

Which Way Shall It Be?

Psalms Series

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Bible Text: Psalm 1

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I want you to consider a very silly scenario as we begin this morning. Suppose a man said and he meant it, "I have no further interest in the stifling restrictions from the Department of Transportation. From now on, I will drive on the wrong side of the road. I must be free." Now, if a man said that to you, you might laugh as his foolishness; you might try to warn him of the danger; you might fear for those that he will certainly harm. One thing would not happen: when the inevitable disaster occurred, it would not surprise you. It could be no other way. Some realities cannot be avoided. A man who is on the wrong side of the road will die. A man who is on the wrong side of the highway will meet with disaster. This is simply woven into the nature of life and the universe. It cannot be avoided and the outcome is certain. Psalm 1 teaches us an even greater certainty about life and I invite you to turn there to that passage that we read earlier this morning. We're teaching out of Psalm 1 today as an introduction really to our entire Tuesday night series that starts this Tuesday at 7:00 at the new building. The address is there in your bulletins. This is kind of to give us an opportunity to do a running head start into the Tuesday series on Psalms which we're going to be starting. Psalm 1 is a great place to start because Psalm 1 is really the preface Psalm to the entire Psalter. It is the opening upon which the other 149 expound. Every principle of every Psalm is somehow embedded in the great, concise, glorious majesty of Psalm 1 and so as we introduce Psalm 1 today, we're really introducing the entire book of Psalms in addition to introducing our Tuesday study that starts at 7:00 at the new building.

And yet, beloved, I want you to understand that the issues of Psalm 1 are more than about a new study. The issue of Psalm 1, the content of what we're going to see today is of incalculable eternal consequence. What we have in Psalm 1 is your future laid out for you. For good or for ill, Psalm 1 lays out to you the future of life and the future of eternity to you. It is a way by which you can diagnose your life and know what the outcome is. Just like the man driving on the wrong side of the road, if you are on the wrong side of Psalm 1, God's word guarantees to you that disaster lies ahead. By contrast, Psalm 1 promises you that whatever else may happen in the meantime, for those of us that are on the right side of Psalm 1, blessing from God lies ahead. It is a certain outcome that cannot be avoided. One path leads to blessing from God. The other path leads to judgment from God and, brothers and sisters, friends, boys and girls, there is no third

path. As we gather together in this room as this message is heard later on, everyone who hears this message is on one path or the other. Psalm 1 allows no third path and there could be no third path. What God has done here at the beginning of the book of Psalms is he has graciously set forth before us the path that leads to life. The question is: will you listen? The question is: will you respond? The question is: will you examine yourself in light of what this Psalm says so that you can position yourself for the blessing of God. Here's the thing, think about it this way: you have to opt into it. If you don't opt into this blessing, you're left with a path that leads to destruction. If you want to continue and just go on as you are, know that you're choosing the path that leads to destruction. Even just by saying, "I don't want to think about it right now," you've made your decision. You're taking another step toward your own destruction and so we must approach this Psalm with a sense of holy reverence, of anticipation, of a great sense of urgency because not only is its content of great consequence, it is the head Psalm of the largest book in the Bible. It must be important. It must call for our attention. What we have before us is a division in the road and one path goes one way and another goes another way.

I think about these kinds of things when I'm driving on the interstate system all the time. There is a particular place in California that we drove through many, many times. As you're driving from California moving into the normal part of the United States, there is a place where as you're driving on Interstate 15 going north, the road divides and you can either take I-40 to the right or you continue on on I-15 and I-15 at that one moment, that decision takes you on a path that leads you north into Utah, the other path takes you to North Carolina. But there is this moment where you are choosing the fork in the road and the consequences, the trajectories that those take you on are vastly different. Well, Psalm 1 is like that. It is laying forth paths, two paths, that have completely different outcomes and you must choose. You must be conscious of what lies ahead, that there are consequences. There are consequences.

