

Walking in Righteousness

Psalms

By Dalton Teal

Bible Text: Psalm 1

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm chapter 1. My hope and prayer is that the end of that hymn would be the prayer of our hearts, that we would stand clothed in his righteousness.

We will be looking at Psalm chapter 1, the entirety of the text this morning. The title of the sermon is very simple, "Walking in Righteousness." I'm so thankful for Neil who heard what I was going to be preaching on and structured a worship service around it. The hymns we sang, the verses that we read were all there intentionally and so it's such a joy to get to lead with you, my dear brother, to take part in this worship service. As James mentioned in his prayer, I am preaching because Pastor Ty is out. He and John and Charles all went down to Countryside Bible Church in Texas, which is actually where Nia and David Swillam are now members at. They went down to a pastor's conference this weekend to work on leadership training within the local church and so be praying for them as they come back tomorrow, Lord willing, that their flight would be safe and that they would arrive back safely so that we might grow and glean from them.

But our text this morning leads us to two different ways of life. If you have a header in your Bible, you will likely read the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked, and so this morning we will consider the two different ways to live. And there are only two, and my hope is that we walk away saying we want to walk in the way of righteousness. Let's look at the text and then we will open in prayer. Psalm 1, verse 1.

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; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 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. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Let's go before the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you allow us to worship you, that weak, broken creatures can come before you in praise of your great name, not based upon our own standing, not based upon our own righteousness, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Lord, this morning, as we look into your word, our prayer, my prayer, is that we might see the great chasm between the two different ways that we can live, in righteousness or in wickedness, and that we would desire all of our days to walk in righteousness. Lord, help us now as we look into your word, as we study your truth, may you open our eyes and our hearts to see what you have called us to. Lord, in my prayer for myself in this moment is that you would remove me from the equation, that I would not preach from pride or selfish gain, but only for the glory of your name and through the power of your Spirit. Be with us now. May the next few moments be for the glory of your name alone. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Charles Thomas Studd, affectionately known as C.T. Studd, was born in the United Kingdom in 1860 to a family of great wealth. In his early years, Studd fell in love with athletics and sports, and most particularly cricket, which I know many of us in this room have probably never played. He spent many of his childhood days practicing in the yard, practicing his swing, trying to master his craft. In 1878, at the age of 18, Studd came to saving faith in Jesus Christ under the conviction of a traveling preacher. In 1879, he entered Trinity College of Cambridge University. Soon after starting his schooling at Cambridge, he joined the cricket team. He developed a skill and ability, so he joined the team and quickly rose to popularity. But as his devotion to the game grew, his devotion to the Lord waned. In November of 1883, Studd would see his younger brother, George, grow very ill. He watched his brother suffer every single day, seemingly going to his deathbed, and while he watched his brother die, he pondered the question, what is it worth to possess the riches of the world when a man comes to face eternity? Though this question haunted him as he watched his brother die, his brother would actually make a miraculous recovery, but CT was left forever changed.

While at Cambridge, he came to know a very influential missionary named Hudson Taylor. If you've never read about him, I have a biography, you can borrow it. It is an outstanding story of the inland mission to China. Hudson Taylor came to Cambridge and argued for all of the students that were at Cambridge that you should leave your schooling, you should leave everything you know in England and go to China and minister to the millions of lost souls. So CT decided to answer the call. He left behind the world that he had known, his love for crickets, his skill for cricket, and decided to move to China. But before he left, he went on a teaching circuit with six others. There were seven of them in total. They were future missionaries. And at the last meeting of this teaching circuit, he had this to ask, are you living for the day or are you living for eternal life? Are you going to care for the opinion of men here or for the opinion of God? The opinion of men won't avail as much when we get before the judgment throne, but the opinion of God will. Had we then not better take his word and implicitly obey it.

C.T. Studd left England and spent his life devoted to the missionary work, not only in China, but India and in Africa, and as his life drew to a close, he reflected on his life and his ministry and had these few words to say. "As I believe I am now nearing my departure from this world, I have but a few things to rejoice in. That God called me to China and in spite of the utmost opposition from all of my loved ones, I went. That I joyfully acted as Christ told that rich young man to act. That I deliberately at the call of God gave up my life for the work of God. My only joys therefore are that when God has given me a work to do, I have not refused to do it." Studd died in July of 1931 after spending several decades on the mission field. The question that he built his life off of is, how will I live my life? For him, the answer was clear, for the glory of the Lord.

