

The Way of the Blessed

Psalm 1:1-6

August 6, 2017

Psalm 1 is, as you know, the gateway to the Psalter, to 150 psalms, which is the really the songbook of Israel. And the psalms in their entirety, they describe the, the life and the experience of the believer. From positive to negative and everything in between, the songbook of Israel provides an outlet and an expression of praise to God and prayer to God in all of life and its experiences.

Really the Psalm 1 speaks of the of the one who pursues God, the one who God has chosen for himself, opened the eyes and the ears and the heart to understand truth. Now the psalmist provides expression for the blessed man. The puritan writer Thomas Watson said of Psalm 1, he said, quote "This psalm may not unfitly be entitled *The Psalm of Psalms*. For it contains in it the very pith and quintessence of Christianity. It is short

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as to the composure, but full of length and strength as to the matter. This psalm carries blessedness in the frontispiece. It begins where we all hope to end. It may well be called a Christian's guide, for it discovers the quicksands where the wicked sink down in perdition and the firm ground on which the saints tread to glory." End quote.

That's very true. And I think you'll discover that as we walk through this psalm together. That is a very short psalm, only six verses. But you'll see, we're only going to scratch the surface and I'm gonna take the better part of an hour to do it. So by now, you should be in Psalm 1. So follow along as I read this psalm to you.

"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; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 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.

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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.”

The first word of that psalm, both in the Hebrew text and in its English translation, is the word, *blessed*, which I hope you can see ties this directly to our study of the Sermon on the Mount. The beatitudes. Jesus’ ascriptions of blessedness upon the poor and the hungry and the weeping and the despised. He used the Greek word *makarios*, which translate the Hebrew word, which is used here, the word *'ašrê*, *blessed*.

Blessed, that’s the first word in Psalm 1. So we could say legitimately whatever is predicated of the blessed man in Psalm 1, the same is true of those Jesus called the blessed in the Sermon on the Mount and vice versa. And notice how the psalmist begins in verse 1, “*Blessed is the man,*” which emphasizes every individual. Then how he ends in verse 6, “*the way of the righteous,*” which refers to the righteous as a group of people.

So the psalm isn’t just about the individual pursuit of righteousness. The blessed man is a member of a corporate

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community. He is a member of a people who are all characterized by the same qualities. These qualities, these are the redeemed of God. these are those who are on the righteous way. The same ones that Jesus described as the poor, the hungry, weeping, the despised, all the same.

Psalm 1 here is a picture of God's people. People as a corporate group and individually, every single one of them. Those for whom Christ died; for those whom he has loved, those whom he has given himself to save, those whom he has given the Holy Spirit to sanctify. And again, I come back to what I said at the beginning, this is what makes me so grateful to be engaged in pastoral ministry here among the saints of this church. There is no greater honor bestowed among men, no greater privilege than to do what I'm doing here, to deliver the Word of God to a congregation like this, to the people of God. You people are described so accurately here in this psalm.

For you older saints, you who are entering into the silver or golden years of your lives, time is growing short, isn't it? I'm not trying to start out with a bumner. I'm just saying the clock

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is ticking. The wick is growing shorter and shorter and burning out. Time is growing short, isn't it, for you older saints? You, you look ahead to that day when as the psalmist says here, you will enter the congregation of the righteous. And with each passing year, you realize just how powerful and how true these truths are in this psalm.

If you could do it over again, you'd pay even greater heed and attention to what you read here, don't you? You think that way. I know you do. And now at this time in your life with much of your life behind you and just a very short time left, you want to make sure not only that you end well, but you want to make sure that the generations that follow you align their lives with the tenor and the tone and the truth of this psalm.

So for the senior saints among us, please listen carefully this morning. Make sure you are rightly aligned yourselves as you think about entering into the presence of God. But also pray about how you can then turn around and influence the next generations to also pursue the way of righteousness.

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For those of you who are in the, let's call it the middle years, say late twenties, early thirties all the way up into your fifties. Whatever your situation, in the middle years of your lives, you're, you're busy. Busy with family responsibilities, busy earning a living, all the while you're juggling so many things, you're trying to keep your priorities straight, right? God, family, work, ministry. And as you pursue your life together, you are demonstrating to everyone how the central focus and aim of your life is the kingdom of God and his righteousness. There is no other concern of yours in comparison.

For you, the Lord's Day is the most important day of the week. For you and your family, you're training them to think that way. For you, keeping the truths of Psalm 1 front and center in your thinking is a daily fight. It's a daily struggle. You're surrounded by counsel that comes from non-biblical sources. You're bombarded all the time with temptations to distraction by the world around you. Sometimes the technology that you have to use to do your jobs is the very thing that's trying to take your heart and your eyes and your attention away from the God that you love and serve.

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You face pressures every single day. And the trials you face, they reveal vulnerabilities in you. They put the pressure, reveals cracks in the vessel, you might say. Exposing sinful thoughts, habits, behaviors. All that is by God's good grace and kindness because he wants to strengthen you. He wants to reveal that, that he may shore it up and cause you to grow more Christlike.

