

THE BLESSED LIFE

Psalm 1

“A Bible that’s falling apart
usually belongs to someone who isn’t.”

~ Charles Haddon Spurgeon ~

This week we had an especially wonderful time in our Home Group sharing how God’s love is rescuing and renewing us. We heard some truly amazing stories. The sad reality is we can be part of a church family for years and never get to know our brothers and sisters at a very deep level. What a loss! That’s why we highly recommend joining a Home Group. As we’re honest with each other it’ll come out that sometimes we’ve been angry with God or confused because we didn’t understand why things were happening to us as they were. Sometimes we don’t feel like God is listening to us or that He cares. Other times our hearts are bursting with joy because of answered prayer or deliverance from a trial. We need to be sharing and receiving from each other so that we can learn and grow with each other in our relationship with God.

We have a lot of books in our Bibles that record God’s work in history. The Gospels reveal the life and teachings of Jesus. The Apostle Paul’s letters teach us about Jesus, salvation, the Church and many great things of our faith. But there is one book that takes us inside people’s hearts and minds as they struggled to understand, trust, obey and worship God in every day life.

This book is the book of Psalms; the hymnbook of Israel.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PSALMS

The Psalms are the inspired responses of human hearts to God’s revelation of Himself in law, history, and prophecy.¹

The Psalms Reflect Israel’s Life Situation and Religious Beliefs

The Psalms reflect Israel’s covenant relationship with God. Surrounded by pagan nation-states, the Psalms reflect the Israelites loyalty to God, His law and their strong sense of right and wrong.

The imagery of the Psalms is earthy because the Israelites were a nation of farmers and shepherds living close to the land. Military images are also used because the Israelites were also a fighting people often involved in wars to either conquer land or defend it.

Key Feature of Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism

The primary characteristics of English poetry are rhythm and rhyme.

Roses are red,
Violets are blue.
Sugar is sweet.
And so are you.

¹ Allen P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 778–779.

The primary feature of Hebrew poetry, however, is *parallelism*. Parallelism is simply saying something twice. There are several types of parallelism. Here are three to look for as you read the Psalms.

Synonymous parallelism – this is saying the same thing two different ways. We can see this in Psalm 105:23:

Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

Antithetical parallelism – here the Psalmist says something and then says its opposite. We can see this in Psalm 90:6:

in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

Emblematic parallelism – in this type of parallelism one idea is illustrated by the other. Psalm 103:13 is a good example:

¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

So when you read the Psalms and see things repeated, realize that was how the Hebrews composed their poetry.

Authors of the Psalms

Moses wrote Psalm 90.

King David wrote 73 of the Psalms.

Asaph wrote 12 Psalms.

Heman the Ezrahite wrote Psalm 88.

Ethan the Ezrahite wrote Psalm 89. (Asaph, Heman and Ethan were musicians from the tribe of Levi.)

Solomon wrote two Psalms (72, 127).

The authorship of some of the Psalms is not known with certainty.

But given the authors we do know we also know that the writing of the Psalms spanned over a thousand years from Moses in the 1400's BC to Heman and Ethan in the 400's BC.

Types of Psalms

Because the psalmists addressed both personal and national issues there are different types of psalms. These include individual laments, national laments, thanksgivings by individuals, and hymns. There also are royal psalms, pilgrim psalms, victory psalms, songs of Zion, songs of enthronement, torah psalms, and wisdom psalms.

This Series

Over the next six to seven weeks we will be studying Psalms 1, 2, 3, 51, 65, 73, 95. We encourage you to get a jump start and read these before we study them together.

In this study we will read out Psalm 1. Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm. Similar to the book of Proverbs, Psalm 1 lays out the path to the blessed life.

PSALM ONE

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 path to the blessed life first involves that which we must not do. If we want to live the blessed life we will not allow the wicked to influence us.

I. Do Not Let Yourself Be Influenced By The Wicked (1:1)

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;

Notice the retrogression from casual influence to identification with the wicked in scoffing at the things of God. This can happen to unbeliever and believer alike. The blessed life is first one that is vigilant not to be influenced by the wicked.

What are the many ways we can be influenced by the wicked? Friendship with those who are antagonistic towards God. Teachers and professors committed to destroying students' religious worldview. Secular news and commentary. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The Apostle Paul warns us that, "Bad company ruins good morals." (1 Cor. 15:33). We also know "garbage in, garbage out" is true to life.

