



A Life to Be Envied

Psalm 1

February 11, 2024

As we come to God's Word this morning, I'd like to look at the first Psalm of the psalter, Psalm 1. Psalm 1 is kind of been on my heart lately and I want to work through this Psalm with you. And so Psalm, I believe, of David, it is not given an ascription of authorship in the Psalm. But Psalm 1 and 2 really do go together and Psalm 2 is referred to as the Psalm of David later on in the Scripture. And I believe that a Psalm 1 also is the work of David. Psalm of David here is the Psalm of the blessed man, a man who lived a blessed life. Let's read that together.

Psalm 1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the way of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, And in his law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its

fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not rise in the judgment, nor sinners in this congregation of the righteous. For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous, the way of the wicked will perish."

Again it's a Psalm of contrast, the righteous and the wicked. And the very first word of the Psalm, which makes that the first word of the entire Psalter is the word blessed. Blessed is the ascription applied to the man who is called righteous. The word blessed is sometimes translated as an adjective, as someone who is blessed or someone who is happy. Sometimes you'll see a translation that says happy is the man and it reminds us immediately of Jesus' words in the beatitudes. Blessed is the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek and so on.

And it's the same concept, same idea, same word. In this case it's really used. The word is used as an interjection. So how happy, how blessed is the man? It's calling attention, is a

remarkable thing to look at this man, look at this life and say that is a life that I envy, that is a life that is most blessed, most happy. The word there is *eser* from the, the verb *asar*, and it means, and it may surprise you to think about this meaning but the, but the word, the verb *asar* kind of refers to an envious desire, not in an evil way, but an envious desire, literally meaning to be envied.

And so David is telling us about a life that is enviable, a life that really calls for congratulations, a life that others celebrate and rejoice over and praise as commendable and worthy and most blessed. As we begin, let me ask you what is probably a probing question for you. Let me needle you a little bit and as I ask you the question, and by the way, no one knows your thoughts but you and God. So be honest with yourself, alright? This is for your benefit. This little thought exercise is for you.

But here's the question. When you take a long hard look at your life, when you look at yourself in the mirror, it sounds weird and, but stepping away from yourself, and getting outside of



yourself and take a good hard look. Are you living a life that others envy? Are you living a life that you will be congratulated for? Notice that I'm not asking this question. I'm not asking the question; are you happy with your life? I'm not asking you; are you content? Are you satisfied? Not asking you about your own subjective sense of well-being. I'm not asking you about your sense of ease or comfort or your sense of accomplishment or fulfillment. Those things come and go, and those things are very subjective in their orientation.

My question is about an objective measure of judgement. And really, as we look at the Psalm, it's about a comprehensive assessment of your entire life, which is what David wants us to picture in this Psalm. Notice that David starts with life at the present moment. Not the past, mind you, but the present. The past is gone, so he's calling us to focus on the present. And then he takes us in the Psalm all the way into the future, all the way to life eternal. Pictured in verse 5 as the congregation of the righteous, or the assembly, or the counsel of the holy.



So when you consider the broad span of your life, from this present moment onward to the place of your eternal abode, are you living a life that others envy or are you not? You may be thinking, man, that's heavy, that is deep. I don't even know how to answer that kind of question. That's why David wrote the Psalm. To help you answer that kind of a question. To help us assess our lives, to help us think carefully about our choices, to evaluate our priorities, to examine our own ambitions, to be very thoughtful about our own desires and where they come from and where they're taking us. To take a very good hard look at what occupies our time, what preoccupies our thoughts. David would have us consider that now, before it's too late.

Whether we are living a life to be envied or not. If we are living a life to be envied, if we take that good hard look, and we're reflective and meditative and thoughtful and careful and we're very honest with the word of God, open before us to evaluate our lives in light of the truth. And we could say, yes, I, I think by God's grace that is the life that that he has given to me. Well, then we can read this and hear this message and be encouraged to press on and to excel still more, to be heartened and gladdened in our souls as we carry along the way.

Because sometimes, as you know, life can get difficult as disappointments abound, as things are hard, as various challenges and trials hit us, like wave after wave after wave. But a Psalm like this helps us to gain perspective. To recognize what life is really about, and that every single trial, and every single difficulty, and every single challenge is all Romans 8:28. That God uses "all things for the good of those who love him and who were called according to his purpose." All things, trials too.

But if you're not living a life to be envied, David is by, by this Psalm giving us a chance to repent now and to make the necessary course correction now, before we run out of time, before we stand before God and it's too late then. He's giving us a chance to think now.

And as we read David's Psalm, as I mentioned, what grabs our attention is this contrast between the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. In fact, that's many a heading that many of our Bibles use for as a title for Psalm 1, right, The way of

the righteous and the wicked. That's what my Bible has. Perhaps yours does too. And the contrast as we flow through the Psalm kind of provide a natural division of this Psalm into three sets of two verses each.

So you see the first set of verses, the righteous and the wicked have two different inputs, two different sources of information coming into their minds, coming into their hearts. And then you see that leads to in the second set leads to two different outputs. Two different results from those inputs, from that information. And that leads to a third set, leading to different outcomes, different futures, very different futures.

Along the way, David makes it very clear there really only one input of the two is good. Producing a good result, leading to an outcome that is enviable, leading to the blessed life, a life that is to be envied in the end. And that's what he commends. That's what he calls us to, makes it very clear. It's inescapable what his intention is. He is writing this Psalm to persuade you that if you are on the wrong road, if you're following the wrong path, if you're taking in the wrong



information, he wants you to stop, repent, turn around and go the other way. And so this is a gracious call to repentance or gracious call in the even in the Psalm to salvation.

