

I. Psalm 1 in Biblical Perspective  
“The Blessed Man”  
Psalm 1  
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This text for me over 35 years ago set the pattern of how discipleship is done. I think this study will be beneficial for you as a follower of Christ, a disciple and as you disciple others in your family, congregational community, small group, etc. This is I believe the template for discipleship and you will see why as I take you through it. This is God’s Word which is inerrant, infallible and sufficient. Psalm 1:1-6 says *[1] 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; [2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.*

*[3] 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. [4] The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

*[5] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; [6] for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I love this Psalm and I’d like to tie this into another text of Scripture found in Ephesians 1:3 which says *[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.* Then Paul describes this verse for the next 11 verses in Ephesians 1:4-14. Blessing comes from the Greek word *doxa* which means doxology. How blessed is that man to whom Christ gives every spiritual blessing. In life how do we lay hold of that?

I had a lady come up to me one and time and say, “Pastor, I think you have the second blessing.” In what I call my sanctified sarcasm, I couldn’t help myself and said to her “I do. By the way, now don’t tell anybody but I have the third blessing too and the fourth.” She said “I’ve never heard of those.” I was able to take her to this verse in Ephesians 1:3 as I quoted it to her and then I said to her ‘I have all of the blessings of God. My problem and I think what you’re driving at, is am I using them and are they at work in me, on me and through me.’

That is what I love about Psalm 1. Psalm gives us the template of how the blessings, cured by Christ from the Father are delivered to us by His Spirit. The Psalms are arranged in five books. The first book in Psalms are the didactic Psalms, the teaching Psalms and the first of the didactic Psalms in Psalm 1. Charles Spurgeon wrote a couple of volumes on the Psalms called the Treasury of David and when he deals with Psalm 1 he calls it the beatitude of the Old Testament. We see the beatitudes in the New Testament in Matthew 5.

As a side note, when you see the word ‘blessed’ in the Bible it has to be determined how to use this word as a noun, verb, adverb or adjective and what it is doing in the text will dictate how you pronounce it. If you are speaking of the one who should receive blessings because he is able to bless then you pronounce it as a two syllable word, ‘bless-ed.’ If you are talking about those who are in need of blessing and they receive blessing, then it is pronounced as a one syllable word, ‘blessed.’ Psalm 1 should be read using the one syllable word ‘blessed’ and then

we are told why and how this blessed man – Biblical, truly happy, joyful man – exists and how these blessings from God by grace through Christ in His Spirit are delivered to him in life.

I want to give you three thoughts about the blessed man from Psalm 1 but before we get into this study I want you to know that whenever you are reading prophecy, the Psalms or Proverbs it's important to note that the Hebrew writers would use poetry. Whenever the genre of poetry is used parallelisms are also used in the poetry. Parallelism is where they make a statement in a line and then repeat a statement that is related to the previous statement in the next line and may even extend to three lines. Some of these parallelisms are saying the same thing using different words to build your understanding of what that thing is. Some parallelisms are given in order to bring a contrast and those are called antithetical parallelisms. So as you read through a prophecy, the Psalms or Proverbs you will come across parallelisms that build on a truth or that present contrasting truths and we see both in Psalm 1.

Psalm 1:1-6 says [1] *Blessed is the man* (then comes a description) *who walks not in the counsel of the wicked* (the following builds on this), *nor stands in the way of sinners* (more building follows), *nor sits in the seat of scoffers*; [2] *but* (now in contrast or alongside of that) *his delight is in the law of the LORD*, (now back to building follows) *and on His law he meditates day and night*.

[3] *He is like a tree planted by streams of water* (building) *that yields its fruit in its season, and* (building) *its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.* [4] *The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

[5] *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous*; [6] *for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

In Psalm 1 we have the blessed man and the wicked man. The blessed man knows the joy of the Lord in His salvation and then there is the condemned man (wicked) standing under the judgment of God. It is arranged as an antithetical parallelism, but when you look at the blessed man you will the parallelisms that build on each other. In Psalm 1:1 we see the parallelisms that build on each other and then in Psalm 1:2 we see the antithetical parallelism which is in contrast.

About 38 years ago I preached 27 sermons on Psalm 1 and people have asked me how I did that but when you lay out Psalm 1:1-3 you have the priorities of the blessed man, the passions of the blessed man, the portrait/picture of the blessed man, then when you get to Psalm 1:4-6 we see how the wicked man lives which is the opposite of the blessed man. The condemned man seek counsel of the wicked, they seek the path of the sinner, they seek the company of the mockers/scorners and have no delight in the Word of God. Then there is the picture of the wicked man – not tree planted but chaff blown in the wind. So now I want to give you some thoughts from Psalm 1 on the blessed man since I've already given you the outline.

