



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

Psalm 1

Choosing Wisely For 2020

Wisdom is a curious term, often difficult to define. The Bible presents wisdom as a practical outworking of profound truths centered in God's Word. Several times it affirms that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (e.g., Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7). The wisdom literature of the Old Testament further adds terms such as prudence, discernment, understanding, and discretion to the characteristics of wisdom. As we begin 2020, perhaps it is beneficial to refresh our understanding of what a life of wisdom looks like. Genuine, biblical Christianity is not a mere crutch; it is truth that can be mined and applied, which leads to a transformed life. But one needs to accept it as truth and embrace it as truth. That is the path of wisdom. Consider the counsel of Psalm 1.

This Psalm serves as the gatekeeper for the entire Psalter. It introduces the profound concept that humanity has only Two Paths in Life: The path of the righteous or the path of the wicked. You must choose.

THE PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS

WHAT THE PATH IS NOT, V. 1: A trilogy of three expressions are described as "blessed" (used 26 times in the Psalter), which means to be right with God; enjoying His peace, presence and joy. This is the true happiness expounded upon by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. To follow this path is the result of a sober choice. It draws attention to the realms of thinking, behaving and belonging, so central to the human condition. This path rejects a well-defined conformity with the world—accepting its advice, being party to its ways and adopting one of its most fatal attitudes, that of scoffing. It represents an intentional, decisive departure from God.

WHAT THE PATH IS, V. 2: This path is not influenced by the unrighteous but by meditation on the Word of God. The mind is the first bastion to defend; the first bastion on the path of righteousness. It is the key to the whole person; what shapes a person's thinking shapes that

person. Therefore, this is the path of delight in the God's law—His Word. This term is critical for it demonstrates that the Word is not the legalist's handbook but is food—for nourishment, for enjoyment, for good, for purpose and meaning in life. It is like a wonderful, sumptuous meal that satisfies completely.

God's Word also stands opposed to the "counsel of the wicked," for it directs, instructs and results in meditation, reflection, processing of what God has said. It is the secret to achieving anything worthwhile.

WHAT THE PATH PRODUCES, V. 3: Those who choose this path will find prosperity. Using the image of a fruitful tree, the psalmist declares that the righteous prosper. What does this mean? The point is that if a person is controlled by God and meditates on His Word, the resulting actions will be godly and these God-controlled activities will receive His blessing (i.e., result in their divine fulfillment). This life will be characterized by what pleases God, what brings His blessing.

THE PATH OF THE WICKED

WHAT THE PATH IS, V. 4: It is "wicked." This Hebrew term connotes gross evil, described as one not in a covenant relationship with God. The wicked live according to their passions; they are ungodly. They may do good deeds, but they are without eternal merit when it comes to God. This path is like "chaff." It is the ultimate in what is rootless, weightless and useless. The figure is obviously of winnowing, in which the threshed corn is tossed up and the fragments of straw blow away, leaving behind what is good grain. Arguably, this is in direct contrast to the righteous, who are fruitful, valuable, and righteous.

WHAT THE PATH PRODUCES, V. 5-6: "Therefore," the natural consequence of the choice of the wicked is judgment. Before the Judge, they will not have a leg to stand on! These are the two aspects of judgment—collapse and expulsion, the natural results of choosing wickedness. (See Isaiah 2:10-21). God will separate the righteous from the unrighteous, a theme declared throughout Scripture. The righteous are related by covenant with God, live by his Word, and produce things of eternal value. God separates the two as He does wheat and tares.

The basis for this judgment is God's knowledge. Salvation is being "known" by the Lord—see Matthew 7:23—which communicates intimacy, care and ownership. The way or path of the wicked involves the entire manner of life, what directs it and what it yields. Those who are wicked produce worthless lives that will not endure.

So, the two paths part forever.

As we begin 2020, let's covenant together to choose the path of the righteous, the path of wisdom. If we are intellectually honest, all around us we see the tragedy of the wicked life. It is a broken, purposeless, heartbreaking life. But, Jesus offers an alternative—an abundant life filled with purpose and meaning; a life that is characterized by eternal significance; a life that claims by faith the promises of God. It is a life of hope in a very dark world. There are only two paths: Be careful which one you choose for 2020.

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