Perhaps in all this, though, you've discovered how vulnerable you, you've become to temptation, to slip a little, to give in a little here, little there. Break, take a break from this blessed way. And so for you this morning, you need to be reminded of these truths. Now you already know this. You've probably memorized this in AWANA when you were just a little tike.

But you need to be reminded so that you also can renew your commitment to a singular aim, to seek God first. And to trust that in so doing, all these things will be added to you as well. So listen, those in the middle years, take courage. We're all with you in that same fight. We're pressing along, along with you.

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Those of you who are still young, just starting out perhaps, maybe in your teens or all the way into your twenties, late thirties, perhaps this psalm is most impactful for you because it sets the course of your life. By charting your course according to this psalm, Psalm 1, you put yourself on an upward trajectory which guarantees that your life will be significant, fruitful, productive in the Lord.

You ignore or put off what this psalm teaches at your own eternal peril. But for those who pursue it, in the end it is the Lord himself who as verse 6 says, "knows the way of the righteous." He's gonna be there to open up heaven for you and to welcome you in saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

So the senior saints and all of us in the middle years, we're praying for you younger people. We're cheering you on that God will grant you the grace of regeneration and saving faith. We're praying that God will give you clarity of mind to turn away from the many and the crippling and the defiling distractions of this very attractive, very alluring, very invasive, and yet all-

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enslaving world. To turn away from all that and give yourselves wholly and completely to the way of the blessed that's described here in Psalm 1.

So whatever your age, whether young or old, whatever, whatever your station in life, whatever your situation, this psalm is divine wisdom for you. And all, all, for all of you at this church, for all of us, it's really a holy and blessed privilege, isn't it? A unique gift that we have to belong to an assembly of believers like this. Precious people, saints of God committed to pursuing the way of the blessed. We're doing all that by God's grace, not our own works, but by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He's given us such a precious gift to be doing this together, delighting in the Word of God.

You probably noticed when we read the text that this psalm is filled with contrasts. That is the characteristic of the Bible's wisdom literature to teach wisdom by way of contrast. And that's, that's really what the psalmist does here. He's describing the blessed man by contrasting him against the wicked. You can see the first contrast in verses 1 and 2 is

between two hearts, really. One that is tempted by and drifting toward the wicked ever closer. He's walking, then he's standing, then he's just sitting down and getting comfortable. And the other heart is by contrast fixed in delight, raptured in the joy of God and his Word. That's one contrast.

Second contrast, verses 3 and 4 pictures the result of the counsel that each heart receives and delights in in verses 1 and 2. So the one who delights in God's Word is like a well-watered tree, strong and tall. While the one who follows the temptations of the world sinks into lifelessness, uselessness like dead chaff driven away by the wind.

The final contrast, verses 5 and 6, it pictures the end of the righteous and the wicked. Both of them are pictured there standing in the king's court where all loyalties of the heart are revealed, and sentences are rewarded, passed out, handed out. Again, very powerful imagery to paint the contrast between the way of the righteous, which the Lord himself knows thoroughly, and that of the wicked, which the Lord will judge. The wicked and his way will perish in the end.

So that's how we'll organize our brief exposition of Psalm 1 according to those three contrasts in those sets of verses. So the first point, you could just write this down in your notes if you'd like to. The vitality of the blessed way. The vitality of the blessed way, that's point one and that's verses 1 and 2. The vitality of the blessed way is found in the law of the Lord, which is lifegiving. To advantage himself of that lifegiving vitality, the blessed man must actively and constantly turn away from the dead end futility, which is the end of the unbelieving way. Look at verses 1 and 2 again, "Blessed in 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; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

In verse 1, the psalmist gives three warning signs to caution the one who would be counted among the blessed. First warning sign: don't follow the unbeliever's counsel. Second, don't endure the unbeliever's lifestyle. And third, don't seek acceptance in the unbeliever's world. All of this has to do with influence, doesn't it? The influence of the unbelieving mind and heart.

So first warning sign: Don't, don't walk in the counsel of the wicked. Don't walk in the counsel of the wicked. The Bible describes the wicked, that's a class of people, a group of people and it uses these words to describe them, the Bible does: evil doers, ruthless, tyrants, vicious, foolish, transgressors, liars, and faithless. Not a very positive look, is it? Those terms describe behavior.

And it's behavior that so comes to characterize their lives that that behavior is enough to identify them that way, as those kinds of people. When God looks down and he casts his omniscient gaze on the world, and he looks through these peoples' behavior and he looks into their hearts, he doesn't see somebody who's simply misguided, someone who's simply misunderstood, or had a bad upbringing. Maybe his mom didn't rock him long enough when he was a kid. Switched too early to formula, or whatever it is.