First are the priorities of the blessed man. There are three priorities given and all three are given in the negative. Why the negative? When I was in school I had to take driver's ed and that class was generally taught by a coach. Some of those coaches were not known for their scholarships in life. My driver's ed teacher was named Coach Rufus. The first thing I saw when I went into that class was 'be a defensive driver.' College coaches know the key to offense is defense. You stop the team from scoring, take the ball from them so you can score. They focus on defense in order to move to the offense. Sometimes the best defense is a good offense but they understand the importance of defense in life and so it is in the Christian life.

Men, you are particularly on my heart for you are just two strokes on a keyboard from plunging into the abyss of the death of a marriage, a life, a family, a witness, a ministry. Ladies, you are just two chat rooms away. When you think about the events of the last 20 years and the conflicts where Saddam Hussein was built, then captured and we hear mission accomplished but it wasn't accomplished. The head was taken down but all these other people are still fighting and they aren't fighting fair – they don't show up in a uniform. They come in camouflage. They also don't fight face to face but bury explosive devices that will detonate when someone steps on it. Do you see why the Bible says to put on the armor of the Lord and take up the weapons of the Spirit?

It's also the reason why the Bible tells us to walk carefully, circumspectly. Ephesians 5:15-16 says *[15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.* If you have ever seen how recon teams in the military do – they watch how they walk, they scan the area, they are taught what to look for. It is the same for the Christian life. We are to walk carefully and the Psalmist David does not leave this up to your imagination or ingenuity as we see in Psalm 1. He gives us three negatives to employ in our life.

The first negative is do not let your life be directed by the counsel of the ungodly. After Jesus gave the parable of the Sower He said 'Be careful how you hear..' (Luke 8:18), in other words be careful who you listen to and in another Gospel He says 'Pay attention to what you hear...' (Mark 4:24) so be careful what you listen to. When all is said and done the pupil becomes like the teacher (Luke 6:40). The greatest decision you ever make in your life is when by God's Spirit you come to Christ as your Lord and Savior.

The next most important decision you make in your life is your relationship to the Word of God and the preaching of the Word of God. Being careful to who and what you listen to is why the Bible tells us in I John 4:1, *[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* With this, elders are supposed to test those who are apt to teach, for these things are important. James 3:1 says *[1] Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.* What is being taught, whether right or wrong, is going to have an effect on those hearing – right doctrine will have a right effect, wrong doctrine will have a wrong effect.

The second negative is do not live in the pathway of sinners. Paul's interpretation of this is to flee temptations (II Timothy 2:22). Don't resist temptation, resist Satan and he flees from you. James 4:7 says *[7] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* What is sin? It is the child of two parents according to James. It is when the external temptation marries the internal corruption (lusts) that is still remaining in our life, then sin produces death according to James 1:15 which says *[15] Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* James isn't just talking about physical death, it could be the death of your marriage, your witness, your ministry. If you want to kill sin, kill the parents. Kill the old man internally daily and flee temptation.

When I was a student pastor doing my sermon series on Psalm 1 I was in Chattanooga and there was a street called Broad street that was an area known as the Red Light district. I was working with a man in my church who would have issues of unfaithfulness sexually within his marriage and by God's grace him and his wife got back together. Then came a second time and by God's grace they got back together and then he comes to me a third time. This time I was moved to ask him where he worked and he told me it was near the Red Light district on Broad

street. Then it kind of clicked for me and I asked him where he parked to when he went to work. He told me it was the parking deck closest to his work in which he walked two blocks and in those two blocks were stores filled with sexual temptation. I asked him if he had ever stopped in one of them and he said 'when I'm in an accountability group, being prayed I can walk right by them several times without looking and then I'll happen to stop and look, where the next day I may go in and then before long I'm right back talking with you.' I said to this man, 'I have an idea. There is another parking deck you can park in to get to work but you will have to walk six blocks to get to work instead of two but you will not have to walk by any of those stores.' I never had to counsel that couple again.

Flee temptation, don't try to resist it. What are you watching? What do you decide is entertainment? What do you watch on YouTube? What do you look at on a computer or on your iPhone? Those things are amoral and can be used positively or negatively. There are wonderful Christian ministries that have a YouTube channel. There are wonderful Christian producers that produce good entertainment. You don't have to look at Hallmark every day. Don't try and resist temptation. Don't try to walk next to the cliff. Flee it. So, be careful who you pick as your counselors, preachers, teachers and those who disciple you. Do not stand in the path of sinners. Be aware of the arrangement of your life – where you go, how you live, what you are near, what is around you – because you not only need to deal with the ear gate to your heart but you need to deal with the eye gate to your heart.

