

FBC POWELL, 2-5-17 AM NOTES
"True Prosperity"
Psalm 1:1-6
#1 in Series, "Psalms: Medicine for the Soul"

"The Psalms are rich in human experience. At times, they ring with the din and noise of battle, at other times they take us with hushed hearts into the inner sanctuary, into the immediate presence of God. At times they set our hearts aflame and our feet dancing for joy, at times we turn to them when our face is drenched with tears. For the Psalms touch all the notes in the keyboard of human emotion. Here we have love and hate, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, peace and strife, faith and despair. This is the stuff of which life is made. No wonder God's saints in all ages have felt the tug of the psalms." —John Phillips

Joshua 1:7-8 (NKJV) "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may **prosper** wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way **prosperous**, and then you will have good success."

2 Chronicles 20:20b (NKJV) "Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye **prosper**.'"

Psalm 35:27b "The Lord be magnified, who delights in the **prosperity** of His servant."

3 John 1:2 "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may **prosper** and be in good health, just as your soul **prosper**."

1 Corinthians 16:2 "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may **prosper**, so that no collections be made when I come."

"In view of the fact of the cultic origins of the health and wealth gospel, its heretical Christology, its devastating effects on human lives and the false portrayal of Christianity it presents to the world, this paper is a call to the wider evangelical community also to engage in an apologetic [defense] that will distinguish the gospel of Jesus Christ from those who indeed propagate a different gospel." —Terris Newman

Dr. Gordon Fee, a charismatic professor at Gordon-Conwell College wrote a book entitled, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*.

I. Those Who Prosper (vv. 1-3)

A. Those Who Prosper Are Separate from the World (v. 1)

1. Those Who Would Prosper Do Not Walk in the Counsel of the Wicked (v. 1a)

Romans 12:2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

2. Those Who Would Prosper Do Not Stand in the Path of Sinners (v. 1b)

3. Those Who Would Prosper Do Not Sit in the Seat of Scoffers (v. 1c)

B. Those Who Prosper Are Saturated with the Word (v. 2)

Joshua 1:8-9 “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

“They came to the Word of God and meditated. They laid the Bible on the old-fashioned, handmade chair, got down on the old, scrubbed, board floor and meditated on the Word. As they waited, faith mounted. The Spirit and faith illuminated. They had only a Bible with fine print, narrow margins, and poor paper, but they knew their Bible better than some of us do with all our helps. Let’s practice the art of Bible meditation...Let us open our Bibles, spread them out on a chair and meditate on the Word of God. It will open itself to us, and the Spirit of God will come and brood over it. I challenge you to meditate, quietly, reverently, prayerfully for a month. Put away the questions and answers and the filling in of the blank lines in the portions you haven’t been able to understand. Put all of the cheap trash away and take the Bible, get on your knees, and in faith say, ‘Father, here I am. Begin to teach me!’ —A. W. Tozer

C. Those Who Prosper Are Supernatural in Their Ways (v. 3)

II. Those Who Perish (vv. 4-6)

A. There Is Regret for a Wasted Life (v. 4)

B. There Is Rejection for a Wicked Life (v. 5)

C. There is Ruin for a Wayward Life (v. 6)

First Baptist Church Powell 02 05 2017 AM

Sermon: True Prosperity

Psalm 1:1-6

Series: *Psalms: Medicine for the Soul*

Today, we begin a lengthy series entitled *Psalms*:

Medicine for the Soul. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on introducing the book of Psalms, but a few introductory remarks (most taken from *The MacArthur Study Bible*) might serve to whet your appetite for what is coming up over the next fifteen to twenty weeks. This collection of 150 psalms is simply called *Praises* in the Hebrew text. What we call the book of Psalms was in reality Israel's God breathed (inspired) hymnbook.

There were multiple human authors that God inspired to write the book of Psalms. King David wrote at least seventy-five of the one-hundred-fifty psalms, the sons of Korah wrote ten, Asaph wrote twelve psalms, two are attributed to Solomon, one to Moses, one to Heman, and one to Ethan. The remaining forty-eight are often called "orphan psalms" because we do not know the human author. It is widely believed that Ezra wrote many of the *orphan Psalms*, but we do not know for sure. The important thing is that we know that whoever the human authors were, God inspired them.

