

PSALM 1

INTRODUCTION

I intend to commence a series of studies upon the Psalms. The psalms were primarily a songbook for the people of God; it was used during the Old Testament, when they would sing these Psalms in their worship at the temple of Jerusalem. They are therefore worship songs that I hope will cause us to humble ourselves and exalt and worship our God. But the Psalms are also very instructive, about God, ourselves, and our relationship with our God. They are also instructive in helping us in responding to God as we find him revealed in the pages of Scripture.

Psalm 1, is probably one of the better-known Psalms in the whole Psalter, and the commentators have looked at this Psalm in various ways. Some see in this Psalm two clear ways, the way of life and the way of death. Some see in it the secret to true happiness, based on the first word in the Psalm.

The word blessed has the idea of happiness at the centre of it, someone has said that it was a term of congratulations, and therefore we can say that the man described in this Psalm is to be congratulated. But the congratulations are not based on anything the man has done by his own merits but on what God has enabled him to do. So let's look at this man that is described for us in this Psalm.

1. WHAT THE BLESSED MAN REFUSES (v 1)

It is noticeable that we are immediately faced with negatives. But they are negatives that have a positive outcome. For example when we read the sign 'Danger men at work' that sign is there for a positive outcome to stop us from getting hurt. So it is here, to know this blessedness there are certain things that the believer refuses to do. When you become a Christian from the human perspective you make a choice to follow Christ.

But that is not the only choice that you make, for the fact that you have chosen to follow Christ means that there are lots of other choices that you have to make that continue to enable you to follow Christ. For to choose to follow Christ means that there are things that you must reject. Those choices are summed up in these three things that this man refuses to do.

a) The Blessed Man Refuses To Think Like The World. - The word 'walk' means to allow or to have ones conduct shaped by the counsel (advice or thinking) of the wicked. A commitment to God, through Christ means that our thinking has to change. This world lives without any reference to God; they live without any fear of God. They live with no thought of anything else beyond this life, even if they say they believe in an after life, the life they believe in, is so far removed from what the bible teaches that it makes no real difference as to how they live.

The way you and I live and the way the world lives depends upon how we think. If central to our thinking is God and His kingdom, then that will be reflected in our living, as we will see in a minute. Therefore we must reject any thinking of the world that conflicts with biblical teaching.

b) The Blessed Man Refuses To Live Like The World - The word 'stand' carries the idea of a settled practical lifestyle. A blessed person refuses to align himself with such a way of life. Now because people of this world think differently they live differently. Therefore their standards of acceptable behaviour are different. Let me take you to the world of work, here is a Christian woman among many unbelieving women.

Now she has a clear testimony for the Lord, but at the same time she wants to get to know her work colleagues so that she can help them know the Lord. Every Wednesday the girls from work

go out to the Pub together, and because of that close friendships develop. This Christian girl is invited to go with the group, but Wednesday is the bible study and prayer meeting in her church. What should she do? Well because this woman thought differently from the rest of the girls and therefore lived differently she chose not to go because for her going to the Bible Study, was far more important. The girls at work couldn't understand this but that's because they thought differently.

Then there is the Christian man, who is invited by His employers to work overtime on a Sunday. He is tempted because he could do with the money but he refuses to do so, everyone else at work jumped at the opportunity, but this Christian man thought differently, he knew what was important and so He spent His Sunday worshipping with God's people.

c) The Blessed Man Refuses To Belong To The World. - The word 'sits' carries the idea of a sense of belonging and fellowship. It does not mean that the Christian doesn't associate with unbelievers, for the rest of Scripture contradicts that, but it means that we do not see ourselves as one of them, as one of the crowd. We may be in the crowd but not one of the crowd. There is a big difference. Perhaps another illustration will help us to understand what is meant here.

A young Christian lad goes with his unbelieving mates to town one Saturday. Everything is going normally until the lads come across a church holding an open-air meeting. The lads in the group begin to mock the preacher the pressure mounts on the young Christian to join in. But this lad understands that he thinks differently, therefore lives differently and does not belong with the world. So he goes and identifies himself with the group of open-air preachers. That's what it means not to sit in the seat of mockers.

We can say that true repentance must include repentance in these three areas. We repent of thinking, living or belonging to the world or the ways of the world. But of course in the bible salvation involves repentance from sin and the world but it also includes a turning to God. Turning to God means turns to God's word and that brings us to our second point.