If you're a note taker, I'll give you a first point here that you can jot down and just kind of helps organize our thoughts here. But number one, point number one, the blessed posture. The blessed posture. The posture meaning how we stand, how we're oriented to something. The opening contrast, as I said, is between two opposite inputs, and only one of them leading to the enviable blessed way. And David starts by warning us and dissuading us from the wrong way. In verse 1, he says how blessed is the man, and he doesn't immediately tell us what that is. He tells us what it's not.

It's not how blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers. We can see the obvious progression there, right? Walk, stand, sit. It shows a person who's in movement and then going into a standstill and then getting downright comfortable, right? There's the counsel of the wicked, the way

of the sinners, the seat of the scoffers. All those phrases we'll get to in a moment. But let me say a word about David's description here of the ungodly. They are the wicked, the sinners and the scoffers, the wicked, the sinners and the scoffers. And these are not three different people.

This is one kind of a person. This is the kind of the person who is a stranger to God, a person who is an unbeliever with no spiritual life. David characterizes the person in these three ways. They are wicked at heart, that is to say, under the influence of evil and sin and rebellion in the inner man, in the inner life, in the inner self. That's what the heart is made up of. And they are then sinful.

Secondly, sinful in their thoughts and their words and their actions and that sinfulness, the sin that they commit is in relation to the holy standard of God and his law, God and his truth, they're transgressors, they're those who rebel against that standard and commit iniquity.

And then the third term scoffers refers to whenever they're confronted in their way, whenever they're corrected in the, the way that they're living, they react with scoffing, sneering. They push back. They don't want to accept any correction. They reject any confrontation. You may remember a few weeks ago when Bret did a great job working through Paul's diagnosis of the fallen human condition from Romans chapter 3. I'd encourage you to go back and read a, or, or listen to those sermons if you missed them.

But look again, would you, at, Romans Chapter 3 and Paul's summary diagnosis of the fallen condition. In Romans chapter 3 and starting in verse 10, he's been dealing with the with what it is in mankind, what it is in fallen humanity that provokes the wrath of God. He started there in chapter 1 verse 18 is continued on to this moment here in chapter 3 where he brings it all together and summarizes in this way, he says in verse 9, "What then? Are we any better? We Jews? Are we any better? Not at all; We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; There's none who understands, There is none who seeks

for God; All have turned aside, and together they have become worthless; There is none who does good. There's not even one.'"

And he uses a number of biblical word pictures drawn from the Old Testament to illustrate that. But skip ahead to verse 18. He just wraps it all up in this summary conclusion. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." No Fear of God, no reverence for him, no awe of God. God is an afterthought, if even a thought at all. And so of course they go their own way. Whenever I have read those verses from Romans chapter 3 to what, you know, I, I just go back to the moment of my own salvation.

From that point onward, as I read those verses for myself, I think to myself, man, God really sees me. He really does know my heart. He really does have me pretty what, pretty much figured out. It's got me dead to rights. That is the response of every believer. It may not be the immediate response because we don't always act our best do we? But it is the response, eventual response of every true believer to read a, a diagnosis like that and say guilty. Upon thoughtful, careful, biblical, reveac, reflection in our own hearts, every true believer can see and

admit, yeah, that's me, that's, that's what I am before God. That's what he sees me as. He knows my thoughts, knows my imaginations, he knows, he knows me in private and public, and he's got me.

Conversely, everyone, without any exception, everyone who tells me that they're a Christian. So everyone who tells me and professes that they are born again, that they're in a right relationship with God, with sins forgiven. And yet if they find these verses of Paul and read them and do not like them, and they try to wiggle out of the diagnosis in some way, if they don't like or agree with Paul's stark and unbending critical analysis, they end up scoffing at that diagnosis.

Invariably, every single time I've seen this and I'm talking about those who profess Christians, profess to be Christians and are not. But that includes really the rest of the world as well. Even those who wouldn't even pretend to be religious or pretend to be Christians. They read something like that and they're like, whoa, talk about psychological oppression, talk about really destroying someone's self-esteem and you believe that

stuff. It's going to make you psycho, lead to a school shooting or something terrible.

Try to stuff down all that guilt that you're heaping on. They just scorn. They scoff at the diagnosis, and that's exactly what I know. Oh, it's because you're not really a Christian, are you? That's why you debate with the word of God. That's why you think this is a debate. That's why you think you can challenge what he says, because you're not really a Christian. If you reject the problem, which is your sin, then you can't really claim to believe the solution for your sin, can you?

Now, even though that's a very stark, critical, harsh diagnosis in Romans chapter 3. I think Bret drew this out wonderfully in his messages. But it's a testimony to the grace of God, isn't it among fallen human beings that though they are this, and though, as David says, they are wicked and sinners and scoffers, you can go back to Psalm 1 now. God's restraining grace keeps them from being as bad as they really could be. God's restraining grace is, in its many forms, the, the law of God, written on the

heart, internal conscience that either accuses or excuses us based on the law in our heart.

The, there's the law of society, in society there's penalties and punishments. All that evidence of God's restraining grace really does prevent the wicked from being as bad as they could be. But take away the restraints and sin breaks through like a broken dam, like water out of a broken dam. But let's be very clear. This is exactly what every unbeliever is in the sight of God as he looks down and there's no defense that they can make against his omniscient gaze as he looks and sees their hearts and the thoughts and attitudes of their hearts and their intentions.