For those who know the Lord and walk with Him, the book of Psalms is a staple of their spiritual diet. John Phillips has some comments about the Psalms that resonated with my soul. "The Psalms are rich in human experience. At times, they ring with the din and noise of battle, at other times they take us with hushed hearts into the inner sanctuary, into the immediate presence of God. At times they set our hearts aflame and our feet dancing for joy, at times we turn to them when our face is drenched with tears. For the Psalms touch all the notes in the keyboard of human emotion. Here we have love and hate, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, peace and strife, faith and despair. This is the stuff of which life is made. No wonder God's saints in all ages have felt the tug of the psalms." [John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms, Volume One*, page 9]

Today, we are going to examine the first psalm. It is a psalm about two paths or two worldviews in life. One leads to true prosperity and the other leads to judgment and death.

Before we examine this short psalm, I want to give a rather lengthy introduction that examines the meaning of a key word used in this psalm and in many other places throughout the Bible. One of the enemy's tactics is to take a biblical word and give it a completely different meaning. The word I am referring to in Psalm 1 is "Prosper" or "prosperity." It is a tragedy that the heretical "Word of Faith" movement has hijacked the words *prosper* and *prosperity* and given it a meaning that bears no resemblance to what it means in Scripture. The words prosper or prosperity are used multiple times in both the Old and New Testaments. Here are a few examples. Joshua 1:7-8 (NKJV):

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

2 Chronicles 20:20b (NKJV): "Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.'"

Psalm 35:27b "The Lord be magnified, who delights in the prosperity of His servant."

In the New Testament, we see this word *prosper* in 3 John 1:2: "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."

1 Corinthians 16:2 "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come."

When the "Health, Wealth, and Prosperity" false teachers speak of prosperity, what do they mean? They mean that God desires all of His children to be physically healthy all the time and financially wealthy all the time. Believers, they teach, have the power to create health and wealth through their faith which is generated by their positive confession. The logical conclusion of that heretical view is that if you are sick, poor, or just barely making it, it is your own fault for not confessing health and wealth by faith.

While almost every one of the “Health, Wealth, and Prosperity” teachers is associated with the charismatic movement, not all charismatics are a part of the “Health, Wealth, and Prosperity Movement.” Terris Newman, a Bible professor at Southeastern College (an Assemblies of God school) said:

In view of the fact of the cultic origins of the health and wealth gospel, its heretical Christology, its devastating effects on human lives and the false portrayal of Christianity it presents to the world, this paper is a call to the wider evangelical community also to engage in an apologetic [defense] that will distinguish the gospel of Jesus Christ from those who indeed propagate a different gospel.

Dr. Gordon Fee a Charismatic professor at Gordon – Conwell College wrote a book entitled *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*. [All examples taken from *The Areopagus Journal*, September/October 2003, page 3]

I am tired of heretical Bible teachers and preachers hijacking a good biblical word – prosper, prosperity, or prosperous – and giving it a meaning that contradicts the Scripture. By God’s grace, we will see today what true prosperity looks like. You can be prosperous in the biblical sense of that word when you are physically suffering and when your finances are few.

Psalm 1 shows us two categories of people: Those who prosper and those who perish.

I. Those Who Prosper (vv. 1-3)

The first Psalm is a study in contrasts. The contrast is between the God-centered worldview and the self-centered worldview. In verse one we are quickly told that the God-centered life is “blessed.” The wicked, in contrast according to verse 6, will not be blessed, but will perish. That word *blessed* in English doesn’t really communicate much today. When someone sneezes we say, “bless you.” That’s pretty generic and generally meaningless. The Hebrew word that is translated “blessed” means to be prosperous, blissful, contented, fulfilled, or to be congratulated. In the HCSB it is translated “How happy is the man...” In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, this is the same word that begins the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. They begin with “Blessed are...” The Psalmist is saying that the God centered worldview, the prosperous life is one that is blessed.

