

Two ways to live and two ways to end

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: 06 August 2017

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 00] Psalm 1 in front of you, that'll be good. So Psalm 1, I'll pick it up in verse 1 and we'll read through the entire Psalm.

But this morning we're going to concentrate on the last two verses. So week 1 was verses 1 and 2, last week was verses 2 and 3, sorry, verses 3 and 4, and then this week we're doing 5 and 6. Now hear God's word. 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.

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

[1 : 17] For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Well we pray that God... Please then in your Bibles turn again to Psalm chapter 1.

As I said, this is the last message on Psalm 1, and we have seen several things throughout this Psalm.

Many things that you thought weren't there actually are there. Well as we come to the end of Psalm 1, the thing that should become apparent to you is that the end is a mirror of the beginning.

The end is a mirror of the beginning. Verse 1 speaks to the different ways to live. There are two different ways to live. In simple terms, the right way and the wrong way.

But it's not as plain and simple as that. But that's the general principle. There are two ways to live. The right way and the wrong way. Verse 6 says, Given that, there are two ways to end.

[2 : 22] There are two ways to begin, and there are two ways to end. Well that makes sense, doesn't it? That if there are two ways to begin, there are naturally two ways to end.

If you begin on the right way, you end on the right way. And if you begin on the wrong way, you end on the wrong way. Well, there's a slight variation that needs to be made there, and that's conversion.

If you're like me, I clearly was born into a family where we started out on the wrong way. And on that way, you meet Christ. And Christ gets you on to the right way.

So, we need to take into consideration the fact that a person can be converted. But the point is, is when that person is converted, he's then on the right way, and there is only one way that that ends in, and that is the right end with God forever.

But the basic principle is this. Whatever point you are in life, the question is, what way am I on? What path am I walking? Is it the right one, or is it the wrong one?

[3 : 33] That's the thing that the psalmist wants to drum home to us. Now, there's nothing more frustrating to people who see other people on the wrong path when those people don't see it themselves.

This is experienced clearly with parents and children. Okay? They don't think that we've been there before. They certainly don't think that we've lived that before.

And so, they think that they know better than us. But of course they do. They're half our age with half the amount of intelligence. Why wouldn't they? Well, at least that's how they figure it out.

And in general speaking, I can clearly understand that children, sometimes children can know more than adults. There are some things that I computer coding.

I look at it and see, I don't really see anything. Children look at it and go, oh, I know what that means. Well, it's all foreign to me, because it is effectively all foreign.

[4 : 33] The point is this, though. There are some things which can only be learned with age. And God's ways are those ways. You learn them with age, not just by sitting down with a book in front of you, learning something new.

You learn them with age. The man here who's speaking to us is a man of age, we can say. Many who have gray hair are starting to, apparently are wise.

As you can see, I don't have a full head, so the wisdom is limited in me. But you understand the point. Wisdom comes with age. It doesn't just come with being able to sit down and figure things out.

Some things have to be lived, and God knows that we have to experience life to learn from it. Why? Because not all of us learn the things that we're told.

Even though we're told that that will lead to the wrong kind of outcome, we're unwilling to accept it until we experience it. Now, Proverbs is very, very clear that that's the hard way to learn.

[5 : 42] You can learn easy, or you can learn hard. The hard way of learning is don't pay any attention. Experience everything. The trouble is, is that is wearing on the mind, heart, the will, and the emotions, and it unfortunately creates several consequences that you have to live with.

The easy way of learning is to listen to God. The trouble is our heart doesn't want to do that. We have to fight against that sin in our heart that makes us say no to God.

In fact, I think that that is probably the best or simplest definition of sin. What is sin? In simple terms, it's saying no to God. I'm going to say no to God.

Okay. Whatever else it might be, it's basically when your heart is saying no to God. So the psalmist here knows that he has to be committed to the right one.

He needs to know where the paths are going to end up so that he knows which path to choose in the beginning. So God tells us the future for the simple reason that we need to know where things end so that we can know where to begin.

