

The Profile of A Blessed Man

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[0 : 0 0] We're starting a series in the Book of Psalms today called Songs of Prayer. And the Book of Psalms is very helpful for us and very appropriate to this context during our corporate prayer service because the Psalms help us to feel and to pray.

They articulate the deepest longings and struggles of the human heart. And so this, I hope, and my prayer is that as we go through the Psalms, it will really build our church up in prayer, that it will teach us to pray and to relate to God in an intimate way as the psalmists frequently do.

So let's look at the Book of Psalms. Open it up to Psalm 1. Psalm 1, verses 1 to 6. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.

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

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. It may seem to us that there are as many different ways to live as there are people.

[1 : 5 3] But at the bottom of it, there are really only two ways to live. And verses 1 to 4 tell us what these two ways are. And verses 1 to 3 tell us about the blessed.

And verse 4 tells us about the wicked. The blessed man is first described in terms of what he doesn't do. And then in terms of what he actually does.

First, 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. The blessed person steers clear of all manner of wickedness.

What is it saying? Notice the progressive degeneration of the wicked. First, one begins to walk in the counsel of the wicked. Then he starts to heed the counsel of those who call good, evil, and evil good.

And then their wicked counsel begins to sound plausible, even wise. So then second, he stands in the way of sinners. He's no longer merely listening to their counsel.

[2 : 5 9] He now stands on their side and participates in the sin. Third, he then sits in the seat of scoffers. He's no longer just standing among the wicked.

He is now seated, settled in the ways of the wicked. So much so that he scoffs at the righteous and mocks the ways of the righteous. This is a frighteningly accurate description of how people turn from God to sin.

But this progression of wickedness is ultimately not the main point of these verses. The blessed man makes sure that he does not have anything to do with the wicked. That's the point.

He doesn't walk among them. He doesn't listen to them. He doesn't stand by them, nor sit with them. He avoids all manner of evils. The blessed man follows what 1 Thessalonians 5.22 commands.

The blessed man abstains from every form of evil. And what he does instead is in verse 2. His delight is in the law of the Lord.

[4 : 05] And on his law he meditates day and night. And the law here doesn't merely mean legal ordinances in the Bible. The word means more broadly instruction.

And so it refers to the entire word of God and the wisdom contained therein for living according to God's will. The creator of the world surely knows best how creatures ought to live.

And the law of the Lord then is the instruction manual that reveals the meaning and purpose of our existence. And the blessed man delights in the law of the Lord. He doesn't merely observe the law dutifully.

Though he surely does this. He delights in the law. It brings him joy. He loves the law of the Lord. So much so that he meditates on it day and night.

This is a literary device called merism that mentions two extreme ends in order to refer to the inclusive whole. For example, when the book of Revelation says that God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, it means that God is eternal.

[5 : 10] Not just that he's at the beginning and at the end. And similarly, when it says day and night in this passage, it's not just saying that he meditates on the word of God in the morning when he gets up and then at night before he goes to bed.

No, it means he meditates on the law of the Lord all day long. On any given moment of the day, he is contemplating the law of God, marveling at its beautiful truths and seeking to live by them.

Well, of course, he can't be holed up in his room reading the Bible all day long. He needs to eat, wash, work and do other things. So in order to meditate on the law of the Lord all day long, he must have the law in his head.

That means he's so acquainted with the word that he's able to meditate on it throughout his daily activities. Do we delight in the law of the Lord?

Do we cherish the law of the Lord? Do we read God's word daily and memorize it diligently? Do we meditate on God's word day and night?

[6 : 14] This is not a hyperbole. It's describing a blessed man of God who is truly captivated by God's word. And whose life is truly saturated with God's word.

Just like a boy who is immersed in his favorite video game thinks about it all day long. Just as an infatuated lover thinks about his beloved all day long.

Those who know how blessed it is to know and live by the law of the Lord meditate on it. Day and night. And this blessed man, verse 3 tells us, This image may not be as striking to us as because we live in an area that has plenty of rain so there are trees everywhere.

But in the harsh desert climate in which this psalm was written, A tree planted by streams of water was a powerful image of enduring fruitfulness in the midst of the hardships of life.

Because it is planted by a stream of water. The tree, though in a dry region, grows and bears fruit every season. Its leaf does not wither.

[7 : 39] In the same way, the blessed man who delights in the law of the Lord prospers in all that he does. Now, it's important to note here that this state of blessedness is not described as a reward for delighting in the law of the Lord.

But as the natural state of the person who delights in the law of the Lord. I hope you're following me here. It's not saying that if you delight in God's word and keep it, then God will prosper you.

Rather, to delight in God's word and keep it is to prosper. It's not saying that if you delight in the law of the Lord, you will be blessed. It's saying that delighting in the law of the Lord is to be blessed.

It is blessed to delight in the law of the Lord. Whoever delights in the law of the Lord prospers in all that he or she does. Not as some separate reward, but because the law of the Lord teaches us how to fit snugly into God's plan.