But our question this morning is, how do we do that? How do we live for the glory of God? According to 1 Corinthians 10:31, that is our calling. Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we do all things for the glory of God, the question is, how? As we dive deeper into understanding the Psalm, I want us to consider that very question. How will we live our lives for the glory of God? How do we do this? How should I live my life? The answer, according to several things that we will see this morning, is actually twofold. You will either, A) live for yourself and the glory of yourself, and therefore not actually live for the glory of God, or B) you will live for the glory of God by walking in righteousness. My hope this morning is that we would see the incredible beauty and joy of a life devoted to walking in righteousness for the glory of God.

Now, a few things we need to note before we dive into this Psalm, first of all, is who wrote it. Some of you will have in your Bible that little inscription in several Psalms. You can flip over and look at some of the Psalms. Psalm 3, a Psalm of David. Psalm 4, a Psalm of David. Psalm 5, a Psalm of David. If you fast forward, a Psalm of the sons of Korah in Psalm 48. 47 is the same. 49 is the same. Every Psalm is typically attributed an author. This one, however, we don't have that or at least in my Bible we don't. Some Bibles will attribute it to David, some also think that it might've been Ezra years and years and years later when he was trying to put together the Psalter, but the fact of the matter is we don't know, but it was likely David. This is where we're gonna lean this morning. It was more than likely David that wrote it, though I could be wrong and we'll find out in eternity.

The timing is also unknown, but what's interesting about this and one of the things that we need to take special note of is where it is placed in the Psalter. It is number one and we believe that it is there for a reason. It stands as the introduction to the book of Psalms, the "why" behind the book. Why is this book here? What does it mean? What is its purpose? And I would argue, and several others would argue, is that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 serve as its introduction, its thesis statement, its main point that drives you deeper into understanding what is going on in the Psalm. And the reason why I believe that is it focuses on the major theme of how to live a blessed life and we'll look at what that means. You do this by living according to the law of God and living in righteousness. You can do a quick survey of the Psalms and see the tension of living for yourself like the world does and the dangers that is presented there, or living for God and the joy that is found in there and you find that by working through the law of God. Constantly, as we

will find out, there is this delighting in the law of God, meditating on the law of God. This is how we are to walk in righteousness and Psalm 1 hints at that as it is later expounded throughout the book of the Psalms.

Charles Spurgeon actually said about this Psalm, "The first Psalm may be looked upon in some respects as the text upon which the whole of the Psalms makes up a divine sermon." So this is the text like we are looking at this morning and the rest of the Psalm is unpacking it. That was the argument of Spurgeon. So just as the introduction of every good book establishes the main point, this Psalm then drives the reader to one of, if not the, central themes of the entire book of Psalms, namely what it means to walk in righteousness. Our outline this morning is simple. We have three points. Point number one, there are two ways to live. There are two ways to live. Number two, am I the righteous person? So a question we will ask of ourselves, am I the righteous person? And then number three, characteristics of the righteous person.

So let's dive into point number one, there are two ways to live. Now what's interesting, Neil and I were actually talking in preparation of worship and he said, "I'm gonna sing 'The Solid Rock' and we're gonna read from the end of Matthew," and I went, "That's perfect because we're gonna read from that at the very beginning of the sermon," because that is found in the Sermon on the Mount and one of the things that I noticed just in studying is some of the parallels and the allusions and similar themes between Psalm 1 and the Sermon on the Mount as we'll unpack in just a minute. Here are a few of them just to think through. Psalm 1 begins with, verse 1, "Blessed is the man." If we're a good Bible reader, and we just thought about some central themes and key passages that are in the Sermon on the Mount, how does the Sermon on the Mount begin? "Blessed are the. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek." In fact, let's actually just turn over really quickly to Matthew chapter 5. Hold your place in Psalm 1, we'll go back there in a moment. Matthew chapter 5, to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Psalm 1 begins with, "Blessed is the man." How does the Sermon on the Mount begin? It says in verse 2, "And he opened his mouth," this is Jesus speaking, "and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.'" And we can keep reading, there are several more blessings there but you see blessing beginning our Psalm and blessing beginning the Sermon on the Mount.

So it's important that we recognize we are called to live a blessed life. We are called to live a blessed life, not in the world standards of blessing, which is all about material gain, but God's standard of blessing. A few other things that we should consider, parallels between Psalm 1 and the Sermon on the Mount. Both discuss living according to the law and delighting in the law. We see a lot of that in Psalm 1. You see that kind of mixed throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Both liken the righteous to trees bearing fruit. You see that in Matthew 7. Turn over a few pages to Matthew 7, verse 17. Actually, we'll just start in verse 15. Matthew 7 verse 15, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in

sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits." It sounds very similar to Psalm 1.

