

We find ourselves tonight entering into that section of scripture found in the center of your bible, the book of Psalms.

## Psalm 1

It's been said for every "sigh" there's a psalm, and no doubt for every "high" there's a psalm. and I suppose that's why the psalms are so dear to so many of us because the full gamut, the entire spectrum of human emotion is explored throughout this book. There's no desperation, or exasperation, there's no sense of loneliness or frustration that you've ever experienced that you won't find articulated in the psalms, there's no joy or happiness, satisfaction or contentment that you've come into that you won't find articulated in the psalms. J. Vernon McGee said, "The Psalms record deep devotion, intense feeling, exalted emotion, and dark dejection. They play upon the keyboard of the human soul with all the stops pulled out."<sup>1</sup> There's no thought or impulse or emotion that sweeps over the soul that's not recorded in this book.

And As you've perhaps heard before not only are the Psalms a "hymn book" of the scriptures they're also a "Him-book" of the scriptures, Christ is woven all throughout the psalms. Remember when Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection and they were all standing there mystified, stupefied, and in disbelief. and He said to them, "'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." So we'll find the psalms absolutely full of Christ, and in certain ways the psalms give us an even clearer picture of Christ than do the gospels. What I mean by that is this. The gospels tell us that Jesus went into the mountains to pray, the psalms record His prayer. The gospels tell us He was crucified, the Psalms tell us what was going on in His heart, in His mind while He was being crucified. Truly the Psalms are a "Him-book" a book all about Him, even as the word tells us that in volume of the book, it is written of Him.

The psalms have been referred to as the anatomy of the soul, and out of the 219 quotes in the NT from the OT 116 of them are found in the psalms.

Now, these psalms, or songs, were no doubt at one time arranged to music, but when you read Hebrew poetry understand that they don't measure poetry like we do in the west. In the west it's about rhyme and meter. When it comes to the psalms or Hebrew poetry, rhyming and meter aren't really focused on at all. It revolves around what's called poetic "parallelism." Which is the repetition of a meaning in parallel expressions, and there are of course different aspects to parallelism. There's synonymous parallelism which obviously builds on a single thought pattern expressing it and expanding on it throughout a verse. There's "antithetical" parallelism which balances parallel elements through the opposition or sharp contrast of thoughts. "In the morning it flourishes and is renewed, in the evening it withers and fades."

There is “emblematic” parallelism which uses one thought to bring illumination to another through metaphor. “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.” and There are a number of things like that which comprise the structure of Hebrew poetry and I say all that to simply say this, when the words don’t rhyme don’t be dismayed, they’re not supposed to. The psalms are structured completely different than western poetry or song structure. Of course there are historical psalms, eschatological or prophetic psalms; there are Messianic psalms, or psalms written regarding the Messiah specifically. There are psalms of national lament, of thanksgiving and praise, psalms of worship, adulation and exaltation; truly they touch the full spectrum of the human experience and emotion.

The Psalms can be divided into 5 particular portions each section ending with a doxology, or praises unto God. and The divisions are Psalms 1-41, then Ch 42-72, Ch’s 73-89, Ps 90-106, and finally Ps 107-150. You should also know that the Psalms weren’t written by 1 person in 1 time period, but by several people over a time period of about 1,000 yrs. David “The sweet Psalmist of Israel” wrote the majority of them 73 designated to him in the Psalms, 2 more he’s given credit for in the NT which are anonymous in the Psalms for a total of 75 written by David. (and Possibly several more because there are a number of Psalms who remain anonymous as concerning human author. But we’ll find a Psalm or Psalms from the sons of Korah, from Asaph, Heman, from Solomon and Moses. Again others that there’s a bit of uncertainty concerning, perhaps Ezra. The bottom line is like the rest of the scriptures, the Holy Spirit is the author, the human instrument is peripheral at best. So with that we want to begin this book of prayer and praise and see what it is that God may have for us presently, and personally.

Beginning here is Psalm 1 we have before us a Psalm that considers 2 men, 2 ways, and 2 results. and It’s said in several different ways, we can dance around on semantics all day but the bottom line is that there are only 2 types of people in this world, the righteous, and the un-righteous, the godly, and the ungodly, each of them have their way, and each wind up with results. The Psalmist observes.

Vs1-3

Now it doesn’t get a whole lot more practical than what we’re reading right here. I don’t think anyone would honestly stand up and say, “I don’t want to lead a blessed life; I’m content in the pit of despondency and despair, hopelessness and depression.” Hey we all want to be blessed, what we have before us is really the pathway to the blessed life. Now, this word “Blessed” here in Vs 1 is the word “esher” it speaks of happiness, perhaps we could understand it, “Oh the bliss of the man.” Now the word “esher” comes from the word “ashar” which speaks of “being straight” or “being right” and the idea here that’s ultimately being communicated is that there is contentment found in life, happiness and just this state of being blessed in being right with or “straight” with God. The righteous man is a happy man.

