

January 7, 2018  
Psalms 1  
Pastor Jack Abeelen  
18TM800

All right. Let's open our bibles back to Psalm 1 this morning.

The book of Psalms is the second book in the section of the Old Testament called the Books of Poetry and Wisdom. They run from the book of Job through the Song of Solomon. But this book in particular, **Sephir Tehillim** in Hebrew. It means the book of praise, if you will. The word Psalms is a Greek word that means to accompany with musical instruments. It's the word for poem.

The Psalms, and for that matter all of these books of wisdom, are distinct in that write to you and they make a couple of presumptions. Number one, that you're interested in walking with God, and then they write to you in the present tense. They might refer to the past or look forward to the future, but it is always with that idea of helping you today to walk with God. So everything that you find in these books are designed to address your current walk with the Lord.

You don't often get to listen in on people's prayer life, but this is a pretty good book for that. You know, if you want to see David crying out to the Lord, you know the situation he's in, you can compare what you might pray to what he prayed and what he sought from the Lord. So very helpful.

And many of the Psalms are marked as far as their background, and because of that you get an even better understanding of what was happening in terms of what motivated the prayer or the praise to begin with. So it is our intention over the next couple of months to go through some Psalms. We won't bounce around. We'll start at one and end somewhere at the back. But we're particularly going to be picking Psalms that we do know the background about so that we can kind of look at them in their context.

Nearly half the Psalms are attributed to David, 73 of them. There are several that are attributed to Asaph, the worship leader, two to Solomon, one to Moses, one to a fellow named Ethan, 12 to the sons of Korah, which was a Levitical family of singers in all. And the Psalms are such that I think they give us a pretty good feel for what God who want in terms of relationship with you and I. There are Psalms that are just repentance driven, seven of them to be exact; nothing but the subject of repentance. There are 15 Psalms that are sung by pilgrims moving who are themselves towards the land of promise. There is a thanksgiving Psalm, Psalm, I think, 136. Just completely filled with thanking the Lord for all that he has done. There's a Psalm that's just completely interested in the Bible, Psalm 119. You probably know that one. It's longer than any verse in the Bible. That's Psalm 90 about God's glory. There's one about God's care that follows it in Psalm 91. There are some hallel songs, the songs of ascent, when the children of Israel ago would go up to Jerusalem to the feast days. It's a great bunch of studies for to us do.

Some of these songs will have you dancing and singing. Sometimes you'll be crying. There's an awful lot in here about Jesus and his coming. There's lots of prophecies about his birth and his character and his life and his death and his resurrection. It is a -- in Psalm 110 I think, there's that Psalm about Jesus being the son of God, the priest after the order of Melchizedek. It is the single most frequently quoted Psalm in the New Testament. In fact, there is a 180-plus references to the Psalms in the New Testament itself.

When you find people in trouble in the Bible, a lot of the times they turn to the Psalms. You might remember Jonah in the belly of that great fish and he turns to begin to quote the Psalms. Jesus in the upper room with his disciples, later on at Golgotha as well. Pete on the first Pentecost, the first sermon he ever preached, reached to the Psalms to make his point. So does Paul in Romans when he starts to talk about the indictment of God's spirit against sinful man.

So we hope over the next many weeks to get a sampling of the Psalms, and to a greater or lesser extent, depending on what we know about the background. But this morning we wanted to study this first Psalms, because it really does set the stage. And notice that it starts with the word "blessed" and it ends with the word "perish," so I suspect what's in the middle is important. Six very short verses to define a way of life for the sinner, but also for the saint.

So for three verses the godly man, that he is known for what he doesn't do, verse one; that he's known for what he does do in verse two; and then the fruit of his life in verse three. And then the ungodly man, we are told of his fruitlessness, of his separation from God, and ultimately of his reward. Now, Hebrew poetry is distinct in that it teaches either through parallelism, which means that it paints one picture and says this is kind of like that, so that you have an understanding of the spiritual things you don't see by talking about the things that you do, or through contrast, which is usually the one that's used I think more than anything else. You contrast and you compare thought. And that's kind of how Hebrew poetry goes. It doesn't go through rhymes, it goes through contrast.

