

Intro:

I love the Psalms, don't you? In the Psalms, God has given us a Worship Manual, a "how to" book on the subject of praise. Did you know that the Psalms were designed to be sung? By individuals in personal worship, and by the congregation in public worship.

God gave the Psalms to the Israelites. Many different human authors contributed: Moses, Asaph, Solomon, Ethan, the sons of Korah, and of course, David. 73 psalms are ascribed to that great shepherd-king David. The Psalms are poetic literature, filled with beautiful imagery, expressing the heart-felt cries of individuals devoted to God. When God gave Israel the Law, He showed His people how to live. The Psalms personalize the Law. The Psalms reveal the reflections of real people in real situations, as they seek to honor the Law of God in their lives.

Tonight I want to lead us in a new, Sunday evening, mini-series. I've entitled it, "How to Experience the Presence of God in Our Lives." The Psalms answer that question for us. God is real. And He wants us to enjoy a personal, vibrant relationship with Him. The Psalms show us how.

Of course, we won't digest all 150 Psalms. Time wouldn't permit that. But we do want to devote 6 weeks or so to 6 selected Psalms which will show us how to experience the presence of God in our lives. (eg--Ps 15)

Q: Where do we begin?

At the beginning! Let's turn to Psalm 1. Psalm 1 is probably familiar to most of us tonight. Some 25 men are presently working at memorizing Ps 1 in our Men's Growth Groups.

READ Psalm 1

Q: Is God real to you? How can I experience the presence of God in my life?

A: Ps 1 tells us this--It's a matter of choice.

Do I really want to experience the presence of God in my life? Do I? Do you? In fact, it's a matter of daily choice. What are the options?

Proposition: According to Psalm 1, there are two options from which all of us must choose. Only two. There are also two outcomes. And one critical choice.

I. Option #1: The Blessed Man (1-3)

A. What the Blessed Man does NOT do (1)

1. Does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly--Distinct Values
2. Does not stand in the way of sinners--Distinct Lifestyle
3. Does not sit in the seat of the scornful--Distinct Company

B. What the Blessed Man DOES (2)

1. He delights in God's Instruction
2. He meditates in God's Instruction

- C. What the Blessed Man EXPERIENCES (3)
 - 1. Fruitfulness
 - 2. Prosperity
- II. Option #2: The Ungodly Man (4-5)
 - A. What the Ungodly Man is: Unstable (4)
 - B. What the Ungodly Man can expect: Judgment (5)
- III. The Choice is up to you! (6)

There are two types of people in the world...

I. Option #1: The Blessed Man (1-3)

V 1 "Blessed is the man"

Here's option #1--The Blessed Man.

Q: What does "blessed" mean?

--"happy", but more than that

--fulfilled, complete, satisfied

See: Mt 5:3ff "Blessed are the poor in spirit..."

The blessed person is obviously the person who has God's blessing on his/her life. The word "blessed" is found 26 times in the Psalms:

2:12 "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him."

32:1-2 "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered..."

33:12 "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord..."

34:8 "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him."

The Hebrew word is actually plural. "Blessings upon the man."

Q: What man? What is true of the person who experiences God's blessings?

A. What the Blessed Man does NOT do (1)

V 1 reveals what is NOT true of the blessed individual. There are 3 parallel phrases, revealing 3 things a blessed person does not do...

1. Does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly--Distinct Values

"Counsel" has to do with thinking. A blessed person does not think like ungodly people. He operates with a different set of values. What determines those values? We'll see in v 2.

2. Does not stand in the way of sinners--Distinct Lifestyle

The "way" has to do with behavior and lifestyle. Do you remember how many "ways" from which to choose there are in life?

Mt 7:13 "...broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many go..."

Mt 7:14 "...hard is the way which leads unto life, and few find it."

There are only two ways in life. One pleases God. The other doesn't. The blessed man chooses the way that pleases God. He chooses the distinct lifestyle.

3. *Does not sit in the seat of the scornful--Distinct Company*

Here's the third negative. The "seat" has to do with a person's associations. The blessed man doesn't associate with scornful people. Scoffers. A scoffer is a person who mocks at God and mocks at sin and mocks at eternal values.

Listen. The blessed man watches the company he keeps.

Did you notice the downward progression? Walking leads to standing which results in sitting. These 3 phrases show 3 steps a person takes in moving God out of his life. It starts with his value system, and moves to his lifestyle, and results in the company he keeps. Spurgeon remarked, "When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse." Illust:

Challenge: The Blessed person doesn't isolate himself from sinners. That's impossible. V 1 does not say, "Blessed man is the hermit who retreats from the world, and the monk who hides away in a monastery." No. The blessed man separates himself not from the ungodly, but from THE WAY OF the ungodly.

Key: Separation is biblical. But the doctrine of separation does not mean we should insulate ourselves FROM the world, but that we should be distinct IN the world. In our walking, in our standing, in our sitting. That's pretty comprehensive, isn't it? If we want to be blessed, we are to live with distinct values, lifestyles, and company.

Application: Let's be specific. Look again at the phrase, "nor sits in the seat of the scornful." In Hebrew society, the "seat" was often a place of prestige in society. Leaders would "sit" in the city gate.

Listen. A godly person isn't caught up pursuing prestige. It's not his goal to "sit with the big-wigs"!

Q: Is it ever appropriate for a Christian to turn down an opportunity for a job promotion? Should we ever decline a job advancement which may result in more money and prestige?

Illust: Story of Bob McAlister in Colson's "The Body"

B. What the Blessed Man DOES (2)

V 2 "But"

Notice the strong contrast. BUT. The reason godly people don't do certain things is because we have a different passion in life.