Let’s examine what the Psalmist tells us about a prosperous, God-centered, successful, blessed life.

A. Those Who Prosper Are Separate from the World (v. 1)

Though the word “world” is not used in verse 1, that is what the Psalmist is referring to. What do we mean when we speak of the “world” in a negative way? The world is a value system, an approach to life that just leaves God out. The world doesn’t necessarily deny the existence of God; they just see Him as irrelevant in daily life and in daily decisions. Those who are “of this world” are those who walk in the counsel of those who leave God out; they stand in the path of sinners (those who do not know God), and they sit in the seat of scoffers. Notice the progression in verse one – walk, stand, sit.

1. Those Who Would Prosper Do Not Walk in the Counsel of the Wicked (v. 1a)

In the Bible, our walk is the pattern of our life. The counsel of the wicked is worldly counsel, advice, or plans that just leave God out. I remember a number of years ago getting a brochure from a man who was starting a counseling ministry. The brochure told of his degrees, his experience, and the kinds of problems he dealt with. Then at the bottom of the brochure, he wrote something like this: “In the counseling sessions, we will bring God into the solution of the problems as much as the counselee feels comfortable with.” That’s the world system! Generally, the world is not outwardly “anti-God.” God is just seen as optional at best and irrelevant at worst. The world says, “We can ‘fix you’ bringing God in on the solution or leaving God out – either way, no big deal.”

The one who would prosper, be blessed, doesn’t walk in the counsel of the world. We are commanded in Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Those who would experience true prosperity and success, as God views success, see God as the center of everything. He is not optional. They do not want to settle for that which is *bad, unacceptable, and flawed!* They walk

in a way that is different from this world that they may prove the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

2. Those Who Would Prosper Do Not Stand in the Path of Sinners (v. 1b)

The Hebrew word translated “sinners” is interesting. It comes from a root word that means “to make a loud noise” or cause a tumult. It conveys a sense of provoking a riot or causing a disturbance. This is referring to a “party hardy” person – a person with a totally self-focus who lives to have fun. There is a progression here. First we don’t walk in the counsel of the person who just leaves God out. Second is the person who is more anti-God, who lives for the party life.

3. Those Who Would Prosper Do Not Sit in the Seat of Scoffers (v. 1c)

What is a scoffer? In other translations it is translated, “mockers” (HCSB), “scornful” (NKJV). Notice how the world tightens its grip. First there is walking in the counsel of those of this world. Next is standing in the path of sinners, and finally comes sitting down and being at home with the mockers and scorners. The scorner or scoffer doesn’t just ignore God; he is actively anti-God. To be seated implies an acceptance – no more battling against the world and the devil. You sit down and make yourself feel at home.

B. Those Who Prosper Are Saturated with the Word (v. 2)

In verse 1 we looked at prosperity from a negative perspective – “does not” walk in the counsel of the wicked, does not stand in the path of sinners, does not sit in the seat of scoffers! Verse 2 tells us what we must do to prosper. The “law of the Lord” refers to the revelation of God. We could paraphrase verse 2 to say, “But his delight is in the Scriptures.” If you would prosper, you must get your counsel from the Scripture and not the wicked; you must stand on the Scriptures and not in the path of sinners. If you would prosper, you must stay away from the scoffers and be saturated with the Scriptures.

Notice that the Psalmist delights in the Word of God. I recognize that there is to be discipline in reading the Word, but at some point in your walk, delight should replace discipline. The word “delight” means to take pleasure in or to pursue. I suspect that a lot of church members read the Bible like a rule book and that is why it is not very exciting to them. The prosperous person reads it to better know the One they love above all others and how they can please Him.