I think Robert Frost, the poet, wrote that in that little poem "The Road Not Taken," he wrote, "Two roads diverged in a wood and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

So there's this comparison, what road are you on? What place are you headed? And you'll find that that's a teaching tool that Jesus used constantly, because that's Hebrew in practice. So if you get to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, for example, in Chapter 7 of Matthew, you will read about two gates and two roads and two trees and two types of fruit and two houses and two foundations, and it just continues to make that comparison so that you can't miss the obvious. And you find that here in the first Psalm as well: Two men taking two different ways, ending up in two destinies, so you are pushed to ask yourself the question, which one am I? What road am I on? And what side do I take? And the contrast makes you have to answer the question honestly. It leaves very little room for doubt.

So let's start with the godly man, Verse 1, "Blessed," the word in Hebrew is "barukh," "blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, doesn't stand in the way of sinners, and doesn't sit in the seat of the scornful."

The word "blessed" or "barukh," is plural. It doesn't say happy. That's not what this word is. It literally means how happy, if you will, or how blessed in every way, being plural, is the man who doesn't do these things, does others, and finds himself in this kind of life. It begins by saying God will pour out his blessing upon every area of your life as you begin to walk with God. Or if you will, there are tremendous benefits in every area of your life just putting God first. Makes sense to you?

There are a lot of churches who build on the false premise that positive confession is the only Biblical way to go. I had a guy tell me a couple of years ago, he said, "How are you?" I said, "I don't feel too good." He goes, "Don't minister that negative stuff to me." I said, "I thought you just asked me how I felt." "Well, bro, you got a positive confession, you know." I said, "Well, that's not going to help. Hey, I feel great, but I'm lying. I didn't get it."

I want you to know that God here starts with the negative, then he goes to the positive, right? Oh, how happy is every man who doesn't do these things. These are the things he doesn't do. These are the places he doesn't go. These are the books he doesn't read. These are the movies he doesn't see. This is the advice he doesn't follow. This is the company he doesn't keep. He starts with the negative. And you and I would be wise to get on a road that simply avoid certain things, avoids certain people, avoids certain situations, avoids certain habits and practices that will make God's blessing upon your life impossible. God will just have to withhold his blessing, because the multiplicity of blessings come from the man who avoids certain things.

He will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. Translation: Your blessing found when you don't listen to the advice of those who don't know God. Or that you should present yourself to the Lord in such a way that you are devoid of worldly counsel, that you set God's ways aside and you live your life based on what the world says. Look, the world has lots of advice. People make their living giving you advice, but it is worldly in scope. It is just for this life. It is just for you selfishly. Whatever is good for me. It is good for my success and influence and all. If success is all that matters, they've got advice for you. But I'll tell you one thing that sets you apart, and the believers apart, is where they look for counsel. What drum beat do they follow? What wisdom do they surround themselves with.

In Psalm 81, which we'll get to in just a couple of days, the Lord said to Israel, "I am the Lord your God who has brought you out of Egypt. Now, if you will open your mouth wide, I will fill it." "But my people," he said, "were stubborn. They wouldn't listen to my voice. They didn't want anything to do with me. They were stubborn in heart. They walked according to their own counsel." And then he said, "I wish you'd have listened to me. You would have been able to feed

from the finest of wheat, and with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you." But you had a different resource and it wasn't the Lord. It was the world. And so he warned us, look, here's the blessed life, the one that doesn't put its life together based upon the counsel of the unbeliever.

It's interesting how the world just gives you advice. Everyone cheats on their taxes because the government's crooked, so so should you. No one follows the speed limit, so why should you? And if you're upset, have a stiff drink. It will calm you down. There's a thousand platitudes of man. People embrace them. They become a part of your culture, part of your life, and yet the scripture says this is the counsel of the ungodly. So let me ask you something: How many decisions do you base -- or that you make, your decision making is based upon worldly counsel as opposed to God's counsel? If someone was to sit next to you and say, well, what does the Bible say? Would you find yourself going, yeah, I guess I do this when I should have been doing that. Because that's really the way of blessing in God's sight. Blessing comes to the one who chooses to avoid a ungodly advice for his life. So set worldly counsel aside. That will bless your life.

Second of all, blessing comes to those who will not stand in the way of sinners. Look, there's nothing wrong with having friends in the world. Jesus had plenty of them. In fact, he was known for being a winebibber and a glutton and a friend of tax collectors and sinners, but that's not what this is speaking about, right? He was friendly from beggars to rulers. He loved people. He wanted them to know who he was. But standing in the way of sinners implies that you agree with what they're doing, that you join in their behavior, that you commit yourself in agreement to sinful activity, to a life that's lived by people who don't know the Lord, who just -- you just join in with them. There's no blessing there. Blessing is standing away from that, removing yourself from that practice. We're not to follow the crowd. I guess that would be the easier way to put it. Don't follow the crowd, unless the crowd is the church. Don't follow the crowd.