Twice in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to there only being two ways to live, which is the exact same thing that is going on in Psalm chapter 1. Look at verses 13 to 14 of 7. You can turn back a few verses. Jesus says, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." So there are two different paths, the way of the wicked, the way of righteousness.

Flip over to verse 24, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them," we just read this, "will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." The point of all of this to say is that there is only two ways that we can live. Only two ways to walk. You can build your house on the foundation of the rock and it will stand this test of the storm, or you will build off of the sand and it will not stand the test of the storm. And that is what we are considering this morning, those two ways to live.

We'll turn back to Psalm 1. In both instances in the Sermon on the Mount, a rhetorical question is posed, what path will you follow? What foundation will you build on? And our text this morning poses a very similar question. How will you live your life? And according to this Psalm, there are the two options. The way of the righteous, or as we might also say it, the way of the word, and then the way of the wicked, which is the way of the world. So let's look first at the way of the righteous. We are called to live righteous, which means standing right before God, blameless and holy. The way of the righteous. Psalm 1 begins with, "Blessed is the man." So what does this blessed mean? What is this blessing that we are to be receiving, that we are to be walking in? Again, it's not the sense of worldly possession. So what have I gained in terms of I am blessed because I have a nice car, a nice house, a great family, a great job, I'm about to retire. None of that. That doesn't come into the equation of blessing. In fact, the Hebrew word is often best translated as happy, but not just a simple happy, we're talking about supremely happy, beyond the happiness that you might feel in a moment when someone gives you your favorite food, or when someone, for me, gives you a cup of coffee. There is a greater happiness, a supreme happiness.

So supremely happy is the man. The man here is the Hebrew plural, so supremely happy is the one. Those who do what? Blessed is the man. Our culture today is obsessed with the personal pursuit of happiness. When you think about what's going on around us, they

argue that you should express yourself however you want to, that you'll only be happy if you come out and declare your sexuality to be this thing. You'll only be happy if you get that job you've always been dreaming of. You'll only be happy to fill in the blank and it's your job to pursue it at whatever cost. Doesn't matter how it impacts other people. Doesn't matter how it might impact your standing before God because the culture rejects him entirely at this point. Just do whatever makes you happy. But the Psalm argues for a different way. In fact, it is a radically different approach to living the blessed life. But before we get into how to actually pursue it, there's the negative.

So if we're trying to be the righteous person, what should I not do? We'll read through the rest of verse 1, "Blessed is the man, supremely happy is the one who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers." So this is our does not, our "do not's." Take special note of this, if you want to be a righteous person, do not do these things. So let's unpack these "do not's." The first one, walks not in the counsel of the wicked. Now one of the things that just briefly to mention that I think would be helpful is to notice the progression of sin here, walking, standing, sitting, but then notice the progression of the righteous, delighting, meditating, and then producing fruit. So these progressions are going to be very important. This is the first step in the progression of the ungodly, what the righteous are called not to do. Do not walk in the counsel of the wicked. Now walk is best understood as the way of life. It's not a literal walking necessarily, though it could apply to that. It's do not walk as in your way of life should not be. As one commentator said, a man's walk is his course of life. And the general idea is that the righteous person is not, is not living a life built off of the counsel of the ungodly.

Proverbs often speaks of this danger. Let's thumb through a few proverbs really quickly. Proverbs chapter 1. We're doing a lot of Proverbs flipping in a moment. Proverbs 1, verse 8. Just before this verse you hear, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." And the first words coming out of the king's mouth, out of Solomon's mouth is, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, 'Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse,'" here's the warning, "my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths, for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood." Do not walk, do not listen to them, do not receive counsel from them.

Look at verse 24, "Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me." This is what happens to the person that

walks in wickedness, that receives counsel from the ungodly. God will bring judgment on them as we find out in a moment.

But flip over one more chapter, chapter 2, verse 11, "discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways." The counsel of the wicked is not merely described as listening to their advice. That is part of it. What we see in all of these verses is the danger of who you're listening to, but also who you're following. Who are you following? Who are you walking after? Who are you imitating? Who are you watching? Walking in the council of the wicked is following the advice, the motives, the principles, and the patterns of the wicked. The righteous person does not live by these patterns. He does not live by them. He does not follow the counsel of the ungodly.

So that is your first warning, do not walk in the counsel of the wicked, and just briefly, we will unpack more of the practical side of this towards the end, but right now we just want to explain it quickly. Do not walk in the way of the wicked. Number two, do not stand in the way of sinners. The next step in our progression, So who we're listening to, who we're imitating, who we're following, who we're receiving counsel from, that's the first step. The next step in the progression is focused on avoiding the environment and the community of sinners. So it starts with listening, starts with imitating, it starts with following, and now suddenly it moves to who's around you? Who are you around? It says in Psalm 1, "does not stand in the way of sinners." Does not stand in the way of sinners. If the first warning is against imitation and submission to counsel of the wicked, then this warning is do not surround yourself with a company of sinners or as someone else said, do not be party to their ways. Don't have a part in it.

