

Temporal Belssings

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[0 : 0 0] God's Word with you there. Please turn again to Psalm 112. Well, a few weeks ago, two weeks ago in fact, we looked at the nine Psalms, we looked at one of the nine Psalms within the Old Testament, which is a didactic Psalm. Now, there are only nine out of 150, and I won't go into explain all over again what a didactic Psalm is, other than to say that this is one of those Psalms that fall into the didactic framework. Like if you're learning English, you would learn different levels of comprehension and how different, whether it be a narrative or it be an argument or it be a persuasion, they require different types of reading in order to draw out the necessary information. And a person can be looking at the same set of information and come away with different levels of understanding. And Psalms generally work like that, but didactic Psalms are very instructional, even though they're telling you of clear realities. Now, it is clear then, like this Psalm, that the Psalms are full of praise for God.

And praise, simply put, is speaking well of God. Okay, when you praise a person on earth, you speak well of them. The words that are coming out of your mouth are corresponding with something that is true in their life. So, if they're known to be a certain way, and you speak of them in that way, you're praising them. And there's nothing wrong with that type of praise. It's simply a reflection of who they are and their character. Now, when a person praises God, the exact same thing is happening.

You're only able to praise God to the level of understanding you have of God. And the more you see the wonder of God, and the more you see how much God has done for you, and the more you begin to see exactly how God has laid out his plan, the more you're able to then praise him. Because praise is a reflection of what you know about God, which you speak to him, whether it be in a Psalm, whether it be in a Psalm like this, or whether it be in a song, or whether it be in any other form of communication like prayer to God, or a Bible study, or even in a sermon. So, here it's obvious that this Psalmist praises the Lord. He speaks well of the Lord, and we're about to find out why. Why would anybody speak well of God? Well, if I ask you why you speak well of God, it may be quite likely that you're more likely to go to a recent event in your life where God has been clearly gracious, that you're drawing on the most relevant information to you. For others, it may be because of a Bible passage that you have been reading, and you're able to praise God simply because that has been brought fresh to your mind. So, why does this man praise God? Why does he speak well of God, and what has he got to say about him? Well, something else to notice here is that Psalms sometimes come in pairs, and this one is paired with Psalm 111, or at least it is its companion. But as I said, what makes Psalm 112 a distinct Psalm is that it is a didactic Psalm, and some Psalms stick in your mind and heart because of one verse. So, the Lord is my shepherd. You are probably thinking Psalm 23, and you're right to think Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked. And immediately, you are drawn to the whole of Psalm 1 because you recognize that that's how Psalm 1 begins. One verse draws you in. I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. That one verse, you're able to remember from Psalm 84.

But can you remember the surrounding verses? Well, perhaps not so well. And it is because there are some Psalms that contain some verses that just manage to grip, that just manage to stick with us and just are not moved. If you're familiar with this Psalm, which some people are, some people may not be, the verse that grips us, the verse that sticks with us, is the fact that this man's not afraid of bad news.

Well, that's quite a surprising thing to say. In a world, especially in the world we live in, that has quite a lot of bad news. And this man is not afraid of bad news. That doesn't mean that he courts it. That doesn't mean that he wants to hear it. But what it means is, is that when it comes, it doesn't alter him, it doesn't change his foundation. He remains stable through it. But some people, they go to the doctor anticipating what they might hear. And yet if the news is perhaps, say, far worse than what they were expecting, it's that level of expectancy that draws you then to a bigger fool. Because wherever there is high expectations in one area, or at least in one direction, and then the actual reality is the opposite direction, that distance between the two is what creates that sense of disappointment, that sense of, well, this bad news has hit me really, really hard. So it's not that bad news can affect a person. Bad news can clearly affect a person.

