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Psalm 1 | Life of Faithfulness or Life in the Fast Lane
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WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Psalm 1.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

We have spent the last ten and a half months going through Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

As Jesus began to draw His sermon to a conclusion, He's given us several illustrations to make His main point.

1. Two different types of gates—one narrow and one wide.
2. Two different types of Bible teachers—one true and one false.
3. Two different types of fruit—one good and one bad.
4. Two different types of Christians—one real and one fake
5. Two different types of houses—one built on The Rock and one built on sand.

Jesus provides all these word pictures as different choices we all need to make.

As we have learned over the years, first through Mark's Gospel and now Matthew's...

Jesus draws from the OT and then expands by correctly interpreting it, unlike the Scribes and Pharisees.

Looking back in our rearview mirror a bit we see others offering choices.

We see Moses offering choices:

Deuteronomy 30:19— *I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.*

Joshua also offered two choices:

Joshua 24:15— *... if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve...*

INTRODUCTION:

The world also understands this concept of two choices.

Robert Frost's famous poem, "The Road Not Taken."

He begins...

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

And ends...

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Dante Alighieri, (Ali-gary) in the *Divine Comedy* begins,
*Midway this way of life we're bound upon,
I woke to find myself in a dark wood,
Where the right road was wholly lost and gone.*

Choices—we make them every day, but as we all know some choices are much more important than others.

Today, we see the most important choice in Psalm 1.

Psalm 1 is fascinating. I have never preached on a Psalm.

So I'm excited to share this text with you today.

Psalm 1 has had a special place in my life.

I'm guessing that Psalm 1 has been a part of my daily prayer life for the past decade or so.

So let me provide some general background on the book of Psalms before we dive in.

The first psalm is among the most familiar and famous Psalms.

It's commonly known as the Gateway Psalm.

It is from this text that the remaining psalms flow.

Psalm 1 is a practical psalm.

It introduces us to earthly happiness and eternal joy.

Psalm 1 provides practical instruction on how to feed our souls.

It also provides a blunt warning if we choose life on our terms.

The Psalms like Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are called Wisdom books.

But Psalm 1 is more than this a wisdom book.

It's been called the father of all the wisdom psalms.

Jerome, an early church father, called Psalm 1 "the preface of the Holy Spirit."

So with that introduction, let's dive in...

The Psalmist describes two choices in Psalm 1—similar to Jesus's conclusion to The Sermon on the Mount.

For the Psalmist, the subject matter is straightforward:

Every person must decide: 1) God's way 2) Your way

It doesn't matter if you're a young person living at home.

Whether you're a young adult and newly married,

Or single and building your career.

Maybe you're middle age and need to tweak some of the choices that you've made.

Perhaps, you're retired and settling into a new season of life.

Regardless, each one of us must choose—and constantly be choosing.

What exactly are these two choices?

1. Life of Faithfulness (God's Way)
2. Life in the Fast Lane (Your Way)

And do these options that mean for you today? Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 1 (ESV)

Psalm 1:1—*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;*

Psalm 1:2— *but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Psalm 1:3— *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.*

Psalm 1:4— *The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

Psalm 1:5— *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

Psalm 1:6— *for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

*These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible
Word of Almighty God.*

PRAY:

Father, your Word is exceedingly pure; We love you and love your Word. Please teach us today a deeper understanding of the beauty, richness, and consequences of Psalm 1.

EXEGESIS:

Psalm 1:1—*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;*

Psalm 1:2—*but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

The Psalmist starts with the heart of the matter.
And the heart of the matter is sin.

As humans, sin has stained every aspect of our lives—especially our decision-making.

Apart from the Lord, we make awful decisions.

Psalm 1 starts with a primary and profound thought—we need a relationship with God.

It's within this relationship that God gives us a new heart—a new “chooser.”

This idea of blessing is divine favor.

So this Hebrew poem starts with...

"Blessed is the man" — paints the picture that God highly favors this man.

Because God favors this man, he is happy and joyful—regardless of his circumstances.

This man has a deep sense of well-being—it is well with his soul regardless of the chaos around him.