Are you surrounding yourself with the ungodly? Are you surrounding yourself with sinners that mock your religion, that try and lead you into sin? The Psalmist is saying, "Stay away from them. Do not surround yourselves with them." We'll talk about this later, we are called to be in the world, but not of the world. We're called to be around sinners, to proclaim the gospel to them, but not be like them. If your community is filled with unbelievers alone, if you're receiving counsel from the ungodly, it's going to produce in you ungodly desires. Bad company corrupts good morals, does it not? We must be very careful.

Proverbs, again, is extremely helpful. We won't turn over there for the sake of time, but Proverbs 13:20 says, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise." That's good. If you walk with wisdom, you become wise. "But the companion of fools suffers harm." If you surround yourselves with fools, you suffer harm.

Proverbs 14:7, "Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge." You will gain no wisdom, you will gain no knowledge from them.

Proverbs 22 verses 24 to 25, "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare." So now it's not just the fool that's making you foolish, but if you're around an angry person or somebody that is wrathful, you're gonna glean and learn his ways and you're gonna start to imitate them. Or as we just mentioned, 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived, bad company ruins good morals." Who are you surrounding yourself with? What is your fellowship? The warning of the Psalmist is very clear, "Stay away from those that would lead you away from the Lord." What is your community?

The final step in this progression is sitting in the seat of scoffers. So first of all, it was listening and imitating, and then it became dwelling in the place of sinners, that's what it literally means to stand, is to be around them, to dwell in the place of sinners, and the final step is you have become the scoffer yourself. To sit in the seat of the scoffer is to fully arrive as the scoffer. The scoffer is best defined as the one who has not only rejected the wisdom of God, but openly mocks it in their foolish pride. This is not someone you want to be, mocking God, profaning his name, leading others away from him. It is important to note that the scoffer is the one that has completely rejected God and imposed their own truth. They reject the truth of God for a lie and yet again, Proverbs warns of the danger of the scoffer. 29 verse 8, "Scoffers set a city aflame." 19, verse 29, "Condemnation is ready for the scoffer." And Spurgeon commented that the seat of the scornful, the scoffer, may be very lofty. They sit high esteem in their own mind. It may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell.

Sitting in the seat of the scoffer means that you are the one that mocks the Lord and it all started because of who you were listening to, who you were receiving counsel from, who you were imitating, and then it moved into, now who are you surrounding yourself with? Where are you spending your time? And it finishes with, now look at who you've become. This is the danger of sin. It creeps in and continues to build and fester in our heart and brings disease to the entire body and so the warning for the Psalmist to the righteous person, the one who wants to live a supremely happy, blessed life is this: do not give ground. Do not open the door to sin. Do not allow it to creep in because it will destroy everything.

When men are living in sin, they go from bad to worse. At first, they merely walk in the counsel of the careless and the ungodly, who forget God. The evil is rather practical than habitual at that point, but after that, they become habituated to evil and they stand in the way of open sinners who willfully violate God's commandment and if left alone, they go one step further and become the pestilent teachers themselves, they become the tempters of others, they sit in the seat of the scornful. But according to 1 Corinthians 10:12, before we make a judgment, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall, and we'll look at that more in just a moment.

So if that is what we are called to not do, if we're to walk in righteousness, we're called to not do this, what should I do then? What do we do instead? Here is the positive: the righteous rejects those things, instead he first delights in the law of the Lord. Look back at verse 2. The righteous person, the blessed man, "his delight is in the law of the LORD,

and on his law he meditates day and night." Now for the Psalmist, that was literally the law. At this point, the entirety of the Scriptures with the New Testament in it were not there because the New Testament hadn't been written. But as we find out through the writings of Timothy, all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable so we're going to speak to all of the Scriptures in this moment. The righteous person if we are called to be righteous to be blessed and blameless before the Lord, we must first delight to delight in the law of God and to delight in something is to love it deeply, so much so that you are satisfied in it. One author defined it in this way: delight is a response of the heart to the beauty and the value of something or someone, and in this case it is to god's word.

