

“Delighting in the Word”

Favorite Psalms Pt.1

Psalm 1

Summary: Oh how blessed (stable, vital, fruitful, durable, prosperous and successful) is the man who doesn't delight in human wisdom, the company of sinners or inclusion with (and acceptance by) the mockers! Instead he delights in God's instruction resulting in meditation. The opposite for the wicked – they will perish.

The Blessed Man

What He Doesn't Delight in

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

What He Does Delight in

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

His Blessedness

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

The Wicked

Their Lack of blessedness

4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

Summary

6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Introduction

This morning I'm going to start a series on several of the favorite Psalms. There is a reason why the Psalms are the favorite part of Scripture for so many people. It's been that way for thousands of years. This book has always been treasured by God's people. It strikes a common cord in the hearts of God's people in every age. When you open your Bible and look at the words of a Psalm you're treading on some very precious ground. You are looking at the same words, marveling over the same thoughts that hundreds of thousands of saints over the centuries have read, prayed over, wept over, memorized and treasured.

This morning we are going to look at Psalm 1. If you read Jer.17 you'll see right away that Jeremiah read and thought deeply about the words of Ps.1.¹ And surely that's true of all the other prophets and godly men and women. There must have been many times when Jesus poured over the words of Psalm 1 when He was growing up and throughout His adult life. Peter, James, John, Paul –

¹ It was Jeremiah's common practice to take earlier writings from Scripture and expand on them. That's what he does with Ps.1.

Jer 17:5-8

This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. 6 He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. 7 "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. 8 He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

when they looked at the beginning of the book of Psalms they opened to the first one and saw the very same words you see before you right now.

One reason why the Psalms are so loved and treasured by the people of God is because we can relate to them. Most of the rest of the Bible gives us the point of view from heaven – which we desperately need. More than anything we need to know things as they really are, not as they appear to our eyes. So most of Scripture gives us just that. But the Psalms are written more from the earthly point of view. In the Psalms you don't get neatly stacked categories of theology. What you get is love and hatred, fear and trust, joy and sorrow, hope and despair - all breaking in upon one another and overlapping and competing for our attention in the chaos of life. That's how we experience life and so we can relate to the Psalms. In the Psalms we learn how to cry out to God in the midst of all that. The Psalms teach us how to pray and how to relate emotionally to God.

Introduction to Ps.1

Whoever was the person or group responsible for the final arrangement of the Psalms saw to it that the book would begin with a wisdom Psalm. We don't know who wrote Psalm 1. It would be no surprise if it was Solomon. You can imagine Solomon taking the collection of so many of the works of his father and compiling them and writing an introduction to them that sounds like something out of the book of Proverbs.

Whoever wrote it, it serves as the perfect introduction to the book of Psalms. In fact in Acts 13 Psalm 2 is referred to as the first Psalm in the earliest manuscripts. Evidently either Ps.1&2 were originally combined or, more likely, Psalm 1 was originally not numbered but served as a preface to the book. And there is some good evidence that that was the case.²

There are some wisdom principles God wants us to know before we step through the gateway into the book of Psalms.

So this morning we step through the gate. Psalm One is the door way that lets us enter in to the wonderful, beautiful world of the book of Psalms. And as we pass through this gate something very important is going to happen to us. We are immediately divided into two groups: the righteous and the wicked. And we are shown that there are only two possible outcomes to life: Blessing or perishing. And which one you are is determined by which of the two dominate affections drives your life: love the world or love God's Word.

Throughout the book of Psalms all of humanity is split into two groups, the righteous and the wicked. There is no other group. And Psalm One lets you know which you are. As you pass through the doorway you learn right off the bat which character you are going to be in all the rest of these Psalms.

And that's a little hard for us to take because the righteous appear so good in this book, and the wicked appear to be so bad, that most of us don't really feel we fit in either category.

We always want to imagine ourselves somewhere in the middle. But Scripture never gives us that option. You are either a wicked, vile reprobate, ready to slide right into the fire of God's eternal wrath at any moment, or you love the Lord your God will all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your strength. God won't allow us any comfortable middle ground of complacent, half-baked, half-hearted commitment to Him.

So when you see the blessings of the righteous in this Psalm (and others), if you are a genuine believer, those blessings will have two effects: 1) They will greatly encourage you and produce profound joy in your heart and 2) at the same time they will alarm you as you see the areas where you fall short of the description of righteousness. And you will be motivated to a more pure love for the Lord.