[6 : 14] And bad news can affect a person even more when you're not expecting it. But is it possible for bad news, for you to be not afraid of bad news, for you to be not moved by the bad news, for your praise of God to remain constant through the bad news that you have received? And this is where this man finds himself. And I can guarantee, because of the type of world that we live in, and Jesus says, you're not going to be able to get through it without facing problems, that we're all going to face, if we haven't already, bad news. So the question is, is not how can we remove ourselves from bad news, because bad news cannot be removed from a world that is essentially fallen? But rather, how can we protect ourselves in an environment where bad news is going to come? How can I be in the same places he is, where I am not afraid of bad news? I'm not going to welcome it. I'm not going to hope that it comes. But I want to be in that place where when it comes, I'm not moved. I want to be, verse 6, for the righteous will not be moved. And then verse 7, I'm not afraid of bad news. So here's the summary of the psalm. This is how it unfolds. You'll notice that it begins with wisdom, even though wisdom is not mentioned. But we know that it begins with wisdom. We know this is a wise man speaking, because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And this man here in verse 1 fears the Lord. Proverbs 1 says that that's the precondition for receiving wisdom. This is why this is a wisdom psalm, because he is a blessed man, because he fears the Lord. And in fearing the

Lord, God gives him wisdom. Now, you don't get wisdom automatically, okay? There are certain conditions, even found in the New Testament, that you must trust, you must ask, you must fear. There's a number of things that the believer must be in order to then receive wisdom. But you can't just be sitting at your kitchen table or your dining room table, expecting it to suddenly arrive through your letterbox, like, well, there it is, and I didn't even ask for it. No, there are some things that God only gives to his people upon them, fearing him, loving him, asking him, and then it turns up.

And this is what this man understands. And yet some Christians, even though they've heard this, can still struggle to understand. They just go on and think, no, it'll be there anyway. That's not actually the case. He then delights in God's commandments. Now, I want you to notice this, because this is pretty important for a number of reasons. And I can remember once getting myself into trouble, not because I said anything wrong, but because it was misunderstood. But I don't really know how it could be misunderstood. And I said, I don't think we should teach children to obey the commandments.

I think we should teach children to love the commandments. Okay? We should teach them to love the commandments, because that leads to then keeping the commandments. And the reason I can draw that conclusion is because I'm just quoting Jesus. A lot of people don't realize that I'm quoting Jesus.

But Jesus says, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. So the precondition to keeping a commandment is that delight for God, and is that delight for his law. It is that love for his law.

[9 : 59] So whether you're a child or you're an adult, it is crucial that you love the law. Okay? Love the law, and that'll bring out the obedience in you. But love the law first. Love the commandments first. Okay?

And that's the crucial part about this man. He has enough wisdom to know that love for God's word precedes anything else. That love for God's commandments precedes anything else. As we move through the rest of the psalm, another thing which is not apparent, not immediately apparent, but you soon get there with a little bit of work, is that this psalm is not so much concentrated on the eternal as much as it is concentrating on the temporal. That this is about temporal blessings in a temporal world.

That God is the God of temporal blessings in a temporal world. And when you describe something as temporal, what you're actually saying is, it is for this world only. It doesn't mean that it's bad to say something is temporal, isn't to say that it is sinful. It isn't to say that it is bad. It's simply to say it's one of those things that'll perish. It's one of those things that'll go.

Okay? Wealth and riches, which this man has, is a temporal blessing, but they'll go. Okay? There's a number of other things that are included here that'll go. But what we are meant to understand is that the eternal God is the God of temporal blessings. Okay? The eternal God is the source of all temporal blessings. And God gives temporal blessings in a temporal world to temporal people. Okay? Because it is necessary that we receive them and receive his blessing that way. And that's not to take away from the fact that God is an eternal God who gives eternal blessings. The fact that you have eternal life and that you are sealed with him. But that's not what this psalm is concentrating on. What this psalm is focusing on is the fact that every temporal blessing you enjoy comes from God. And this is what this man is praising God for. It then goes on to say that we live in a world where bad news can be expected, but he is a man who is not affected by bad news. Verse 6. He is a righteous man. He will not be moved. Verse 7. He will not be afraid of bad news.

He trusts in the Lord. His heart, verse 8, is steady. But then verse 10, the wicked are not so.

