 : 16] And all he does. It prospers. It's a wildly successful tree. In the hot climate of the Middle East. It's wildly successful. And then the psalmist switches there. At the end you see. Back to the man.

Planted by streams of water. Yields its fruit in season. Its leaf does not wither. In all he does. He prospers. While the psalmist doesn't unpack it in detail yet.

What we'll see in the rest of these chapters. The blessed man faces life's trouble. Without blinking. He's not taken out. He's not unfruitful.

In harsh winds. Or drought. There are people that sink down. Or anxiously spin their wheels. When trouble comes. But the blessed man does not. He's stable.

He's steadfast. He's strong. He's secure. How? Wow. The word. The water. That's where the image comes together. His delight is the word of God.

[22 : 18] Only he meditates day and night. And it comes together. It's just like the tree. It's fruitful. Because he's taken in this water. And I just love this. He's just continually pressing his roots deep.

Into this water. And I just love this. The thing that sets the blessed man apart. No one sees. No one knows what makes him strong.

No one understands what makes him stable. No one sees what brings him joy. Ever met a person like that? We don't really see what a person's like until the heat turns up.

But the blessed man finds plenty of food there. Look at the way Jeremiah Burroughs says it. Great Puritan. I just love this.

A Christian can get food that the world does not know of. A Christian can get food that the world does not know of. He's fed in a secret way by the dew of the blessing of God.

[23 : 17] A poor man or woman who has but a little with grace. Lives a more contented life than his rich neighbor who has a great income. If you were to come to them and say, How is it that you live as happily as you do?

They cannot tell you what they have. But they find there is a sweetness in what they enjoy. Scriptures say that the life of the righteous is a continual feast.

He meditates on the word. Meditates on the law day and night. It feeds him. It satisfies him. It strengthens him. It saturates him. And the Christian life is not one of doldrums and dragging ourselves around.

It's to be one of delight. And saturation. In the word. One author described it. He was talking about. He illustrated this very well. This saturation.

When his family. He says. And I'll quote him. He said. When our family moved into a rather ugly house. My wife bought a couple of wooden flower tubs. To improve the appearance of the front entrance.

[24 : 22] I was tasked with boring drainage holes into those tubs. And so I took my bit and brace. And drilled away. As I did. There was an unmistakable whiff of whiskey.

Every grain of that wood had been soaked in whiskey during the years. It had served as a whiskey barrel. I could have drilled anywhere. And found the same thing.

In the same way. Every aspect of us has been tainted by sin. Our thinking. Our wills. Our bodies. Our feelings. And the word of God. Not only gives joy. But it's meant to saturate every aspect of who we are.

And to change us. To leave no aspect of our lives untouched. To wherever someone wants to bore a hole. They'll find the word. They said. John Bunyan. Who we just talked about.

They said. His blood. Svirgin said. His blood was bibline. You pricked him. He bled Bible. I wonder about us. When we're sounding off.

[25 : 22] In the confines of our home. Or in the publicity of social media. Is it the word that comes out? But the wicked are not like that tree.

They're like chaff. Look at the way it's bluntly stated. Original text. It just says. Not so. The wicked. Not so.

But I like chaff. That the wind drives away. Now we know so much about the wicked. We saw them in verse 1. Right? But how are they not like the righteous?

How. What's he trying to say? When they're like chaff. You know. They're worthless. And weak. The idea. I mean. We might have expected him to say. The wicked are like a shrub. Or a dying tree. Or a tree that's not beside water.

But he reduces it even more than that. It's just like chaff. And the idea is during a harvest time. When the grain had been harvested. And separated from the stalk. And the farmers would gather it into a heap.

[26 : 31] And throw forkfuls up in the air. And in the process. The wind would blow the chaff away. So that the chaff is just this worthless part. You know. Sometimes I roast coffee. And after it cracks in my house.