There are consequences to the way that you respond to the word of God. There are consequences to the way that you respond to what you will hear today and I realize that most of evangelical churches in the past 50 years have conditioned us to treat the moment of preaching with indifference. When people joke and smile at you, they condition you to think, "This isn't too serious. I'll take it or leave it. I'll have a good time and I'll go on with my life." Look, this is not it. Psalm 1 is not like that. Psalm 1 confronts us and says, "You must pay heed because the consequences are so vast." And so I invite you, I ask you, I beg you to pay heed this morning for your own sake and for the sake of what the Lord has set before you today. And you should approach this text, you should approach Psalm 1 as God once again extending a merciful hand to you that says, "Here is the path of blessing," and God is warning and saying, "If you don't take the path of blessing, the consequences are severe." There is so much at stake. So the Lord invites us to blessing as we read Psalm 1 and yet the Lord is not one to be trifled with. His word will be heeded sooner or later.

Who will listen? Which way will it be for you? That's really the question and there are two ways that are set forth in the Psalms: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. That's the outline of today's message. Point 1 here this morning, let's take a look

at the way of the righteous, the way of the blessed. Who wouldn't want to be blessed? Who wouldn't want to be supremely truly happy? Why would anyone walk away from that? Well, this is what is being laid out for us in the first half of this Psalm, it is the path of blessing. Look at Psalm 1-3. We'll read this stanza to start us off,

1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his
delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and
night. 3 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.

Just take a little overview look at this Psalm. Get acquainted with the wonder of it. It says, "How blessed is this man." It's a word of intensity; it's a word that speaks of intense multiplied happiness, of the goodness of God that is going to rest on this man. It's not from good circumstances; it's not promising an uncluttered path in life. It is saying that it is supremely good to be in this position and then he goes on to describe what this position is. So right from the start, Psalm 1 arrests our attention and says, "Here is a man who is supremely blessed." Even at the most base level of self-interest, you should say, "I want to be blessed. I want to be supremely happy. Why don't I pay attention and pay heed here?" It draws you in; it invites you. Psalm 1 is an invitation to the blessing of God in its truest and deepest sense.

Now, here's the thing: you don't just fall into this; you don't just happen to experience the blessing of God as if you received an unexpected inheritance from a distant rich uncle and somebody calls you and says, "Hey, this uncle you didn't even know, he just left you ten million dollars." "Wow! I wasn't expecting that. That's great." It's not like that. Look beloved, Psalm 1 promises blessing to those who will actually think about life, who will actually contemplate their soul, who will actually look at the world about them and think and judge and make discerning evaluations about the path of life that they're going to take. That's the kind of invitation that is given. How can you be the man who is under the blessing of this Psalm? Well, it requires you to think; it requires you to make decisions. You can see this as you move along. You can recognize the righteous man by three aspects of his life. These are subpoints to the way of the righteous. How do you recognize the righteous man? What is it that the blessed man is marked by? What is it that you must do if you want to know the blessing of God? Well, there is a positive and there's a negative and there's an illustration. Let's put it this way: the righteous man can be recognized first of all, by what he rejects. By what he rejects. The man, the woman, who simply wants to please everyone that's around them, that never wants to cause any waves, that doesn't want to have to struggle in life with difficult questions, is a person who is never going to be blessed because the blessing of the righteous man – watch this – who looks at the world around him, who understands it is an ungodly environment, that there is ungodly thought and philosophies that drive the actions and the thinking of the world and says, "I will not be a part of that. I will separate myself from it. I reject that. I disown it. I do not belong to this world." That is what is required to enter into the blessing of this world.

There is a negative and a positive dimension to the godly life. Look at Psalm 1 with me again. Look at verse 1. "How blessed is the man who," watch the negative characteristics that are laid out in verse 1 now, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" Notice the negatives. There is no way around this. He does not walk in this counsel. He does not stand in the path of sinners. He does not sit in the seat of scoffers. This is profound. In one simple verse, you're seeing a man who looks at the world and rejects it. He does not turn to the world for advice. He does not participate in their sinful activities. He does not accept their definitions of truth. He rejects their standards of morality. He says, "I will stand alone before I will stand with them."