[12 : 51] Ultimately, at the very end of verse 10, they have desires that will perish. And this is one of those truths that's spelled out throughout the psalms. The wicked, the unbelievers, everything that they have will also perish. And they will, because they don't belong to God, they will perish along with it presently and then ultimately eternally. But an important distinction has to be made here, lest you're left thinking that this wicked person doesn't belong to God. Okay? Sometimes we can read it as simply as black and white, A and B. But the issue here is a little bit more complicated, but the best way to describe it is in the same way as the Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus preaches that sermon, he has three people in mind. He has believers, he has religious people, and then he has unbelievers. Okay? He has three different types of people in mind. Here in the psalm, it wouldn't be fair to say that the righteous person belongs to God. That is true. But the wicked person cannot. Because this psalm, if you read it through in its context, seems to indicate that this wicked person is part of

God's people, but not living righteously. Part of God's people, but actually living in quite a wicked way. And God throughout the Old Testament spells out to his people about their wicked ways. He calls his people wicked at certain times and their wicked deeds. So the issue here is the distinction being made between a person who is delighting in the commandments of God and the wicked person who doesn't.

Now, you could say, well, perhaps he is an unbeliever. Well, perhaps he is. But there is a distinction to be made throughout the whole of scripture of the three types of people. The faithful godly, those who belong to God, those who belong to God and who are unfaithful, and those who do not belong to God at all. Okay? And that's an important distinction to make, especially when we move on to the temporal blessings. Those who belong to God and are faithful, those who belong to God and who are not faithful and those who just don't belong to God at all. And that's a distinction worth making.

The blessings here then that God gives falls upon everyone, but they do not fall upon everyone in the same way. When God sends rain, he can send it on a Christian farmer's farm. He can also send that same rain, because the unbelieving farmer is right next door, on his farm as well. Both farmers, irrespective of their belief and their condition before God, are both blessed by the rain that God sends. But which man pleases God? Which farmer pleases God? Well, now we're getting into distinctions, but the distinction cannot be arrived at is whether or not he's received blessings and the other one hasn't. Because some of God's blessings are for everyone. But then there are some which aren't.

And this is what this psalm is drawing out. That this is a man who loves God and who receives particular temporal blessings, while another one of God's people don't. And God doesn't treat everybody the same.

[16 : 38] He loves everybody the same, who are his. His love doesn't change, but he doesn't treat us all the same. And there's quite a few reasons for why he doesn't treat us all in the same way. And this is because, one, God knows what he's doing with every single one of us, but ultimately because we're different.

We're different. I know that it's often been said that you can talk about grace in such a way where a person who is living faithfully is not any better off than a person who is living unfaithfully yet belongs to God. And yet I can understand what's being said because God's grace is equal to both. And I'm not denying that for a moment. God's grace is equal to both. But God's temporal blessings isn't. And God uses blessings and he withholds blessings in order to steer men and women, boys and girls that belong to him into greater and greater faithfulness.

Sometimes God will withhold in order that you bow the knee all the more in prayer to him till you really get it in to your head and to your heart that God really is the source of what you need.

And God will let you go almost everywhere else to get it until you drill that down into your heart, realizing that actually I've tried everything and I should have known at the beginning that I couldn't have got this from anywhere else but God. And then as you come to God, God confirms at a much later date by giving you the blessings. So some things are distributed in different ways to different people who are gods because of their condition before him. So let's look then at these blessings.

Number one, it is the wisdom that the man who fears the Lord has been given wisdom by God. And there is no doubt about that in Proverbs 1 and in James and elsewhere in the scriptures.

[18 : 46] But he is also a man who delights in the law. He loves the law. And this is something that his heart has been cultivated to do, to actually love the law. And that happens in several different ways, which we don't have time to go into. But another thing to notice here is the issue of the temporal blessings in a perishable world. His offspring, verse 2, will be mighty in the land.

Well, they won't always be because they will grow up and they will get old. And somebody else's offspring, who were born at a much later date, will take over. And then they will begin to enjoy the land. And then it will be theirs. So yes, there's blessing there, but it's temporal. Because we understand that through time and through age, this thing once was and is no longer. Then we notice in verse 3 that wealth and riches are in his house. Well, that doesn't happen automatically.

There are some Christians can be quite wealthy through unbiblical means, which God allows them to maintain, only to deal with it at a much later date. And then there are those who have wealth through faithful means, which God blesses even more. And then there are those who are faithful who don't have any wealth at all. And this is because God deals with us differently. You can't be faithful.

And then after five days worth of faithfulness, end up with a nice house, a nice car, and a good pension. It doesn't work like that. However, it does work like that. And that's one of the things that jars with us. Because we want to say, oh, it doesn't work like that. But it also does work like that. God does reward. God does honor those who honor him. Okay, God does honor those who honor him. This man's righteousness then is a practical righteousness. It's not talking about his spiritual condition as much as it is talking about how he deals with what he has been given by God towards other people. So he lends to other people. He deals generously with other people. He gives to the poor.