Solomon wrote to his son in the first several chapters of the book of Proverbs, and he said to them, "My son, don't let since entice you and don't consent to it, and when they say come with us, don't go. Don't cast your lot in with them and say -- when they say we have all one purse, we're going to all put it together, don't walk in their ways. Keep your feet from their paths. Keep your feet from running to evil and to shed blood." He said in Chapter 4 to his son, I've taught you the ways of wisdom. Now keep yourself in the right paths. Walk in them and step in them so you won't be hindered, and when you run, you won't stumble. Let it take root in your life. Don't get it go. There's where your life is. Don't turn from it. Walk with godly counsel. Don't get yourselves involved in the ways of life of the sinner. Turn away.

Abraham stood in the ways of sinners when he went down to Egypt with his wife, lied to Pharaoh said well, she's my sister. He was worried that Pharaoh would say she was beautiful, kill him, take her. Came up with a ruse. God protected them both. It turned out that Pharaoh had to correct this man of God that had ruined his testimony for the moment and was rebuked by a heathen.

Lot stood in the way of sinners when we was rescued by Abraham, but instead of following the king of Salem, he decided to go back with the king of Sodom. Made his life there, lost most of his family there. Lost his influence and lost his testimony. In fact, if it wasn't for Peter, I wouldn't know that lot made heaven. Everything I read I go, guy didn't quite make it. Until I get to Peter and he goes, oh, righteous Lot. I go righteous Lot, really? Peter knew something I didn't. But that's the only way I know.

Peter stood in the ways of sinners when he stood that night that Jesus was on trial with Caiaphas and tried to warm himself at the world's fire, and he ended up bitterly denying the Lord with oaths and curses. He stood in the wrong place, lived the wrong kind of life.

According to the Psalmist there's no blessing for you in any manner in standing with the crowd, in going with the flow, in seeking to fit in and, you know, when in Rome, what happens in Vegas. It's one thing to listen to the counsel of the world, not a good idea. It's another thing to practice the counsel of the world and run with them.

And then that's one more, don't sit in the seat of the scornful. Ungodly advice, ungodly way of life. And then in progression downward into wickedness that goes from hearing to doing to now preaching, because the seat of the scornful, the place of the seat was this place of authority, the place of teaching, the place of putting it out there, if you will. In fact, the word "scornful" means to whisper with hostility. This is one worse kind of step; right? First we listen to what the world says, then we live like the world, and now we go preach to others that they should live that way. We start to pass along an ungodly counsel to others. We stand with those who held the Lord in derision. And the Lord says the happy man does not sit comfortably with scoffers and critics of God's ways.

Our world is full of humanism today, full of atheism. People who just derive your faith as something that the weak need and the uninformed take. We have a college, higher learning, that has a prevalent kind of bent to discredit your faith, to question Jesus, to undermine your trust in him, to steal a young person's hope in God. It's almost their task it seems.

We read in Proverbs I think Chapter 3, "The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked," and "he scorns the scornful." The Lord deals with those who take a position publicly and loudly against him. He said in Proverbs 9, if you scoff you stand by yourself. You're going to have to live your own kind of life. Even today in many of our seminaries across the country, there are now classes on where you can go to question the resurrection, to dispute whether Mary as a virgin gave birth, whether there's a literal hell. And whole seminaries are now setting the book of the Bible aside, looking at it as unreliable at best. Unfortunately the graduation students from seminaries, they're better equipped to be Marxists than they are ministers, and they come away with a skewed idea of the scripture. Blessed is the man who doesn't stand in that teaching against the word of God; right? The opinions about God, the world's pitfalls and perils that are along the path. But those are for people who don't know the Lord. The

counsel of the ungodly, the path of sinners, the sin of the scornful, that won't bless you at all. But if you stay away from them -- first move, stay away from them -- you'll be a blessed man, a blessed woman.

By contrast, verse 2, his delight is in the law of the Lord. In his law he meditates day and night. The delight of the believer is the Word of God. The word of God has his full affection. The word "delight" means joy, sometimes longing, right? So you want to be a blessed person, then long for and look to God's counsel and his purposes in your life. In fact, verse 2 tells us that he in his law meditates day and night. Not only does he have his full affection, he has his full attention. Here's a guy that wakes up in the middle of the night and not says, why am I awake? 2:30. Instead he says, Lord, speak to me. And he begins to fill his heart, meditating upon the Lord.