You see beloved, there is a conscious, deliberate, knowing, intentional separation from the wicked world around that the blessed man engages in. This doesn't just happen. You don't just go through life in a superficial way and just happen to be this way. There is a recognition in the righteous man. There is a conscious understanding that, "I am in the midst of a fallen world. I see the world pushing away Scripture. I see the world mocking the God of the Bible. I see the world embracing behavior and attitudes that God explicitly condemns in his word." And he understands that there are powerful forces behind it. He understands that this is driven at one level by powerful media interests, that this is promoted in all of the marketing that he sees around him. He gets all of that and yet he says, "I am in a river current that is going downstream that's going to go over a waterfall before long. I'm getting out. I reject this. It's not right for the creation to rebel against its Creator this way. I will have no part of it." He rejects the world in which he lives. This is the mark of the blessed man. He wants no part not only of just the activities of sinful people around him, he doesn't want to have their mindset either. His affections are not on what this world brings. His affections, her affections, are not on what this world gives. He says, "This is not mine. This is not what I love." He rejects the world. The blessed man, the righteous man is described here as one who has rejected the world.

Now, this doesn't just happen. That's what I want you to see. This doesn't just happen and you young people that are listening and you're on the front end of life and things are fun and that's good and that's the way young life should be in your pre-teen, early teen years but the sooner that you come to recognize this, the better. You must come to understand that you have to make a choice. You are making a decision about one way or the other which you will follow and better to decide that early on than to get sucked further into the current, sucked further into the vortex where it's harder and harder to get out. Call upon God. Say, "Deliver me from this world now even in my youth that I might be set aside to be one who follows you." Will you be that young person? I ask, will you be that young person? Will you respond to the call of God on your life that way? Young man, young woman? What's being laid before you is a path that leads to blessing but to take that path, you have to say no to the other fork in the road. You say, "I'm not going there," because the blessed man, the righteous man is known by what he rejects.

As you go deeper into the Psalms, Psalms 2-150, it fleshes out all that is being rejected. Here it's just stating the general principle and that's what I want you to see this morning. I

want to see the general principle that there is a principle in the godly life that involves a rejection. There is a negative assessment on the environment in which we live and says, "That's not me." And one of the aspects of preaching the gospel, when we call people to saving faith in Christ and we call them to repentance, we're not only calling them out of their own sin to come to a Savior, we're doing that for sure but we are also calling people to leave the world behind, to come out of the world and to reject it, to separate themselves from it. This is a profound message that we preach. It is a profound statement that, "I don't belong in the very environment in which I actually live." It is that serious. It is that deep in what is laid before us. There is a rejection of the world.

Now, it's more than just a negative rejection though. The righteous man is known by what he rejects, that's true, but he is also known in a positive way by what he receives. What he rejects; what he receives. We see what he receives in verse 2. At his core, this man loves the word of God. It is that simple, plain and evident. Look at verse 2, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." Notice a couple of things about this. First of all, there is a contrast, right? You see that? There is this path of the world and yet there's this contrast in verse 2, "I've left behind the world, as I go into verse 2, I've rejected that and now as I move into verse 2, I'm moving into a different realm. I'm moving into a different realm of desire, a different realm of what I esteem, of what my priorities are." In verse 1, he's left behind what the world thinks and what the world does and what the world says. He's left behind the scoffing and the mocking of the world toward the things of God and now in verse 2, as if he's walked into a beautiful ballroom, he stepped off the street, out of the gutters of the street and he's walked into a 5 star hotel room and he's walked into this gorgeous ballroom with a completely different décor, a completely different setup and says, "Ah, this is where I will set. This is where I will plant my life."