God never gives us any comfortable middle ground, because if there are only two categories, and you think you are in the middle that means there is just as much chance you are in one category as in the other. So these Psalms should encourage you and motivate you at the same time. Thomas

Watson writes "This psalm begins were we all hope to end"³

The structure of this Psalm is very simple. First he describes the blessed man and then he describes the wicked.

The Blessed Man

The first word in the book of Psalms is the same as the first word in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed." And when a sentence in the Bible starts with that word ("Happy are those who..."), we call that a beatitude. So the book of Psalms begins with a beatitude. One of the most important pieces of information God wants you to know is who is blessed.

Blessed is the man

The word "blessed" is plural ("Blesseds is the man"). That's the Hebrew way of putting an exclamation point on the sentence. So a more accurate translation would be something like, "Oh, the blessedness of the man...!"

Anytime you see a "door" in Scripture with the word "Blessed" over it, you can be sure that behind that door you'll find a description of a godly man. But don't look at it only as a description of a godly man. Don't lose sight of that blessed word "blessed." God doesn't just say, "Here's a description of godliness." He wants to begin by attaching reward to it right off the bat. God wants us to be motivated to pursue blessing.

It's hard to translate the exact idea of this word into English because our culture is so contaminated with superstition. We have pushed God so far out of our vocabulary that the English language is losing its ability to clearly portray certain ideas about God. Probably the closest word we have for the word "blessed" is the word "fortunate." When Scripture says, "Blessed is the man who does this" the point is those people who do that are fortunate - they have it made. Or to put it in children's lingo, they are the lucky ducks.

But the problem with expressing it that way is the idea of luck, or fortune are really pagan ideas. They are the naturalistic, atheistic substitutes for the concept of blessing. So if you can think about what a kid means when he says, "That guy is a lucky duck", and then replace the pagan concept of luck with the Biblical idea of God's favor then you have the idea of what "blessed" means. So the Psalm starts out telling us who the guy is who really, really has it made. The real lucky ducks are the ones described in vv.1-3.

John Trapp writes "The psalmist saith more to the point about true happiness in this short Psalm than any one of the philosophers, or all of them put together; they did but beat the bush, God hath here put the bird into our hand."⁴ Psalm One, as much as any passage I know, gets to the core of what true joy and delight and happiness is all about.

This blessedness is pictured not so much as a specific reward, per se, but more as the built-in result of this way of living.

Before we jump into the description of the blessed man's life let's peek ahead at v.3 to get a description of this blessedness. If you want to know what it means to be blessed by God it's spelled out for you right there in v.3.

Description of blessedness

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

- *Stability*

3 He is like a tree

The image of a tree gives the picture of strength and long-term steadfastness.

- *Life & vitality*

planted by streams of water⁵

³ Treasury p.4.

⁴ Treasury p.4

⁵ If you take a raft trip through Brown's Canyon on the Arkansas one of the things that really stands out as you approach the canyon is something known as the

Note the word **planted**. It's a passive participle – “having been planted.” And the word for **streams** is actually the word for irrigation canals.

In that part of the world most of the streams were wadis, which would be full of water during the rains, but completely dry other times. The point of mentioning the irrigation canal is to say that the water is there constantly. It doesn't come and go.

The man or woman who delights in the instruction of God is like a tree that some gardener intentionally planted in an ideal setting. In the ancient world that would be by a stream. The trees along the river grow up randomly just as a part of the normal function of the ecosystem. But that's not the picture here. You're not one of those. You're like a tree intentionally planted in an ideal environment.

To put this imagery into our world it's like saying “He will be like a tree planted in an arboretum or botanical garden.” Plenty of water is always available. And so your life is always vital and thriving. Your roots go down deep to tap into that same living water Jesus promised the woman at the well. And when the droughts come, you will continue to flourish.

- *Fruitfulness*

which yields its fruit in season

The person who is like a fruitful tree is the person whose life produces what it was designed to produce.

Most people's lives are dysfunctional. They may be making a living and paying their bills and going to their kids' soccer games and attending church, but they are not producing spiritually. God created them for a specific purpose and that purpose isn't being realized. And so even though they are making a lot of money and they are real busy and everything looks great on the outside, the truth is they are like a broken down car sitting out in the back yard with weeds growing up through it. But the man who has God's blessing on his life has a deep sense of fulfillment, because he knows he is accomplishing what he was put on this earth to accomplish.