Rather than listening to the enticements of the counsel of the wicked, the righteous person loves God and his word. The greatest, in my opinion, exposition of this heart posture is actually Psalm 119. So let's just briefly overview Psalm 119. Do not worry, I will not read the entire thing. Psalm 119, we'll start in verse 9. Most people in the room should be familiar with this. "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up," or treasured, "your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word." Look at verse 24, "Your testimonies are my delight." Verse 35, "Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it." Verse 47, "for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love." Verse 72, "The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." It's greater than the riches of the world. Verse 77, "Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight." Verse 97, "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." Verse 127, "Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold." Verse 129, "Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them." Verse 159, "Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love." Verse 161, "Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words. I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law." Verse 167, "My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly." Verse 174, "I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight."

Your law is my delight. Is this our posture? Could we be like the Psalmist and write Psalm 119 and say over and over and over again on repeat almost to the annoyance of everyone else that's reading it because you say the same thing, "Your law is my delight. I love your law." Delighting in God's truth, his word, his law is to see it as supremely beautiful as if there is no other thing on earth that compares to it. Your riches, your car, your home, your family, your legacy are as nothing compared to the law of God.

So do you delight in it? This is the first step in the progression of the righteous because the righteous instead of receiving counsel from the ungodly, is receiving counsel from God. He delights in the law of God. The second thing that the righteous person, the blessed man does is he meditates on the law day and night. Verse 2 again in Psalm 1, "but

his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." Our next step, instead of surrounding ourselves with the ungodly, putting ourselves in an environment of sin, we surround ourselves with the word of God. That is what it means to meditate day and night; you are putting it in your heart, a part of your day, everything you do is built off of God's word and his truth. And for the righteous person to truly love the law of the Lord, he must take it and spend time lingering. Not just reading, because I think sometimes we fall into that trap where we have to read the Bible every single day because it's the good Christian thing to do, and so we read, "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; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." Done. That's how we approach reading the word sometimes. We skim through it, say that was good, and we shut our Bibles and don't think about it again. We were not called to that type of living. We have been called to linger, to dwell with God in his word. As a man thinks in his heart, so he is, that which you give the bulk of your time to is the thing that you love the most.

So what do you love the most? What do you delight in the most? Here are a few texts that I think support this truth. Deuteronomy 6:5 to 9, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." The essential truth here is this: love the Lord your God, love his truth and don't stop talking about it. Don't stop dwelling on it. Don't stop meditating on it.

Joshua 1:8, "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." To know God and his word, we must first delight, we must first love it, and then we must linger with it, and we'll talk about more what that means practically later on. To meditate day and night is to have fellowship with the word of God constantly. It fills your heart with the truth of God and his commands and from it is the overflow of joyful obedience.

If you want to know how to walk in righteousness, you must know God and his word and you must spend time with it constantly because it then drives you into the final step of this progression, number three, it yields lasting fruit. This is the goal for every person is to yield fruit. When one delights in the law of God and surrounds himself with the truth of God, then the natural final progression is the production of righteous fruit. Here are a few, we're just going to highlight these key attributes of this tree that is producing fruit.

First of all, "He is like a tree planted by streams of water." The context of this writing was likely in a more desert environment. Around here, our trees sprout up everywhere. You look outside and there's pine trees everywhere. In a desert environment, it's a little different. It's not like most trees can just dig their heels in the sand, their roots in the sand,

and say, I'm going to produce fruit when there's no water. I don't know much about science and I don't know much about trees, but I know they need light and water and nutrients, but that's a different conversation. They need water. They need to be planted by streams. If it's not, it dies, but the stream gives life. So if the righteous person is to bear fruit, he must be planted by streams of water. Well, the question is, what is the stream of water? It is the word of God. The word of God is that life-giving stream. Being planted by water for the righteous is to be found near the life-giving well that is the word of God. Are you planted by that well?

The next thing is that it "yields fruit in season and that its leaf will not wither." The language there was intentional. It doesn't just say it yields fruit, it says it produces fruit in season. Just as our earth goes through seasons, plants go through seasons. They are not constantly bearing fruit. There are seasons of drought. There are seasons where it is wintertime and they're not producing fruit. The Psalmist here describes the righteous person as one that endures those seasons, that in good season and bad season, they are able to produce fruit. And the wonderful truth is that its leaf will not wither, it will not fall off. A tree that is planted nowhere near water might bear fruit one time, but soon it's going to run out of water and it will wither and it will die, but the righteous person who lives by the life-giving well the word of God will never wither. It will never die. It will be kept for all of eternity.

So the righteous person then rejects the counsel of the wicked and instead delights in the law of God. The righteous person does not surround himself with communities of sinners, but dwells with the word of God daily. The righteous person does not become the scoffer, but produces lasting fruit of righteousness. And what is the result of the righteous person when they walk in the progression of the righteous rather than the progression of the wicked? They prosper. Now, don't read into the text, we are not talking about worldly prosperity here. There is nothing that indicates that. It does not mean that you are about to get a Lamborghini. It's something far greater than that, in fact. It's not about what you gain from the world. and has everything to do with your ability to walk in faithful obedience, delighting in God always.