Notice it doesn't say "Blessed is the rich," or "Blessed is the scholar," or "Blessed is the one who has platform or position in people's lives," but simply, "Blessed is the man." This blessing from God is attainable to anyone who's simply willing to receive it, to walk in it. Your social status or the amount of money you have is irrelevant to this promise.

We recognize that there are things negative and things positive that this man does. To the negative there are 3 things that he won't do. #1 He won't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, #2 he won't stand in the path of sinners, and #3 he won't sit in the seat of the scornful. He won't venture down the destructive path of worldly reasoning. The bible says that we're to be in the world, but not of the world. and No doubt it's rightly recognized that what we have here is a progressive pattern of sinking deeper and deeper into a sinful lifestyle. At 1<sup>st</sup> it's a walk, kind of a casual yet forward progression with the ungodly, then he goes from walking to "standing" with them, hanging around the ungodly and from standing he finds himself "sitting" which speaks of the full on fellowship of the ungodly, those who mock God, His word, His ways. Of course we see this particular pattern exemplified in Peter when the Lord told him to flee but He insisted on walking with the crowd that was leading Jesus to His trial. Next thing he knew he was standing with the ungodly, from there sitting around the campfire warming himself with the enemy and as you well know it led to his own denial of the Lord 3 times.

Now, there are a couple of things we need to realize here. # 1 In order to not walk in ungodly counsel we need to be able to recognize ungodly counsel. The bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." Prov 14:12 Too many times I fear people are seeking advice and they're looking for advice that lines up with their opinion but they're not really stopping to consider whether or not the counsel they're getting is "godly" counsel. Rooted and supported by the word of God, obviously God's word is the best counsel we're ever going to get. If you can't find advice in God's word, find someone who can find it for you, point you to the principles and precepts found therein. Don't just look for someone who'll tell you what you want to hear. "I don't know why you ever married that jerk in the 1<sup>st</sup> place!" "How can you stand to live with her, get rid of her!" "Hey man, you just need to lose yourself in the bottom of a bottle and forget life for awhile." Or whatever, on and on it goes, those things are obvious, other things are more subtle, the bottom line is that we're to have our senses exercised by reason of use (regarding God's word, which is a discernor of both the thoughts and intents of the heart) to be able to discern both good and evil.

So the 1<sup>st</sup> question is, are you able to discern ungodly counsel? Because the Blessed man won't go there, won't entertain it or walk in it, be careful regarding the things you're willing to take in, be it through the radio, the TV or whatever.

"Nor stands in the path of sinners" Sinners have a path that they stand upon. Of course a path speaks of a way, or road, a particular direction. The righteous man knows he doesn't belong on that path, he won't go that direction.

It may be comfortable, it may be the easiest, most “go with the flow” path of least resistance, yet the righteous man sees the end, he knows it’s the path that leads to destruction. Jesus said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matt 7:13-14 The path of the sinner is broad, it’s easy, and it’ll destroy you. The righteous will take the road less traveled, go against the flow, why? Because he knows it’s the pathway to blessing, to true happiness, to eternal life. He stands in the confidence of Ps 16:11, “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” God has ordained a path for the righteous, the path of life, of course we know that road to be JESUS CHRIST Who is the way, the truth and the life, and exclusive access to the Father comes solely by Him.

So the blessed life is one who doesn’t entertain the counsel of the ungodly, doesn’t stand in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. and Again we’re seeing here a downward spiral of declension and depravity, when someone is “seated” they’re rooted somewhere, we’re talking here about being in that place of out and out mocking and criticizing the things and the people of God, scorning them. The one who would be blessed will avoid that seat, won’t go there or be in that spot. You find yourself in a crowd that’s putting down Christians it’s easy to just sorta sit there and be part of the crowd, yet in so doing it’s in reality taking a place in the seat of the scornful. The righteous will avoid that particular place, that seat. So those things are to the negative, there are certain things that the righteous will not do.

To the positive there are other things that He will do. (Vs 2) “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” Now throughout the book of Psalms we’re going to find this phrase “law of the Lord” as a reoccurring phrase. But don’t be misled by it it’s not a phrase that limits itself to the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the bible, the books of “the law.” It’s a reference to the entirety of the word of God, the “whole counsel” of God. The righteous will “delight” himself in the wholeness of God’s word. This word “delight” could also be rendered “desire” his desire is to be in God’s word. Ps 40:8 says, “I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.”

and Again, “The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.” Ps 119:72 I’ll give you one more, “Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.” Jer 15:16 What a barometer for you and me, the testimonies of various men of God throughout the scriptures who “delight” themselves in the word of God. “The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold or silver.” “The joy and the rejoicing of my heart.” “I delight to do your will, o my God, and Your law (Your word) is with in my heart.”