He sees them, instead, biblically as proud, arrogant, haughty, haters of righteousness, vile, polluted, treacherous, unstable. Now I know all of you work with co-workers, you have friends and

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neighbors, you have loved ones, maybe who don't name the name of Christ. And on the outside, they don't appear to be what's being described here. They appear to be very nice, very kind.

But you have to set aside your own fleshly judgment and realize that God sees not as man sees. For man looks on the outward appearance, that's all we can do, right? We're finite. We're limited. We're creatures. "Man sees not as God sees for man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks," where? "On the heart." Everything that the Bible predicates to these people is true.

So when God looks down at humanity, he doesn't say, Oh, how precious, 'A' for effort, everyone. Good job. You get a smiley face on your life for trying real hard. It's because of what's in their hearts that they treat others with utter contempt in the pursuit of their own goals, their own ambitions, their own lusts, their own desires.

You may not always see this, because of God's common grace and restraining grace, he withholds the very worst of humanity most

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of the time. Sometimes we see it unmasked. But the Bible says because of what's in their hearts, out comes things like violence, and oppression, and greed. They're engaged in plotting against and trapping the poor and the weak. They are willing to murder to gain their own ends. Watch out who you partner with in business. Watch out who you connect yourselves with by contract. Because the Bible says the wicked are dishonest in business and predictably bear false witness in the courtroom.

Well that's the Bible's description of these people that are called the wicked. And if you're familiar with Scripture, you're gonna recognize all those descriptions I just gave you are not my own. They're biblical language. And I can give you all the references. I didn't want to overwhelm you, but here's one you can write down. Paul summarized the wicked in Romans 1:29-31, which is, by the way, a summary indictment of the entire world in its sin. No one excepted. Not Jew, not Gentile, not male, not female, not young, not old. Nobody is excepted from this indictment.

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He described the wicked as, Romans 1:29 and following, "filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, hater of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

Sounds like today's headlines. Sounds like what I read in the news all the time. But all that to say following the counsel of the wicked will only lead you to where they are, which is the way of death. Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25, both of them say the same thing. "There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death."

Now, that's not saying that we don't make use of unbelieving doctors, lawyers, accountants, and mechanics. When it comes to brain surgery, going to court, doing my taxes, or getting my car fixed, I'm gonna choose the most well-trained, the highly skilled, the uber competent person every time even if he is an unbeliever. Are you? Christians don't get preferential treatment and a pass on incompetence in their profession.

Whatever counsel, though, I receive from a professional, whether it's a Christian or a non-Christian, I'm gonna scrutinize all advice and all counsel through the grid of God's Word. But the point here isn't about getting medical treatment or getting your car repaired. The verb there is "to walk in the counsel of the ungodly." It's the verb *halak*. It refers to the way you live your life, your aims, your pursuits, your ambitions, your priorities, how you spend your time. That is the counsel that we cannot take, we must not take from the ungodly. Because their worldview will only produce the lifestyle and behavior that is condemned by Scripture and leads to certain death and that's the first warning sign.

We've passed by that first warning sign and we come to the second. Don't stand in the way of sinners. Don't stand in the way of sinners. The word sinner here designates someone who is a committed habitual transgressor. He, there is the law of God, and he pushes beyond the boundaries of that law. Whatever God says don't do, he wants to do. Whatever God says do, he does not do and doesn't want to.

He will not be turned away from his sinful lifestyle. That is, frankly, beloved, that is the kind of person our society rejoices in, the one who pushes all boundaries, will never be told no. This is the kind of person our society glorifies in its media and its entertainment and its stories. And then to stand with sinners, that means we are enduring or even accommodating their lifestyle, which eventually leads to approving of their lifestyle and then celebrating it. And far too much of that going on today.

But the Bible's clear. We're not to condone or endure the lifestyles of committed habitual sinners. This isn't a matter of trying to legislate some kind of Christian morality that's gonna usher in the kingdom of God. Rather, this is a matter of your heart. Watch out, beloved, that your own heart does not become tolerant of sin. Whether your own sin or the sin of other people.

I'm reminded that, of that every time it comes to the issue of entertainment. To be on guard against the power of media to dull

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our sensitivity to sin. I quoted earlier from Paul in Romans 1:29-31. I stopped short of the end of that chapter, verse 32, which says, "Though all those people know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them."

Do we give approval? Even tacit approval by the things that we participate in, enjoy? Look our attitude toward sin, as we learn from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Our attitude toward sin should be one of weeping, one of great sorrow. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:136, "My eyes shed streams of water because they do not keep thy law." Beloved, is that your attitude toward sinners and their sins? That your eyes stream, shed tears at, of lament and sorrow and pain and grief, that you watch sinners destroy their lives?

Very hard to, for people to weep over the sins they're enjoying in their entertainment, isn't it? But as Paul wrote, Ephesians 5:11-12, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them. For it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

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So we can't stand in the way of sinners, enduring and approving of their sinful lifestyle.