Verse 2, look at it with me again, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." Notice that it's stated there twice: "in the law of the Lord" and "in his law." That's the focus of this verse. The word for "law" here, it can refer to the first five books of Moses, the Pentateuch, the Torah, is the word that's used here. It can refer just to that but more broadly, this word refers to God's instruction, to God's written revelation in the Bible and that's the way that we should take this. The totality of what God has revealed in Scripture, that's what this man loves. He loves a book. He loves God's word. He studies it. He reads it. He thinks about it. Brothers and sisters, he goes further: he obeys it. This man, this woman, this young person, has his mind on the word of God day and night. Let me say something that should convict many of you, many of us, should be convicted by what is about to be said: in the righteous life, there is not room for the principle of compartmentalization, to say, "I'll be in church on Sunday but I have these worldly activities that I love, these things that are kind of sinful but I'm going to enjoy them, these things that are anti-God in their tone, in their music or whatever, in their entertainment, but you know what? I don't care. I want that too." It doesn't work that way. There is a day and night monopoly on this man's affections, on this man thinking, that comes from the word of God and the entire desire, the unifying desire of his heart is to bring the totality of his life in whole and in its parts under the authority, under the blessing, under the clarify, under the revelation of the word of God.

That is no burdensome yoke to him that he resents. This man loves that. Look at verse 2 with me again, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD." This is what he wants. This is what he builds his life around, around the word of God. Now, here's what I want you to see, stepping back and taking a really big picture look at things: living a righteous life starts with your mind, it starts with your affections, it starts with the inner man. It starts with asking this question: what have I set my heart upon? And when a man, when a woman, sets his heart upon the Scripture, here's what happens, here's why the outcome of Psalm 1 is guaranteed: when you love the word of God, when you read the word of God, when you think on the word of God, when you study on the word of God, when you obey the word of God, it changes the way that you think and when your thinking is changed, what you love, what you desire, is changed. The mind drives the heart and the heart drives the behavior and so a man who wants to live the blessed life, the man who wants to know the goodness that lies at the end of the blessing of God says, "I'm going to set my heart and I'm going to direct my affections to seek and to pursue and to understand God's holy word. That will be the desire of my heart."

So the question is as this is a really searching Psalm, the question is: do you love God's word like that? Do you love God's word and I realize that we're not all going to be monks and reading the Bible for 14 hours a day and all of that. That's not the point. This is not talking about a quantity of time, it's talking about a quality of heart. Is God's word what you have set your heart on? Is it what you value more than anything else? If it's not, you're not in the camp of the righteous. If you don't love the Bible this Psalm teaches us, you're not in the path of the blessed. You see, the blessed man, the happy man, rejects the world and receives God's word. It says, "I will set my heart on this word."

I want you to turn to the book of Ezra, chapter 7, which is just before the Psalms. You need to turn back before Job, before Esther, before Nehemiah. It is likely that we have the book of Psalms compiled in this form from the hand of Ezra. I want you to look at Ezra 7:10. Here is the take-away, here's the illustration, here's the model for you to follow in your own life compact, clear, concise, understandable. Verse 9 ends, "the good hand of his God was upon him." Verse 10, "For," the good hand of God was upon Ezra because Ezra was this kind of man, "Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." Look at that. He set his heart. He gathered up his affections and with a deliberate intent of his mind he said, "My life will be pursuing this word. I will embrace this word. This is what I will study. This is what I will think about. This is the most important priority in my life is that I understand this word and that I conform my life to it." He wasn't just someone who studied it, he wanted to practice it and so there is this whole-hearted orientation of the inner man that says, "This book is my love. This book is my hope. This is the object of my affection. This book is that to which I give the kiss of submission and allegiance."