The third negative assemble with the scornors/mockers. I think this also deals with other Christians. I know I'm supposed to fellowship with all Christians and I try to but I do not want to be around the unbeliever in fellowship. I am more than happy to extend friendship so that I can evangelize and bring Christ to them, but not the fellowship of life. Don't sit or settle in with the assembly of the mocker. There was a man I tried to minister to in the church I was in in Chattanooga and he was the most negative, cynical, and sarcastic man I have ever met. I knew I needed to take some time to try and disciple him so I met a weekly meeting with him. After meeting with him for about 8 weeks, I began coming up to the meeting place, standing outside taking deep breaths because I knew that once I went in it would be a constant deluge of mocking, gossip, slander, critical and negative everything. Sometimes you get drawn to the whisperer, but don't do that. Finally, after meeting with him weekly for three months I said to him, 'With all due respect, we're going to have to go to once a month because I can't take this. You're killing me. I've done my best to try and encourage you in the Lord so I'm not going to settle in here every week.'

My friend Carl Ellis calls this 'crab Christians.' The meaning behind this actually has to do with crabbing in the marsh. Once you pull the crabs up out of the water and you put them in a bucket, you will notice that the crabs do everything they can to get out of that bucket. They crawl all over each other to get out and push others down so they can get out, but worse than that when one of them gets their claw up over the top edge of the bucket, another will pull them right back down.

There was a popular author when I first became a Christian whose name was Evelyn Christenson. She made two wonderful comments. One of her comments was, 'When someone tells you the grass is always greener on the other side, here's why; it's on a septic tank.' The other comment she made was this; 'do not make the settled company of your life, basement people who pull you down, but make it balcony people that pull you up so you can be a balcony people that pulls others up.' Now that I have covered the three priorities of the blessed man, the

Psalmist now goes from the negative to the positives and now we see the passions of the blessed man and there are two of them that are built around the Word of God.

The first passion of the blessed man is that his delight is in the law of the Lord, meaning his first passion is to embrace the Word of God. I love the emotional language here when it says his delight is in the law of the Lord, but he doesn't simply embrace the Word of God, secondly, he engages the Word of God. The law of the Lord means multiple things in context but it's most basic meaning is authoritative teaching from Jehovah and that's the Word of God. The Bible is not a magic book you put on the table and vibrations coming out of it will make you holy, no! You have to study to show yourself approved unto God (II Timothy 2:15). You won't engage the Bible until you embrace the Bible. The Bible is God's Word to me.

Recently, my wife and I were cleaning out some closets and in one of them we found a box that had the letters she wrote me while we were courting. She wrote me one almost every day and my wife wanted to look at them. I had one fear the entire time and that was we would eventually find one letter that had not been opened and therefore not read. My hope was that we would all had been opened and even crumpled so that it would evidence I had perhaps read them more than once. I realize for some reading this that writing handwritten letters are getting few and far between with the technology we have today. I don't want to stand before God and He says "I wrote you 66 letters, what did you do with them?"

II Timothy 3:16-17 says *[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* It is His Word to you. You put off, now where do you go for your counsel – the Word. Where do you go for your conduct – the Word. Where do you go for your company – the Word. You embrace it first, emotionally and delightfully and then you engage it. Psalm 1:2 says *[2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.*

The word meditates here in Psalm 1:2 gets to another word in the English language. This word meditation is not Eastern or transcendental meditation for this word is so far from that type of meditation. We don't try to empty our mind, we try to fill our mind and this is Biblical mediation. The word it translates to most aptly is the word ruminate. Who ruminates? Cows. Have you ever wondered – white milk, green grass? Here is the way it happens. The cow takes the grass and chews it and chews it and then swallows it but doesn't completely swallow it. Then they make this noise similar to the one you might make if you couldn't keep something down, and it is brought back up and the cow chews it again. They do this several times until they get everything nutritious out of it. That is our relationship with the Word of God and because it's the Word of Life. I need to be in that Word daily.

Paul had just left a church where people were dying for Jesus which was in Thessalonica. He goes to another church – Berea – they're not yet dying for Jesus but Paul says the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians and then he tells us why. Acts 17:11 says *[11] Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word (preaching and teaching) with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* So, we hear and receive God's Word taught and preached, and we are learners but we don't spill our brains out. We examine the Scriptures as they are being taught to see if it is a twisted use of the Bible or a faithful use of the Bible. We give ourselves to the Word to understand it. So the two passions of the blessed man is to embrace and engage the Word of God.

