

Psalm 1 - The Christian's Way

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Introduction

What is the most profound, the most fundamental, the most basic difference between human beings? What is the one thing that either sets us apart from one another, or brings us together? In our world today you might think the most profound difference between people is their political bias. Whether they are a Democrat or a Republican. Lately people are assaulting one another to halt the going forward of an opinion. It must be the most profound difference. God disagrees. You might, as we have seen so many times in recent history, think the most fundamental difference between human beings is what color they are on the outside. Whether they are black or white. Again people are resorting to violence to make their point on race in this country. Surely then this is the most fundamental of differences between human beings. God disagrees. Let's go deeper. Is gender the most basic difference between human beings? Is your being female or male what separates you from someone else? God, again, says no. No, political bias isn't it. The color of one's skin isn't it. Gender isn't even the most basic difference between human beings. Well, what is it?

The most profound, the most fundamental and the most basic difference between human beings is whether or not they are known by God. You see, all of the other things we have talked about will have no effect on where you spend eternity, but your relationship with God has everything to do with where you will spend your eternity. Psalm one is going to, very simply, walk us through some of the contrasts between the man known by God and the man who knows nothing of God. It is my sincere hope and prayer that in the next thirty minutes you will be able to see yourself clearly, in light of The Word of God and know which one of these people you are. Are you known by God, or do you know nothing of God? Your understanding of who you are is the most important knowledge you could ever have. I pray you gain that knowledge this morning.

Prayer

God's word says this in Psalm one, verse one,

Happiness

1 Blessed is the man
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

Blessed is the man! Happy is the man! The Psalmist grabs your attention right off the bat with

something that everyone desires. Blessing. Happiness. Who doesn't want these? Even the most evil of people are out for their own happiness aren't they? The liars, the adulterers, the drunkards, all are out to make themselves happy. They would love to have blessings bestowed on them and the Psalmist pulls us into his song by starting out with something everyone can understand. He's like the street vendor hollering out over the crowd, "This way to happiness".

He then quickly turns to the negative examples. He's talks of "walking", "standing" and "sitting". Walking is the lifestyle of the man. Perhaps the opposite would be easier to grasp. You can see in your mind's eye what it would be for someone to walk in the counsel of the wise, can't you? You can see that man making wise choices in his life that leads to blessing in the end. Well, this is just the opposite. The blessed man does not walk, he does not have a lifestyle of, listening to the wicked. He does not fill his mind with the ways of the wicked and then live them out in the course of his day to day life. It would be like any of us constantly sitting in front of the garbage Hollywood puts out and walking away expecting to live a life that pleases God! We would not. Young people, listen to me. What passes as entertainment today is often nothing more than counsel from the wicked. And don't think I'm picking on you, we adults are sadly not much better. God says you are blessed when you don't walk in counsel of the wicked.

Nor do you "stand in the way of sinners". I like the way the NLT states this, blessed is the one who doesn't "stand around with sinners". Picture it like the street corner you drive by in the rough section of town. Who's out there at one in the morning? I mean it could be the local street preacher, and God bless him, if it is, but usually these folks gathered on the corner in the middle of the night are up to know good. God's word tells us the blessed man is not standing around with sinners". He has surrounded himself if the righteous and their lifestyle will "rub-off" on him. The old saying, "birds of a feather flock together", was annoying to me as a teenager, but it is as true today as it was in my younger years. God says blessed is the man who does not "stand in the way of sinners".

Lastly God says, blessed is the man who does not sit "in the seat of scoffers". Or again in the NLT, he does not "join with the mockers". He doesn't take his place at their table to mock God and his righteous ones. This is more than lifestyle, or the company you keep, this is raising your banner and identifying yourself as one of the scoffers. Here I sit. I will do no other. God says blessed is the man who "sits not in the seat of scoffers".

He doesn't walk, sit or stand, so what does he do. How will the blessed man live? God's word says this in verse two,

2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

You see, the blessed man, the happy man, he does not go about attaining his happiness from his lifestyle, or the company he keeps, or even the kind of person he identifies himself to be. The blessed man delights! He finds happiness and fulfillment, where? In the law of the Lord. And as such he spends all of his walking, standing, sitting and even lying down time meditating

on that law. He has found what brings him joy and he has set his life upon obtaining more and more and more of that joy. Isn't that what we human beings do? We do things we think will make us happy. We are driven by our wants and desires. So, what makes you happy? Is it the law of the Lord?

God has shown us here in verses one and two that there are people who seek their happiness in themselves and there are people who seek their happiness in the law of the Lord, the word of God, The Lord Jesus Christ.

Next we will see the fruit of the righteous and the wicked. God's word says this in verse three,

Fruitfulness

3 He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.

The Lord continues describing our blessed man. He's like a tree. Not just any tree, but one that is planted by streams of water. What do you think that water might be? Could it be the "living water" we've heard about elsewhere in God's word? Jeremiah 17:13 tells us the Lord is a "fountain of living water." In the book of John, Jesus asks a woman from Samaria for a drink. When she questions him about it he answers, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." These streams of water are not giving life to the physical body, but to the soul. The tree speaks of a peculiar strength that is fed by the living water of God.

Not only is the man planted and strong but he "yields...fruit in its season". He is not wasting his time standing around with sinners, he is producing things that benefit others. That tree will produce the good fruit of the Spirit of God and it will never die. Do you see that? God says "its leaf does not wither". The fruit of the Spirit grown out of the tree planted by the stream will continue to grow and mature in its serving and sustaining abilities throughout the life of the blessed man.

