

02 Psalms - Two Paths to Choose in Life

We started last week looking at the *Tehillim*, or "Praises." For centuries the Hebrews really had no name for this collection of books, so they just settled on calling it "praises." When I think about it, the Book of Psalms has probably done more for strengthening my daily Christian walk than any other book of the Bible. Here is some more trivia about the Book of Psalms that I wasn't able to cover last week.

Psalms has the most chapters of any book in the Bible.

Psalms has the longest chapter in the Bible - Psalm 119.

Psalms contains the shortest chapter in the Bible Psalm 117.

Psalms was written by more authors than any other book in the Bible.

Psalms took longer than any other book to be written. 900-1000 years to be compiled.

Psalms is the most quoted OT book in the NT. Jesus quoted it more than any other.

Psalms contains more prophecies concerning Jesus than any other OT book.

In our first lesson, I wanted to stress that the Book of Psalms is the inspired Word of God. It is truth, authored by the Holy Spirit, and penned by men. I gave you four or five biblical references emphasizing that point. Around half of the psalms were either penned "for" David or "by" David, or "because" of David. (Hebrews 4:7 makes a reference to this but isn't very clear about it.) But it's important to remember that David (the musician king) was also a prophet (Acts 2:29-31).

As we discussed last week, whatever you're going through, there is a Psalm that speaks to the condition of your heart. The Book of Psalms is divided into five books, and scholars sometimes categorize the psalms into seven to nine recurring themes:

Wisdom - These give practical guidelines to life.

Royal - The messianic psalms foretell of the coming of the Messiah and His death.

Lament - These are packed with emotion, recording the writer's heart usually for deliverance.

Imprecatory - These call on God to pour out His wrath and judgment.

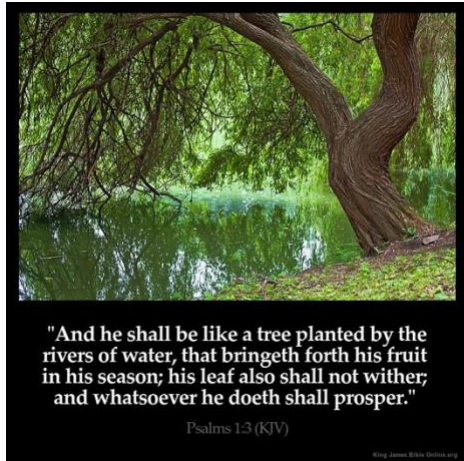
Thanksgiving - These express gratitude for God's blessings.

Pilgrimage - These were specifically sung by Jews while making pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Enthronement - These describe God's majesty and providential care over His creation.

These are the ones that we often sing as praise songs.

Today, we will start our study with a psalm of wisdom. It will contrast two ways to live the life that God gives you on earth. One way is God's way. The other way, is the world's way. The psalmist will show that where we get our ideas from, and what we allow to influence us will bring about two distinct outcomes in our lives. God's way will bring blessing and happiness, while the world's way will bring about spiritual hunger, lack of purpose, and judgment.



PSALM 1

This is a wisdom psalm. Notice it begins with "Blessed is." It is telling us a way to be "happy." It is saying Happy is he who

Verse 1

*Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*

Blessed = אשר = ashr - straight level / ungodly = rawsha = רשע - depart from path / sinners = התא = miss the mark / scornful = לוצ = make mouths at (imitate truth) **Hebrew thought - Level is the man that does not walk in the counsel of those who depart from the path, does not stand in the way of those who miss the mark, does not sit in the seat of those who imitate the truth.**

The psalm starts with a Hebrew poetic device called parallelism. Each statement is progressively intense. It is describing increasing degrees of negative influence in a person's life. They all relate to associating with the negative influences of other people.

Counsel of the ungodly - The psalmist begins by saying happiness starts by not following the counsel of those who have no relationship with God. Back in the day, people would go to certain people for advice. People would sit down one on one and receive instruction about certain problems, etc. The psalmist instructs us to not follow the counsel of the ungodly. We should not adopt worldly philosophies that embrace a world view devoid of God. Where are you getting your advice? I make a point to be very careful about where I seek counsel.

Today, we are influenced not just by those we go to for counsel, but by many other sources that promote a humanistic world view. Those sources of counsel start from the premise that there is no God. Humanism is a view point that puts self at the center, and looks to self for all of the answers. It denies the existence of a Creator who has a purpose and plan for humans. I do not open my heart to unbelievers by seeking advice from them. They have different priorities and different "truths."

Standing in the way of sinners – The psalmist's next instruction is to caution us to not take the next step in seeking ungodly counsel by standing with those who have missed the mark. The

"blessed person" doesn't follow the crowd. We shouldn't be so concerned with our popularity rating. The world is fickle. The godly person is going to find joy and happiness going a different way from the world. Who are you standing with?

Sitting in the seat of the scornful - Lastly, the psalmist tells the godly person to not be at rest in the presence of those that are scornful of God and the things of God. We should not abide listening to those who "imitate the truth" of God and the things of God. It reminds me of my time in college. I remember my first semester having some crazy English professor who asked everyone in the room whether or not they believed in a god. He asked those who believed in God to raise their hands. Several of us rose our hands and he began to berate us and ask us senseless questions about God's existence. I wish I had had the wisdom to raise my hand, and ask what in the world that had to do with English. We were literally sitting in the seat of the scornful and I tolerated it. Where are you sitting and taking in information?