He says that they're wicked at heart, that they sin against his law in thought, word, and deed. And when they are graciously corrected by his word or by a, by a believer, they respond to that gracious conviction and correction with scoffing and sneering, with prideful attitude of rejection, snarling at the gracious hand of correction like a rabid dog bites the hand that tries to help him. The wicked, the sinners, the scoffers, what

do they look like to us? We know that they're not dressing up in devil suits, horns and pitchforks, bowing before Baphomet statues and all those kind of things.

They're, they're not that at all. In, in fact, they're exactly the opposite of what we might expect from that harsh analysis of them, that harsh diagnosis of what they are, the, the characterization of them as wicked and sinners and scoffers. No they're not obvious. In fact, they're pretty attractive. They're the pretty pop stars, the celebrated actors, the eloquent speakers, the professional athletes, clever cultural commentators.

These are the people that are likable and affable and winsome and witty and clever. And we've come to understand that, especially from what Paul writes in the New Testament, that does not Satan disguise himself as an angel of light and his ministers, as ministers of righteousness. I mean, if he dresses up and churches up his evil in religion. We would expect that many of the distractions he wants people to follow in the world are equally attractive, if not more so.

His people are the cool people, the popular. And get this, they are those in the world who are envied as the psalmist in Psalm 73 said, as Asaph said. I was tempted. I was envying the wicked. What am I doing? Smack myself in the face, wake up from this worldly perspective. They are the blessed ones. They're the happy, they're the at ease, content. They're the ones who have fun, enjoy life, take all kinds of exciting vacations and post it all on Instagram. They're the ones who are living life to the fullest and telling you all about it.

But they're also, you know, and you get to know them, they're so real and so down to earth. Big on family, big on family values, they vote in the right ways, you know, in agreement with us, you know. That's the wicked, the sinners, the scoffers.

Jesus says, woe to you who are rich, for you're receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now. Everything's a big joke. Everything's a, just a lot of fun for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets. Watch out,



beloved. Watch out because it is so easy to listen to them, to envy them, to stand with them, to sit with them. Listen, beloved. Watch your posture.

My friend, you may be here and you're not a Christian, I gotta tell you. Watch your posture. Pay attention to what David is about to tell us. First, don't walk in the counsel of the wicked, don't. You find that same metaphor, walk, in the New Testament; to walk refers to how we live our lives. It's pictured as a walk. We go on a walk. We're living our life and our walk, and the direction of our walk is directed by the priorities that we set and the priorities that we said are set according to what we value, what we prefer, what we like.

How we walk, how we live is evident in the activities that we give ourselves to and the things that we spend our resources on. You want to take an assessment of what you value? Look at how you spend your time, how you spend your energy, how you spend money, what you imagine in private, what your mental preoccupation is, what you're always thinking about. That's what you're interested in.

Here's another one to evaluate yourself and watch out for. How do you relax and rest and refresh? Is it with the Word of God? An open Bible, in prayer? Or is it with endless entertainment and watching sports, talk shows, surfing YouTube, or Pandora, or Netflix, or whatever; you're just binging all the stuff from the world whenever you get a free moment. Just think about it, folks. Those platforms are the, what I call the world's pulpit. It's where they preach. Occupied, those pulpits are not occupied by the godly. They're not preaching the truth of God's word. They're filled almost exclusively by the wicked, the sinners and the scoffers.

So watch out, because they're sermons, they may be getting into your head. Their counsel, their justifications for why they do what they do, their ambitions, what they chase, what they love, may very well be influencing you because they're tapping into something in you, the law of sin, that's in your flesh.

Second, David says don't stand in the way of sinners. Don't stand in the way of sinners. Don't do it. This, the word, way, refers to a pathway, a walkway. So this is what the what the,

the, the ungodly walk on. It's the place where sinners traverse. It's where they travel back and forth. It's where they conduct their life. And the idea of standing in the path where they walk is a picture of remaining there. You're in their space. You're enduring sinners in sinful ways. You're putting up with the sin and the sinful lifestyles. What starts with toleration turns into accommodation, and then acceptance, and finally full affirmation.

What may smell rotten and foul when you first step onto the path. After a while, your olfactory nerves adjust and you get used to the smell. You don't notice the stench anymore and allows you to linger. And as you linger and as you loiter, if you're there long enough, you become comfortable enough to take your rest with them.

And so David says, thirdly, don't sit in the seat of scoffers. Don't get comfortable, don't sit down. Reference to a seat kind of pictures an assigned, a reserved place of respect and authority. It's pictured a, sometimes in a king's court to sit in that reserved place, respect, authority. It's, it's where you want to be. It's where you want to be, sitting in the presence



of greatness, in the presence of majesty. It's a goal. It's an ambition to sit there. It's a cherished place, a coveted place.

To sit in the seat of the scoffers means you've, you've kind of fallen right in. You've not just entered into temptation, you have fallen to temptation, and there you sit down. You're making no protest against them any longer, for whatever reason, for fear of losing favor or losing your status, or losing your seat or losing your job. It's a very bad place to be, there among the scoffers, there among those who scorned the truth of God above. There among the rebels who refused to humble the heart and bend the knee before the, the one that who you once claimed as Savior. Think this can't happen to you? Think again.

Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'" Every single time. Listen, if you're hanging around with the wicked, you're spending a lot of time with worldly people doing certainly sinful things. But even if you're doing innocuous things or good things like, like sports and extracurricular activities, if you're always trying to run your kids around to get them into good colleges, or



however you justify the life that you live, if you keep company with them, you're going to be influenced by them.

If you don't keep company with Christians regularly, you're going to be less influenced by them. It just stands to reason. And also get this, I have to say this because our, our land is filled with false gospels, sub Christian gospels that have given false assurance to many who think they're Christians. They're fine if you keep company with false professors of Christianity, those who profess Christ, but clearly their lifestyles and their habits and their conversation has nothing to do with loving and worshipping and obeying Jesus Christ. Paul warns you, don't be deceived. The corruption is at work. It's happening, it's taking place. You're just unaware of it. You're dull to its corroding power. Decay is underway. You're in grave danger, walking in the counsel of the wicked, of standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of scoffers.

And even now, examine yourself. If you're tempted to react against what I'm saying, it might just be some evidence of corruption that's entered into your heart. I want to illustrate

this with a recent incident to help you who think you stand to take heed lest you fall. I assume most of you have heard about the, the bad counsel, the unrighteous counsel of Pastor Alistair Begg, who, that he gave to a woman about attending a transgender wedding. And I only mention it here not to pile on his error, because I truly am, I truly have been a, a, a someone who's been appreciative, very appreciative of Alistair Begg. But I'm saddened by his sin.

I prayed for his repentance. I hope for it, wait for it. But I bring up this incident to help you take heed to yourself. On his radio program The Truth, Truth for Life, the host interviewed Pastor Begg and Pastor Begg decided to share a little anecdote with his national audience, and he said this, quoting from his transcript on his website. "We field questions all the time that go along the lines of my grandson is about to be married to a transgender person and I don't know what to do about this. I'm calling to ask you to tell me what to do, which, as Begg says, is a huge responsibility."

He's got that right. It is a huge responsibility to field questions like that, he continues. "In a conversation like that just a few days ago. And people may not like this answer, but I asked the grandmother, does your grandson understand your belief in Jesus? Yes. Does your grandson understand that your belief in Jesus makes it such that you can't countenance any affirming, in any affirming way, the choices that he has made in life? Yes. I said, well then, okay, as long as he knows that, then I suggest you do go to the ceremony, and I suggest you buy them a gift. Oh, She said what? She was caught off guard."

Ending the quote from the transcript. For a moment, I just want to say this that every pastor knows and most of us can tell. The grandmother's surprise response signals the recoiling of her conscience at his counsel. Her conscience here has immediately been stung and hurt by his terrible counsel. She's confused. She's troubled. A text that leaps immediately into my mind as I heard him say this on the internet, and as I've read the transcript. What leaps immediately to my mind is what Jesus said in Matthew 18:6, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy

millstone be hung around his neck, and that he'd be drowned into the depth of the sea."

As a pastor, I fear that. But pushing past the conscience, pushing back past the caution that her conscience protested against here. Begg tried to justify as sinful counsel again quoting him, "I said, well, here's the thing. Your love for them may catch them off guard, but your absence will simply reinforce the fact that they said these people are what I always thought, judgmental, critical, unprepared to countenance anything." End quote.

Pastor Begg has clearly been influenced by the counsel of the wicked. He's been standing for far too long in the path of sinners because he's more concerned about evoking a scoffing judgment than he is about stealing this woman's resolve to, and helping her to ignore her conscience. To compromise righteousness. To fail to love her grandson well by speaking the truth to him in love, by helping her to hold fast in loving loyalty to her Savior Jesus Christ, who is her first love and first priority.

I'd be remiss if I didn't give you my counsel. If you have to face those kinds of choices, we're all facing them now, aren't we? But if you're called to go to a gay wedding, transgender wedding, we understand that those are not marriages. God defined marriage in Scripture, and anything that departs from his definition is not a marriage, no matter what they call it. To go to something like that means you're there as a witness. Unless you go there and you're going to make a scene by protesting it and calling everybody there to repent, which is just throwing, I'm not being insulting when I say this, but it is throwing pearls before swine.

We can't go to those things, beloved. But what we can do, is when we're invited, is to respond to the invitation by saying; my dear child, my beloved grandchild, I love you so much. And it's because I love you so much that I can't go to what you're asking me to go to. I can't be there as a witness. I can't participate. I can't affirm this. I can't celebrate this. That's what this occasion is for. And I want you to know that you're calling me to this great, you're putting before me a great tension. You're calling me to love you more than, to favor you

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more than I love the Lord Jesus Christ, my Savior, who died on a cross for my sins.

And perhaps my son, my grandson, my daughter, my granddaughter, may, perhaps he's died for your sins too. Will you repent of this sin of yours against the holy law of God. Can we have coffee together? I love you, and I will love whoever it is you're joining together with as well. But I cannot be a participant and a witness.

Pastor Begg was confronted by people, by others who love him. One of the radio networks that carries this program asked him to recant and he refused. So they dropped Truth for life altogether. Very popular program by the way. It's hard, but it's fitting that they dropped truth for life because his counsel departed from truth and did not lead to life. They saw clearly.

When others appealed to Pastor Begg gave him and giving him a chance to retract his counselor, correct what he said or something. He not only doubled down on what he said, but he scoffed at those who tried to correct him and said they're just

a bunch of legalists, fundamentalists. He's slandering his brothers and sisters in Christ. While I have prayed for his repentance and still hope for it, I'm concerned that he will be unmoved by appeals and he will continue soldiering on, ignoring any loving correction and scoffing at the sincere and righteous concern of fellow Christians.