And lastly in verse three the blessed man prospers in what? What does it say Church? All that he does? There is nothing the blessed man lays his hand to that does not prosper. And you'll say to me I have seen many a man of God go through hard times. And I would say to you, yes, from the blurry eyes of an earth bound Saint the drudgery of this world does not always look as though it is prospering the blessed man. But that's because our eyes do not see as they ought to see. God reminds us in the book of Romans "that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Even the hard times will prosper the man of God because

even they will work to conform him “to the image of his Son”. Now tell me that being more like his Son is not prospering! No matter what God uses to get you there. Can you hear Job whispering to us, “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”. The blessed man will prosper in all that he does. Even in times of great trial and great suffering.

The blessed man will grant shade to the weary, food for the hungry, beauty to those unable to see it through the darkness of a sin cursed world, and if I may carry the metaphor just a bit further, he will be to the child of God a tree like the ones we used to climb as children, a secret refuge from the chaos of the world below.

We will now see the contrast between him, our blessed man, and the wicked. God’s word says this in verse four.

4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

See the contrast between the blessed and the wicked. Here is the most fundamental, the most profound, the most basic difference between human beings. The blessed man is a tree, strong and tall, able to stand and bring good to others around him, but the wicked are not so, they “are like chaff that the wind drives away”. The wicked are not producing fruit, providing shade or a refuge for anyone. They are not able to stand in the storms of life but in contrast to the blessed man when the storm comes the wicked are blown away! Whereas the heat and the dew of God’s love provides growth and change for the child of God the wicked are hated by him and when they attempt to stand strong in their arrogant self-reliance they will be blown away like so much refuse.

The wicked are useless to God in this life and we are soon to find out how they will fare in the next one. God’s word says this in verses five.

Knowledge

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

When you read the word “therefore” you must think in your mind, “what’s it there for?”. In our case it is there for the purpose of pointing you back the verse before. You are to read it like this, “as a result of the wicked being “like chaff that the wind drives away” they will not stand in judgment. The wicked will no more be able to stand in the presence of the almighty God of Heaven than any man could stand in the winds of the strongest hurricane. On that judgment day the wicked will all at once be confronted with their utter worthlessness and the gloriously perfect Holiness of God Himself. They will want to run and hide from his perfections and at the same time they will be blown away, like chaff, from him faster than they can run. In the sheer terror of meeting God face to face they will want with all of their being to stand and give excuse for their

treason against The High King of Heaven but they will not be able to speak, let alone stand!

They will not stand in the congregation of the righteous, but God's judgment on them will be cheered by the congregation of the righteous. God allowed them the opportunity to repent and come to Christ while they lived, but now they will have no chance to join the congregation. No chance to sign praise to the God of the Universe from whom they are being cast away.

Why, why all this blowing away, judgment and banishment from the very presence of God? God's word says this in verse six.

6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Because as we see in verse six God knows the way of the righteous and by their meditating on his law day and night, they know his. He has watched over them as a mother would her new born babe. Paul tells us in Ephesians that God "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him." He knew you, brothers and sisters, "before the foundation of the world". God knows the way of the righteous from before the starting line and long after the finish. Your way is not going to end in death but in brilliant new life, lived out in the Heavenly city.

And as we, believers in Christ, celebrate this truth it is bittersweet as we continue on to the next line. Which starts out with the ominous word, but. Yes, on the day of judgement there will be celebration and joy, but there will also be perishing. Notice what the verse does not say. It does not say the wicked will perish. You see, the lie you have been told is that in the end, you just die. You cease to exist. You, perish. No, that's not what it says. It says, "the WAY OF THE WICKED will perish. The way they live, the kind of company they keep and the identity they take on for themselves will perish. It will be no more. The new creation will not tolerate this way, and it will be a forgotten memory to all who ever had contact with it. The wicked will have been blown away in the judgment of God and their way will be no more.

Close

We have seen today the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. The wicked find their happiness in themselves, whereas the righteous find their happiness in The Word of God.

The righteous stand firm, fed by the living water of God and produce lasting fruit to the glory of God and the benefit of others, whereas the wicked produce no fruit at all.

And lastly we saw wicked will not stand in judgement because they will be blown away like chaff, whereas God knows the way of the righteous and has planned a sure path for their journey home.

So, Christian, what is your response to a passage like this? How should Monday morning be affected by Sunday morning. There are three things I would like you to meditate on this week.

1. Praise God for His word. He has given it to us that we may delight in it. How so? By knowing, reading, singing, meditating on, and giving to others.
2. Praise God that he has planted you by streams of water. Do you think about that often. Your salvation is a miraculous work of God! Psalm 40 says he, “drew [you] up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set [your] feet upon a rock, making [your] steps secure. He put a new song in [your] mouth, a song of praise to our God.”
3. Praise God and rest in the fact that he knows your way. The path may get rough and you will surely get tired but He has given a lamp to your feet and a light your path. You shall never be lost and on the day God takes you from this earth you will open your eyes to see the home you always knew, but had not yet seen.

My friend if you are here this morning and you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior...God's word has been very clear for you this morning. Please think over these things as you leave here this morning.

1. You have found your delight in yourself and the small pleasures of this world. One famous author is quoted as saying you are content with mud puddles while just over the hill is a vast ocean to enjoy. Oh that you would stand and walk over the hill into the arms of the greatest joy ever know. Run to the Savior of your soul, he is an ocean of blessing.
2. All that you do here on this earth is like chaff, blown away by the wind of God's judgement. None of your works, even the good ones will last. Don't fool yourself into thinking that God will judge your good and bad works and find the scales tipping in favor of the good. That might work if you put my good works up against yours. But it will not work because opposite your good works on the scales are the infinite perfections of God himself. How do you match up to those? Right, me too. You need the perfect son of God on your side.
3. Your way will perish, but the way of the righteous is known by God, so I would encourage you today, believe the good news of the Gospel, “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”. Repent of your sin and receive the righteousness of Christ on your behalf, and be known by God.