Thirdly is, the portrait of the blessed man. The portrait is the blessed man is like a tree, not a bush. The portrait of the blessed man is Psalm 1:3 which says [3] *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.* Those who have been saved by Christ become trees of life because Jesus is the Tree of Life. They are trees firmly planted. Think about that. If a tree is planted that means it's been transplanted. It didn't say he was like a seed planted that becomes a tree. We have been transplanted from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light – from death unto life into the Kingdom of Christ.

Notice, this tree is first of all, firmly planted. It is set in. Secondly, it is rightly planted. Where? It is by streams of water. The language we use in the church here for that are the means of grace. It is planted to receive the preaching of the Word, to be in worship, to sing the Word and whenever you see a row of trees in the middle of a field, it means there is a water source there. Here is the assembly of God's people by the streams of living water as trees firmly planted, sealed by the Holy Spirit into the Word of God by the blood of Jesus. They are also rightly planted – there where the sacraments are planted, in preaching, fellowship, discipleship and all those things are making an impact in their life.

What is the result? They bear fruit. Jesus defined fruit for a Christian in John 15:8 which says [8] *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.* The Christian bears fruit, much fruit and more fruit. What is fruit? It is a life that gives glory to God and shows everyone that Jesus is Lord and Savior. How is it born? It is born when the tree – the believer – is firmly and rightly planted by the means of grace and therefore bears fruit in its season. Since its leaf doesn't wither, what kind of tree are we? We are evergreens for we are always to be in season, giving glory to God.

The wicked are not so. They live in the wasteland of death and sin and delight in it. You would have too if God's grace had not changed your heart. The wicked are like chaff. When I would go to Uganda and go by these villages, I would see these women who would be in these fields with a pile of grain next to them. They had these blankets. She would stick a winnowing fork in it and throw it up in the air. The wind would drive the chaff away and the grain brings it down to be saved. The life apart from Christ is chaff and it's blown away and burned in the fire. The Lord knows the way of the wicked and the Lord knows the way of the righteous. The wicked will not be found in the assembly of the righteous in eternity.

I'm not asking you what is your way for this way of life becomes dependent on Who becomes your way. John 14:6 says [6] *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* This is what undergirds everything I have attempted to share with you in this study.

I meet people like me who had sins in their life when they were converted and the Lord just microwaved them out. Then there are sins that He has been crockpotting out for a long time. There's a key here for you as Christian today. My first takeaway is simply make Jesus the way in your life and this will become the way of your life. Put off the counsel of the ungodly, conduct of the sinner and the company of the mocker. Put on a delight in the Word of the Lord, meditation upon the Word of the Lord and you will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water which yield its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither, but if you're apart from Christ this will not be so.

If Christ is your way, those besetting sins, those entangling sins, the key is to put off and put on. I have two trees in my backyard and one of them has dead leaves on it right now. The other one, all the leaves have fallen off. There are two types of trees. On one when the sap is cut

off the leaves die and fall off. I can name some sins that happened in my life when I got converted but the sap got cut off that was feeding them and they fell off. It killed them and they were gone. I don't even think about them anymore. I have some besetting sins, entangling sins, which we all have and that's why you need to know about the other tree. This is where you not only have to cut off and kill the old but bring in the new sap, the new life, the streams of water. This other tree with the dead leaves will get new sap (new life) this spring when the new sap comes and pushes the leaves out for new leaves to grow. When you put off to put on, a way to do this is as you are putting on it will drive out and when you fill up there's no room for that which would have filled you up wrongly.

That is why Jesus tells the person who has been freed from the demon that if they don't fill their heart with Him then it will be seven times worse the next time it comes back to see if it is still empty where it had been (Matthew 12:43-45). When you fill your heart up, you drive them out and I call it full contact discipleship. This is the picture of it; kill sin and fill up to drive remaining, entangling, hanging on sin out. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the privilege, God to give You praise, glory and honor this Lord's Day. We do pray for the many who are battling illnesses today and lift them up to you. We pray for those who are affected by weather conditions and those effected by other situations, we ask that You would help us love one another well in such times. Now Father, we pray You would help us love You well and as we love You well, the One who first loved us, bless us for we want to be blessed men and women who do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the path of sinners or sit in the seat of the scorner, but our delight is in Your Word and in Your Word we meditate, ruminate, day and night. There are all kinds of things happening in the culture and in the church, so Father make us trees firmly planted, yielding fruit in season and always in season because our new leaves do not wither – the leaves that pushed out the old leaves do not wither but are fed daily, in Jesus' Name, Amen.