The chaff kind of shoots out onto the ground. I just kind of blow it into the grass somewhere. To just blow away eventually. The idea. It's useless. It's worthless. Whereas the righteous man is stable. And steadfast. And secure. The wicked is useless. And worthless. The worldly man that might seem so successful. And secure. So well known. And well thought of. In the end. And will blow away in the wind.

Bob Dylan captures it very well. And very vividly. Once upon a time. You dressed so fine. Threw the bums. A dime in your prime. Didn't you? People said. Beware doll.

You're bound to fall. You thought they were all kidding you. You used to laugh about. Everybody that was hanging out. Now you don't talk so loud. Now you don't seem so proud. About having to scrounge for your next meal.

[27 : 32] How does it feel? How does it feel? To be on your own. To be without a home. Like a rolling stone. That's the way chaff is. It looks so secure in this world.

And just blows away. The way to true happiness. And the mess of life. Is meditation on God's word. That's what makes you into a tree. And neglecting is what makes you into chaff. Point three. The world never saves.

The world never saves. The end of both paths. So this wisdom psalm. This laying out both paths. Lays it out all the way to the end.

The end of both paths. Is revealed in the final judgment. A lot about our lives.

Is revealed on how we prepare. The pandemic has revealed. That we like to prepare ahead. Right? We like to stock up on toilet paper. And toiletries. And hand sanitizer.

[28 : 30] And of course Oreos. I was talking to a friend of mine. Who said. He went to food city. Kind of right after all this broke. And he. You know. He totally understood. That the paper towels were out. He totally understood. The hand sanitizer was out.

Totally understood. The toilet paper was out. And the toiletries were out. But then when he goes down. The snack out. All the Oreos. I mean the double. They got like 15 kinds nowadays. All of them are gone.

Because in a pandemic. You must have Oreos. You must have Oreos. Similarly. We should all prepare for. For the final judgment. Randy Alcorn says.

Your life is like a dot. Eternity is like a line. Why would you live for the dot? In his wonderful way. When the line goes on forever and ever.

J. Gresham Machen said it like this. Every historian. Whether he's a Christian or not. Ought to take account of this strange fact. It's a very strange historical fact. That a certain man. A man who lived. [29 : 31] In the first century in Palestine. Was actually convinced. That he would. He looked out. Upon the men. Who thronged about him. That he would. One day sit. On the judgment seat of God.

And be their judge. And the judge. And ruler. Of all. The world. Everyone should take account. Many historians. Should take an account. But most don't.

Most don't prepare. The final judgment. Is a day of reckoning. When all the scales of justice. Will be righted. It will be a day. When it's obvious. Who is ready. And it's obvious. Who is not.

That's what it shows. In verse five. Therefore the wicked. Look down there with me. Will not stand in the judgment. Nor sinners. In the congregation. Of the righteous. We see the wicked.

And sinners again. From verse one. They stood up. In the way of sinners. They sat in the seat of scoffers. But they will not stand. In the day of judgment. That's what he's trying to say. He's trying to make it painfully clear. They stood up in allegiance.

[30 : 25] To things in this life. To allegiance. Of ways of life. But they will not stand. In allegiance. On the day of judgment. Because they will not stand. With. The righteous.

But who are these wicked people? Who are they? In this passage. Maybe they're out there. In the world.

Maybe they're the them. You know. The sinners. The rebellious. The ones sleeping around. The ones rioting. And looting. Is that who they are? But the psalm is not directed at the world.

Think about this. The psalm. This psalm. Is a warning. To the people of God. What the psalmist is trying to say. Is some are numbered.

In your body. Outwardly. That will not stand with you. Eternally. Some are numbered. In your body. Visibly.

[31 : 28] That will not stand with you. Eternally. With the invisible. People of God. That we don't see. Right now. In fact. All of them. Will. Perish.

Some think. They've given their lives. To Jesus Christ. That's what he's trying to say. But they've never. Turned. Over. Allegiance. And submitted. Completely. To Jesus.