- *Durability*

and whose leaf does not wither.

If you are blessed by God when the harsh winds and the extended droughts come, and all the other trees are drying up and withering away, you are still healthy and green. You have a joy and a happiness that is deep and that doesn't depend on circumstances. Any trial can come crashing into your life, no matter how devastating and painful, and you still do not wither.

- *Success*

Whatever he does prospers.

Here he drops the tree analogy and just states the point directly. The life of the blessed man or woman prospers – it's full of success everywhere you look.

This isn't anymore absolute than the devotion to the Word is absolute. It's proverbial. So it's not absolute but it is true. There are exceptions but the prosperity and flourishing success is still the rule. He crowns your endeavors with blessing and tokens of His favor abound all through your life.

So this is blessedness with a capital B. Who doesn't want stability, steadfastness, durability, vitality, fruitfulness, prosperity and success? Think about the last 20 things you asked for from God for yourself in your prayers. I'd be willing to bet every one of them would fit into one of those categories. If you have these blessings on your life you have all the blessedness there is. And you will be a supremely happy person.

So hopefully now you're interested to know how to get all that. And that's what this psalm is

riparian zone. The riparian zone is the ribbon of lush green plants alongside the banks of the river. And the reason it's so noticeable in that area is because it's desert climate, and so once you get about 15 ft. away from the bank of the river everything is brown. So the strip of green stands out in really stark contrast to the cactus and desert-type landscape of the rest of the area.

If you're walking along in the mountains and everything is real dry with very little vegetation other than evergreens, and then in the distance you see a line of deciduous trees and green plants, you know there is a creek there. When you get close to a river there is a lot of water underground. That's why a river still runs in the winter time even when there is no runoff and no rain. About 1/3 of the water in a river comes from underground sources. And all the plants and trees that are close enough to the river can tap into that with their root system.

The man who delights in God's Word is in the riparian zone. Everyone else is a dried up piece of sage brush.

about. So let's take a look at the description of the blessed man.

What He Doesn't Delight in

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

The blessed man doesn't delight in the world. In v.2 we'll see what he does delight in but it's worth noting that the negative comes first. He doesn't want to just give the positive without the negative, because we need to understand that both are crucial. If all we had were the positive - if it just said, "This is what the blessed man delights in" - we might be content to go through life with mixed delight. We might think, "as long as I delight in good, it's OK for me to also delight in a little bit of the world."

But that's not the case. It's not enough to delight in the good; we must also not delight in evil. And so the psalmist describes that in three ways.

1. Doesn't delight in human wisdom

who does not walk in the counsel⁶

This word refers to the purposes, plans and ideas in the heart. It is very often translated "plans." When someone just has purposes in his own heart those are plans. But when he shares his purposes with you, it becomes counsel. Either way it primarily points to the manner of thinking of the natural human mind.

When we think of the enticements of evil we tend to think of things like illicit sex or alcohol or too much food or too much sleep, etc. But the very first worldly enticement God mentions here is the enticement and allure of human wisdom.

Christians flock to secular counselors by the millions. Not only do individual Christians pay thousands of dollars to visit secular psychologists and psychiatrists but on an even bigger scale millions of people who consider themselves Christians are eager to turn on Oprah, or Dr. Phil or a myriad of other worldly people offering human wisdom. Going to those kinds of people for advice on spiritual matters is just as evil as going to pornography for sexual fulfillment or going to drugs for emotional fulfillment. It's a symptom of delighting in evil.

But it really is an enticement for many Christians. It's enticing because of the kind of counsel the world gives. They say the things that, in our flesh we want to hear. They give us the message that the solution to our problems is within us. God provides help and assistance when we need it, but the core of the solution to your problem is within your own power. And it will come from human ideas and solutions. They entice us with the message of self-love, self-esteem, self-fulfillment, self-actualization, self-sufficiency, independence, etc. and that just feeds our pride and our natural inclination to imagine we are not desperately dependent upon God for everything.

And even when Christians decide they don't want that they go to a Christian counselor. And the tragic reality is the vast majority of Christian counselors have themselves walked in the counsel of the ungodly. Most of Christian psychology is nothing but Christianized secular psychology.

One of the most flagrant blatant ways the Church has committed adultery with the world has been in the area of human wisdom.