What is your delight? What is the joy and the rejoicing of your heart, what is it that would be better to you than thousands of coins of gold and silver? What makes you happy, makes you excited? Personal pleasure?

If that's the case you're selfish and self centered; family or friends? That's better but it still falls short, the righteous will find his/her delight in the word of God, the law of the Lord. and I'm not saying it's wrong to have a good time, or to enjoy family and friends, those things are all find with in their proper context. But the supreme satisfaction of our soul is to be found in the Lord, and in His word. and You can tell when someone delights in something because you don't have to hound them to do it, or harass them to get them to take part in it. They look forward to it, they don't need motivated or threatened with penalties if they don't do it, they'll do it all on their own. So we can measure our delight in God's law, in God's word by how much we hunger for it. Is it laborious and tedious, kind of a monotonous and mind numbing task whereby we force ourselves to pick up the bible out of a sense of duty? Or is it truly a delight, far from a burden it's a blessing, a personal priority to spend time with the Lord, receiving from His word? You see, the righteous delights himself in the law of the Lord.

Think about it a couple times a day, "Daytime" and "Nighttime" or another way to understand that, it's always on his mind. "In His law he meditates day and night." That word meditates speaking of pondering, musing through, thinking about, it even speaks of muttering, or uttering it out loud. We've been reminded recently of the idea of chewing the cud. As the cow takes the grass down into the 1<sup>st</sup> chamber of it's stomach, but then later brings it back up to extract even more nutrients, takes it down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> chamber, but brings it back up again to extract even more nutrients. Then taking it finally down into the 3<sup>rd</sup> chamber, but the idea is that with each resurgence of the grass or grain or whatever it may be, there's a further milking of it, getting even more out of it. You'll never exhaust the depths of the nutrients to be found in the word of God. We're to not simply read it, in one ear out the other type of did my duty attention to God's Word. We're to read it, take it in, think about on or way to work, remind ourselves of it at break time, pray over it some more at lunch, just letting God minister to us throughout the day. The idea being that of "digesting" God's word, letting it make that transition from our head to our heart, changing us, molding us, and making us more like Christ. What's the result?

Vs3

"Strength, stability, and success," and I'm not referencing material success though God can certainly do that, but you will prosper in your walk and relationship with God, you'll be fruitful, God will be glorified and magnified in your life. You'll be like a tree planted by the waters, a tree planted by waters is a picture of both strength, and stability. It has a continual water supply always receiving what it needs, it sends roots down deep, and refuses to wither when the heat is on, it simply draws from the resource of living water that's readily at hand. It's not all the time needy, its needs are constantly met. If you find yourself a "needy" person you might prayerfully consider, are you planted by the waters, are you abiding in Christ, spending time in His word? Having your deepest needs met by the ready supply of living water that's right here for you?

Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." John 7:37

The life of the righteous will be marked by strength and stability. Why? Because he's constantly drawing from the resource he has in Christ, doesn't mean there's never tough times, or that storms don't blow, but he's still standing in the end, he's established his home on the solid rock foundation of being both a hearer and a doer of the word of God. He's like a tree (notice) "planted" by the rivers of water. Note that life in Christ isn't random, "planted" speaks of purpose. If you plant something there's a reason for it, God has a plan and a purpose in your salvation. You didn't happenstance come into a relationship with Christ, you were chosen from before the foundations of the earth, planted by the rivers of water, by the life giving resource found in JESUS CHRIST and in His word.

Something else happens in the life of the righteous, not only is there strength, not only is there stability, there's productivity, there's fruit that's brought forth in its season. Why? Because it's abiding in a "life source" remember when Jesus said that He was the vine and we were the branches (John 15) and as long as abide in Him, and He in us we'll bear much fruit. and The bible talks quite a bit about fruit, of course there's the fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Gal 5:22-23 These things will be the natural byproduct of abiding in Christ, there's the fruit of our lips which is the giving of thanks. The fruit of laboring in the Lord, the fruit of financial giving to the Lord, the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace by those who make peace. and We note that fruit is seasonal, now the leaves are always green, the trees God plants are ever-greens. There's never a sign of deadness, or dryness. and Again I'm not saying you'll never go through difficult or "dry" times, but that the life of JESUS CHRIST will still be coursing through you, being active in you. But fruit is the result of planting, of sowing, of abiding, nurturing and growing. Some get discouraged when they don't see immediate results from what they've done, the fruit will arrive in due season. You plant an apple tree, or a pear tree, you won't immediately see fruit, it may take yrs of cultivating, watering, nurturing, pruning and cutting back, but in due time the fruit will come. The same holds true in Christ, we sow in righteousness, cultivate in holiness, water in prayer, nurture through the word of God, and in due season the fruit comes forth.