And again, if we turn away from the counsel of the wicked, we're gonna stand away from the way of sinners, as well so that we'll be far from standing in it. Certainly, we won't take a seat with them, as in the final warning sign here in verse 1. Don't sit in the seat of scoffers. The reference to a seat here, it pictures an assigned seat or a, a reserved place of respect and authority. Maybe in a, in a king's court. Or today, you might think of it as a position of influence such as a, a political a, appointment, or a university seat or chair. You've heard before a professor holds the chair of philosophy in his department, or the chair of English department. That's the idea here.

To sit in the seat of scoffers is not just to sit down among them, but it's to seek a place of acceptance among them, approval by them. We want to be appreciated and recognized and upheld by the world around us. This has been, sadly, the downfall of many Christian colleges and universities and even, even seminaries that were once sound. They've eagerly sought

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acceptance, academic respectability, approval among the scholarly elite. They long for the recognition in the halls of the academy and they try to find their own seat at the table among those who are something in the world's eyes.

Well, that will only come through compromise, because the world is not gonna budge. They're not gonna give an inch. But individual Christians, and now churches and formerly Christian denominations, they've all done the same things with, today it's the LGBT issue, but we could go back and say it's the same thing with sexual immorality and cohabitation and divorce and on and on it goes, all the way back decades and decades in this country. We know. We understand.

We're not just pickin' on the LGBTQ whatever other initials come after issue. All of that is a fruit of seeds that have been sown for many many years, of which all of us have been guilty of accommodating. We haven't been clear enough in the church to call people to repentance for every sin issue. We pick and choose, isn't right.

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People have ignored, especially these so-called or professing Christians or churches or denominations, they've ignored the warning signs of Psalm 1. They've passed right through, blown right by, descended into compromise and the utter oblivion of their former Christian convictions, they've walked in ungodly counsel. They've stood in the way of sinners. They've given approval of their sin. And now, they seek approval from sinners. They cheer them on in their rebellious and destructive pursuits.

And becoming comfortable with sinners and sins means sitting down with the scoffers, joining them in their scoffing and sadly, that's what we're seeing among many professing, so-called Christians, churches, and denominations; they actually mock people who hold fast to Christian conviction. They mock all of us as being on the wrong side of history.

It's a tragic thing, isn't it? Because the Bible tells us that the company of the scoffer is the last thing we would ever want to seek. A scoffer or a mocker is really a fool who mocks the truth of God because there is no fear of God before his eyes. One commentator described the scoffer pulling from the Proverbs,

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these things here. He described the scoffer in this way, “the scoffer, or the mocker, is first marked by attitudes and actions that smack of corruption, discord, and gluttony. Because the scoffer walks in the same world as the wicked and the fool, the mocker is detestable and must be avoided lest his influence sabotage the walk of the wise. The presence of the scoffer or the mocker is a disruptive element to be driven out of the midst of the righteous.

“The simple gain insight from the mocker only when they witness his demise. And demise is indeed the mocker’s promised destiny. Pride and haughtiness delude the scoffer and the mocker to delight in his own derision and like the fool, to despise knowledge, to scoff at it. Such pride bars the way to wisdom and insulates such a person from the positive impact of discipline and rebuke and instruction.”

Look, that’s a bleak picture of the scoffer. There is no hope for the mocker. He’s become so wise in his own eyes that he cannot be turned from his course of inevitable judgment and destruction. Absolutely hopeless. So why would anybody want the

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scoffer's approval? Why? Not only that but seeking acceptance from the world is downright dangerous. James 4:4 says, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Therefore whoever wished to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Oh, don't put yourself on that side. Don't put yourself there. Pay heed to these warning signs. The walk, stand, sit sequence here is the way of the world, isn't it? This is how the world lives. This is how the world goes. This is how unbelievers do their thing. But notice verse 2. There is a strong contrast between verse 1, verse 2, which leads and turns to the way of the blessed man.

The blessed man is characterized by turning away from those unbelieving influence, by refusing to listen to unbelieving voices. The blessed man, he heeds the warning signs of God's Word. He turns his heart fully to God. As it says in verse 2, "He delights in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." You see that picture there? What is that a

picture of? Turning from one thing, turning to another thing.
What is that called? Repentance.

This is the lifestyle of the Christian. It starts with initial repentance unto salvation. And it continues on through life as like Martin Luther said, "The Christian life is a life of repentance." Repent from what? Repent from sin, self, allegiance to the world, allegiance to Satan and all his principles. Look, God is a holy God. He does not tolerate one sin.

And we are born guilty of that in sin, born into sin, sinners by nature, and by practice. Will any of us stand before a holy God with our sin? No. We're under condemnation. We're born into wrath. We're born into condemnation. All that we can look forward to is the fearful day of judgment when God will condemn us and send us to hell.

But. Some of the precious words in the Bible, in Ephesians 2, "But God." But God, because of the great mercy that he had, he, he raised us up with Christ. He saved us by his grace, giving us faith that we might believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, who

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died for all of our sins on the cross, taking away the wrath of God. Propitiating it, satisfying it in his death on the cross.