And as I said, I'm not bringing that up to make you, make him look bad. I mean, I'm just bringing that up to warn you, beloved. My first responsibility is to you. So that you know how to think about these things and to be cautious for yourself; if such a thing, listen, if such a thing can happen to an older, seasoned pastor, and I have a regard for that man as a pastor, don't deceive yourself into thinking it can't happen to you. Take heed to yourself. Consider what counsel you're sowing into your thoughts, or perhaps more importantly, in light of verse 2, what you're not sowing enough of into your life. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the way of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of the scoffers! But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and in his law he meditates day and night."



The enviable life is a constant posture of delighting in the instruction of God, of leaning into it, of drawing near to it. A posture of loving God's word. It's instruction that the blessed man spends a lot of time in because he loves it. You want to know what someone believes and what he doesn't believe. Find out what he truly loves and what he doesn't love. Find out what he's attracted to and what he spends his time on and what he's repelled from.

Make it personal, ask that to yourself. What do I delight in? What thrills my soul? If I've got some free hours, what do I do with them? What am I excited about? What do I really enjoy as a past time? Because however you answer those questions reveals the condition of your heart. Exposes the, your nature as either a sin nature that you're controlled by and you're unregenerate and unredeemed. Or maybe it reveals a new nature, a nature that has been created in you by the Spirit of God in righteousness and holiness, in accordance with the truth, the result of the new birth, evidence of forgiveness of sins and real redemption by God. You're one or the other. There's no partial.

The word law here seems like a, in our lawless time, our anti authority time, we really don't like the word law, but let me help you to like it a bit more. The word law is the word torah. Comes from the Hebrew verb *yara*, which is to teach. And torah can mean law, which it, often means law. It's a standard of righteousness, but it often means simply instruction, or direction, or simply the teaching. The blessed man delights, yes, in the standard of God's justice, written in laws and commandments and prohibitions and those kinds of things. But the blessed man delights in the instruction of the Lord, the teaching of Yahweh.

Someone who delights in the law of Yahweh is someone who has a saving relationship with Yahweh because of the Christ, whom God has sent to save sinners by dying for them on the cross, taking their penalty upon himself and covering them, their life in his righteousness, completely. And so Yahweh is no distant God to this man, but through Christ Yahweh has become his father. That is how we read the word, as if reading a letter from our Father.

I love the psalmist picture in Psalm 119, verse 33. It says, "Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your statutes, Teach me the way of them." The language there, pictures like picturing a child who's learning his letters from his father. So it's a wee child and he's learning how to write, how to read and write. And the father stands behind his child and takes his young child's hand in his own, his big old hand, and he helps him to trace the letters that he's already drawn. That's the word statutes, kind of pictures that language. It's inscribed and it's, you got grooves to it and curves and feel and he's writing, taking his son's hand or his daughter's hand and, and helping her, or him to trace the letters.

So like a child with a loving father, the one who meditates is trying to get the sense and the feel of, of God's letters, his statutes, the perfection of his ways. And the more he learns, the more precious those words become, because, they're personal because, they are to this child of the father goodness itself, better than food. The word meditation. It's an onomatopoeic word, *haga, haga, haga*. It refers to kind of the deep, kind of quiet cooing sound that a dove makes, you know, cooing.

It's also using context to speak of a low guttural growl of a lion as it stalks its prey. You can kind of picture that. Or maybe as it lies contentedly in the grasses of the Serengeti next to the prey that, well, let's face it, the lion didn't do that. The lioness did. She's doing all the work for the pride, right. So throws the little, the killed gazelle or whatever before the lion and, and the lion is sitting there next to the prey that's caught and killed and just kind of purring. A lion's smaller cousin, the house cat. We would call it purring.

Meditation is the cooing or the purring of contentedness of an internal musing or an, can sometimes come out into audible mutterings or even outright speech. But someone who is meditating on God's word might be even caught muttering about it under their breath, as the word is mulled over in the mind as, as the blessed one reflects on it and ponders the sense and, and kind of tries to think about the meaning in his mind. As he or she thinks about the implications and of the word and what it's teaching her soul and she's considering, how can I obey this? How can I go about obeying this in my daily life?



This is one of the reasons, by the way, that the blessed man loves to be among believers, in the community, in the company of the righteous attending the services of the local church. He comes, she comes, to hear the word preached and taught and proclaimed, because that informs further the meditation that enriches the reflection in order to strengthen the love and, and direct the worship and clarify the nature of obedience to the Savior.

So those who attend sparsely or not at all, really show little interest in any accurate meditation, meditation that ought to be well informed by the gifted ministry of the local church. Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for a purpose to teach because not every one of God's people has the gift of teaching. So we come because we have an interest in the means of grace, we have an interest in the assembly of the righteous. We have an interest in learning from one another, learning from gifted teachers and preachers and all those things.

So one whose way is, is envied. One whose life is envied. He meditates on God's torah, his instruction, day and night. That is daytime and night time. That's what the imagery is meant to reveal is particular time. It's just all the time. Meditation of the blessed man is, is a habitual, regular habit of life, continual practice. It's as, it's as natural as to him as eating food, and drinking, taking in hydration, breathing, longs for it needs it, feels it when he's without it. It's a continual practice. Why is that? Because he has a close relationship with the author. The author is his father, and he wants to hear from his father all the time. Comforting words, encouraging words, confronting words, rebuking words, correction. We want to hear those things.