Notice that we are not to just read a little of the Word when we can. We are to meditate day and night on the word. The author of this Psalm likely only had the first five books of the Bible when he wrote this. We have the completed canon of Scripture! What is meditation? We have often dealt with this subject, but visit it once again. Meditation is to the mind what digestion is to the body. After Moses died, Joshua faced the huge challenge of succeeding him. God told Joshua the secret of experiencing His presence in all the fearful challenges he would face. Joshua 1:8-9: “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

I find that most people have a hard time getting a handle on this thing called “meditation.” Dr. A. W. Tozer describes Christians of much earlier years and how they approached God’s Word. “They came to the Word of God and meditated. They laid the Bible on the old-fashioned, handmade chair, got down on the old, scrubbed, board floor and meditated on the Word. As they waited, faith mounted. The Spirit and faith illuminated. They had only a Bible with fine print, narrow margins, and poor paper, but they knew their Bible better than some of us do with all our helps. Let’s practice the art of Bible meditation... Let us open our Bibles, spread them out on a chair and meditate on the Word of God. It will open itself to us, and the Spirit of God will come and brood over it. I challenge you to meditate, quietly, reverently, prayerfully for a month. Put away the questions and answers and the filling in of the blank lines in the portions you haven’t been able to understand. Put all of the cheap trash away and take the Bible, get on your knees, and in faith say, ‘Father, here I am. Begin to teach me!’ That is true meditation. That is how we truly prosper.

C. Those Who Prosper Are Supernatural in Their Ways (v. 3)

The lives that are separate from the world and saturated with the Word will be unexplainable – supernatural in their ways. This is the greatest description of a prosperous life. What verse 3 describes is a life that cannot be explained except for God! In Israel’s arid climate, a tree wouldn’t last long unless it had access to water. Follow the progression. The person who refuses to walk in the counsel of the wicked, and who refuses to stand in the path of sinners, will not sit in the seat of scoffers, but has his delight in the Word of God and meditates on that Word day and night – is saturated with the Word, 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.”

Here is a life with supernatural stability like a tree whose roots go deep, supernatural vitality because it is tapped in to the water of the Word, supernatural fertility manifested by the consistent fruit that is borne, and supernatural consistency (“its leaf does not wither”), and supernatural prosperity. “And in whatever he does, he prospers.”

There you have a picture, a description of those who prosper. That is God’s plan for you! But before we wrap this message up, we need to look at something foreboding and unpleasant.

II. Those Who Perish (v. 6)

The wicked are those who walk in their own counsel, stand in the path of sinners, and sit in the seat of scoffers. Verse 4 begins with a double negative in the Hebrew. In English it would be, “Not so, the ungodly, not so.” Remember that the ungodly are not necessarily the super wicked as the world judges wickedness, they are simply those who have a worldview that just leaves God out. They may profess to believe in God and even be a church member, when it comes down to everyday life, they just leave God out. There is no surrender to Him, no seeking Him, no aligning their priorities with His. They know nothing of being “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.” However, here is what the ungodly has to look forward to unless there is repentance.

A. There Is Regret for a Wasted Life (v. 4)

The picture moves from a vibrant, fruit bearing tree to useless chaff that is blown away by the wind. The chaff is the outer covering on the wheat. At the time of harvest, it was worthless. The workers would go to the top of a hill and beat the wheat to separate the covering of the wheat berry called the chaff. Then with a winnowing fork they would toss the wheat and chaff in the air and the wheat berries would fall to the ground and the lighter chaff would be blown away by the wind. What a contrast! There is a tree that is stable, its roots tapped down deep to a continual source of nourishment, and always bearing fruit, and then there is the chaff that has no useful purpose that is blown away by the wind. That is the picture of the person who gives only lip service to God and then lives their life as though He doesn’t even exist. This person may be very impressive by the world’s standards, but not by God’s standards. When it comes to eternity, their life has been wasted.

B. There Is Rejection for a Wicked Life (v. 5)

There is a final judgment. Those who have left God out will not stand because they have no roots. Everything about them was bluster and brag and ego, but there was nothing of substance as God assesses substance. They will be separated from God for eternity.

C. There is Ruin for a Wayward Life (v. 6)

There is the way of the cross and the way of the curse. The way of the cross leads to eternal life, eternal prosperity. The way of the curse is perishing. The word “perish” means to be destroyed, to fail, to experience ultimate ruin.

Look at the contrast. Prosper or perish; success or failure; delight or defeat; a life that wins or a life that is wasted. Which will yours be?