That's the idea. You say, "To a book?" Yeah, this book is precious because it came from God. This book came from our Creator. This book, this written word of God is the one that testifies to the Incarnate word of God, the God who became flesh to be the Savior of men by giving his life on a cross to save us from sin. You know, look, I realize I get

animated about a lot when I'm up here preaching but how could you not love this book? How could anyone not love a book that comes from the infinite Creator of the world? That testifies to the way that our sins can be forgiven and that is pure, that is true and that leads us to the path of God's eternal blessing? How could you not love a book like that? And how, beloved, how could you not reject, how could you not separate, how could you not disown, the environment that is opposed to this word? How could that be? I mean, we have to examine ourselves and we have to think about life from these most fundamental perspectives. What is it that I love? What is it I'm after? You can't have it both ways.

The young person, the man, the woman, that wants to keep his foot in both camps, you need to understand something: if you're trying to keep your feet in both camps, one in one and one in the other, understand that both of your feet are in the camp of the wicked because the righteous man delights in the word of God day and night. He has rejected the way of sinners. He has rejected their counsel. He has rejected their thinking for the sake of pursuing this word and the word to which this word testifies. So, do you love God's word? Do you build your life around it? That's the question. Have you rejected the world? Think about it this way: have you received God's word as the defining affection and authority in your life? Is the word of God the defining affection and authority in your life? That's what this is calling us to: the defining affection, the defining authority.

Now, what happens to a man like that? What's the outcome? You see, there are consequences. It matters whether you go left or right here at this juncture. The interstate that you choose when you're driving, takes you to a destination. In a far greater way, the way that you respond to this very principle determines the destination of your entire life. Nay, it goes further and echoes throughout your eternity. There is so much at stake. For those of you that love God's word, for those of you that do understand, "I have repented. I do reject the world. I do love God's word. What's in it for me? What's going to happen now? What's the outcome?" Well, those of you that are that kind of person and you come in discouraged, drink from verse 3 and see what this righteous man resembles. We get an illustration. There's a simile here. He compares this righteous man to a position of blessing and he describes it in verse 3.

So we've seen what he rejects, what he receives and now we're going to see what he resembles in verse 3. What happens to this man who stands alone under the affection and authority of God's word? Verse 3, it's a beautiful picture, "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." It goes well for this man. A tree planted near water will flourish regardless of the surrounding elements. In the same way, the man who loves God's word in the way that we've been describing this morning is going to thrive regardless of his life circumstances. There will be a spiritual fruitfulness to him. There will be an ever-developing, growing maturity, a strength, a courage of character. There will be productive things that come out of his life. It doesn't define what those things are; it states it in the most broad terms. Look at it at the end of verse 3, "in whatever he does, he prospers." There will be seasons where there is just fruit coming out of his life. He'll be an evergreen. He's not going to shrivel up under the weight of adversity because there is a life sustaining spiritual water coursing through the branches

and leaves and twigs of his life. There is a vitality of spiritual energy fueled by the Holy Spirit that animates everything that this man does, thinks and says. He is carried on eternal wings. He is borne by a spiritual current that leads to blessing. There is a power at work in him that is outside the realm of this world that guarantees this outcome of life for him. Whether his spiritual excellence is displayed in the quiet simplicity of being a godly family man unnoticed by the world, whether it is a spiritual excellence that gives him prominence amongst God's people, whether it is a spiritual excellence that leads him to the martyrs' grave at an early age, there is excellence, there is spiritual prosperity, there is a godly vibrancy about his life that transcends the external circumstances and defines the very quality of who this man is.

As you trace it all out, as you see those different effects that we just described, one man prominent, another man martyred, another man just quiet faithfulness, beloved, here's the thing that you have to understand, here's what you have to recognize from Psalm 1, here's what you have to discern as you understand and make judgments about life: you trace each one of those illustrations, you trace them back and you find the common root that defines the different ways in which those branches have spread about across the world and you come back and you say, "Oh, the common root is that was a man of God. That was a man who loved God's word." You look for that common root to define and explain what you see. It's not about the external manifestations or about which particular leaves your branches uphold. The spiritual prosperity described in Psalm 1 traces its root back to this book that is on your lap. When you realize the consequences of it, when you realize how much is at stake and that this speaks not only of earthly blessing and spiritual productivity but this defines blessing throughout all of eternity, you realize that what is sitting on your lap is an instrument either of your blessing or of your cursing. That what is on your lap is more powerful than the gas that fills your tank in the vehicle that you're going to drive home. That there should be a sense of reverence and respect and desire for this book that you view this with a sense of deference and respect and affection that says, "I have to take this seriously." How I respond to this book defines how life comes out for me. How I respond to the Christ to whom this word testifies, defines my eternity. This book is of awesome, unspeakable, incalculable importance.