Your translations say—

"How happy is the man ..."

This is not the superficial happiness that comes and goes based on external circumstances, but a profound internal joy that only comes from God's grace.

So what Psalm 1 does is offer true, lasting happiness.

And it does so by presenting a series of comparisons and contrasts between the righteous and the wicked.

It describes two kinds of people living two types of lives resulting in two different outcomes.

Once again very similar to Jesus closing the Sermon on the Mount.

This first man in Psalm 1 is known for what he does not do.

It's one choice revealed by three different illustrations.

Psalm 1:1—*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;*

So even though it's one choice illustrated three ways, we do see a progression of sin.

Charles Spurgeon said,

"When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely *walk* in the counsel of the careless and *ungodly*, who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they *stand* in the way of open *sinner*s who willfully violate God's commandments;

and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they *sit in the seat of the scoffers*. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation they are installed.”

Here’s the thing—we’ve all experienced this spiral of sin to some degree.

So even though the Psalmist first takes the perspective of what the blessed man does not do—I want to teach it from the other angle.

Because we can learn from our own mistakes by remembering our own stupidity.

1. We walk (Temporary activity). We’ve walked into places where we should have never been.
2. We then stop and stand (Contemplative/thoughtful/meditative stance)
3. Finally, we sit down (Permanent situation)

Do you have your own story playing in the back of your mind?

I sure do—and I’m ashamed of it.

It's as if the Psalmist peels back the layers on the one choice of not following God into three stages of life.

All three stages contribute to the one choice we’ve made—and that is living life in the fast lane.

So let's think about this.

Walking with sinful people paints the picture of them influencing you.

You begin to laugh at sin on talk shows and movies.

You listen to music that makes sin sound appealing.

You respect a celebrity who openly mocks God.

You listen to what the wicked say.

You laugh at the dirty jokes of a neighbor.

You admire an ungodly person at work.

You spend more and more time with questionable friends.

As you do all these things—

You start to meditate on sin, although you might not call it that.

But look at what happens next in the Psalm

The godly man doesn't stand in the way of sinners,

But we have.

The word "way" refers to a lifestyle.

Their sinful lifestyle becomes your lifestyle;

Their attitude becomes your attitude;

Their habits become your habits.

There is no better example of standing with sinners than the church embracing sexual sin over the past decade or so.

We're in the month of June.

Somehow June is now known as Pride Month.

So let's get this straight,

We have:

- New Years Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Groundhog Day
- Valentine's Day
- St. Patrick's Day
- Palm Sunday
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Tax Day
- Mother's Day
- Memorial Day
- Father's Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Election Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Black Friday
- Christmas Day

And yet somehow and in some way, the world wants us to celebrate sexual sin for an entire month?

They equivocate that Pride month is the same as celebrating Black History Month, and the church has bought the into the lie.

Psalm 1 is a perfect example of how the church slowly changes by standing with sinners.

“Can a woman be a pastor? What is a woman?”

Talk about swimming in the shallow end of the pool!

The Psalmist moves goes on to say that the Godly man doesn't *sit in the seat of scoffers*.

Scoffers are funny—they'll make you laugh as you turn away from God.

They tell vulgar jokes.

They call 'good' evil and 'evil' good.

They want to make you feel stupid for trying to follow God.

"How can you say that marriage is only between one man and one woman?"

"The Bible is so outdated."

"What about two consenting adults that love one another?"

Outspoken atheist are a classic example of this.

These guys are so smug and clever.

They work the crowd to laugh and cheer as they mock God and crucify Christians.

If you listen to these guys long enough, the Psalmist says you will walk in their counsel—not God's.

You will take your stand with them—and not the church.

But in verse two, things change.

And now we learn what a blessed man does.

Psalm 1:2— *but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

How do you delight in God's Law?

Only by being born again.

Only by confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Only by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in your life does anyone find delight in the Bible.

The word "law" is the Hebrew word *Torah*, which means instruction.

So for the original audience, their delight is in the instruction that comes from reading the OT.

