

Reading: Psalm 1

Subject: The Blessed Person.

Who are we going to be influenced by in our ways of thinking and behaving? Many pressures are on us how to think and act - usually based on atheistic, evolutionary based philosophical ideas and thoughts. While these are trendy and influence so many, to have freedom of thought and action, but all are expected, demanded to conform to such! As believers we are to think and behave differently – our lives and thoughts are to be shaped by God and His ways - shown us in His word. Psalm 1 stands in its own right, but is also an introduction to the book of Psalms. What is our attitude to God, His word and His ways? This Psalm causes us to think about that. It presents the reader with two ultimate and serious alternatives for our lives – v6 *“For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”* Which are we in? The word of God shows there are only two categories of human beings and everyone belongs to one or the other. The righteous are blessed and these are contrasted with the wicked/ungodly. See 3 main headings to help us look at this Psalm:

1. Condition.(v1 & 2)

The condition of the blessed ones is presented to us in these verses. The psalmist speaks of the one who is blessed and some just translate this word as happy, but the word in the original is plural and indicates that such a person does not just have one blessing, or joy, or source of happiness, but many. We could say *“O the blessednesses of the man; O the happinesses of the man or woman”* - the fullest measures of every happy condition.

First we have a **Negative Description** of such a blessed person! Usually we do not like negatives because, well, they seem so negative! Yet for over 100 years in photography the saying was *“good positives need clear negatives.”* The blessed person is presented to us concerning 3 things they **do not** do. This is not a boring picture, one of little joy, but is one of safety and security in the way that they live and behave.

Firstly: They do not walk in the counsel of the wicked/ungodly - here we need to recognise that the word wicked/ungodly carries in it the idea of looseness, abnormality – like a boat that slipped its moorings, or a dog its lead so that they drift, go away from where they should be. The use of this word describes those who deliberately let loose from, or simply just slip away from God and His standards and are go in wrong ways. These ones will have their counsel, their advice, and they openly proclaim, push and insist on them as they deal with others. They want others to think and live as they do. They want their ideologies and philosophies of life to affect other people's lives, but the blessed person does not, for they see that the counsel of such ones are not in line with God's standards and ways and they choose to walk in God's counsel. They are not wise in their own eyes or understanding and they do not lean on such, but they acknowledge God, His commands, precepts, guidance and word and do things God's way.

Secondly: They do not stand in the way of sinners - the wicked have their counsel and it shows in the way that they live – their way and stand in life. The meaning of the word "*sinners*" comes from an archery picture which means "*to miss the mark*" and all people have missed the mark of God standards and ways, but some insist that is the way to live. While all of us miss God's glory by our sin, yet here the psalmist's emphasis is on those who make open rebellion against God and His known ways. The blessed person will not go along with such ones, not choose their way of life for themselves. Yes at one time they may have been with them, even been the worst of them, but now they've been changed by God's grace. Instead of standing, living in their ways, they now desire to stand in God's ways, to be with those who would want to do the same - other Christians. When we are converted there is to be change in life and attitudes. If God's grace does not affect the way we live, then we must question if we have the eternal life that grace gives. It does not mean we cut ourselves off from society, friends or family, but there should be a growing desire that becomes stronger as we go on in the Christian life to go in God's ways and do so with His people.

Thirdly: They do not sit in the seat of mockers/scorners - these live with disregard to God and His ways, their hearts and minds have become hard as they have expressed their hatred and indifference towards God and divine things. There are those who mock, jest, laugh at God and His ways and standards and some do so openly, yet many others do it quietly. It has been said that many people, especially young people, take their life viewpoint from stand-up comedians and their cynical, critical mocking becomes theirs. Mockers would seek to pressurize others by their ungodly counsel and sinful way of life. Yet the blessed person avoids such notions of scorn. To avoid sitting in the seat of mockers, we need to sit often at the feet of the Lord Jesus and 'hear' His voice as we read and study His word. How much are we affected by the counsel of the wicked, the way of sinners and their mocking? We all, young or older, need to be on our guard not let the world squeeze us into its mould and shape our thinking, attitudes and living, but be transformed in the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