And by God's grace all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ are covered with the perfect righteousness of the spotless Son of God, who lived this life perfect, free from sin. God approved of that sacrifice by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. He lifted him up, raised him. Jesus was seen. He appeared to many, his disciples. He appeared to many. He was raised and ascended into heaven. He is bodily, right now, at the right hand of the Father.

And he sends preachers like me, preachers like you, he sends us out of the world to preach that message that all who listen, all who heed, all who repent of this verse 1 way, they put their faith in Jesus Christ will receive eternal life. How does that happen? How does that happen? His delight is in the law of the Lord. We're not born with delighting in the law of the Lord. How does this happen?

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It happens, Psalm 1, doesn't unpack it for us, but it tacitly alludes to it. It implies it strongly. Regeneration has taken place in this blessed man's life. The Holy Spirit has come in and made this man alive. We know regeneration has taken place because of that little word in verse 2, the word delight. Delight. The word, delight, takes us right to the affections of the heart.

Listen, when we're walking in the way of the world, what are we delight in? Sin, right? We delighted in, I delighted in getting away with it. I loved to sin and then I loved getting away with it. I loved covering it over with lies. So did all of you. Now we don't delight in that at all. Now there's something that's changed internally. Now we delight in the Word of God. We have an affection for truth and righteousness and God and his nature, his character, his, all of his perfect attributes.

And what we hate now is not God, not his Word. No, it's sin. We hate that. We hate unrighteousness. So this is not some superficial or dispassionate admiration of the Bible as history. No. God's Word causes this man to experience emotional joy,

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rapturous delight. It is his greatest pleasure. Because that attitude is so diametrically opposite of man's natural state into which he's born. We know something has changed in the heart.

The blessed man is the one who by God's grace has been awakened to repentance and saving faith. He's been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. He's received new life from God. And for those who are born again, they and only they have the power to leave the seat of the scoffers, to turn away from the way of sinners and to ignore the counsel of the wicked. Only those who've been born again have eyes to see and ears to hear the wonderful things in the law of the Lord, right?

Now the fact that his delight is in the law of the Lord, that explains his behavior. "On his law he meditates day and night." Why wouldn't he? Why wouldn't he indulge himself in what God has freely given day and night? This reveals a new, a saving relationship with the giver of that law, the writer of that law, who is here the Lord. Now do you see a relationship there?

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Well take a look at the word, law. The word law is the word *torah*. And *torah*, you've heard that before, refers to the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, right? That's *torah*, that's the law of Moses. And the word *torah* is the noun form, it comes from the verb, the Hebrew verb *yarah*, which means to teach, to instruct. So the word *torah* can mean law as in law code, or can mean and as it often means in Scripture, simply instruction or direction or simply teaching.

So the blessed man here, he delights in the instruction or the teaching of the Lord. This isn't some guy who's in love with the law code like a lawyer. This is someone who's in love with instruction coming from his God. So this is, this imagery here is one of relationship, one between the teacher, who is the Lord, and the blessed man, who is the willing, the eager, the appreciative student.

There's an intimacy implied here, a love between student and teacher that develops and grows. Especially when the student recognizes this, this profound value that he has in the Word of

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God. A pricelessness of what's being imparted to him. Like the psalmist, Psalm 119:97, "Oh how I love your law! It is my mediation all the day." This isn't just any instruction; it's the law of the Lord.

Notice the word, Lord, in our Bible. It's in all caps in our English translations. That's a reference to the divine name *Yahweh*, which is a nominal form of the verb *hayah*, which is the Hebrew verb of being, to be. That is, he is not the God who was or the God who will be. He is the God who is. He is the ever-present eternal God of being. He is.

You may remember in Exodus 3:13 and 14 when Moses met God at the burning bush. God called Moses to serve him, leading Israel out of Egypt. And Moses asked God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" Moses isn't asking here for God's secret name like a, like a code name that Israel will say, "Okay, that's the right God. Okay, we'll follow you."

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It's not about him having some kind of a, a shibboleth that they, they can, he can reveal to them, they could trust Moses to follow his leadership. Rather he's asking God, "What assurance is there in your character? What attribution? What name do I give the people?" Their trust has to be in God as God. So they can break free from the fear of their Egyptian oppressors, from the fear of those Egyptian gods and they could put their confidence in God's ability to deliver them from bondage.

And so God told Moses, "Here, take this back to Israel, say to them: I am who I Am. Let them know I Am has sent me to you." That is the divine name, *Yahweh* the I Am. And with a little reflection and thinking about what I Am signifies; it signifies the eternally self-sufficient lifegiving one. *Yahweh* has no need, no want. Instead, he has all power. He has the power of life. As Jesus said, John 5:26, "The Father has life in himself."