In other words, he understands that the righteousness that he has and the blessings that he has comes from God and therefore ought to be shared with other people. He can be trusted to share with other people because he can be trusted already to be able to handle them himself. Some people can handle God's blessings, and some people can't. I've said often enough that there are some blessings that can only be handled in the Christian life with prayer, and if the prayer is absent, then the blessing will equally be absent. Right? God knows how well we can steward what we have. This is why Jesus says, first be faithful in a little, and then you can be faithful with much, much further down the line. But prove yourself in small areas first. And if you can't manage that, then you're going to stay there because there's no moving on to grade two or grade three until you've completed grade one. First be faithful in a little, and then you can be faithful in much. So the issue here then for us, or rather the point, is for us to truly appreciate that the eternal God is the God of temporal blessings. That the eternal God is the God of temporal blessings. Food, money, home, etc., clothing. That the eternal God blesses you with temporal blessings.

[22 : 38] And the reason he does that is because you live in a temporal world where those temporal blessings are needed to make your life easier. God is the source of all those temporal blessings.

They don't come from the world. They come from God. Do you remember the illustration of how God taught his people of old that bread didn't come from the ground by sending it from the sky?

Isn't that the lesson that God was trying to convince his people? The reason God sent bread from heaven is because they got so used to the fact that it came from the ground that they had actually forgot that it came from God. So God said, right, I'll send it a different way. I'll send it from heaven.

Just so that God's people get the point that bread does not come from the ground, it comes from God. And this is what this man here understands. That these temporal blessings, yeah, they come from the world, but that's not the source. That may be the vehicle, but the temporal blessings actually come from God.

And temporal blessings can make your life easier. Okay? A person who doesn't have shelter, okay? If given shelter, his life becomes easier. A person who doesn't have food and he's hungry, his life, if only temporary, temporarily, is made easier by giving a plate of food or a whole week of food.

[24 : 13] Yet it's a temporal blessing, but it's a temporal blessing that makes a real difference if only it is temporal. Water for the thirsty. Again, you could argue that's a temporal blessing. It is if you can't keep it up, but water today is better than no water today. Water for a whole month is better than no water for a whole month.

The argument cannot be made that if I can't do it for good, then I shouldn't bother. As if to say, if I can't make it last, if I can't get it right first time so that it works all the time, then I'm not going to bother to start. God is the God of temporal blessings.

Okay? We're to trust him daily. We're to trust him for these things in a very deep and meaningful way, understanding that God gives us these things. And this man here shares the things that he has with those who don't have. He is a steward of God's blessings because he understands they're not his.

They don't come from him any more than bread comes from the ground. It comes from God. God. That's the point. Imagine it this way. You're rich enough to afford private health care.

No NHS waiting list. Okay? You need an operation. And you can skip a very long queue and several months simply because you have the temporal blessing of enough money. Now, there is no doubt that that is a clear odd thing which isn't neither good nor bad. It's just money in the fact that you don't love it.

[25 : 49] But can provide particular help in a particular situation that you couldn't get anywhere else. Say that education, again, is a temporal blessing. You know, when we're in heaven, we don't need to learn all the things we do. Well, maybe we do. Maybe we don't.

But the real issue is, is that however much you think education is temporal, the person still needs it. It can improve their job applications. It can open doors that they wouldn't have opened if they didn't have these blessings, this temporal blessing of education. So we really have to understand that God is the God and the source of all temporal blessings. The question is, if they come from him, do we use them in the same way this man does? Because when this man gives, we are to understand that he is simply reflecting what God is doing with him. His generosity is a reflection. It is an act of praise.

I am simply reflecting God. What God has done for me, my wealth and riches are in my house. I can now, I can now make transfers. I can now send it out to this person, to this person, to that person.

And you say, well, he's generous. No, he is generous. But there's something more going on there. What's really going on is the fact that he's reflecting God. He's righteous. Okay? He's not, it doesn't end it, it doesn't end it being generous. Because you then have to ask the question, well, why is he generous? Well, because his heart's different. But okay, why is his heart different?