Jesus addressed this fact. In a devastating way. He said at the end of. Well actually. The passage. Ralph was quoting earlier. The song. Sermon on the Mount.

And. And Matthew 7. He says. 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's in heaven. And on that day.

Many will say to you. Say to me. Lord. Lord. Do we not prophesy in your name? Do we not cast out demons in your name? Do we not do mighty works in your name?

[32 : 23] And then I'll declare them. I never. Knew you. Depart from me. You workers. Of lawlessness. Now listen to this commentator.

He says. Sadly. Sadly. Jesus answers. That one can be sound. Calling Jesus Lord. Sincere. Note the fervent.

Lord. Lord. Successful. The power of ministries of verse 22. And lost. One can be sound.

One. One can be sincere. One can even be successful in the things of God. And lost.

I don't know. There's a more sober word that could be said. The Bible says.

[33 : 24] Make your calling and election. Sure. Don't. Don't delay. If you're. If you're sure. In this. Rejoice. But if you're not.

Sure. The Bible again and again would say. Don't. Don't delay. If you don't know. Which side you would be on. In eternity. The Bible say. Don't. Delay. Don't. Don't. Go to bed tonight.

Don't rest. I'm not trying to put you in an anxious chair. Any of those things. I'm trying to call you to the free offer. Of the gospel. That comes. And if you're unsure. It reminds me of that old commercial. If you're unsure.

Then you should. Come. Forward. This morning. To be. Made. Right. With. Jesus Christ. The truth of the gospel. Is there is one mediator. Between God and man. The man. Christ Jesus, the man who is fully God and the man who is truly man, who is tempted in every way, yet without sin, so that he might come and stand in your place to endure the furious wrath of God that will take eternity to exhaust for everyone who does not offer allegiance to Jesus Christ.

He says, come, I stood in your place, receive that wrath in full, in total, debt paid, so that you might walk free this morning, sure, that you might walk free this morning, justified, just like the tax collector and the publican. Only one went down from the house of the Lord justified that day, and it was not the one who impressed anyone on the outside. It was the one who remained completely and totally fixed on Jesus Christ and his unworthiness before him and his need for a mediator before God. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. God does not merely want to wipe away your sin, which is a wonderful thing. Forgiveness is a wonderful thing. We celebrated it last night.

[35 : 16] God wants to qualify you to enter the presence of God. God wants to make you righteous, so that through Jesus Christ, through his death on the cross, all your sin might be placed upon him, so that all the wrath of God is exhausted on him, so that his righteousness might come to you.

God made him who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God, God made him who knew no sin to be sin, so that we might be sure, completely sure. The righteous will stand in the end. Now that's just an unbelievable thought. When the role is called up yonder, when the role is called, it won't be to summon us into the courtroom, to give us what we rightly deserve. What the psalmist is saying, when the role is called, when that last day is called, we will stand. If that's not a head-scratcher to you, then you've got to get into this text and into your heart a little bit more, but look what sets the man off. I mean, what makes us stand in that day? What makes us any different than any man on this earth? Surely nothing. We have done what makes us different. Look in verse 6. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous. The Lord knows them. The Lord actively appears in this verse. I just love this. They were meditating on the law of the Lord in verse 2, and then the Lord just suddenly appears right here.

The Lord knows his people. He sets them apart. They're his. That's wonderful. Karl Barth, one of the most important theologians of the 20th century, wrote many, many, many, many, many, many books. They say you can't go through Barth. Barth, you just got to go around him. I mean, like no scholar after him can go through him. No one can understand him completely.