Most of you are probably like me, you've got 20 Bibles in your house some of you. Some of you more and their almost fungible items, you can take them or leave them. They get worn out, you throw it out and you get another one. Don't let the availability of the printed product diminish your sense of respect and reverence for God's word because you hold on your lap that which determines the blessing of your life or that which will rise up and judge you in the end. We have to take this seriously. I want you to hold that Bible on your lap and say, "Wow, this is really precious. This is really, really important. I'm going to make this book the delight of my mind because I want to be that tree that's firmly planted." That's it. That's what Psalm 1 is teaching us to think about the word of God.

Now, what comes next? What comes next is a jarring and a sharp contrast. Beloved, listen to me: there are times where you just despair of trying to do justice to the word of God and that's how I feel right now. In the first three verses, we saw a negative and a positive contrast of the righteous man: what he rejects, what he receives. In the brilliance

of the mind of God which inspired the writer of this Psalm, you have another contrast going on. The righteous man is defined by a contrast: what he receives, what he rejects. Then there is this bigger contrast that we're about to step into in the next two verses that contrast that righteous man that we've just seen with a wicked man and so there are all of these clear contrasts that are going on throughout the Psalm. What we have now is a jarring, sharp contrast. We have just seen a description of the way of the righteous and we say, "This is a path of blessing. He comes out like a tree flourishing. This is so good." And then you move into verse 4 and when you read it in the original it says this, "Not so the wicked." Not so. Not them. Look at verses 4 and 5,

4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

Who are the wicked? They are the reverse of what I just described. They are the contrasting image. They are defined by the opposite of what we just saw in the first three verses. So as we look at the way of the wicked, let's look at what he resembles. The wicked are not so and so when he says, "The wicked are not so," he's saying, "They do walk in the counsel of the wicked. They do stand in the path of sinners. They do sit in the seat of scoffers. They do not delight in God's word." You see, I'm always grateful that there are so many faithful people that come to Truth Community week after week and I know that for most of you, you come because you love God's word and you're the object of the blessing of the first three verses and I just thank God that he's been good and is pouring that blessing on you but not everyone in this room is like that. Some of you are in this second path. You're here because you have to be. Somebody made you come or it just seemed like the right thing to do. But at heart, you do not love God's word. It is a burdensome yoke on your neck and so you dismiss it. Outwardly you go through the motions but inwardly you dismiss it. You don't love it. You don't delight in it. Well, here's what I want you to see: the second half of Psalm 1 is talking about you. And here's what it says, the way of the wicked, what he resembles is what we want to see.

Verse 4, "4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away." There is a tree and there's chaff. "Chaff" is a word that we don't use a whole lot here but it was something very common, something well known, part of daily life, when this was written. Let me give you just a little bit of a picture, a little bit of an explanation of chaff because it's describing what the wicked are like and so it matters. These people who reject God's word. Chaff was a byproduct of harvest time. They would pull their grain together and the grain would be mixed with dust and dirt and husks and debris and they had to separate the good grain that they could eat from all of that dirty byproduct. They had a means by which they did that. They had a pitchfork like instrument called a winnowing fan and what they would do is they would stand up on a hill where their threshing floor was and there'd be a good firm wind blowing through. What they would do is they would shovel up this mixture of grain and straw and chaff and they'd throw it up in the air and the wind would blow the chaff away and the good grain would fall back down to the floor. They would just do this repeatedly, the wind blowing the chaff away into a pile away from the grain, separating it and then they would eventually burn the

chaff. The chaff was useless; it was a hindrance; it was a waste; it was a byproduct that had no value, that needed to be destroyed. It had to be separated from the debris and eventually it was gathered and it was burned.