[6 : 52] Now, this is where it gets slightly complicated, but it's easy enough to follow. There is one way to follow God, but there are two ways to avoid him. Okay. One way to follow God and two ways to avoid him.

Here's the first way of avoiding God. And that is that I just don't want to believe in his existence. I'll just rule God out of everything that I think about and everything that I do.

God doesn't exist. Now, that doesn't mean that God doesn't exist. It just means that he doesn't exist in your framework, your mind. So you live your life as if God doesn't exist.

The other way of avoiding God is to believe in a God of your own choosing. And that is, well, I believe that God, a God does exist, and I like to think of God like this, so that's the type of God I'm going to believe in.

Well, that causes a whole load of problems. In other words, you end up with different gods and those different gods don't agree. Don't agree. You know, I once had a conversation with someone who said, you know, that all religions lead to God, and I thought, well, you're not paying any attention to any of them.

[8 : 11] Because if you paid attention to any of them, you will understand that none of them agree with each other. Now, if none of them agree with each other, how on earth can they end up in the same place?

No, Jesus rightly is quite exclusive. I am the way and the truth and the life. Jesus is the way. So, this man here, the blessed man, not only knows that to be committed to God, he must worship the true God in true ways.

That's one way, but he must also be committed to the fact that he is not to worship God in ways of his own choosing. And my frustration is that this is really, really easy for many people in the church to follow God in their own ways.

And being in Scotland where any criticism made of a position is taken as a criticism of a person. I don't understand why that is the case. Why, you know, I can disagree with what you believe without thinking anything about you.

There are two separate things. The trouble is is we are so attached to what we believe that we take it personally. Well, don't take it personally when you have false views of God, but take it personally because those false views are affecting you personally.

[9 : 33] That's a challenge to all of us, I feel. So, the ways that people devise to avoid God, as I said, is God doesn't exist. Okay?

You know, it's the famous John Lennon song. Imagine there's no heaven. Now, you've heard me talk about this before, why I hate the song and why I think you should hate it.

Because if there is no sky above us and there is no hell below us, there is nothing, then above Lockerbie there is nothing. No justice. Okay?

Above Jimmy Savile there is no justice. Okay? Only sky. So, if you like that type of song and you like that type of mentality, what is wrong with you?

Okay? There are some things that if you follow them through carefully, they lead to awful ends.

Awful ends. So, this man knows that if he is to think about God, he is to think about God in the right ways.

[10:38] He can't think about God in his own way or his own choosing. He has to think about God in his own way. Now, the moment believers, and I want to speak about believers just for a moment, like to think about God in their own way, you need to ask yourself the question, why do we do this?

Why do we do this? Well, it's often the case that if I can't get, if I don't, if the God of the Bible doesn't give me what I want, then I will either leave the God of the Bible or imagine him in a different way. And the moment when a believer starts to imagine God in a different way, the first thing that will happen in their life is that they have to depart from God's word. They can no longer listen to what God is telling them.

And so, they depart from God's word and then they start believing what they want. They come out from the governing of God, the thing that will keep them safe and secure and blessed and they remove themselves from it so that they have the freedom then to think of God in ways the Bible doesn't describe.

Now, that is, that is the beginning that every believer takes when they like to think about God in ways that they want to. That is dangerous because you are departing from the true God.

[12:01] And any departure from the true God is a departure from the blessing of God, is a departure from the security of God. So, you know, you might expect the pastor to say he wants us to get God right.

Well, I want you to get yourself right. You know, what good would it do if you looked at your husband or wife and said, do you know what, I like to think of you like this.

Or your husband looks at the wife and says, you know, well, I know the way you're explaining yourself, but I like to think of you like this. Can you imagine the devastation that would follow?

This normally happens in the first year of marriage when you receive the first Christmas present from your newly wedded wife. And you look across to her or she looks across to you with those eyes that say, what on earth did you buy me this for?

Right? It's more embarrassing after 10 years of marriage or 11 years of marriage and you're still doing it. What's going on there? Well, this is how I like to think of you. Okay?