Now, this enviable posture, always leaning in, always listening, listening ear to God's word to meditate and obey it. This, it's productive and it brings us to a second point in our outline: The blessed picture, the blessed picture. That first point was longer. Okay, the second one and the third one are shorter. So rest assured.

The blessed picture in verses 3 and 4, you got two different outputs that correspond to each of the inputs in verses 1 and 2. Two different outputs in verses 3 and 4. First of all, the blessed Man, the taking in the word of God, it says this "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away."

Now let's meditate on this, Okay. Let's, let's apply verse 2 and just start chewing this over. And a, if I hear some cooing and some purring out there, I'll understand. On any other Sunday, I'd be, find that distracting, but we'll excuse it for today. As we meditate on this, we'll make several observations about David's word picture. It illustrates the enviable man who lives an enviable life and what comes out of it.

First, he's like a mature tree. He's like a mature tree. The picture of vitality is the picture of the tree. Strength, usefulness. I mean usefulness up and down the age scale, right? Little kids climbing in the tree, grown people picking the fruit

of the tree, older men sometimes chopping down the tree and using the wood of the tree to build a house. Whatever it is, we understand a mature tree doesn't start out as a mature tree. It had to grow that way, right? And growth takes time.

It's a perfect illustration of what the Christian life looks like, what the believing life looks like, what an enviable life looks like. It's, it's not instantaneous. It, it takes time. It has to grow. This is God's way, isn't it? To plant the seed of the gospel into the soil of a prepared heart and cause that good seed to take deep root to germinate, to grow. And over time, that little plant, it's been growing underneath the soil. You haven't been able to see it, but then all of a sudden, boop, it pops through the soil.

Its growth seems imperceptible at first, but eventually it breaks the surface of the ground. It gets bigger, thicker in the trunk. It, it, it gets stronger until it stands up strong and proud and tall as a mighty tree. And that happens because, second, God plants that tree next to a plentiful water source. "He is like a tree firmly planted by streams of water." The LSB here adds the word firmly because it conveys the picture accurately, that the tree is firmly planted by God.

It has a strong root system, healthy, strong because it's planted in rich prepared soil and it is well supplied with clean flowing water. The water here pictures the Word that's always flowing, flowing water. It's an infinite supply that never runs out, never runs dry. No drought can touch it, no poison can affect it, no dam can stop its abundant supply. The tree planted in that place by those waters, it's going to grow strong like a mature tree which, which can, even when strong hurricane force winds can bend this thing. It never breaks.

And the blessed man is like that. Even in trial he's immovable, unshakable in the storm, never uprooted in the trial and third because of the water supply this tree, this tree yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. Yields fruit in its season and its leaf doesn't wither. Fruit in its season. Fruit is the sign of life and health. Fruit is the evidence of fecundity, of the tree's health, of its, of its actual growth and productivity, its usefulness. We know this from John 15, the tree may have trunk and branches, stems and leaves, but if it bears no fruit, it's good for nothing but the fire, right?

The enviable life of the blessed man is like a productive fruit bearing tree. It's not cut down, thrown into the fire. Instead, it bears fruit. It bears fruit in its season and it bears abundant fruit. The sweet fruit from the tree comes in its season. I think that's important to understand because it's comes in according to the perfect will of God. Fruit bearing comes as a, a matter of God's will on his timetable. It appears at the appropriate time in fitting seasons to accomplish God's good purposes. Whatever the season.

We see that another sign of the strength and health of this tree is that little phrase in the middle verse 3, and its leaf does not wither. I love that picture because even the smallest, most delicate parts that a little two year old can reach up with his pudgy little hand and rip off a leaf, that leaf doesn't wither. Those flimsy little leaves are still strong and healthy and vibrant and thriving, and they do their job. They stretch forth to capture light from the sun and then take the energy from that sun and bring it down into the root through the whole wonderful process of photosynthesis.

Some of you homeschooling families know all about that. I, I can't explain it right now, but energy light, turns energy, causes growth. It's amazing. Happens through the flimsy little leaves. This leaf doesn't wither. None of the leaves wither life giving nourishment from the streams of water coming up through the root, up the trunk, out of, out of each and every branch. And that vitality extends to each individual part, even the most seemingly insignificant but very important part. No part of the tree, no part of the life of the blessed is untouched by God's life-giving waters or by the life of his divine light.

Fourth part of this picture, in here David departs from the tree imagery to complete the picture of the enviable, enviable life of the blessed man. He says, "and in whatever he does, he prospers." Now, trees don't do or plan anything, they just sit there. All right, so David, he's no slave to his metaphor. He sets the figure aside and allows us to see that the blessed man is not just a static stationary tree, but he is an image-bearer and he is filled with God's instruction and filled with God's instruction, he thinks like his teacher. As a child of his

father. He starts to think like his father and act like his father and make plans according to God's will.

So, the blessed man is fruitful like a tree, but the bearers best comparison we can make is this. He's like his father in heaven. He's got him, he's created in God's image. He has a mind, he has a will, and he's like his savior Jesus Christ, who has an active participant in his own fruitfulness and his own usefulness. Gives himself to the work.

"But," verse 4 says, "the wicked are not so," "the wicked are not so." Stark contrast here. It's arresting language. It's meant to stop us in our tracks. We've been enjoying the pleasant scene of the tree, planted by a stream of flowing water. We can imagine ourselves underneath the tree, enjoying its shade and laying up against its trunk. But now we're ripped out of that context, and we're thinking about dead, dry, worthless chaff that the wind drives away.