2. WHAT THE BLESSED MAN DELIGHTS IN (v 2)

This man refuses certain things because he chooses better things, the law of the Lord. The law here probably means all of God's written word we would say today the bible. The word "law" speaks of authority, we here the saying "he is laying down the law," meaning he is exercising his authority. Well the blessed person rejects one authority, the authority of the world for a better authority, God's. It is this law that he delights in, that's why that Christian woman could refuse a night out with the women for the bible study. Her delight is in God's word. That's why the man could forgo the overtime on Sunday's, because his delight is in the law of the Lord.

The mark that this man's delight is in God's word is that he meditates on it day and night. It is this book that takes up his time; it is in the study of it that he directs his attention and energy towards. The word 'meditate' simply means to mutter, it carries the idea of speaking to yourself. It involves thinking it over, chewing upon it like a cow night and day, so that we can understand it, and so that it gets from our head to our hearts and therefore keeps us from thinking, behaving like the world, or belonging to it.

The pressure is constantly upon us, to go back to the thinking and ways of the world, but only mediating upon God's word prevents us from doing so. For we are so good at rationalising our thinking, behaviour and associations that in our mediation we need to ask: Is my think on this subject biblical? We need to ask: Are those actions in accordance with God's word? We need to constantly look at ourselves and ask: Are we like one of the crowd?

I can assure you that if we fail to delight in mediating upon God's word, then it will not be long

before we are faulty in our thinking, behaviour and belonging. Now time has almost gone and I have two more points let me give them to you and comment only briefly. You can go home and mediate upon them.

3. WHAT THE BLESSED MAN PRODUCES (v3)

a) **Fruit** - We have this man in picture form. He is a tree, whose roots enjoy and delight in the water. Because his roots are well nourished he produces fruit. Presumably the fruit is holiness of life and effectiveness in God's service. This fruit is lasting it does not wither, so that this man's life prospers. I think the prosperity spoken about here is described in this verse. The last phrase sums up what has gone before. So a prosperous life is a life whose roots are established and enjoying the water of the stream and is therefore living a fruitful life.

Do you want to live a fruitful life? Do you want to know the happiness that flows from such a life, then, you must refuse the thinking behaviour and belonging to this world, you must delight in the right thing, and mediate upon it, and in doing so, you will be like a tree well watered, that produces fruit that lasts.

4. WHAT A BLESSED MAN AVOIDS (vs. 4-5)

This man in the Psalm avoids the judgement that the unbeliever faces. The way the wicked think and live, is so far from the way the believer thinks and lives, that their destinies are completely different. Notice the 'not so the wicked.' The unbeliever thinks that he is prosperous and fruitful, but God says not so. From God's perspective they are weightless like chaff, they have no substance. O they may believe that they are important, they may hold positions of power and influence in this world, but in God's eyes they are lightweights.

They haven't a leg to stand on (v 5) when they come up against God's judgement they haven't a leg to stand on. No matter how noble they thought they were, no matter how right they thought they were in their thinking. No matter how good they thought they behaved, and even though they thought they associated with the right people.

When it comes to God's judgement upon them they cannot stand. They didn't delight in God's word, and they thought that those who did were weird. They never read it never mind mediated upon it, therefore they have no place with the righteous. They think like the world, live like world, associate with the world, therefore they go the same way as the world, which is a refusal of God to accept them as belonging to Him and therefore such people will perish (vs. 5-6)

For the Christian this outcome should help us to continue delighting in the law of the Lord, it should encourage us to continue in the daily discipline of meditating upon His word.

That is why that young lad could leave his friends in town that day and associate with the Christians in the open air, it was only because he knew that in the end those friends of his who were mocking, would perish, unless they too came to embrace the Lord. That lad was only able to do what he did because he mediated upon the law of the Lord and therefore learned to think and act differently, so differently that when a choice had to be made between his friends and his fellow believers he knew which one to choose.

Why will the Christian avoid perishing? Because the Lord watches over the way of the righteous. He belongs to God. How do we belong to God in the first place? By repenting, which entails repentance of the way we think, behave, and we associate with. And finally it means trusting in the Lord or in Christ as we would say, which involves turning to His word, and taking it as our new authority.

May God help us to do so? - Amen.