Then secondly we have the **Positive Description** of the blessed person. **Firstly** their delight is in the law of the Lord. They are not just a bundle of negativity, but have a delight in the law of the Lord. What does the psalmist mean by that? It could mean the 10 Commandments, the first five books of the Bible and a few other books by the time the author wrote this Psalm. For ourselves we can delight not just in the OT, but also the NT. We should be thankful we have a completed Bible, the word of God. We need to ask ourselves "*Where is our delight?*" As believers we are not under the law, under its demands to gain salvation, but because we are blessed with salvation through grace, we are to place ourselves not **under** the law, but **in it** and make it our delight. Our attitude to God's word is a good test of our spiritual state and temperature! Do we view it as a burden to read and know or do we see it as a love letter, warm, exciting, stirring, thrilling us, even if at times it humbles us as we learn of God and what He would have us do? How do we react when we see His

promises, commands, instructions and principles as relevant and applicable for our own lives and situations now?

All who are pleased there is a God, should be pleased there is a Bible - the revelation of God and His will - which tells of the only way to happiness in Him. Any professing believer who willingly sets aside God's word is as a sick animal or person who is off their food, but we should be delighting in and hungering after God's word e.g. the newborn baby desires to be fed, so the newborn believer should desire the sincere milk of God's word and as both grow they are able to take in stronger food with a growing appetite.

Secondly they meditate on God's law. This is an active thinking about and considering of God's word. Jim Packer said "*Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God.*" The old puritans would compare it to a cow chewing the cud - recalling and getting out as much nutrition from it as you can. This is an important part in delighting in God and His word; that we chew it over, seek to get out every bit of nutrition that we can for our own spiritual well-being and our daily lives. "*The Bible is meant to be bread for daily use, not cake special occasions.*"

Reading God's word is good, is commendable, especially in a systematic regular way, but to get further benefit of that we read, we have to think about it, meditate on it and see what it says for our own lives and situations. Christian meditation is not the emptying of our minds, but filling it, using it to get all the goodness from God's word that we've put in our minds. All this is done so that 10 minutes after we have read it, it is not forgotten, but we take God's word with us throughout the whole day. We need both the negative and especially the positive aspects of the blessed person.

2. Comparison (v3 & 4)

Here the psalmist compares the blessed and the wicked ones. **Firstly** he shows us that the blessed person is **established and prosperous** by

using this picture of a fruit tree planted by streams of water which gets the Middle Eastern sun, but needs water and here it has a bountiful supply, leading to its fruitfulness and an evergreen state. This is a picture of the work of God in their lives. The tree is deliberately planted, literally it is transplanted. We who are believers were at one time not so. In fact we were dead in trespasses and sin, had no life toward God and did not desire Him. Yet God met with us, worked in us, so much so that we have been given new life and have been taken out of the kingdom of darkness, out of Adam and transplanted into the kingdom of light and into Christ. Isaiah 61:3 says *"to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."* This tree flourishes and produces fruit and the whole picture is one of health and loveliness. What a lovely picture of the blessed person and what they like.

Being planted by streams of water is not a chance event - the original may be translated "*channels*", irrigation channels to water, maintain and nourish the tree. When God saves us, He also provides us with channels of grace to nourish us, to keep us growing and ongoing in the Christian life, so we can produce fruit and know freshness in our lives. We call them the means of grace - God's word, prayer, fellowship, the ordinances and all these blessed by the Holy Spirit who is pictured as life-giving and refreshing water (John 7:38 & 39). We are to bear fruit to evidences that we are a believer - the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22 & 23). The blessed person has a vitality and freshness evident even after many years as a Christian, even in old age showing the grace and refreshing of God still active in their lives.