So the blessed man, he's come to know that God. And so he delights in learning the Word of this immortal self-sufficient lifegiving God. He gives himself to meditation, reflection,

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prayerful reflection on that lifegiving word day and night. Why? Because by constant meditation on the Word of God, he finds it to be vital for his existence, lifegiving, motivating, stimulating, provoking. Saving his soul.

The word meditation there, it's an onomatopoeic word. The word is *hagah*. And it's, it's the deep, quiet sound that a dove, have you ever heard a dove cooing? Makes that sound when it's moaning, or, or maybe hopefully you haven't heard this sound, the low guttural growl of a lion as it stalks its prey.

Hopefully, you just see that on TV. But in the same way, like the, like cooing of a dove or the, the low guttural growling of a lion, in the same way mediation, kind of refers to that what some comes out, sometimes comes out of us as kind of an audible muttering to ourselves and thinking about the Word of God.

It's, it, it's really internal musings and prayerful reflection, but sometimes it comes out as audible mutterings, even outright speech. The one who meditates often on God's Word, he, he sort of mutters about it under his breath, mulling it over, reflecting upon it. Praying it through with God, talking to him

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about it, to understand its meaning, its sense. To think carefully about its implications and how to put it into practice in his everyday life because nothing delights him more than to do what his God does.

Meditation is the practice of every true believer whose heart is inclined to live in the pattern of wisdom set by his teacher, his divine truth teller, his divine mentor. To walk as he walks. The blessed one does this day and night, which along with the passive verb tense here, or along with the verb tense, I should say, not the passive verb tense. But the psalmist makes his point emphatic here. Meditation of the blessed man is, is habitual, it's a regular habit and pattern of his life. It's a continual practice.

Listen, when you recognize the eternal worth of God's Word, when you recognize the incredible condescension of God that he who gave this lifegiving instruction, is the same one who comes to teach it to you by his Holy Spirit, the internal, indwelling truth teacher. There's no sense of burden meditating day and

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night on his word. We become meek, teachable, ready to receive the wisdom of God, grateful.

We come to God's Word, the preaching, the teaching of God's Word. We come with an attitude of reverence and humility, teachable, ready to learn with diligence, eager to work, to listen carefully. When you recognize the intrinsic value of divine instruction, you pursue it with joy, diligence.

We've noted the progression of the warning signs in verse 1 from walking to standing to sitting. And as I said, that walk, stand, sit sequence, it pictures there in verse 1 a progression from a relatively casual association with the wicked to end up in complete identification with them. That's not good.

In fact, it's the very picture of dying because the descent in the unbeliever's way goes from walking to standing to sitting. It goes from mobility to immobility. It goes from activity to inactivity. From walking to sitting. And the next step along that trajectory is death. It's the grave.

But the way of the righteous also pictures a progression. One that starts with the lifegiving vitality of God's Word, instruction in the way of righteousness. You say, Yeah, I, I can understand that, but where's the progression of the righteous? What's the trajectory?

Well, notice verse 3, the trajectory of the blessed is pictured by a living, growing vitality of a well-watered tree. You see that there? That's our second point. You can write this down in your notes: the productivity of the blessed way. The productivity of the blessed way. When our lives are connected to the lifegiving vitality of God's Word, they will grow fruitful and strong like the tree in, in verse 3.

But whenever someone is disconnected from the vitality of God's living word, listening instead to the counsel of the wicked, he's cut off from the source of life and just withers, dries up and dies. He's like chaff of verse 4. So look at those verses again. The blessed man, verses 3 and 4, "He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,

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it's 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."

So the blessed man meditates. The blessed church meditates. So let's do a little meditating of our own and see how this imagery of the productive tree provides us with the perfect picture of the life of the blessed man. First, he is like a tree. The mature tree is a picture of vitality and of strength and of usefulness. But a mature tree, it doesn't start out mature, does it? It had to grow. And growth takes time, patience, travail, struggle.

This is God's way, isn't it? To plant the seed of the gospel into the soil of a prepared heart and then cause that seed to germinate, we might call that the supernatural work of regeneration. And over time, that tree, that blessed man grows. First, a little leaf breaking through the ground. Then a young sapling. And over time, a strong healthy productive fruitful useful tree. How?

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Look at the second observation, by being planted. Secondly, being planted next to the water source. "He's like a tree planted by streams of water." Picture of a planted tree.

Planted. Hidden in that passive voice there of the verb planted is who? The divine planter, the one responsible for the life and the health and the cultivation of this tree. And when God plants his trees, when he plants his blessed and beloved people, he makes sure they're well supplied with connection to his lifegiving Word.

The word, planted, pictures a tree with a strong root system, healthy, vital. It's tapped into the lifegiving supply of rich soil and clean flowing water. The Word of God, which is always flowing and never runs dry because it comes from an eternal source, an infinite source, God himself. No drought effects this supply. A planted tree is immovable, unshakeable in the storm like the blessed man who never uproots in the trial. He may bend and bow, he'll never break.