They just got to go around him. And so anybody that criticized Barth, they've just gone around him, I promise, because he is voluminous. Actually, they said, what will Karl Barth be doing in the first millennia in heaven? And he said he's finishing his church dogmatics, because on earth, he was only able to complete 9,000 pages in 31 volumes. He had so much more to write, which is totally great. They said he's just going to be dragging his cart of the church dogmatics for the first millennium, first million years, finishing those up. In 1962, he came to the States, so he went through. He stood up against Hitler, actually, in Germany and Switzerland. He came to the United States to speak at the University of Chicago, and after his lecture, he was asked if he could summarize his whole life's work in one sentence. The man wrote 9,000 pages, you know?

[38 : 16] Of course he can't. He says, yes, I can. In the words of a song I learned on my mother's knee, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. What a great summary, right? Recently, I saw these words put a different way.

It said, Jesus loves me, or Jesus knows me, this I love. I like them both. Jesus loves me, this I know. Oh, I love that. But it's also true. Jesus knows me, and this I indeed love. And that's what's coming out in this passage. The Lord knows the way of the righteous. J.I. Packer says it like this, the word know, we have this for you, when use of God in this way is a sovereign grace word, pointing to God's initiative in loving, choosing, redeeming, calling, and preserving. What matters supremely, therefore, is not in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact, which underlies it, the fact that he knows me. And that's what's going on in this passage. He knows me. What matters in the last analysis is not whether or not I know God. What matters in the last analysis, what matters in the last moment, what matters on the last day is, does he know me?

And all these passages come together immediately. I know you by name. Before you were born, I knew you. I know when you sit down and when you rise, I discern your thought from afar. I know your way. The Lord knows who are his. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me. And I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. The idea is the Lord knows us, not merely in a sense that he knows about us, but he knows us because he's made friends with us, because he loves us, because he watches over us, because he keeps us, because he's laid down his life for us. And beloved, if you are righteous through Jesus Christ alone, the Lord knows you.

He knows you as well this day as he will know you that day. He knows what hurts.

He knows what aches. He knows what you just wish to just go away, because he's your friend and will never leave.

[41 : 02] The psalm began, blessed is the man. And we do read that, like Tim was talking about it. We read it, if I just try hard, if I just work hard enough, if I just meditate on the word, then I'll be blessed.

If I just meet God halfway, then he'll meet me halfway, and it'll be great. But God never meets you halfway. Just like the father chased down the prodigal son out in the street. In actuality, this psalm is an invitation.

Because of Jesus, it's not saying that if you do this, I'll do that. The Lord does not like those relationships.

He's not looking for a partner. It's saying, just take it up. That's what it's saying. Just read it. Just take it up. Just read it. Just kind of form your life on it. Just meditate on it. Just murmur over it. I mean, anybody can do that. If you can worry, you can meditate.

[42 : 06] That's what the psalm is saying. Just meditate on it. Just hold it before yourself. Whether or not you feel it during the day, bring your body and your mind and your eyes before these words, and that's the way.

That's the blessed life. That's true happiness. That's true joy. That's contentment. That's the habit, the routine. That's the Michael Phelps-like program that we need to find joy.

That's the joy our world doesn't know anything of. That's the joy God just offers freely through Jesus Christ. Let us pray. Father in heaven, we do fall before you.

God, it is a humbling thought and an exciting thought to think that we will stand on that last day, not because of our own righteousness or anything we've done.

We will stand on that last day because of the righteousness of another, Jesus Christ, the righteous one. We pray, Father, that you would help us to read this word not as a duty from a commander, but as a delight from our God, from the one who knows us, who formed us in the womb and called us fearfully and wonderfully made, who wrote his image on our mind and our hearts and our wills.

[43 : 28] We pray that you would come and work. Lord, we do pray for delight. The future is uncertain in so many ways and yet we know who holds the future. And Lord, we don't want to walk to heaven kicking and screaming.

We don't want to walk to heaven to this eternal bliss complaining. We don't want to go to heaven doubting the way you brought us there. We want to go delighting.

We want to step with joy all the way, God. Oh, make it so. So that we can say, it wasn't by my strength or will exertion, but solely by the grace of God, I am what I am.

And so we rest in you and we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Thank you. you