Do you realize what a horrific picture this paints of wicked people? What this says about those who love the world and those who reject or dismiss in whatever form the word of God? Those that are actively hostile to it? That scoff at it? Those that simply say, "Not my cup of tea. I don't care about the Bible." They're in the same camp. They're grouped together. They don't delight in the word of God whatever way they manifest that: in open sin or quiet rebellion. They're all lumped together in this one group called the wicked and Scripture says that they're like chaff. What God's word is saying to us from God's perspective: the wicked are just like chaff. Those who do not love God's word are useless debris fit only to be gathered and burned, a byproduct of, a disposable byproduct of the greater goal of gathering together good grain.

This is an arresting phrase. This brings you up short because we're too used to as human beings, especially in this day and age, we're too used to patting each other on the back and congratulating each other on how important we are. I'm talking in the most broad sense. And that there are multiple paths to God. "You have your truth. I have my truth." Loo, the word of God rejects all of that and says, "Those who don't delight in the word of God are debris." Look at verse 5 with me which describes what this wicked person receives, "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."

Turn to Matthew 3. John the Baptist used this exact same phrase. He talked about it in the exact same way as he talked about the coming ministry of Christ. Matthew 3:11, he says, "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I," he's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ there, he says, "I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Watch what he says in verse 12, "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The choice to ignore, the choice to spurn Scripture, leads to that outcome. If you are indifferent to God's word, the man who rejects God's word and substitutes human wisdom, his own opinion over what Scripture says, is a man who is choosing his own destruction. A man who is manifesting his own worthlessness, useless debris to be cast out, separated from the good grain. And Scripture makes this point with a number of metaphors: the wheat will be separated from the tares; the goats will be separated from the sheep; there will be a separation coming in the judgment. One path leads to heaven, one path leads to hell. You're on one or the other. It's that severe. It's that serious. It's that consequential.

You can't avoid this. You can't avoid it. The blessing that we who know the Lord have is certain. It can't be avoided. The judgment that awaits those who continue to spurn God's word is unavoidable. Why is that? How can you say that with such a definitive, dogmatic certainty? Verse 6. We've seen the way of the righteous, the way of the wicked, now in verse 6 we're going to see the way of the Lord. Look at this, this is cool. "For," there's a

lot that hangs on that word "for" at the beginning of verse 6. Why is it that the man of God's word is blessed? Why is it that the wicked are driven off into judgment? It's not because there is some kind of self-fulfilling power in our choices. Behind all of this is the power and the omnipotence and the righteous judgment of God. We can know for certain that the man of righteousness is blessed. We can know for certain that the man of wickedness will be cursed. For, because, verse 6,

6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous.

The Lord, his most holy name, the covenant-keeping God. How can I guarantee the ultimate blessing of God on your life if you're the man of righteousness? It's because the Lord knows your way. The Lord understands. The Lord cares. The Lord provides. The Lord directs the man who loves his word and this frees us up from all manner of anxiety about what the future holds. You don't have to know the outcome of any of the circumstances, you just have to know, "Okay, the Lord knows the way of the righteous and I have set my heart on his word, therefore somehow the outcome for me is good and I am confident, I am strong, I am courageous," you say to yourself, "because this is the path of blessing that God himself has ordained and I trust him to be true to his word." He knows the way of the righteous. The Lord knows my heart. Peter said in John 21, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you." If you can say that, "Lord, you know my failures. You know my sins of this past week. You know how many times I've fallen short but, Lord, you know that at the bottom of it all, I'm a man, I'm a woman, who delights in your word." Then you have every prerogative, every reason, every hope to look at verse 6 and say, "This applies to me. The Lord knows my way. I will be that blessed man in the end no matter the sorrows that intervene between now and the outcome."