The righteous are known by God and that is a glorious truth. To be known by God is to mean that he sees you and loves you and cares for you and has not cast you off. The blessed man, the happy man is known by God. To be known by him is to be loved and held forever. Very briefly, we will look at the other way to live. We've spent a lot of time on the righteous because we want you to be righteous. The Psalmist spends very little time on the wicked because there's not really much to say about them. It's not great. So the second way to live, the way of the wicked. The Psalmist has little to say concerning the wicked since his aim is to encourage us to pursue righteousness, but we quickly tie back to warnings of the description of what we just saw of what the righteous does not do, this then is what the wicked do. This is what they do.

The wicked are enticed by worldly counsel. They listen to everything. They're carried about by every wind of what they see on social media, what they see in their news feeds, what their friends say, what their family says. Whatever sounds the best at that moment,

they follow that. The wicked surround themselves with other people that are like them so that they can continue to bolster their sin and protect their sin. Finally, the wicked become a proud scoffer and they reject the truth of God. They openly mock him in public. And since we have already talked a great length about what the righteous do not do, and by virtue of what the wicked do, we must look at just a few short, but very, very direct statements concerning the wicked.

Verse 4, "The wicked are not so." They are easily put. Everything here, good, the wicked, not so. This is not who you are. Instead, what are you? You are like chaff. What is chaff? If the righteous are a fruit-producing tree that stands the test of time and season, the wicked are the complete opposite of that. The chaff is a thin, dry part around a grain, so like wheat or barley. It's a dry outer shell that when a wind picks up, it just blows away. Some have described the chaff as being completely useless. They are intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and they're easily carried away. This is a description of the wicked. They have no value in and of themselves. They are like chaff, that when a slight breeze picks up, they are blown away. The wicked do not stand the test of time or season. They are easily carried away by a gust of wind.

Verse 5, "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment." Now, they will be judged, let's not reject that part, that's not what's being said here, but they won't stand in the judgment. They have no ground to stand on, no righteousness of their own, nothing to argue for their basis. They have no standing before God and so they will not last the judgment and they will not have quarters, says, "nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." They have no quarters with the righteous person. They have no fellowship with them. They clearly do not belong. Instead of being known by God, as verse 6 says, "the wicked will perish." They have been cast off by the Lord and the perishing here means death, complete and total death.

So here are your two ways to live. You have the way of the righteous, the one that delights in the counsel of God, the one that dwells in God's word with God's people, and the one that produces fruit. Or you have the way of the wicked, who listens to the world around them, surrounds themselves with sinners, becomes a scoffer and perishes. These are your two ways to live. There's no other option out there. There is no middle ground. You cannot find space in between to dwell. It's not like you can sit on the fence and say, "I'm gonna take a little bit from here and a little bit from here. I'm gonna pretend to be righteous but I'm gonna enjoy my life while I can. I'm gonna do whatever I want and then eventually I'll jump over here." There is no middle ground.

There is a great chasm between the two and so now we come to the point where we have to ask ourselves a real question which leads into the second point: am I, are you the righteous person? Are you the righteous person? As I just mentioned, we have to recognize the chasm that exists. There is nothing in between the righteous and the ungodly. There's no space for us to dwell. It is either righteous living that leads to life or wicked living that leads to death, but in order for us to answer the question of are you the righteous person, am I the righteous person, we must first realize our natural state. And I'm gonna give it away right here: no one is righteous. No, not one.

Let's quickly just think through the Sermon on the Mount again before we go to Romans 3, which I just hinted at. In Matthew 5:21 to 28, Jesus points out to the crowd that many believe that they are good keepers of the law, since they have neither murdered nor committed adultery, but his point in all of this is to point out the issue of that thinking, that if you have been angry in your heart, you have murdered. If you have looked at someone with lustful intent in your heart, you've already committed adultery. The issue is not whether or not you can by appearance sake alone, follow these rules and regulations. The issue is, what is the state of your heart? What is the posture of your heart? What is the desire of your heart? That is the concern of the Sermon on the Mount and I think as you work through the Sermon on the Mount and as you work through Psalm 1 and you consider your heart for just a moment, you realize, I'm not the hero in this story. I'm not the good person in my natural state. Because as Jeremiah says, "The heart is desperately wicked, deceitful above all else." We were born in sin.