Look, Biblical meditation is not the transcendental meditation, the Hinduism pretending to be science variety. In fact, I would say to beware of any philosophy who teaches you you have to disengage your mind from normal thought processes so that you can receive impression from somewhere else. Don't do that. Don't invite the devil into your head.

Biblical meditation is to deliberately engaged your conscious mind to ponder the truths of God, to mull them over, to think them through, to apply them to yourself, to look at the implications. We're to come and to learn from God his ways and his word. So we read methodically; we're reading through the Bible. We read meaningfully; meditatively. Blessed is the man who fills his heart and his mind and his thoughts with what God has to say. It changes you. It keeps you pure and holy. It denotes a man who is godly and fruitful and blessed.

So when you're reading the Bible, ask yourself questions. Is this telling me something to avoid? Is this something I'm not doing? Is there a principle here I can incorporate into my life? Am I falling short of these things? How do I apply these truths? God, help me. That's what we do, right? We meditate upon the word of God. We delight ourselves in what God has to say. You want to be a blessed person, that's how you go about it. Set aside these first three verses -- verse 1, I should say, and delight yourself in God's law. Meditate in it. Give yourself over to it. Let that be a big part of your life.

The result of which, verse three, will be this: You'll be a tree, or like a tree -- contrast/comparison -- planted by a river of water, brings forth its fruit in its season, leaf doesn't wither. Whatever do you prospers. Your life will be like a tree that has a continual source of water.

Now, in the Bible water symbolically speaks of many things. When it speaks about the Bible, it speaks about the cleansing influence that God's word is in your life. When it speaks about the Holy Spirit, it always speaks about torrents of living water, the power of God or the refreshing that God brings. But here is a godly man in his fruitfulness, he's like a tree that has ever-supplying source of water. In both what he avoids, verse 1, and in what he delights in, he develops the kind of roots in his life that will allow him to find himself growing with the resources that the Lord has provided. He's not a wild tree. He's been

planted by the Lord. He's been stuck in the ground right here where life can be found.

And I want you to notice something in verse 3, that if there's drought or weakness or barrenness or dry seasons, it doesn't affect this guy at all. He has an unfailing source of life. If there's dry land, if there's no rain falling, if the wind blows too hot, it un-affects him because his roots are deep in the things of God, and that's the result. He'll bring forth, notice his fruit, in its season. Not untimely, not fruit that isn't ripe, if you will, but over time as he walks with God, as he remains in the soil, fruit comes.

Paul said that to the Galatians in Chapter 6 that, if you would -- would not be weary well, you'll reap in time if you don't faint.

So here's the picture of a man and a woman that is right with God. Unaffected by his circumstances because he delights himself in the world of God which gives -- he's given his full affection and attention to. He'll bring his forth his fruit in the season. Notice his leaf won't wither. He'll be a spiritual evergreen. He's always alive, always fruitful. He doesn't know anything about winter months, doesn't know anything about failed crops, doesn't know anything about down time.

I talked with somebody a couple months ago. I said, "How you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm going through a phase." I said, "What kind of phase is that?" He said, "You know, just nothing's working out." That's not Biblical. Showed him this verse. Get out of the phase, man. I don't know what you're doing, man. You don't belong in the phase.

His leaf won't wither and whatever he does will prosper. Prosper is the word for succeed. Blessed is the man, plural, in his home and his life, with his children, with his family and his church. God will bless the man who refuses the world but delights himself in what God has to say.

God said the exact same thing in Chapter 1 of Joshua to Joshua before he led the children of Israel into the land of promise. He said here's the book of law. It shouldn't depart from your mouth. Meditate in it day and night so that you'll be able to observe according to everything that's written therein, and if you do you'll be prosperous, and if you do it you'll find good success. Same word twice. You'll be blessed. And so will we.

The best test of your life is the fruit that remains. Jesus said, here is my father glorified, that you would bear much fruit. Later on the same book, book of John, he said, "You have not chosen me, but I've chosen you, that your fruit should remain, and that you should bear of fruit." So three verses, the godly plan. What he avoids, what he invests in, and what he turns out to be.