Because of strength and supply, thirdly, the blessed man like the strong tree is fruitful and productive. "It yields its fruit

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in its season, it's leaf does not wither." Fruit is not only a sign of life, it's the sign of good health, of usefulness and productivity. Cause you realize a tree may have trunk and branches. It may have stems and leaves, but if it bears no fruit, as Jesus said, it's good for nothing but the fire, right?

So trees, the trees that God has truly planted, they are strong, they're productive and they are fruit bearing trees. If they're unproductive, God cuts them down and sends them to judgment. Biblically, fruit is pictured in a lot of ways. I, I could go through this, but for the sake of time, I'm just gonna condense it to one image. Galatians 5:22-23. What does it say?

"But the fruit of the spirit is what? love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Right? That's the fruit of the Spirit. That's fruit that grows because the Spirit is present. And all those images and all that fruit, you know where it's pictured perfectly, clearly? Christ. Look at Jesus Christ. And you see, you see the blessed man of Psalm 1. You see him, his image here reflected in Psalm 1.

All that sweet, pleasant fruit comes in its season. That is to say, it comes according to the will of God. Fruit bearing is on God's timetable. It's growing and appearing at the appropriately time. But whatever the, the season, there's another remarkable sign of the strength and the health and the productivity of this tree, this blessed man, it's that little phrase in the middle of verse 3, "and it's leaf does not wither." Isn't that something?

The most delicate part of this tree, flimsy little leaves, they are strong and healthy and living. The lifegiving nourishment from streams of water coming up through the root to the tap root up to the trunk out into each and every branch and through every stem extends to little tiny leaves. Making sure the leaf does not wither even in drought. No part of the tree, no part of the life of the blessed remains untouched or unaffected or unstrengthened by God's lifegiving water.

Fourth mark of productivity for which the psalmist must depart from tree imagery to complete the picture here. "In all that he does he prospers," end of verse 3. Trees don't plan and act and

prosper. They just sit there, don't they? They grow. My daughter, Cali, climbs on them. That's what trees do. They're there for her pleasure and God's glory. But the psalmist wants us to understand that the blessed one is one who, by constant exposure to the Word of God, by continual delight in the instruction of Yahweh, he begins to think like his teacher.

And he plans his life according to the will of God. Luke, Luke 6:40, Jesus said, "A pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone after he has been fully trained will be like his teacher." That's what happens to the blessed man who delights in God's Word. He grows strong like a tree, yes, but he also becomes an active participate in his own fruitfulness.

Productivity is not just a matter of passive growth; it's a matter of active growth as well.

This is a picture of planned productivity. The blessed man makes plans of righteousness and Lord is pleased to grant success.

Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord," and he'll do what?

"Give you the desires of your heart." Why can he say that?

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Because as you delight yourself in the Lord, his desires become your desires, then he gives success to all your desires.

In this the blessed man reflects his maker because the blessed life is a matter of both being and of doing, of knowing and planning and doing his will. So to be the living, thriving, fruitful, productive trees God has planted us to be, it requires we remain vitally connected to Jesus Christ. Now, I was going to have you turn to John 15, but just write that down. John 15:1-8. That's a perfect illustration of all of this. Productive branches remain in the vine. Dead branches are cut off. Productive branches remain and they're pruned to bear more fruit.

The blessed way is like that strong well-watered tree. And those who are described as blessed are deeply rooted in the life-giving vitality of God's living Word. Because of that, they're deeply rooted in the source of all joy. The source of all true happiness, the enduring rock of blessedness. And in the end, the blessed will be envied by all. As I told you before, that is wrapped up in the idea of blessedness.

They have their lives built on that which is like the strong tree. That which is profound, not shallow. That which is steadfast, not fleeting. That which is fixed on absolute truth and objective reality, not on changing feelings and subjective circumstances. Like a well-watered tree, the blessed are those who transcend all the little moments of life to endure to the end, not subject to changing circumstances.

But the wicked, verse 4, "The wicked are not so." In other words, whatever is true of the blessed and the righteous, this grove of trees planted by God, not so the wicked. The language is stark and arresting. The righteous are alive, but the wicked are dead. The righteous are strong, but the wicked are weak. The righteous are planted and permanent, rooted, and fixed. The wicked are temporary, not rooted but blowing in the wind.

The righteous are fruitful and productive. The wicked are dead, dry, and utterly useless. Just send them away. Anything asserted about the righteous, the opposite is assumed of the wicked. They are, verse 4, "like chaff that the wind drives away." This

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pictures the process of winnowing as you understand from Scripture, practiced for thousands of years using the power of the wind to separate the wheat from the chaff. And the heavier grain falls to the ground, while the wind blows this worthless husks of the grain, the chaff. They're discarded as worthless.

It's interesting that only those productive lives, productive according to the will of God because of the vitality of the Word of God, only they will survive the final judgment. The rest, they perish. First point this morning, vitality, second point, productivity. Here's the third point and final point, the eternality of the blessed way. Eternality. I realize that that theologically might be a wrong category to speak of eternality because we're not really eternal in the sense that God is. But I had to have something that rhymed with vitality and productivity, so there you have it.