Illust: People say to us, "Oh, you can't do that...can you? You're a Christian. You can't go there, can you?" Listen. It's not a matter of CAN'T. It's a matter of won't.

I Cor 6:12 "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient."

What is it that is expedient for a blessed man? Two things...

1. *He delights in God's Instruction*

V 2 "But his delight is in the law of the LORD"

The word law is the Hebrew word "Torah." Sometimes the word refers to the 10 commands which God gave to Israel through Moses at Sinai. At other times, the Torah refers to the first 5 books of the OT. Those were the covenant stipulations God gave to His people. He told them exactly how He expected them to live.

But here in Ps 1, Torah is used in its most general sense. Torah means simply "instruction." The Law is the instruction God gave to mankind as a guide for life. When Ps 1 was written, that instruction was primarily the Pentateuch. But for us, God's instruction includes all 66 books of the Bible.

Q: What does a blessed person do with God's instruction?

A: He delights in it!

It's God's Word, not the counsel of the ungodly world, that shapes his life.

Q: Is the Bible your delight?

"How can you tell if it is?" Not by what you SAY about it, but by what you DO with it. Watch what the Blessed man does with it...

2. He meditates in God's Instruction

V 2 "in his law he meditates..."

Turn to Josh 1:8, "This book of the Law...meditate..."

Q: What does it mean to "meditate"?

--not, relinquish control of your mind; in fact, just the opposite

--same word used in Ps 2:1 "imagine" (plot)

--to mull over, to contemplate

Q: How often? Day and night = continually

When we meditate on God's Word, we aggressively use our minds to think about and digest and implement God's instruction (eg--II Cor 10:5 "Casting down imaginations...bringing into captivity every thought...").

Challenge: The Blessed person is the one who takes God's Word seriously. Every moment. In every decision. On the job. At school. In the home.

Q: Do you take God's Word seriously? Do you study God's Word?

Q: Do you have a plan for regular Bible study? If you don't, this blessing can't belong to you.

Illust:

Tran: Why should I delight in God's instruction? V 3 answers that with a word picture...

C. What the Blessed Man EXPERIENCES (3)

A blessed man experiences two things:

1. Fruitfulness

V 3 "And he shall be like a tree...that brings forth its fruit"

2. Prosperity

V 3 "whatsoever he does shall prosper"

See: Jeremiah 17:5-8

That's God's design. He wants you to be fruitful and prosperous. Like a vivacious, vibrant tree. And you can be. How? By choosing option #1. Choose to live like the Blessed Man.

Illust:

Tran: The Psalmist in black and white terms gives us the options: #1The Blessed Man.

Q: Who is the Blessed Man? The Godly Man

Sadly, many choose the second option...

II. Option #2: The Ungodly Man (4-5)

V 4 "The ungodly are NOT SO"

Notice the Psalmist doesn't explicitly tell us what makes a person ungodly. He merely contrasts the Ungodly man with the Blessed man. They're opposites: NOT SO.

Note: The LXX has lit., "Not so the ungodly, not so." Double negative

Q: What makes a person "ungodly"?

A: A person can be sitting in a church and be ungodly. A person can be standing behind a pulpit and be ungodly.

Key: An ungodly person is UN-godly. That is, he leaves God out of the center of his life. An ungodly lives as though God did not exist.

Problem: We tend to view ungodliness with external activities, like smoking and drinking a six-pack and doing drugs. But listen. Those are merely symptoms of a greater, root problem. An ungodly person is one who doesn't give God the place He deserves in His life. An ungodly person doesn't delight in God's Word. He doesn't meditate in God's Law.

When you think about it, some Christians live ungodly lives.

Illust:

Q: What's true of an ungodly person?

A. What the Ungodly Man is: Unstable (4)

V 4 "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff..."

Illust: Picture of winnowing grain at harvest time

Chaff is rootless, weightless, and useless. Chaff is unstable, subject to the whim of the wind. It's the part of the plant that the farmer burns.

An ungodly person is unstable. He's a lightweight.

Observation: There are a lot of stagnant and frustrated Christians.

B. What the Ungodly Man can expect: Judgment (5)

V 5 "Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand..."

Know this. Every human being will face the judgment of God one day (Heb 9:27). But only those who have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ shall stand. The ungodly shall not stand.

Quote: Spurgeon, in his classic, "The Treasury of David," wrote, "Sinners cannot live in heaven. They would be out of their element. Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise. Heaven would be an intolerable hell to an impenitent man, even if he could be allowed to enter; but such a privilege shall never be granted to the man who perseveres in his iniquities." (3)

Tran: We've learned about The Blessed Man (1-3), and The Ungodly Man (4-5).

III. The Choice is up to you! (6)

V 6 "For the Lord knoweth..."

Here's the options one more time.

#1 "The Lord knows the way of the righteous" = The Blessed Man

The Hebrew sheds light here. The sense is this, "The Lord is knowing the way of the righteous." True, the Lord knows everything. He knows everybody, including the ungodly. But He knows the "way of the righteous."

Key: God is personally involved in blessing the life of a person who delights in Him and in His Word.

Job 23:10 "He knows the way that I take..."

#2 "But the way of the ungodly shall perish" = The Ungodly Man

We never hear this in the news. But listen to God. The way of the ungodly shall PERISH. Sure, sin is pleasurable, for a season. But there are severe consequences for taking the wrong way in life.

Illust: Driving a car the wrong way

Conclusion:

Q: Which would you rather be, a fruitful, growing tree, or blowing chaff?

Q: What kind of person are you, a Blessed Man or an Ungodly Man?