2. Doesn't delight in the sinful manner of living

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked... or stand in the way of sinners

The word **way** refers to the manner of living. But the point is not just that you are blessed if you don't have a sinful path but that you are blessed if you don't stand in the path of the people who are sinners. As a believer you still sin but you are not in the category of a "sinner" - someone who is defined by his sin.

It's a subtle distinction. The point isn't that we should avoid going down that path. The point

⁶ It can also mean "council," but most scholars agree that's not the meaning here.

is we should avoid standing around with the people who are on that path.

The righteous man does not delight in the company of sinners. Do we love them? Yes. Do we want to reach them for Christ? Of course. But we do not enjoy their company or seek them out as companions. When we do interact with them we pull them toward the righteous path – we don't stand around with them over on their sinful path.

- Prov 13:20 **He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.**
- 1 Cor 15:33 **"Bad company corrupts good character."**
- Jer 15:17,19 **I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. 19 if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.**

Did you know that Lot is called "righteous" three times in 2 verses in 2 Pe.2 for doing nothing? 2 Peter 2:7-8 **he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men 8(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—**

He is called righteous three times. What did he do that made him righteous, righteous, righteous? Peter doesn't mention anything that he did. The thing that marked him as such a righteous man was the high level of distress and agony he experienced in his righteous soul when he saw the sins of the wicked.

3. Doesn't join in with mockers sit in the seat of mockers.

Some people, to defend their irrational rejection of God, turn to mocking as a defense mechanism. They try to keep the objections of conscience at bay and hold off the intellectual arguments through scoffing and ridiculing. This prevents them from having to think.

And when you are around those people they always keep a seat open next to them. They are very gracious – you have the choice. You can sit down next to them and you will be immediately unconditionally welcomed into their circle instantly.

The other option is to refuse to take a seat among them which makes you the object of their mockery. The word **seat** is used here, most likely, in the sense of "assembly." Mockers tend to flock together. Mockers, complainers and overly critical people tend to gravitate together and they end up forming a counsel that sits in judgment all the time. They are sitting in constant judgment on God and anyone associated with God. And it's enticing to be seated with them so you can avoid being the object of their ridicule.

We want to be accepted by the world. We want them to respect our intelligence and not think of us as superstitious. We want them to respect our music and not think of us as weird. We want them to respect our lifestyle and not think of us as puritanical or prudish. We want them to respect our scholarship and not think of us as bias toward religious belief. We want them to like us, and so we are enticed to have a seat in their assembly, and we justify it in the name of just trying to avoid giving an occasion for God's name to be mocked.

It even comes to the point where I've heard preachers mock Scripture and godly things right from the pulpit – just to show the world that he's cool.

It's enticing to sit down with the mockers because those people are respected by our world. Spurgeon says "The seat of the scorner may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell; let us flee from it, for it shall soon be empty, and destruction shall swallow up the man who sits therein." That University professor who seems to be sitting way up high in untouchable glory - very soon that throne of his will tip slightly and he will slide right off into the fires of hell. Thomas Adams says "That which a man spits against heaven shall fall back on his own face."⁷

That's kind of a comical picture – if you imagine a guy standing there looking straight up and trying

to spit at God. But it's a perfect image of what happens to those who mock God. Eventually their mockery comes right back down on their own head.

So blessed is the man who isn't enticed by all that. He's not enticed by the world's wisdom, ways or attitudes.

I don't think the point is to show a progression from walking to sitting.⁸ The point is to intensify and expand the idea with parallelism.

Normally Hebrew parallelism will have two lines rather than three. The writer will say something and then say something very similar alongside it to give depth perception to the idea - like looking through two eyes instead of one.

Another common tool in Hebrew thought was to express a superlative idea with a three-fold repetition. And I think that's what he's doing here. He makes his point by showing it to us from three angles so we really get the fullness of the depth of the idea.

The point is "Blessed is the man who has absolutely no interest in worldliness of any kind in any capacity."

- 1 John 2:15-17 **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.**

- James 4:4-5 **You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.**

You can't love God and love the world anymore than you can be devoted to your wife while giving your heart and your body to another woman.

So in a psalm about delighting in the right thing, he starts with the negative – what you are not to delight in.

What he does delight in

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

I really think that word **delight** is the centerpiece of this whole Psalm. John Piper has it right. The issue isn't just what you do or even what you believe. The most basic difference between wickedness and righteousness is what you delight in.

The great commandment is to love God and delight is an essential component of love.

1 Cor 13:6-7 **Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.** (I think that's about as perfect a summary of the message of Psalm 1 as it's possible to have.)