Finally the life of the righteous is earmarked by success. "Whatever he does shall prosper." Remember Joshua Ch 1? God told Joshua, "...be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Josh 1:7-8 Be a student of the word of God, study it, make application of it, let it lead and guide your life, and God will be with you, He'll bless and take care of you. Seek ye 1<sup>st</sup> the kingdom of God and His righteousness and God will meet the needs you have in life. This isn't saying that you'll have the "Midas touch" but that God will see to it that the things that take place in your life will ultimately work out for your eternal good, and His eternal glory.

Paul put it like this, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Rom 8:28

#### Vs4-6

So you see the contrast, the way of the righteous is blessed, the way of the wicked, or the ungodly is beguiled, it's deceptive, it's destructive. The life of the ungodly isn't marked by strength, it's not marked by stability, it doesn't receive God's hand of blessing. They're not supplied by a “life source” they're not fruitful, or pulsating with life, there's no life in them. They're like chaff which the wind drives away.

Oh sometimes it seems as though they've got it made, but believe me it's but a shell of an existence, for the ungodly this life is the best it's ever going to be, it only goes down (and I mean radically down) from here. But for the godly this life is the worst it's ever going to get, it only gets better, goes up (and I mean radically up) from here.

The ungodly are like chaff. Now what is chaff? Chaff is the light outer “shell” around a kernel of grain which has to be stripped away before the kernel can be ground to flour. and The way they would separate the kernel from the chaff was to just throw the grain into the air and the wind would separate the kernel from the chaff and the chaff would simply be blown away. That's how insignificant, how lacking in substance, how unstable the ungodly are. Spurgeon referred to chaff as “Intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away.” What a contrast between the tree planted by the waters, and the chaff blown away by the wind. So they're in a dangerous place presently, and they're headed for destruction ultimately.

#### Vs 5

There's no “weight” no substance to the ungodly, therefore they won't be able to “stand” or persist, or in anyway establish themselves in the judgment. Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Which of course has both and present and future application. Ultimately they won't stand in the congregation of the righteous because they don't share the same future as the righteous, you have a glorious future of forever with the Lord. The ungodly will be cast out from the Lord, into outer darkness having rejected the light of the world (JESUS CHRIST) But presently the sinner doesn't stand in the congregation of the righteous either. Oh, the ungodly may visit a godly place, may come to church now and then or for a stretch of a few months, but if they're not prepared to submit their lives to Christ, they won't stay. There comes a time when a decision has to be made and they're out the door. I've seen it again and again, you can not come into a place that has a genuine love for God, the life of Christ is there, the study of the word is taking place. I mean “we really believe this stuff” kind of a place and kind of “blend into the mix” if you're not sincere about a love relationship with Jesus. You'll split, you won't stand, you won't stay, you won't head our way, because Jesus is our way, He's the narrow path that we traverse through life by.

Vs6

The word knows speaks of intimacy, being intimately acquainted with, of course a few times in the book of Acts not to mention the words of Jesus Himself, Christ is called “the way.” The Lord knows you, He knows your ways, He’s watching out after you and is blessing the path of godliness. You see it’s not a mystery, it’s not what do I need to do to be blessed of God? God’s already blessed a certain path, and there’s another path that’s cursed, now it’s up to you, up to me to choose which path we travel down. The way of the ungodly shall perish, the warning goes out. The broad path is like a funnel, it’s got a large opening, it lends itself to a pseudo sense of comfort, lots of people there, everything’s going easy, plenty of company. But as you go down that way it get’s narrower and narrower and empties out in destruction, the ungodly perish. The way of the righteous starts out narrow, it’s difficult, few go there, but as you travel down that road it get’s wider and wider and you wind up with life more abundant. Jesus said I’ve come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. So you have 2 men, 2 ways, 2 destinies, the decision is ours, choose this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house...we will serve the Lord.

Prayer Points:

God thank You for the clarity of Your Word, You’ve hidden nothing from us but have given us all things that pertain to life and godliness here in Your word. and You’ve made it simple, help us to choose the pathway of life, to have lives marked by strength and stability, fruitfulness and success, simply because we heed Your word, we’re in love with Your ways. May we delight ourselves in the fullness of Your Word, give us a deeper hunger, teach us to meditate in Your Word. That we be not misled by the ungodly, help to shun unrighteous counsel, that we not stand with sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful. May we draw from You the nourishment we need, bearing fruit in season, standing firm for Your glory. Teach us as we travel though the psalms.