

Psalm 1

Introduction

- I. What are Psalms?
 - A. Prayers (people experiencing the full range of emotion before God)
 - B. Poems (poetic language and imagery that invites us in)
 - C. Songs (songs collected by ancient Israel and used in their corporate worship)
- II. “Blessed” Psalms: psalms that begin with the word “blessed” (1, 32, 41, 119, 128)
Blessed = Fortunate, happy, right with God and enjoys peace and joy as result
Who are the truly blessed ones according to the psalms?

The Passage: Psalm 1

- I. A very simple Psalm
 - A. The point is simple:
Be one of the righteous who meditate and delight in God’s law
 - B. Its world view is very simple (black and white)
There are two types of people in this world: v. 6: righteous and wicked
Life doesn’t seem quite this simple, but the simplicity brings clarity:
In the end, there are those who fear God and those who do not
 - C. This is the “doorway psalm” welcoming us into the rest of the Psalms
It paints two possible roads for us: the path of righteous and wicked
- II. Verses 1-2: Two Different Actions
Issue NOT: whether you are righteous or wicked,
BUT: what do you allow yourself to be influenced by? Whose
counsel/advice do you follow? What shapes your thinking and feeling?
 - A. v. 1: Being influenced by the wicked
Walking, standing, sitting: progressive in the extent of influence
Walking = casual influence, Sitting = you’ve become one of them
Wicked, sinner, scoffer: progressive in their extent of rebellion

This describes the person who is progressively influenced by the world as it
stands in contrast to God: its systems, values, desires
 - B. v. 2: Being influenced by God’s law
 1. What is God’s “law”?
Hebrew: “Torah” = law, instruction, teaching
Much broader than merely rules, it’s the life God wants us to live

“Torah” comes from a verb that means “to throw so as to hit the mark

“God’s Word is like a javelin, and we are the target. God’s Word is not a reference book in a library that we pull off the shelf when we want information. God’s words, creating and saving words every one, hit us where we live.” (Eugene Peterson)

See Hebrews 4:12

2. The righteous person delights in God’s law

He/she recognizes the value of God’s law (The Creator God who made us and knows how we’re wired has laid out his instruction on how to live).

One who is blessed realizes this and delights!

See Psalm 19:7-11

3. The righteous person meditates on God’s law day and night

Meditate: to ponder, give careful thought and consideration to something

Root meaning: “To murmur or to mumble”

Image: speaking in low tones reviewing the material

Sounding it out as you try to understand it

If God’s law is like a javelin that pierces our heart

Meditation is the action we do to let God’s law do its work

Meditation involves critical thinking, but we don’t study and analyze Torah from a distance, rather, we humbly let the Word enter us and do its work in us

C. What will it be: the world or God’s law?

Many churchgoers choose to be influenced more by the world than God’s Word. God’s Word feels difficult, irrelevant, inaccessible and our hearts don’t delight

III. Verses 3-4: Two Different Images

A. Verse 3: A Tree (an image of the righteous)

1. planted by streams of water

God’s law brings sustenance and life

2. yields its fruit in its season

God’s law brings about a fruitful life

“In its season”: we can’t expect the fruit immediately or whenever we want it, but it will be there over time as we meditate on God’s law

3. leaves do not wither

Withstands adversity: when the hot dry winds of life blow, this tree’s leaves are able to survive: source

4. in all that he does, he prospers

“in all he does” that is in line with God’s Torah

“prosper” in the sense that it will reach its God-directed goal

- B. Verse 4: Chaff (an image of the wicked)
The opposite: not rooted, lifeless, fruitless, unable to withstand the wind

IV. Verses 5-6: Two Different Destinies

- A. Wicked: The “will not stand” in the judgment, they will not be a part of that glorious congregation of the righteous, they will “perish”
- B. Righteous (who meditate on God’s law)
The Lord “knows” their way in the sense that he watches over and protects

V. Summary

- A. Walk in the counsel of wicked: a chaff-like life that ends in perishing
- B. Delight in and meditate on God’s law: a tree-like life that ends in eternal life with the congregation of righteous

Conclusion

- I. How do we begin to delight in God’s law?
 - A. Don’t wait until you delight to start reading or you’ll never start
 - B. Don’t try to make yourself delight. Pray that God would give you delight
 - C. When you get discouraged take a long look at a healthy tree
- II. How do we begin to meditate on God’s law day and night?
 - A. Choose reachable goals (e.g. 15 minutes a day, 3 days a week)
 - B. Find a time and place that works consistently
 - C. Choose a Bible book and read through it from start to finish
Philippians or Ephesians are good books to start with
 - D. Bring a journal and write down some of your observations, thoughts, and questions
 - E. Make a commitment to do this with a friend or your spouse

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. The Psalms (and rest of the Old Testament) consistently talk about the righteous person's delight in God's law. How do we square that with Paul's many seemingly negative comments about God's law?
3. The psalmist paints a beautiful picture of a fruitful tree to describe a person who meditates on God's law day and night. In light of that, how do we make sense of the person who seems to know the Bible from cover to cover but doesn't bear the fruit promised (e.g. the Pharisees)? Has that person truly "meditated" on God's law?
4. It was suggested on Sunday that when it comes down to our actual lives (our actual view of people, possessions, marriage, jobs, sex, etc as well as how we actually make decisions about our time, \$, etc), many church goers are influenced more by the world than God's Word. Is that an unfair assessment in your experience?
5. In what practical ways have you attempted to meditate on God's Word consistently, and what has been most successful or helpful for you? What Bible reading practices and patterns have you experimented with over the years?
6. Describe a season in your life when you delighted most in God's law. What were some of the factors that brought that about?