The last part of v3 causes problems - is it seems to indicate that Christians only know success and prosperity! Yet many a true child of God has lacked even the necessities to live; have known great sicknesses, died of the worst diseases and have suffered horribly just because they are a Christian. In OT thought - physical and financial prosperity were considered the sign of God's blessing - so Job's

friends had real problems with his sufferings and assumed he must be a secret sinner. Yes God can bless us physically and financially, but our focus is not to be on temporal blessings, but to focus on that which would do us good eternally and make us eternally rich. Some Christians have suffered very much and yet have known rich spiritual blessings in their lives and knew Romans 8:28 was true of their life circumstances. Do we want true prosperity or do we go after Christianity and God expecting, demanding an easy life with success and possessions?

Secondly the wicked are compared to what is **temporary and useless**. The wicked, who can be religious, moral, nice, good or even openly wicked - are those who have loosed themselves from God and His ways. Many people would hate to be called wicked and hate this description of them as chaff - the dry coverings of grains and other grass seeds which are separated by the process of threshing or by time in nature. It is viewed as light and useless. Society considers the godly, Christians as lightweight and useless, but that is not God's opinion. Chaff is only there while the grain is with it, but a time of separation occurs in nature and in harvesting. While the seed has a purpose and value, the chaff is a waste product and is still separated from the grain and just dumped on fields and blown away or burned.

What a contrast between the blessed ones and the wicked. Where are we at this moment? The wonder of the gospel is that God can take that which is useless, and do a miracle of transformation to make it beautiful and fruitful. Salvation is something incredible in this life and for the life to come.

3. Consequences (v5 & 6)

There are different consequences for the righteous and the wicked. If people will not listen to God and follow His ways, especially the gospel offer, then there are awful consequences. The wicked may prosper in this life and seem to get off scot-free, even trouble-free - a problem one of the psalm writers had - Psalm 73. Yet one day there will be a day of reckoning when they will have to face God and give

account of their lives and the way that they lived indifferent to or antagonistic towards God and His ways. Many think they will argue their case and bamboozle God with their arguments, but neither they nor their arguments will stand in the judgement. They'll be confronted by the awesome holy God, see their lives as He really sees them and instead of arguing against God they will have to own their guilt. The tragedy is it will be too late; God will judge and condemn them. At that time they would long to be with the righteous and stand in that glorious assembly of the redeemed, but they will not be suited or fitted to do so. Even if they could they would hate it. Charles Spurgeon wrote "***Sooner could fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise.***" They are totally unsuited to the holiness of heaven - what is joy to believers would be an agony and terror to them - to be in the presence of and to see the holy God.

The consequences for the righteous are totally different - they will stand safe in the day of judgement, not because they deserve to do so, but all of God's grace which they experienced in and through the gospel and it covered all their failures and sins. All Jesus' righteousness, given them the moment they believed, will be experienced as never before and they will be allowed to be there in heaven itself and delight in the holy presence of God.

Part of being a blessed person is not just our ultimate end, but knowing that even now the Lord watches over/knows the way of the righteous. It is just not a general or even specific knowledge of an individual, for the original word carries with it a sense of love and care. He watches over, knows His people because He loves and cares for them - just like a mother watching her child toddle off as they are out with friends in a park, while she sees other children she has a heart and eyes only for her own. Our Lord watches over us as believers with far more love and care than we could ever imagine or think. Even when we seem to walk in darkness, in a thick fog, in confusing or hurting circumstances He sees and cares for us. When our hearts are breaking and no one else seems to care, He knows and cares for us. In all situations of life He not only watches over us and

cares for us, but He is with us (Isaiah 43:1-3 *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour;”* or 41:10 *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*).

This is part of the consequences of being a blessed one that we know and experience in our daily lives in whatever situation we are in - we have all this and heaven too! As we close, consider which of the two groups are we in? If by grace we belong to the righteous, then we should rejoice in God's goodness to us and want to tell others so that they too can be transplanted and transformed into knowing every blessing that we have in Christ Jesus. If we are not then the salvation from God's is offered truly and freely to you this moment.