[13:06] It's problematic. Well, how do you think? If you understand the awkwardness of that, then just imagine what that's like between you and God.

You know, God who loves you, you know, accepts everything from you, but he has to say, well, this is who I am. You know, you want to dress me up like this, but this is who I really am.

So it's really important on every level, not just our view of God, but our view of each other. We are not allowed to think of each other in the ways that we want to. Okay?

We ought to think of them in the ways that God wants us to and as they really are. Or else you're just saying, I don't like you the way you are and so I have to mentally change you.

I have to mentally change you. You know, one of my favorite questions is that, you know, men especially, can I just say this, that when your wife walks into the room and says, why do you love me?

[14:05] Don't say anything for a long time because you're in danger of messing it all up. Okay? And here's why. Because if you say, I love you because of, that danger's it.

You have got yourself into a whole world of trouble and you don't realize it. Let me just explain. I love you because your hair is nice. What happens when it isn't? Okay?

I love you because you're this dress size. Okay? But what happens when she isn't? Okay? Your wife is smart enough to figure out that if the thing you love her for changes, then your love for her has to change.

And the same is the other way around. Okay? So, getting people right all the time is super important. Okay? And it's the same when it comes to God.

If we understand it on a human level, then we can clearly understand it on a level before God. Okay? God loves us. Okay? Not because of what we can do or what we think. He loves us just because he loves us just because he loves us.

[15:10] And we ought to love God in exactly the same reason. We love God because he's God. Not because of any other reason. Because he is God. Now, these things are super basic but easily forgotten.

So, let's get back to the focus here of where these ways end up if we don't focus on God. Two ways to live and two ways to end up.

Verse 5 begins with therefore. And therefore is a consequence word. In other words, this is the outcome of verses 1 and 2 and verses 3 and 4.

This is what it leads to. This is the consequence of the blessed man. He gets to stand with God righteous before God but those who don't, those who have rejected God will not get to stand at all. Not even for a moment. And the lesson here is that God keeps a track of everything. Okay? We're told in the New Testament that God keeps a track of every cold cup of water.

[16:14] Every cold cup of water and every plate of food. God keeps a track of everything. You think, well, you know, God doesn't keep a track of everything. Let me read this to you. When the Son of Man comes in His glory, this is verses 5 and 6, this is the, this is the end of the end or the beginning of the end and the angels with Him, He'll sit on His glorious throne.

Before Him are gathered all the nations and then He will separate one from another as the shepherds separates the sheep from the goats. What's the point? Different people go into different areas.

Sheep goes in one pen, goats go in another. The righteous go with God and those who do not belong to God are separated from His people. There's the separation. And He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

There's division between them. Then the King will say to those on His right, come you who are blessed. Psalm 1, the blessed people. Come you who are blessed by my Father.

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Listen. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.

[17:26] I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer Him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you a drink?

And when did we see you a stranger and welcomed you or naked or in clothed you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King answers them, this is King Jesus, truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

God keeps a track of every cold cup of water and every plate of food and every item of clothing. We think God doesn't pay attention to a certain amount of things.

He's too busy. No, God keeps attention on everything. So when we come to stand before God, okay, okay, he doesn't suffer from the things that other people suffer from.

Hopefully, he would have forgotten about that. No, God doesn't forget about it. With God, there is forgiveness, okay, hence why you must be on the right path before you meet him.

[18:40] Nobody wants to meet God without belonging to Jesus. It's dangerous. You just don't want to do it. So Psalm 1, verse 5 is teaching us that there is a final reckoning and a final separation.

That God's people down here are not separated from people who don't believe in God. We're together. But that's not always going to be the case. Okay? A day is coming when the separation will happen.

Okay? Different paths lead to different places. Different paths lead to different places. So think about the one that you're on. Where are you going?

Is it God's path that is clear in Scripture or is it the other one that leads into separation? So verse 6. Here we have verse 6.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous, meaning that not only does he know intellectually, this is what I know to be true, but the Lord knows, and that is he has approval for people who live this way.