Let's look at Romans 3 for just a moment. Romans 3 verses 9 to 12. Verse 9 of Romans 3, "What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written," this is where our point comes from, "No one is righteous, no, not one; no one understands God; no one seeks after God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless." In fact, what's interesting is Romans 3 quotes from Psalm 14 verses 1 to 3 and says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, no not one." There is no room there for us to think that, well, most people don't do good but I do. There is no room for us in our natural state to just lump ourselves in with the righteous and good person. Our heart is wicked. We are sinners and there is no one that is righteous and the question is, if that is true, if no one in this room in their natural state is righteous, then what is our fate? According to Romans 6, it says that the wages of sin is death. That's true for every single person in this room apart from Christ. The wages of sin is death, complete and total death. You deserve the wrath of God for all eternity.

Before God, we have no standing. That is very bad news. According to Romans 3, we live in the bad news but the glorious truth is that we get to keep reading, don't we? We don't have to stop at the verses we just read because we get to look at verse 21. Verse 21 of Romans 3, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it--the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," that is our standing but in verse 24, "and are justified," meaning being made right, "by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Our standing in our natural state is dead in sin. No one is righteous. No, not one. But we get to see something else, a glorious truth, that God did not leave us in our sin. God did not leave us in our unrighteousness. In fact, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, the perfect spotless Lamb of God who is completely and totally God and completely and totally man to go in our place. That is what it means by propitiation. He went for us. He went for us to be sacrificed for us and he did so on the cross. The only way that we can be made right before God is through repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ, and it is all made possible because Christ went where we belonged.

When it says no one is righteous, no not one, and that the wages of sin is death, that means that every single one of us in this room is deserving of God's wrath, is deserving of death but that is where the mercy of God comes in. One of my favorite terms in theology is the imputed righteousness of Christ. On that cross, when Jesus went for us, he took on our sin and instead gave us his righteousness, and that means if you repent of your sins, and you trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God does not see you according to your unrighteousness, he sees you clothed in the righteousness of his Son. So am I the righteous person? Not in my flesh, but in Christ, that is how God sees me. Brothers and sisters, if you are in this room this morning and you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, this is true for you, that no matter your filthy deeds and your filthy rags, Christ has taken them off of you and put on his righteousness. He has given you a new heart that can truly delight in the law of God so that you might walk in obedience to him.

One of my favorite songs and I just want to read a few verses from it, it's called, "His Robes for Mine."

"His robes for mine, O wonderful exchange
Clothed in my sin, Christ suffered 'neath God's rage
Draped in His righteousness, I'm justified
In Christ I live, for in my place He died

His robes for mine, what cause have I for dread?
God's daunting law, Christ mastered in my stead
Faultless, I stand with righteous works not mine
Saved by my Lord's vicarious death and life

His robes for mine, God's justice is appeased
Jesus is crushed, and thus the Father's pleased
Christ drank God's wrath on sin, then cried, "'Tis done!"
Sin's wage is paid, propitiation won

His robes for mine, such anguish none can know
Christ, God's beloved, condemned as though His foe
He, as though I, accursed and left alone
I, as though He, embraced and welcomed home."

That is the story that we see here. We are not a righteous person, but praise be to God, we have his robes. We have his robes of righteousness.

So coming out of this in our final few moments, if this is true of you, if you have trusted in Christ as your Savior, you must ask the question, how will you respond? How will you live? Because remember, there's only two ways to live, and the only way to live in righteousness is through Christ. So if you are in Christ, you have one choice, and that is to walk in joyful obedience to him. So our final point this morning is the characteristics of the righteous person. We will move through this very briefly. It's very practical. We're going to work back through Psalm 1 and just look at the practical nature of this.

There are a few warnings that I want to give you from Psalm 1. A few warnings. The first one especially paying attention to any of our young adults, teenagers, children in here, but it applies obviously to everyone. Keep a close watch on who and what you listen to. Keep a close watch on who and what you listen to. My mom used to always say to me, garbage in, garbage out. Things that you listen to, the things that you watch will impact your heart and will come out of you. So who are you listening to? What are the things that you're paying attention to? Social media runs amok with giving your children, parents, nonsense. It tells them a worldview that is contrary to the word of God. But they're not just safe if you keep them away from phones, they are in schools, they're in public school settings or even in private school settings, homeschool co-ops, there are people in those settings that aren't believers and can lead your children astray. Students, who are you listening to? What music are you listening to? What shows are you watching? What things are you reading? Take close watch on those things.