Picture there is a picture of winnowing. As people would gather, you know, cut the field, harvest, and then take it into the

winnowing threshing floor. And they cast the grain up into the air. And the wind is used to separate out the light useless chaff from the heavy fruit of the grain. And the grain, and being heavier, falls to the ground first. And that's where it's gathered, and pulled away, and made useful, to make bread and those kinds of things, and flour.

The chaff, which are the dead husks of the grain. They float down later, and they're swept into a pile and then taken out later for burning, in the burning pile. The blessed posture toward God's perfect word, intentionally away from the counsel of the world, creates this blessed picture, which guarantees, and here's a third point for your notes. Which guarantees, number three, the blessed future. The blessed posture leads to the blessed picture, which leads to the blessed future.

At the beginning, I posed the question, when you take a long hard look at your life, are you living a life that others envy? Are you living a life that will be congratulated, commended? The question requires you to think not about your own view of your life, your subjective sense about how things are going, how you feel about how you're doing. Those things are really irrelevant, aren't they? I mean, we're self deceived all the time. Rather,

the question requires you to realize that there is an objective view about your life, what someone else sees, how someone else judges your life. Is it enviable and blessed or is it not?

The question also requires you to set aside the selfie. A, a mere snapshot that lacks any true perspective, that's distorted out of all true proportion, and instead to consider how the comprehensive view of your life really measures up. And the objectivity I'm talking about here, the comprehensive judgement of your life and the evaluation of whether or not your life is blessed and enviable or not. Notice in these final verses, it's not a human evaluation that matters in the end, it's not your view that matters. It's not your faith in your own faith. It's not the strength of how much you think you believe. It's not about your spouse's view. It's not about your parents' view, or your grandparents' view. It's not about your, what your children or your grandchildren think about you. It's not about the estimation of a teacher or a coach or a boss, a relative, friends on social media. None of that matters.



The evaluation of our lives that matters in the end is one that is objective, and comprehensive, and omniscient. It's a divine evaluation that calls the shot of whether our lives are enviable and blessed or unenviable and cursed. Look at the verses.

"Therefore the wicked will not rise in the judgment." It's kind of a take on the chaff, the chaff that blows in the wind. It's not going to rise there. They're not ry, gonna rise in the judgment. Sinners are not gonna be standing in the congregation of the righteous, "For," verse 6, "Yahweh knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." And that's how the Psalm ends.

The Psalm about happiness, and blessing, and blessedness, and what's enviable, it ends with a note of warning, right? And yet in the warning is the promise of eternal life to the righteous, in the company of the godly, the blessed assembly, they will enter into the joy of God forever to learn, and to grow, and to achieve, and to accomplish, and to discover, and be blessed, and benefited forever.

Turn with me for a moment to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12. Because the writer of Hebrews addresses those who walk now in the blessed way and they are experiencing, for taking up the challenge of walking in the blessed way, and following Christ, you know, Christ called them. He said, "let everyone who would come after me deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." That means it will cost you your friends, and your relatives, and your acquaintances, and people will turn away from you, and they will despise you, and hate you.

And Jesus promised this, he said, if they hated me, they're going to hate you too. And the Hebrews, the recipients of this letter, they're feeling that. In fact, they're feeling that pressure so much. They want to give up on this whole Christian thing, and they want to return to the synagogue and return to their former life, because it was easier, because that's where all the people that are respected in society go. That's where their business connections are. That's where they can get their kids into good colleges and good training under rabbis, and that's where all the connections are made. They're just having a hard, hard time.

So the writer of the Hebrews is, is trying to encourage them. He's addressing those who walk in the blessed way and embrace the truly enviable life, one that is not envied by so many in this world today. And he encourages the blessed on their way. Join me in verse 14 of Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 14. The writer says, "pursue peace with all men", some just, some general exhortations here. "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." That is holiness.

Pursue holiness in your life, without which no one will see the Lord. No one will see the evidence, the transforming power of the Lord in your life if you do not pursue holiness, if you do not grow in sanctification, and "see to it," verse 15, "that no one falls short of the grace of God;" and then, "no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."

Watch your influences. Watch the influences. See that they're also, verse 16, here being "no sexually immoral or godless person like," like, "Esau, who sold his own birthright for a

single meal." I mean, what a foolish trade. I'm hungry. Give me some of that red stuff to eat. I don't care about this birthright. I don't care about honor. I don't care about carrying on the family name. I don't care about what has been given to me by divine providence. This honor, this responsibility, this duty that I can cherish and bless my family with. I don't care about it. Just give me some stuff to eat.

How many people are trading their souls for a pot of red stuff, like Esau? He sold his own birthright for a single meal. But you know that afterwards, verse 17, "even afterwards when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears." Oh lot of remorse, lot of regret, lot of crying. Many people live in remorse and regret with a lot of crying, a lot of tears, but they find no room in their hearts for repentance. They just refuse to do the deep spade work in their hearts and look themselves honestly in the mirror and say I got to give it up, I got to repent.

Verse 18, "For you," you believers, you Hebrews, "you've not come to a mountain that can be touched into a blazing fire." He's referring to Sinai here, "and to darkness and gloom and a whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which was such that those who heard beg that no further word be spoken to them. They cannot bear what was being commanded, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.' So terrible was what appeared, that Moses said; 'I am full of fear and trembling.'"