[19:46] People who are blessed have God's approval. People who are blessed have God's approval. So two more reasons then to live God's way rather than any other way.

The first reason is this, and that is sin tells lies. Okay? Sin tells lies. And it just so happened to be that the lies that sin tells are the lies that we actually enjoy believing, which makes it even more tempting and difficult.

The second thing is that God's word cannot be broken. That's the comforting. God's word cannot be broken. Now, let me just address sin.

Sin is saying no to God, but then you've got to ask yourself the question, what makes you say no to God? What makes you say no to God? Okay?

Sin is first a condition. Sin is something desperately wrong inside of us. It is a condition that we have that constantly wants to pull away from God and constantly wants to pull us away from listening or doing anything that God wants us to do.

[20 : 59] Sin does make us say no to God, but sin is a condition that causes that. This is something that has to be dealt with. This is something that takes Jesus, the cross, and his resurrection to deal with.

So it's a big issue and it requires a big solution. So understand that sin is something that you have to fight against in your heart.

Now in Jeremiah 17, and for this I have Francis to thank, including the other Hebrew inferences that he's been teaching me, is that in Psalm 1, in Jeremiah 17, it mirrors Psalm 1, but Jeremiah gives it a slight variation.

After he talks about the man being blessed and like a tree by streams of water, he has this to say, the heart is deceitful above all things. The heart is deceitful above all things, meaning that we have a will, a thought, tensions, emotions, that want to do things that we should not do.

Now this is seen and explained in people who know what the right thing is to do, but who don't do it. I know what the right thing is to do and a whole number of things, but sometimes I just don't feel like doing it.

[22 : 13] What's happening there? What's going on? What's causing me to know what the right thing is to do on every level and then not desire to do it? What causes that motivation?

Sin. Sin causes us to be motivated to not follow God. Here's the real problem with sin, I think, in a community like this, is that sin doesn't destroy the taste.

Okay? Let me explain that to you. Sin doesn't destroy the taste. Now, growing up, I had a fondness for Ferrero Rocher's and I still do. Christmas is coming.

And, you know, I'd always save one or two and, you know, it's, you know, the classic thing that you do with a group of brothers when it's Easter eggs, you make sure everyone else eats theirs first and then you bring yours out at the end.

Well, I had this last Ferrero Rocher and one of my brothers ate it and he stole it because it was mine and it was stealing and I happened to walk into the room while he was putting it in his mouth knowing that he had stolen it and all I could think is, was, I hope you choke on it.

[23 : 33] I was so disappointed with him but I was more angry at the fact that I didn't have a Ferrero Rocher. So, not only did I want him to choke on it, I love him now at the time I didn't, not only did I want him to choke on it, I wanted it to taste horrible.

I was just saying to myself or pretending to say to God at the time, whichever was the case I don't know, I just, I just hope it tastes horrible for him. So, I asked him and what did it taste like?

He says it tastes good as it always does. The point here is that we always struggle to tell the difference and this is quite a simple thing but it's a thing that we miss all the time.

We struggle to tell the difference that stealing the Ferrero Rocher didn't destroy the great taste of the Ferrero Rocher. Okay, the stealing was wrong, the eating it was just as wrong but none of those sins destroyed, let's say, the blessing of the Ferrero Rocher, the goodness of the Ferrero Rocher.

Well, what has that got to do with anything? Well, let me explain. When you sin and that sin just happens to lead to something else which perhaps isn't a sin but you've had to sin to get there, okay, and that blessing makes you feel good, makes you enjoy it, it makes you feel happy, you get all of those things, you conclude, you conclude that if God didn't want you to enjoy it, that if God didn't want you to have it, then it wouldn't make you happy like it does.

[25 : 22] That is the deception of the heart. That is the deception of the heart. It makes you forget about the sin that you had to commit to get there and you're only concentrating on the Ferrero Rocher, that it tastes good.

And so many people who live their Christian life fail to recognize this clear distinction that sin doesn't destroy the taste and we conclude that because it tastes good, God wants me to have it. Because it makes me happy, God wants me to have it. God is saying, well, think about the sin, and it took, you had to sin to get it. The only way you could get it was to sin.