Well, because it's been changed. Okay, why has it been changed? Ultimately, you're going to get back because God, because God. This man reflects God in what he does, in how he deals. He understands that the temporal blessings which he has can be given and can be taken away. And God just so happens to have given them to him. And therefore, he can now give to others. As we conclude then, it's only right that in a world of temporal things, that we understand that bad news is also temporal.

[28 : 07] So let's look at this man's personal stability as we conclude. This man, verse 7, is not afraid of bad news. And bad news in a temporal world must be itself temporal. Bad news doesn't last. And the effect of bad news doesn't last. Because the cross of Christ overcomes all. And like all the other blessings that this man has, he recognizes most importantly, that the blessing of God's word is the thing that keeps him personally stable. God keeps him secure. But we're not talking about security now. We're talking about stability. Where your mind and heart is not shaken to the extent that it could be by bad news. But here's a man who is personally stable. He will not be afraid of bad news. His heart is firm. Trusting in the Lord, verse 8, his heart is steady. He will not be afraid. What we're supposed to notice here is that the man's stability doesn't even come alone from the fact that he trusts God's word. It does come from that. It is better to trust God's word than to not trust God's word. It's better to have the assurance and that stability that comes from knowing that what you're reading and believing is true. But that's not ultimately where it comes from. Rather, it actually comes from God's word itself. God's word concerning him.

Notice verse 6. God's word says, for the righteous will never be moved. He will be remembered forever. God's word says, the righteous person will not be moved. Okay? God's word concerning the righteous person says, the righteous person will not be moved. So the righteous person in verse 7 who hears bad news will what? Will not be moved. He will not be moved, not because the bad news can't have any effect over him, but he will not be moved because God's word concerning him says that he will not be moved.

And this is absolutely crucial, that you as believers this evening really have to appreciate what God's word says about you. Not just what you believe and not just what you trust, but rather what God's word says about you. Let me put it a different way. The legs of Jesus could be broken, but they couldn't be broken. Okay? Every bone in the body of Christ could be broken. He was not given a body whose bones could not be broken. They could all be broken, but they weren't. Why weren't they? Because God's word concerning the bones of Christ said that not one would be broken. Okay? It's not that Jesus didn't have breakable bones. He had breakable bones. But the word of God concerning the bones of Jesus said that they would never be broken. And that's the point here. That the reason why this man is not afraid of bad news is not just because he trusts in God's word, but because the righteous man who experiences the blessings of God, the word of God tells him that he will not be moved. So as you read God's word, the thing to really be looking out for, you could say in the Psalms, is the word of God concerning you. What has God got to say about you? Well, quite a lot. What has God got to say about your future? Huge amounts. What does God's word concerning you actually say? So, so much. And it's going to take a lifetime to understand and appreciate everything that God has said about you. And this is why we can praise the Lord.

Because praising God is speaking well of him, of what we know of him. Here's the exhortation. Elsewhere in the Psalms, it says that no good thing will God withhold from those who walk uprightly.

There's the blessing and the condition. No good thing will God withhold from those who walk uprightly. Godliness with contentment brings great gain, or there is great gain with godliness and contentment. John Calvin had this to say, very insightful. He said this, that we would understand that there are such blessings as material blessings.

[32 : 59] And we are meant to understand that these blessings are temporal. He didn't say that, but I'm adding that part because they are. And such blessings would be bestowed upon God's people even more lavishly if it were not for our own sinfulness.

And one of the greatest theologians in the world, clearly identifying that faithfulness corresponds to temporal blessings. Clearly identifying that here, that sinfulness can guard us or keep us away from blessings that God actually wants to give. In other words, if I can put it in my own words, that the Christian would see way more blessings than what they actually do through living by faith, if only they actually lived by faith.

Okay, Christians would see way more blessings than what they actually do if Christians actually took God at his word. The word of God will always hold true.

And you can leave here this evening with not being afraid to hear bad news. It is possible for you to be able to walk out this church this evening.

And I don't know what kind of week you have ahead of you, or a month, or the rest of the year for that matter. But I know this, that God's word concerning you says that you can walk out of this church building this evening in a condition of not being afraid of bad news.

[34 : 34] But you can only walk out of this church this evening in a condition of not being afraid of bad news if you fear the Lord, if you delight in him, and if you trust him completely, in exactly the same way the psalmist does here.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.