By contrast, verse 4, "The ungodly are not so. But they are like chaff driven by the wind." The Holy Spirit I think deliberately picks these specific words. In the Greek Old Testament called the Septuagint that was used much of the first Century, it captures what you don't find in our English translation here,

and that is in Hebrew this is a double negative. So it literally read, "not the ungodly, no, not so with him." It says it twice for emphasis, if you will, much one of those Hebrew practices in poetry, you don't have exclamation marks, but if you wanted to use -- to say something like an exclamation, you just repeat it. Or you'll upstage it, so you'll see six things does God hate; no, seven are an abomination to him. You'll go from six to seven or three to four. There's always that increasing. It reads that way here. Not the unbeliever. Not that guy. Double negatives.

In contrast to the towering tree with deep roots, if you will, nourished by a continual stream of living water, always producing fruit, not the unbeliever. Not that guy. In fact, he's compared, verse 4, to chaff that is driven by the winds. The ungodly man isn't planted anywhere. He's at the mercy of the blowing winds in the world. His spiritual life is like caught up in a hurricane. There's no fruit, there's no root, there's only a husk that produces no life. He is a light-weight. He's blown around by public opinion, fleshly desires, self and lust. He's just pushed around by the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience, by the prince of the power of the air. He might only believe what he sees, but he's being controlled by what he can't see. His life is dominated and he's like chaff.

You know, in Biblical days, threshing floors for the grain harvest was always on the highest mountain that they could find where the wind was strong, and crushing, if you will, the grain, they would toss it high in the air and the heavier part, the grain, would fall back to the ground, but the worthless chaff would just blow away. Chaff is like that thing you get in your teeth when you're eating popcorn at the movies. Nobody goes, oh, look what I found, and eats it. No, get it out of there. It's chaff, it's worthless. You wish you could have popcorn without the chaff, right? That's the Lord's comparison to the unbeliever. You're just blowing in the wind. Really fruitless, living a life going nowhere. He might think he's the captain of his own ship, he might think he's the master of own destiny, but he's pushed around by his own sin. He's powerless to put the brakes on. He's driven. That's the word you wanted to plant on there. The godless man is driven, but not only is he glitch, verse 5 says he's doomed. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

The sinner has a stand for now. Verse 1 would tell us there is a counsel of the ungodly. He has an opinion. The sinner has a position. He has a practice he's dedicated him to, but when judgment comes, he's not going to have a leg to stand on. In fact, when he ends up at the white throne judgment one day before the Lord, he's going to look around and realize that heaven and earth are gone. Everything's he's invested in doesn't exist anymore. Everything he hoped for in this life is no longer there. The only thing that's left is God. And he stands before God empty-handed. Everything he hoped for, gone. He built his house on the sand. He has to now wait for the Lord to open the books of his life sitting upon his table. He's doomed. He's doomed for judgment. No one leaves the throne with eternal life. Not that judgment. So he's driven by his flesh. He's doomed in judgment, and ultimately verse 6, he's damned. It says in verse 6, "The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly, they're

going to perish."

You see, ultimately there's only two roads that you can find yourself on, and only one of them leads to life. Only one does. One leads to the cross, one leads to Jesus, one leads to his word, one leads to everlasting life, to living water, to fruitfulness and purpose. The other one's a pretty broad road. A lot of people on it, popular, but it leads you away from God. And everyone that's traveling on it, the problem is, they don't realize, though they have a lot of friends on their arms, that they're being led to the slaughter. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right unto man, but it's the way of death." Not going to make it.

Now look, by nature and by practice all of us had our feet set on the broad road. Isaiah tells us in Chapter 53 that all we like sheep have gone astray, everyone to his own way, but the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all. But the first part says we're all sinner, right? We were born into sin. We were placed on this broad road. To get off that destination, we're going to have to make a choice, clearly so. And that's God's call to us through the gospel, that we would choose to follow Jesus and take him as our savior, so we could be numbered with the godly, so we can be blessed beyond measure, so that we can have eternal fruit in life.

One day the chaff is going to be separated from the wheat. And the Lord knows the righteous. He knows who is who. So the question is, who's are you? Who do you belong to? What road are you on? We can go from being driven to being directed. We can go from sinner to saint by God's grace. But which path best describes your life? That's the question. Because only one gets blessed. And it's the one that finds itself on its face before the King of Kings, and who honors his word and believes it with all of his heart, and guides his life accordingly. And then there's the other guy. He I has an opinion, he has a way of life, you have teachers that he could surround himself with, but he's like chaff blown by the wind. He's not going to stand in the day of judgment. He's going to perish when God begins to speak, and he's not going to be able to line up with the believers. He's on his own. Not good.

2018 there's only one path to take, I'm telling you. If you're on the wrong way, get on the right one. And if you're on the right one, run, don't walk.