And I don't want you to sin, so if you naturally follow it through, if I don't want you to sin, then I don't want you to have it. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's wrong, but it's going against what God has said.

Your own heart has deceived you. Sin tells lies. It is the deception of the heart. And this is why this man has to read God's word.

[26 : 29] This is why this man meditates on the word of God day and night, so that his whole life, will, emotions, feelings, desires, delights, everything has to come under the guidance of the word of God, because sin tells lies.

Sin tells lots of lies. Here's the second thing. The word of God cannot be broken. The word of God cannot be broken.

And here's another distinction that we have to make. In Psalm 37, it says that time and truth go hand in hand, that given enough time, the truth will always come out. Okay, given enough time, the truth will always come out.

Psalm 73, easy way to remember it, 37, 73, it's the reverse of 37, teaches us that sometimes bad people have good things and they have it for a long time.

And good people who live life before God don't seem to share in those good things and we wonder why. We look at God and scratch our head trying to figure out why is God allowing those people to enjoy those things when here I am trying to keep my heart pure before you, God, and I don't get to enjoy any of those things.

[27 : 45] So we do live in a messed up world and we live in a world where we have to understand things from God's point of view and not from our own point of view.

Now, you will fail daily in your Christian life, daily, weekly, yearly, but the word of God concerning you will not fail. The word of God cannot be broken.

Let me just explain. Were Christ's legs breakable? Were the legs of Jesus breakable? In other words, if I were to take a bat to them and swing it as hard as I could, break his legs?

In other words, were his legs made of something that could not be broken? And the answer is no. His legs were just like our legs, human legs made of bone and flesh racking around them.

They were normal human legs. But the word of God concerning the legs of Jesus says that his legs will not be broken. Okay? So when you think about the things that can break and cannot break, you need to think about the things that concern, that the word of God concern.

[28 : 54] You can be broken. Your life can end up in a sinful mess, but the word of God concerning you tells you that you will be forever gods. That's the point.

You need to pay more attention to what the word of God says about you than what you know about you despite the word of God. The legs of Jesus could be broken, but they could not be broken because the word of God said that they wouldn't be.

Okay? It was the word of God concerning the legs of Jesus that we needed to concentrate on, not the legs of Jesus. And it's the same with you here this morning. You need to see your life from the point of view of what the word of God says about it, not from your own point of view.

Because if you look at it from your own point of view, you will live life knowing that you can be broken. Knowing that you can be taken down and taken out. But when you look at your life from the word of God's point of view, you will learn that you can't be.

Not because you can't be, but because the word of God concerning you says it will not happen.

That's the reason why this man meditates on the word of God day and night.

[30 : 06] God's point of view of God. In conclusion then, in conclusion, the blessed man of Psalm 1 understands that he is to commit his life to God.

And the way he is to do that is to spend a great deal of time in his word. He understands that he is to do this in a world where people are saying, don't listen to God.

Verse 1, the counsel of the wicked. Don't listen to God, listen to us. But he is also to understand that not only will God bless him personally, that God will bless others through him, dependent upon his personal commitment to God in the first life, in the first place.

He will be like a tree that yields fruit in its season. Trees don't eat their own fruit. Okay? Trees produce fruit for others, they don't eat their own fruit.

This man here produces fruit for others, the blessed man. It goes on to say then that the future for this man will not be like those who are taken away with the wind.

[31 : 19] Rather, he is settled and secure until that day he meets God. God, this man knows that there are two ways to live, but we have to be committed to the right one.

Another thing to notice with this we'll finish on is that you can identify with this man because this man can be you. Don't think this man is some kind of super saint or some kind of super Christian beyond your power to imitate and to be like him.

The reason why he is given as an example is so that God can tell you that you can be just like him and receive the same kind of blessings he does.

This isn't speaking of someone who you can identify with, rather this is speaking of someone who you can be like right now. So come. Come and commit to Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.