Love is all about what you delight in. The reason people walk and stand and sit with the wicked is because they delight in wickedness. And they delight in it – it's their source of happiness – because they love it. And the reason the godly man meditates on Scripture day and night is because he delights in that which comes from the mind of God. And he delights in that – gains his enjoyment from that – because he loves God.

Your life stands as a testimony to the glories of that which you delight in. Your life glorifies that which you take delight in and find joy in. And the delight of the godly man... **is in the law of Yahweh**

⁸ (Those who see a progression would probably see it just as much if it were reversed - "sit, stand, walk").

This word translated **law** is “TORAH.” It can mean “law” in certain contexts but the more basic definition, and the way it’s used here, is simply to mean “instruction.” When you see the word “law” don’t think exclusively about God’s commandments or rules. Think of the fact that the Almighty Creator would condescend to offer us beautiful, lovely perfect *instruction* that functions as food for our souls. His commandments are part of that, but so are the promises, warnings, rebukes, encouragements, exhortations, comforts, training, examples, illustrations, biographies and everything else in Scripture.

and on his instruction he meditates day and night.

Meditation

Meditation is the natural activity that comes from delight. When your affections are set to delight in something, the action that comes from that is meditation.

The first time you fell in love with someone you meditated on that person. People who love baseball have their thoughts consumed with baseball. Some of you are spending a lot of your time meditating on your next vacation.

Remember that connection with love.

Ps 119:47-48 for I delight in your commands because I love them. 48 I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.

Meditation is enjoying something in your thought life. It’s when you take something (or someone) you love and enjoy that thing (or person) in your thoughts, that’s meditation.

- Ps 119:14-16 **I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. 15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. 16 I delight in your decrees;**
- Ps 119:23-24 **your servant will meditate on your decrees. 24 Your statutes are my delight;** And I don’t know that there is any more fundamental discipline of the Christian life than meditation on God’s Words.

Meditation on Scripture is kind of like allowing your pupils to dilate so you are more sensitive to light or moving away from the lights on a clear night so you can see more and more stars. As you gaze into the heavens and the distracting light of earth is removed, your pupils open up more and more. Where you saw 10 stars before now you see 100. And then you use a “telescope” (a commentary, concordance, etc.) you can see that you aren’t looking at 100 stars but 100 galaxies.

The Hebrew word for “meditate” literally means “to mumble.” The idea is that you are pouring over a passage and you are so lost in that passage that you begin mumbling out loud to yourself. And throughout the day you are mumbling that passage to yourself as you examine it from every possible angle.

God wants us to think deeply about His thoughts. That’s what love does. That’s what delight does. If you ever struggle with the frustration of knowing what you are supposed to do, but you can’t seem to get it from your head into your life the solution to that is in meditation.

Josh 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

You meditate so that you can obey. Just knowing the truth is not enough. You can’t change the color of the fabric of your life by going to the store and buying some dye. You have to sit and soak in that dye for a while before any real change takes place. That’s why he says **day and night**.

The wicked

We've seen what God has to say about the man who delights in His Word; now let's see what He says about those who don't.

4 Not so the wicked!

Most people are in that category. Notice that the word **man** in v.1 is singular. The words **wicked**, **sinner** and **mockers** are all plural. The psalm paints a picture of the godly man being vastly outnumbered by the wicked. As you move through the world you will find 1 in 1000 who get the blessing of Ps.1. Most people are in the second half of the Psalm.

And instead of going into detail he just says **Not so the wicked**. You would think just those 4 words would be enough to terrify anyone out of taking the path of the ungodly. The other category of human beings does not delight in God's Word; they do not meditate on it day and night. Instead they delight in the world's wisdom, lifestyle and attitudes and so they do not receive God's blessing. The psalm could end right here and everyone in this room who does not truly delight in God's law would have sufficient reason to walk out in tears and agonizing sorrow. To see the glories of the blessed life in v.3 and then to approach that glorious city only to find the gates slammed closed on you and locked, to be shut out of the blessed life is a terror by itself.

But the psalmist goes on. Here's what it's like for the man or woman who *doesn't* delight in and meditate on God's Word:

They are like chaff

You might expect the contrast would be with a scrawny dried up tree. But it's even more stark than that. He picks the most worthless part of plant life imaginable. Chaff.