But friends, if you're indifferent to God's word, you young people, I can't help but talk to you. My years are going to go by pretty quick and you're going to outlive me and I'm going to lose the opportunity one day to keep saying things to you so I'm going to say it because I care about your souls. If you're indifferent to the word, the Lord knows your way too. If in light of Psalm 1 you still stubbornly go your own way resisting, resenting God's word, you are choosing your own destruction and it won't be anyone's fault but yours. God will not accept the blame because the way of life and the way of death was set before you and you said, "I don't care about this word." You say, "I will drive on the wrong side of the road. I'm sick of this Department of Transportation. I want to drive on that side of the road." Really? Really? The outcome of that foolishness is unavoidable. You will be, you will have a collision with a Mac truck known as the Judgment of God. I ask you, why would you do that? Why would you do that? Why? On what possible basis of self-interest even could you justify that attitude?

It's laid out before you. Look at the end of verse 6. Every one of you, look at the end of verse 6,

But the way of the wicked will perish.

It's unavoidable. Here's the thing: I realize these kinds of themes are really stark and there's a certain weightiness to them, that's as it should be. God didn't give us eternal souls so that we could trifle with them, right? Why would he do that? That would be foolish. I realize it's weighty but even in the name of your own self-interest, why would you turn away from this? Why would you spurn God's word knowing that it brings certain destruction? Think about it this way: picture, as it were, all of the people in this room being gathered up and tossed up into the air like the threshing example, the threshing simile that is used in this Psalm, and that most of us will come back down in the hand of God to be gathered up into heaven into his kingdom of safety and yet there are some of you, rather than coming down into that, will be blown away, separated from the rest of us, falling into a pile where you will simply be waiting to be gathered up and burned. Why would you do that? Please don't do that. Please resolve in your heart right now, "I've got to pursue this word. I will seek out this word. I don't understand everything about Christ and salvation but I know that I must become a person of this word and I will start today. God, unveil yourself. God, make yourself known to me through your word." And take the path of blessing but know for certain that if you harden your heart once again and you walk out and say, "I will not be that man. I will not be that person," know that you're just grabbing the keys and saying, "I'm going to be on the left side of the road going home."

Those of you that know Christ, that love his word, take heart. You are a tree planted by water, nourished by the goodness and providence and protection of God. The blessing is on you. Our lives are good and they come out good in the end. Better than we think. The dividing line is God's word. If you won't embrace it, you will collide against it and the outcome will be that you will perish. It's that clear. It's that simple. It's that direct. Which path will it be for you?

Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you for the blessing that you promise to those who love your word and we've seen it, Lord, we've experienced it in our own lives. You've given fruit to our lives. We've prospered in what we've done. We've experienced the joy of the Spirit and a clear conscience that comes from the forgiveness of our sins. Your blessing just rains down on us and the tree grows deeper and broader by the day. Thank you for your goodness to us and may those who are truly in Christ who have heard this message, Father, take great nourishing encouragement from the fact that you know the way of the righteous and you will bless them. May it sustain them through the sorrow and the discouragement that they felt over these past many days. May this be water that revives the plant of grace in their hearts.

Father, for those that are not so, who push away Christ, who don't care about your word, Father, I beg you to work in their hearts so that they would take your word seriously, that when you describe them like chaff as those that will not stand in the Judgment, as those who will perish, as those who will be gathered up and burned, that you're not bluffing, that you're not kidding. Father, may there be a holy fear that takes root in their heart that persuades them to humble themselves under your word and to

receive your word, the written word and the Incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the defining affection and the defining authority in their hearts. There is too much at stake, Father, and we've said all that we can say. Now we look to your Spirit to do that hidden work which only he can do. We commit all of this to you in Christ's name. Amen.

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