Second, be careful of bad company. Who are you surrounding yourself with? That's another thing that we need to be very careful of is the people that were around ourselves. Again, we are called to be in the world, but not of the world. We're gonna need to rub shoulders with unbelievers because it's part of our calling. Matthew 28:18 to 20 tells us to go and make disciples, which means we have to be in the world, but we don't make our close fellowship with the world. We must surround ourselves with the saints of God's church. There's an old saying that goes, show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are. You must be very careful of who you surround yourselves with. 1 Corinthians 15:33, we already mentioned it, bad company corrupts good morals. I don't care how good you think you are, if you surround yourself with ungodly people, it's going to produce ungodly characteristics.

So watch your company, be careful of bad community. See that you do not mock God in your speech and your actions. The scoffer openly mocks God with his speech, beliefs and actions and actively leads others astray. So we are called to honor God in our speech. Honor him in the way that we think of him. Honor him in the way that we carry ourselves. People are watching. They're going to see how you carry yourself.

So do not mock God, but honor him and finally, do not give an inch to sin because it will cost you everything. That is the danger that you see of this first progression, you give an

inch, it'll demand a mile. One of my favorite stories growing up was if you give a mouse a cookie, right? We know how that story goes. Give him a cookie, he's gonna want something else and it's just this crazy progression up to the most ridiculous thing. That's how our sin treats us. You say, I'll give an inch. and then it asks for another. Before you know it, it's asking for a mile. People that have been married for 20, 25 years, been faithful to their spouses, typically don't start with the most grotesque adultery you could ever imagine. It typically starts with giving an inch to lust in their heart and continues to build and build and build until it makes a mess of their lives.

Do not give sin an inch. Keep a close watch on your heart. Keep a close watch on who you're surrounded by. So if that's the warning, here's the instruction very briefly, delight in God's word. We've already talked about it, it's simple. If you want to know the mind of God and what he has called us to, you must first love his word. Often people want to know the will of God. What is God's will for my life, and they're asking that question and they're getting frustrated because God's not telling them what they're supposed to do. And they do so with their Bible closed. I don't know who to attribute this to, but I read complaining about God being silent when your Bible is closed is like complaining about not getting texts when your phone is turned off. It doesn't make sense. If we want to know what God has called us to, if we want to know how to live a righteous life but we never open the word of God, we're doomed from the start.

So delight in God's word. It is a life-giving stream. But reading is only half the battle. Like we said earlier, it's not just reading. but dwelling and meditating on it. Meditate daily on his word. Meditation is a tool that we often neglect, but it produces incredible fruit. If you want a really helpful book on Christian disciplines, it's spiritual disciplines for the Christian life or Christian disciplines. What's it called again? You know, Neil. Neil taught the class with me, by Dr. Whitney. It is a phenomenal book. It's very practical, very helpful and growing in the spiritual disciplines, but meditation is a wonderful tool to use. It means to dwell on the word of God and you can do this in a number of ways. You can read through the Scriptures and have one verse that you're gonna commit to memory throughout the day. When you have a moment, you meditate, you dwell on it. It could also be just going through and picking out a key truth, a key thing that you can walk throughout the day or the week, just dwelling on it. God's word calls me to live an upright life by delighting in his law. So how am I delighting in his law today? Meditate on that. Or meditation could be spending long hours or weeks or months or years trying to parse through a very difficult doctrine of the Scriptures.

Dwell with God's word and the final encouragement here is to endure. We must endure to the very end. But the joy of 1 Thessalonians 5 is that he who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it. If we are his saints, he will hold us to the end. We will face many trials and temptations as we've been looking at in 1 Peter, but he will hold us fast. So endure, cling to Christ.

There's truly only one way to live and by live, we mean to have life, and that is found in Christ. So are you living a life that is built upon the solid rock of Christ Jesus? Are you walking in righteousness or are you looking like the rest of the world? The only way for

you and for I to walk in righteousness is to delight in Christ and to delight in his word. So will you follow him and live for his glory all of your days? CT Studd, who I mentioned at the very beginning, wrote a very famous poem, something that I have learned to love very deeply. I'll read a few verses as we're closing.

"Oh let my love with fervor burn, And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone, Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne."

This is a very famous line. I want you to go home and actually read the entire poem. It says,

"Only one life, yes only one, Now let me say, 'Thy will be done';
And when at last I'll hear the call, I know I'll say 'twas worth it all';
Only one life,' twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last."

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we pray that you would stir in us a love for your truth, that you would create in us a heart that delights in your word through Christ Jesus, and that we might walk with you all of our days. Lord, as trials and temptations come, as good season, bad season, joyful season come that we might endure, that you might hold us fast so that we can walk in righteousness all of our days. God, we love you and we thank you for this time. May you stir in us a desire to follow you all of our days. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.