When the people harvested their wheat they would take the piles of wheat mixed with chaff to the threshing floor and throw it up into the air. They wouldn't do it when it was windy, obviously, or all the wheat would blow away. They would do it when there was a gentle breeze. That way the wheat would just fall down to the floor but the chaff, which is so light and without substance, would be carried away even by a slight breeze.

That's why he says **They are like chaff that the wind blows away**.

Those who do not delight in and meditate on the Word are useless worthless contaminations. And the only thing that needs to be done with them is to eliminate them, which is easy to do because they are so weightless that the slightest breeze takes them away.

In contrast to the steadfastness of the righteous mighty rooted trees that can withstand any storm, they can't even withstand an afternoon breeze.

Chaff, in Scripture, is always the epitome of worthlessness. It's possible to extract some value from almost anything. A fruitless tree might be useful for shade. A dead tree could be useful for firewood. Dirt is useful for growing crops. Even a broken piece of pottery can be useful for someone like Job to scrape his sores. But there is absolutely no value to chaff. That's what the ungodly are like. Their lives are utterly worthless in this life and even more so in the next.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

There will be a great separation one day. The implication of this phrase is that the wicked want to be associated with the righteous. In this life they love the company of the wicked but they still consider themselves righteous. So on Judgment Day they will want to be counted with the righteous.

These are the hypocrites – the ones who think they are of us because they are among us. Nothing is closer to a kernel of wheat than chaff. It envelopes the kernel. But at harvest time they are separated.

There is a lot of chaff that thinks it's wheat because of how close it is to the wheat. Spurgeon: "How closely related are the ungodly to the righteous! One of you, it may be, now present, an

ungodly man, is the father of a godly child. You have been to that child what the chaff is to the wheat; you have nourished the child—cherished it in your bosom; you have been wrapt about it like the chaff about the grain...” but “...The chaff cannot be taken into heaven with the wheat.”⁹

You can be the mother of saints and at the same time a daughter of hell. And it can work the other way too. You can be the offspring of godly parents and yourself nothing but chaff. I don't doubt there is wheat and chaff working side by side in this church in important ministries. If you do not delight in the law of the Lord, no matter how busy you are in the kingdom, you are nothing but the outer husk that must be torn away at the harvest. And on Judgment Day you will go from the songs of the saints to the shrieks of the damned. Those mockers you so enjoyed sitting with, those sinners whose company was so appealing to you in this life, their shrieks of agony will be your only companion for all eternity.

Summary

6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous

Literally it says **the LORD knows the way of the righteous**.

This is talking about that kind of knowledge that implies relational favor in intimate interest. That's why the NIV correctly translates it “**watches over**.” That's exactly the point. It's just like

- Ps 37:18 **The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure forever.**
- Job 23:10-12 **he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. 11 My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. 12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.**

Job is saying exactly the same thing as Ps.1. Because Job delighted in and treasured the words of God's mouth more than daily food, God knew Job's way and saw to it that it resulted in glory for Job. God watches over the life of the righteous... **but the way of the wicked will perish.**

God doesn't attend favorably to it, and so left to itself it can do nothing but fall into the depths of hell. If you are among those who do not delight in God's Word, I just want to ask you – in the words of the prophet Ezekiel – why would you perish? Are God's promises and His self-revelation so hideous that you can't delight in them? Is the Lord Jesus Christ such a hard Master that you would refuse to love Him? Is the giving up of the glories of heaven, and the sacrificing of Himself on the cross for you not enough to win your heart? Is the company of the wicked and the momentary pleasures of sin worth your eternal soul? Why would you perish?

Ezek 18:31-32 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

Maybe you think your sin is too great – too much to be forgiven. Listen to the words of the prophet:

Ezek 33:10-11 "Son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?" ' 11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

Benediction:

Matt 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into

practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Review questions

1. What is blessedness according to this psalm?

Stability, vitality, fruitfulness, durability, prosperity and success.

2. What aspects of the righteous and the wicked are contrasted?

Primarily their affections (what they love), but also the outcome of their affections (blessedness vs. non-blessedness and perishing).

3. What if you are in the middle ground between the extremes described in this Psalm?
You aren't. Everyone is in one category or the other. The more it feels like you are in the middle ground, the more concerned you should be to see to it that you are in the blessed category and not the other.

Discussion Questions:

1. What aspect of your life is the most "shaky" when it comes to being firmly in the "blessed" category?
2. Describe your level of delight in
 - God's Word
 - Human wisdom
 - Sinful people
 - Inclusion with the mockers