The first step towards the blessed life is to refuse to come under the influence of the wicked.

The second step towards the blessed life is to fall in love with the Word of God and saturate our hearts and minds with it.

II. Saturate Your Heart and Mind With The Word of God (1:2)

² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

At this point in history, King David had the first five books of Moses, perhaps Joshua and Job. What he had of God's revelation he loved. It delighted his soul. He continually read it and turned it over in his mind. Of all the things the Holy Spirit could have inspired David to identify as key to the blessed life it is this: saturating our hearts and minds with the Word of God.

We now have all 66 books of God's revelation. Do we love God's Word? Does it delight our souls? It is the key to experiencing the blessed life.

If you want the blessed life you need to establish time to read and meditate on God's Word. This would be a great thing to share in your Home Group – how do your brothers and sisters get into the Word? For some its in the morning; others its in the evening. I know of brothers and sisters who use their commute to listen to the Scriptures on DVD or listen to Christian radio. You can also subscribe to Christian teaching podcasts – I know some of us like to listen to Ravi Zacharias podcasts as an example.

However we do it, we need to be in God's Word so God's Word gets into us. As God's thoughts become our thoughts and His will our will our lives are transformed. We experience the blessed life of stability and fruitfulness.

III. You Will Become A Stable, Fruitful Person – the Blessed Life (1:3)

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.

Why did David choose a tree to represent the blessed life?

First, it would be very meaningful to an agrarian society. Nothing better than a well watered fruit tree producing fruit season after season. Dependable, steady, such a tree was a wonderful blessing to a farmer and his family.

A tree represents stability, staying power, longterm fruitfulness. The blessed life is not the easy life void of trials and pain. A well watered tree puts down deep roots. Wind and hail may hammer it and break off branches, but that tree will stand and come through. So also, believers with deep roots in God's Word remain steady through hard trials and come out the other side stronger and more fruitful than before.

The wicked, on the other hand, are empty, unstable and unfruitful. Their destiny is judgment and condemnation.

IV. The Fate of the Wicked (1:4-6)

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.

Those who live their lives according to the thinking of the world and for their own selfish ends are unstable and empty like chaff. Their morals shift and change according to their immediate needs. They don't stand for anything except what benefits them in the moment. When winds of adversity blow the wicked are blown to and fro not standing firm in what is right and good in God's eyes, but compromising and double dealing to save their own skin. They cannot be depended upon to do what is right and good.

The ultimate fate of the wicked is to be condemned at the Great White Throne Judgment. If we do not want God in this life, we will not have Him in the next.

CONCLUSION

There are two paths before us; the path of the righteous or the path of the wicked. The path of the righteous leads to the blessed life; a steady, fruitful life. The path of the wicked leads to the empty, worthless life that ends in condemnation.

Which life do you want? That is really what this Psalm comes down to. Which life do you want?

If you want the blessed life, 1) do not let yourself be influenced by the wicked and 2) saturate your heart and mind with God's Word. It cannot be clearer.

Who is influencing you? Who are you listening to? With whom are you spending a lot of time and are you the "influencer" or the "influenced"? Do your friends encourage you in your Christian walk? Do you need to choose different friends?

Are you spending unhurried time reading and meditating on God's Word? What time wasters can you remove to create "space" in your schedule?

Here are resources we have available in the foyer free of charge:

30 Days to Understanding the Bible by Max Anders

A 30-day study on what every Christian needs to know about the Bible! Introducing you to key characters, places, and events in chronological order, this user-friendly volume helps you "think your way through" Scripture and acquaint yourself with its core teachings in just 15 minutes a day.

Your Daily Walk by Bruce Wilkinson

With *Your Daily Walk* you can read through the entire Bible in only one year! You will be helped to think carefully about one theme from the day's reading and how it applies to your own life in the clamor and chaos of today's world.

Living By The Book by Howard Hendricks

How would you describe your personal Bible study? Mundane or motivational? Lackluster or lively? Redundant or reviving? Howard and Bill Hendricks offer a practical 3-step process that will help you master simple yet effective inductive methods of observation, interpretation, and application that will make all the difference in your time with God's Word!

Let me close with this great quote by Charles Spurgeon that sums up Psalm 1 very nicely:

“A Bible that’s falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn’t.”