Which is the best way to live. To illustrate, if you study hard and you get a good grade. And that's not as a reward for studying hard per se.

[8 : 48] But because by studying, you learn the material. The good grade is the natural outcome of the process. If you practice every day, for example, you can become a good musician or athlete.

Not as a separate reward for the mere act of practicing, but because practice itself makes you a good musician or athlete. Are you with me?

The delight in and doing the law of the Lord is to be blessed. The blessing does not follow afterward as a reward for delighting in and doing God's will.

I mean, there is a reward for delighting in and doing God's law, as we will see in verses 5-6. But for now, we must recognize that delighting in the law of the Lord is part and parcel of the blessing itself.

As Christians, we can often forget this important truth. We think of reading the Bible and praying as an obligation. Oh, I really don't want to do this, but I have to.

[9 : 47] Because otherwise God won't bless me. No, that's not how we have to approach it. There is blissful joy and blessing in reading the Bible and praying, because there we get to encounter God and enjoy Him.

It is blessed to delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night. It's a joy and a privilege to delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it.

And then, in stark contrast, in a short sentence in verse 4, the psalmist describes the wicked. It says, The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

The wicked are like chaff. This is an allusion to the practice of winnowing grain at harvest time. The farmers would take the grain that they harvested and toss them into the air with the pitchfork at the threshing floor.

And then the heavy kernel would fall to the ground because of their weight, while the light chaff and husks will be blown away by the wind, thus enabling the farmers to separate out the useful kernel from the useless chaff.

[10 : 58] The wicked, in this way, are lightweights. They are insubstantial and useless. It may appear that they have substance, weight, and clout in this world, but the reality is that their ways are futile and their future bleak.

I pray that this image is seared onto our memory so that whenever we are tempted by the ways of this world, whenever it seems that the wicked are prospering, we would have the spiritual lens to see through them.

It's just chaff that the wind blows away. Let's not exchange kernels for chaff, for that will undoubtedly lead to spiritual starvation and death.

And the psalmist gives us God's final verdict concerning the wicked in verse 5. Therefore, now here's a clue that we're about to hear the final result of these two different ways of life.

Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. This likely has the future judgment of God in view, since verse 6 talks about the Lord knowing the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked perishing.

[12 : 13] So when the righteous are gathered into a congregation, there will be no place for sinners there. The phrase, And the reason for this judgment ultimately is given in verse 6.

And the reason for this judgment ultimately is given in verse 6.

The fact that God knows the way of the righteous doesn't mean that He doesn't know about the ways of the wicked.

Of course He does. But this knowledge refers to God's acknowledgement. In Amos 3.2, God says to Israel, You only have I known among all the families of the earth.

This does not mean, of course, that God was only aware of the existence of Israel and ignorant of all the other people groups on earth. He knew Israel in a special covenantal way.

[13 : 27] Israel was His people. And this same word for knowing is also used to refer to marriage relations in Genesis 4.1. It says, So the knowledge in view here is a personal, relational, covenantal knowledge.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous. And the Lord knows those who delight in the law of the Lord because the law of the Lord is the mark of the covenant relationship that God has with His people.

Unfortunately, however, God's people in the Old Testament persistently and repeatedly failed to delight in the law of the Lord. And instead, they turned to the perishing ways of their wicked neighbors.

And knowing this, God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah that the days of the old covenant will come to an end and that the covenant that the Israelites continually broke will come to an end.

But then God will promise, God promised to establish a new covenant in Jeremiah 31, 33-34. It says, For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord.

[14 : 42] I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me.

From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Brothers and sisters, God knew that we could not delight in and observe the law of the Lord perfectly.

He knew that we would fall short in our knowledge of Him. So God sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to die on the cross for us, to pay the penalty of our sins, and absorb the wrath of God.

And by doing so, God forgave us our sins and iniquity. And now He fills everyone who puts his or her faith in God with the Holy Spirit, so that we can all say that we know God, and we have been known by God.

So that the law of the Lord is no longer externally imposed on us, but rather the law of the Lord is written internally on our hearts. And by that, I'm not saying that every Christian now loves God's law and obeys Him perfectly.

[15 : 57] We still fall short. We still sin. But here is the key difference. As Dane Ortlund writes in his book, A New Inner Relish, immoral people don't want to obey, so they don't.

Immoral people don't want to obey, but they do. Christians want to obey. True Christians have the law of God written on their hearts, so that they want to obey.

That's the difference. So the law of the Lord is no longer an external obligation, but an internal desire. And though the psalmist wrote about delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating on it day and night, it was nothing more than an ideal that he strove after.

But for us, who have been indwelt by the Spirit of God, this ideal is a reality. So let's delight in Jesus Christ, to fulfill the law perfectly for us, so that we can be forgiven.

Let us delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night. Let's pray. Tutes sakere means Whichât for us, let's start with the law of the Lord.

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