For us today, our delight comes from reading the whole counsel of God.

The word "meditate" means to murmur or to mutter.

It has the sense of talking to yourself, speaking under your breath as you ponder God's Word.

This is an ongoing action.

The blessed man ponders God's Word "day and night."

Think of it like a software program or a firewall / security system always running in the background on your computer to protect you from viruses.

Pondering, considering, and contemplating God's Word releases its flavor as we chew on it over time.

Psalm 1:3— *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.*

God uses the illustration of a beautiful tree.

Notice that this tree—this godly man—does not grow in the wild—it's not in the forest.

This tree has been carefully planted by a stream of water.

In other words, this tree has been chosen and placed.

The picture is that a landscaper/gardener is caring for this tree.

In the same way, God chooses where to place us for our good and His glory.

This tree is placed permanently.

It is a deeply rooted and well-fed tree.

And because this tree is healthy and cared for, it does two things.

1. It produces good fruit.
2. It offers shade/protection for the birds.

But now we come to a word that the prosperity preachers love in verse three—*prosperity*.

“In all that he does he prospers.”

In this context, prosperity means "to succeed, to accomplish the work."

It's not about financial prosperity.

It's not referring to the health and wealth gospel.

All we have to do is look at the life of Jesus.

Jesus is the blessed man in this psalm.

And He accomplished his work through the cross.

Jesus *prospered* through suffering.

He accomplished His work through death and the resurrection.

So if we want to use a financial term we would say this—

In God's economy, suffering and humiliation equal Biblical prosperity.

However, the pain and suffering are not pointless.

As we've already seen, God has planted us right where we are so that we can suffer well and suffer for the glory of God.

Psalm 1:4— *The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

This is peculiar—No one watches over the wicked.

No one protects and blesses them.

They only watch over themselves.

The Psalmist now uses a farming illustration to illustrate this.

The picture here is of a threshing floor during the grain harvest.

Threshing floors are placed on hills where its windy.

Grain is crushed, then pitched high, where the wind blows the chaff away.

The grain falls back to the threshing floor and is gathered for use.

The wicked are like chaff in two senses.

1. Chaff is worthless, and 2 chaff is burned.

The Psalmist says that the wicked life is futile, empty, and worthless.

But it gets worse—because the wicked will be judged for making the wrong choice.

Psalm 1:5— *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

Psalm 1:6— *for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

King Solomon wrote,

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death (Prov. 14:12).

Death is the way of the wicked.

Eternal conscious death—in a very real place called hell— is the result of making the wrong choice apart from God.

Life is the result of making the right choice.

Jesus is our example.

He is the blessed man in Psalm 1.

In John 14:6, Jesus said, ***“I’m the way and the truth and the life.”***

PREACH:

Black Ice story.

Psalm is that man with that warning.

PRAYER

BENEDICTION

(May) the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

MOVEMENTS:

The first movement is a precursor to verse one. It is a downward movement with the reality that apart from God we will always make wicked decisions.

The second movement is upward in verses one, two and three. Blessed and/or happy people meditate on God’s Word, thus making godly decisions. The Psalmist provides a beautiful example of a godly man resembling a tree producing good fruit.

The third movement is downward. Verses five and six reveal the consequences of living life ‘in the fast lane.’

The fourth movement is upward and relates to the main point within this sermon. God has given us the ability to choose—choose wisely. Choose a life of faithfulness.

REFLECTION:

I have learned many things from this seminar. The biggest takeaway comes from the use of illustrations and the various types of illustrations that are available. I generally use Biblical illustrations because I want people to learn the whole counsel of God. However, I'm also learning the value of including real world illustrations. I specifically used several real-world illustrations in this particular sermon to get me out of my comfort zone. I'm still not sure if it conveyed the message well. It still feels uncomfortable, awkward and forced on my end.

I have also learned a lot by discovering the movements within the passage compared to looking at the verses. However, I feel as if I'm still not thorough enough to make a single point. There is a tension that I have with the movements compared to the verses. Regardless, being pushed out of my comfort zone has been good.

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