In our weekly bible reading, if you're, we do this together as a church and if you're keeping up, you realize that last week we read Exodus 20. I'm describing this very scene and we see that most of the people, the nation, million children of Israel walking through the wilderness and there they are at Sinai. And they're repelled by the holiness of God. They don't want to come near. They turn away in fear. Moses, though, was compelled by the holiness of God. He wanted to draw near. Yes, he trembled. Who wouldn't? He was longing to draw near to God, longing to come near to Yahweh, to see him, to know him, to love God, to worship him, to give his life for him.

# GRACE CHURCH



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We read in Exodus 20, verse 20 that Moses said to the people, don't be afraid. God has come in order to test you and to, in order that the fear of him may remain in you, so that you may not sin. Isn't that interesting, don't fear, but fear. Don't turn away in cowering fear. Your God wants to save you, reveal himself to you. Draw near in a holy reverential fear, the fear of a son for his father. But the people stood at a distance. Moses approached the thick cloud where God was. We also read this last week in Exodus 24:9 that Moses, along with his brother Aaron, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, along with 70 elders of Israel, and remember the, the privilege that they had.

They were called up to Sinai, up to the mountain, approached Sinai and they saw the God of Israel. Sites that no one else saw. Even since they beheld God, they ate, they drank, but listen, even that amazing experience didn't affect them. The experience as dramatic and amazing as it was, didn't change their hearts, didn't make a dent. Only Moses entered the cloud that day, communed with God. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, the 70. They descended the mountain and led Israel in the dance of the golden calf. That's our reading for this week. Their hearts weren't right.

Even in the presence of holiness, their hearts were not right; wicked desires, sinful actions. They would never join the sacred assembly along with Moses, along with all the blessed, along with those who are living an enviable life. Let's continue reading in Hebrews 12:22. "But you," beloved, "you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the festal gathering, an assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking."

This is David's message too. "See to it that you don't refuse him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned him on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from him who warns us from heaven. And his voice shook the earth then, but now he is promised, saying, 'yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.'"

"Now this expression, 'yet once more' indicates the removing of those things which can be shaken, as I've created things, so that those which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which mean we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."

Oh, listen, that is our charge. That is our call. The wicked will continue keeping their own counsel. Sinners will go their own way. Scoffers are gonna continue sitting down, enjoying eating, and drinking, and laughing, and joking, and having a ball. But woe to them when they come before the judgement of God.

Go back to Psalm 1 again. David says, they will not rise in the judgement. They won't stand there. If they won't kneel there, they will be flat on their face there, cowering before the God that they have spurned all their life, and they will be cast down forever because of it. They will not join in the eternal assembly of the righteous, but they will be excluded, exiled,

cast out forever into the eternal fire. By choosing now, the way envied by sinners in this life, a way that we know God has condemned, sinners forfeit the enviable life that God himself knows, the way that he knows Yahweh knows the way of the righteous.

They forfeit that. They forfeit all that he's offered them. And so they will perish in the way that they have chosen. It's so tragic. It's so tragic. It's such a sobering picture, isn't it, frightening reality. And that's we want to note again that that's the tone that David sets for the reader of the Psalms. As this Psalm 1 stands at the entry point into the rest of the Psalter. We have to enter into the blessed, enviable life God offers to give us, really repenting of our sin, and turning away from the world, and obeying his word.

Because all the rich beauty, all the, pictured here is the kind of the Psalter, all the glory of the treasure of the Psalms. Oh, the doors are wide open to those who delight in the instruction of Yahweh, to those who meditate day and night, those who draw near to God in praise and worship, who are devoted to him and

devoted to nothing else. God will tolerate no rivals. He's not going to share his affection with any idol in your life. No other gods before him. He'll share us with no lover. He will always demand we abandon every single idol in our hearts and give ourselves wholly unto him. He does that for his glory, yes, and for our good.

It's a loving command and those who follow it, like the blessed man David writes about, live the truly enviable life and that judgement, that it is an enviable life, though it's spurned and scorned in the present moment now by the world, that judgement will be vindicated in the end by all, but especially, and most importantly, by the all knowing, all seeing God. Friend, what about you? Will you repent of your sin, turn from the world and follow this blessed way?

By the grace of God, empowered, empowered by his spirit, and informed by his word, will you live now an enviable life, one that is judged to be enviable, enviable by God himself? That's my prayer for you today, that you will forsake death, the deadness of the chaff, and that you will instead choose new life

in Christ and live a life that is truly to be envied. For it is in the life of Christ that we see the ultimate life of his that is to be envied.

Bow your heads with me please, and listen to this from Philippians chapter 2, which was also in our reading this past week. Jesus Christ "being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And therefore, God also highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Our Father, you have put before us in Christ, the blessed man, the truly enviable life. And though he was judged a criminal, though he'd committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth, though he was crucified along with robbers and thieves, Father, you exalted him to your very throne, given him the name that is above every name. And now, from the perspective of your eternal view, your perspective, your vantage point, we see that the life that was despised on this earth and crucified, treated



as a criminal, that one perfect life has been raised up on high,  
that anybody who looks to him may be saved.

Father, would you be pleased to pour out your saving grace, even  
today on those who desperately need it? And for those of us who  
do know your saving grace, we pray that you would help us to  
repent of any sin, any sinful way, any wrong counsel we've been  
listening to, any pathway that we've been walking in, any seat  
that we've been sitting in. Help us to rise up and turn 180 out  
and follow Christ. It's in his name we pray. Amen.