Movies, television programs, and other social media are now a place where people are being greatly affected. It is an ungodly influence that tells you nothing of lasting value. Don't sit and meditate on things on Facebook that make you feel bad. Don't waste your time filling your mind with negativism and ungodliness. Rather, direct your attention to what will bring you a blessed life.

Verse 2

² *But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.*

delight=הִפּוּז =bend toward something (of need, of value / law = torah = יְרָה = lit..to flow, throw, or point out like an archer pointing a finger to teach / meditate = הִגָּה = to murmur as in pleasure or anger, "ponder" on that which you need **Hebrew thought = But his need is in the teaching of the Lord and in His teaching does he ponder day and night.**

Now to the positive switch. This is the person who gets his or her influence from the right place. This is the person who doesn't just focus on good information, but who DELIGHTS in the "instruction of the Lord." If you delight in something, there is no reluctance to do it. You will have great pleasure in participating in what you delight in. The psalmist describes this person who gets GREAT PLEASURE in just hearing what God says in His word and who meditates on it. The person that is "blessed" has a heart that yearns for and delights in focusing on scripture rather than the moral idiocy and craziness that is being spewed out by the world.

If things bother you, DON'T WATCH THEM. There are many upsetting things that vie for your attention. Don't let your mind be drawn to them. I am not telling you to bury your head in the sand, but don't spend time soaking in and meditating on things that will weaken your faith and upset you. Instead, listen to the counsel of these psalms, stand with the godly, and have your intimate associations (sit with) with those who encourage you in the Lord and point you to the truths of His word.

Verse 3

³ He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.

This describes the result and the blessing that follows a person who delights in the "law of the Lord" and who "meditates on God's instruction day and night". The psalmist is saying that such a man or woman will be like a great tree, planted by "rivers of water." On my ranch there are quite a few scraggly little trees, but the trees that grow down by the creek bed are enormous. The difference is the water and nutrients they get down by the "river." They take in water and nutrients from deep down. It is the same way with us spiritually. When we are close to Jesus, we grow to our greatest spiritual potential. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, *"¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."* (John 4:14, NKJV).

So how do you drink of that water that is Jesus? You do it by spending time talking to Him, reading His word, and listening to the Holy Spirit of God. You drink by doing what He instructs you to do. That is obedience. The psalmist says that this is the result of loving the law of the Lord and meditating on it day and night.

The psalmist is saying that the person who does that and chooses that influence will have a fruitful, blessed, and happy life. Being fruitful means that your life will produce exactly what God intended for you to produce. There is no waste. There is little time lost. There is purpose to your life. Nothing brings on depression quicker than having no purpose for your life, and having no hope for the future. God has a plan, a purpose, and a place for you to be productive in the Kingdom of God. Resting near the water and drinking of the water will grow you into all you were meant to be.

Not only that, but you will be like a "leaf that does not wither." You may falter and wobble, but you will not wither and die and fall off of the tree. If you delight in the "instruction of the Lord" and if you meditate on it "day and night," you will be resilient. You will have the spiritual nourishment to stay healthy and to not wither.

Finally, that person who loves God's instruction and who thinks on and incorporates God's truth into their life, will prosper. Prospering means that you will flourish, and you will grow strong and healthy. That's a picture different from being a withering leaf.

When you feel you're not growing as a Christian or if you feel your prayers are going nowhere, ask yourself if you are in an environment of growth. Are you putting yourself in an

environment of stagnation or destruction? Who are you hanging out with? What are you listening to?

What are you putting in your heart? Guard your heart! It is what feeds the rest of your life. It is the wellspring of your life. Be connected to HIM! Abide in Him and you WILL be fruitful.

THE CONTRAST

⁴ *The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.*

⁵ *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*⁶ *For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

Chaff has no value. It has no weight. It is not the fruit of the grain but the throw-away. The psalmist describes the wicked just like chaff. There is no lasting fruit of their lives. The psalmist tells us that these kind won't stand in the day of judgment. They will be burned up and blown away. And, those who persist in living a life of sin and rebellion against God will not be counted in the "congregation." This means they will have no companionship or sweet fellowship with believers. They are on a different wavelength. They just don't fit with the people who delight in the way of the Lord and who "meditate" (think in and live in) on His way day and night.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous means. This means more than that God is informed about your ways. It means that He is personally and intimately acquainted with the circumstances of your life. He guides and guards you in these details of your life.

This whole discussion is about being guarded in what we let influence us. I've heard it said that we should be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. That's about having different priorities than the world. So what should be our relationship with unbelievers? Paul tells us we're not to leave the world. We have to interact with the people of the world, but our interaction should be limited where we don't become influenced by unbelievers. I don't create intimacies with unbelievers. I don't share my dreams with unbelievers and I don't open my heart to unbelievers. I guard my heart and I am very careful about where I get my counsel, who I stand with, and who I sit with. I seek out people who will pray with me and for me. I need the encouragement of other believers. I keep a close circle of friends that I know will direct me back to the truth of God's word.

Do you want to live a blessed life? This psalm of wisdom is clear about the path to such a life. Write down verses 1-2 or better yet, memorize it, and do it and you will be blessed!

Let us pray.

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