Eternality. That is to say we will go on forever. We have a starting point, yes, not like God who goes eternally in either way. We have a starting point, but we will live eternally on into eternal life. Young people, middle aged people, take heed

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of this point. Pay very careful attention to these final verses. It's typical when you're young to think that you're going to live forever.

Ask the senior saints in your midst and see if they ever thought that way and, and then realized, as the aches and pains and the toll that this life takes on the body started to catch up with them. The invincibility they once knew as a young person, it, it goes away with time.

The psalmist, though, would have us, and you young people especially, he'd gave us to live with the end in view. If you sit in anticipation what, what will I be doing in my seventies or eighties or nineties? Will I look back on my life with regret and shame? Or will I look back on my life thankful to God that he kept me on the blessed way? That's how you have to think now. And if you plan that way now, you'll live your life so as to get there n If you live with final judgment in the forefront of your mind, it's gonna give you wisdom. To live a productive, God-pleasing life of blessedness right now while you're young. That's how the older wiser Solomon counseled young men. End of

Ecclesiastes, right? "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or evil." Right.

Keep that in mind as we read to verse, verses 5 and 6.

"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." Why this reminder about final outcomes? Because as we look around in life, it is sometimes hard when it seems like all around us the wicked and selfishly ambition thrive and prosper and get their way and will never answer to God.

That was the complaint of the, of Asaph in Psalm 73, who looked around and saw the wicked prospering. He says, "In vain I've kept my heart pure. Why am I doing this? Oh, until I came into the temple of God and I realized their end and then I thought I've been acting foolishly. I've been acting like a brute and ignorant beast. What am I doing?" He repented of his wrong thinking and returned back to Psalm 1 thinking.

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There is one group of people who make it to the very end. One group, folks. One group of people who will live forever in the presence and the joy of God. The psalmist calls them the congregation of the righteous there in verse 5. The Lord knows them because he knows their way. Why? Because he plotted it from the very beginning, set their course.

These are the ones who delighted in his Word all their lives. These are the ones who grew along that trajectory of productivity doing the will of God, planning and doing good. These are the ones the Bible calls blessed. Jesus described them in Luke 6 as the poor, hungry, weeping, despised. Further in Matthew 5, they're the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. These are the blessed ones.

They and they alone will endure to the end because unlike the wicked, when they come to stand before God, their sins have been completely forgiven. God has, he has already punished all of their sins in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ his own dearly beloved Son. When they stand before God, they're meeting the

teacher whose *torah* they have believed and loved. Whose lifegiving water made them healthy and strong, productive and fruitful.

He was at work within them both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. And they walked in the works that he had planned for them before, from before the foundation of the world. But not so the wicked. They walked according to verse 1, according to the counsel of the ungodly. They stood in the way of sinners. They endured and accepted the transgressions, iniquities of a God-hating Christ-rejecting world.

Because they continued in that counsel, because they stood in that way, they eventually sat down among the scoffers, the arrogant, the haughty. No lifegiving truth flowed through their veins. No nutrients, no relationship with the truth telling teacher. The divine instructor and giver of the *torah*. And so when the winds of judgment come, they're like chaff that the wind drives away, along with their friends, along with their fellow scoffers, along with the wicked whose counsel they followed.

They will not stand at the judgment. They will be excluded from the company of the righteous whom they had once mocked and derided, and they will perish in that way. And thus that downward progression is complete from walking to standing, from standing to sitting. From sitting to lying down in the stillness of the grave and eventually coming to the judgment to the eternal damnation of death and hell.

It's a frightening, frightening, sobering reality. An interestingly, it's the tone that the psalmist wants us to end with. He doesn't end on an upswing. He wants us to end with a word of warning. This word of warning is a warning to all those who are not Christians. And if that's you here today and you do not know God through Jesus Christ, your faith in his Son, you need to come and talk to me. You need to come and talk to one of us. There is hope for you while you still have breath.

But the word of warning is also most poignantly, it's a provocation for the righteous, to keep on turning away and heeding those warning signs in verse 1. And keep on delighting

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in the law of the Lord, keep on loving him, meditating on his word, looking for signs of life and productivity and fruitfulness. Look, if we pursue those things by the mercy and grace of God our whole lives, we will enter into the congregation of the righteous and we will hear those blessed words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master."

Well beloved that's just a brief look at a psalm that so characterizes this church. And one of the many reasons I feel privileged to serve here in pastoral ministry. May God be continuing to show his mercy to us and be gracious to us to keep us pressing on toward this way of the blessed that we, we never depart. That he would make us strong, healthy and productive in the Gospel ministry. Amen? You with me on that? All right.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the goodness of your Word, power, the strength of every line of Scripture. It's incredible to see that meditating on your Word just continues to reveal more depths and more breath of, of every single word. We do rejoice to meditate on it.