

Godly Joy
Psalm 1
Sunday, May 28th, 2023
By Ryan Perry

Scripture:

Psalm 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 Pray

Introduction:

Today we are going to be focusing on the book of Psalms. But instead of trying to do what feels like an impossible task of giving you an overview of this book I am going to focus on one Psalm. And that one Psalm just happens to be Psalm 1.

Now before I get into Psalm 1, I want to start by giving you some of the background of this book. My hope is that this background will not only help you to understand why I picked this particular Psalm, but it will also help you to be a better reader of the Psalms in your daily life.

So first, the original Hebrew title of this book was "*Tehillim*" which means "Book of Praises" because these are **songs and poems** that were used as praises to God.

However, the English title “Psalms,” which means “Book of Songs,” comes from the Greek word “*Psalmos*” because, like a hymnal, this book is a collection of **songs** that would have been used both in the public life of temple worship and in the private life of personal devotion to God.

As for dating this book, it is very difficult to know the exact time period in which all the psalms were written. But most scholars agree that they come from various periods in Israel’s history. And we know that those periods include:

- The time of Moses which is either the 15th or 13th century B.C.
- The time of David and Solomon in the 10th century B.C.
- The exile and the post exile period which is in the 6th or 5th century B.C.

Which means that the book of Psalms took around 1000 years to be written and put together in its final form.

As far as authors, we don’t know who wrote every psalm, but we can be fairly certain about the following authors:

- David wrote around 73 Psalms
- The sons of Korah, who were worked in the temple and were part of the singers and musicians under David’s rule wrote 11.
- Asaph who was the musical director during the time of David wrote 12.
- Moses wrote 1.
- Solomon wrote 1.

And even though we don’t know who compiled these psalms there is a logic to how they were put together. First, they are put together into 5 different books that are divided as follows:

- Book 1 is Psalms 1-41
- Book 2 is Psalms 42-72
- Book 3 is Psalms 73-89
- Book 4 is Psalms 90-106
- Book 5 is Psalms 107-150

Each of these books ends with a doxology, and the order follows a somewhat logical progressions that mirrors the history of Israel from the time of David.

We have the establishment and continuation of the Davidic covenant in Books 1-2. Crisis and exile in Book 3. A recognition of God’s kingship in book 4, and the return from exile and praise in book 5.

As you read the various Psalms you will notice that there are three main types of Psalms:

- Laments Psalms (expressing sorrow, grief, or regret) which make up about a third of the Psalms.
- Psalms of Praise which declare what God has done and praise him in response.

- Lament and praise psalms which are a mixture of both grief and confidence in God.

You could of course break these into roughly 100 sub-categories, but these three seem to encapsulate most of the psalms.

Also, since the book psalms is the hymn book of Israel and was put together over a 1000 years, it contains a wide variety of themes that are found all throughout the Old Testament.

It including the names, attributes, and acts of God. The reality of sin and living in a fallen world. The judgement of God. The hope of redemption and restoration. The kingdom of God. The wisdom of God which Psalm 1 falls into. And there is a looking forward to the Davidic Messiah which is fulfilled in Christ.

So that's really quick snapshot of the book of Psalms.

But I do want to touch on one more thing before we get into Psalm 1.

Because the book of Psalms is a book of poetry and songs, it needs to be read in a different way than other books of the Bible. For instance:

Psalm 103:10 says:

*[10] He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

In this verse the second line isn't saying anything different than the first. It is instead reinforcing the meaning. This is called **Synonymous Parallelism**.

Or in Psalm 37:21 it says:

*[21] The wicked borrows but does not pay back,
but the righteous is generous and gives;*

Here the psalmist is giving you contrasting opposites (wicked and the righteous). This is called **Antithetic Parallelism**.

Finally, it says in Psalm 19:7:

*[7] The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;*

In this verse the 2nd line is answering the first. This is called **Synthetic Parallelism**.

I only point these out so when you read the Psalms as poetry and song, you won't read and try to interpret them like you would a narrative or normal story. **So hopefully that will be a benefit to you in your future reading and understanding of these beautiful poems and songs.**

Now on to our psalm for this morning.

The reason I picked Psalm 1 is because most scholars agree that this serves as an introduction to the whole Psalter or hymnbook of Israel.

It orients our hearts to receive these prayers, poems, and songs as God's Word. It calls us to meditate deeply on the message that God is communicating through them. And it strongly affirms the idea that how one responds to God's Word (Including the Psalms) and ultimately to God himself, determines the course of their life.

So then this psalm is an exhortation. It is an exhortation to reject the ways and loves of this world, while at the same time delighting and immersing ourselves in God's Law or Word. **And for us as New Testament Christians, since Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the law, it is an exhortation and call to delight and immerse ourselves in Christ.**

And when we do this, the Psalmist says that we will receive a **Godly or God-filled joy** that bears fruit for God's kingdom, and will ultimately lead the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

So let's begin by looking at the exhortation to reject the ways and loves of the world and to delight and immerse ourselves in Christ and his word as we look at the root of our Godly or God-filled joy.

The Root of Godly Joy

Psalm 1:1–2

*[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.*

One of the first and most important things we need to notice about this Psalm is one of the easiest things to overlook. It's the first word "Blessed." It comes from the word "esher" in Hebrew which actually means "happy" or more precisely and emphatically "how happy!"

But there is an important distinction here. When we often think of the word happy in English we first and foremost think about it as a feeling.

“I am happy that it is finely warm outside.”

“I am happy that my kids are almost done with school.”

“I am happy that Aaron Rodgers is no longer a Green Bay Packer.”

You see all of these are expressions of feelings. And we all know that feelings are something that can be here one day, and when the circumstances change, can be gone the next.

But this isn't what the Hebrew word *“esher”* or *“blessed”* is getting at. Instead, of a feeling of happiness, **it is pointing us to the underlying and lasting joy and gratitude that comes from being people that get to live in fellowship with their God.**

As it says in Psalm 34:8

[8] Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

And this kind of lasting joy is not something we earn, but instead it is given to us as a free gift of God.

As it says in Psalm 32:1:

*[1] Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.*

God is the one who fully and freely forgives our sin, and according to his own grace and might calls us into fellowship with him and bestows on us the favor of being his people.

And as Christians we know this a blood bought favor that we have received through Christ and his death on the cross. As it says in Ephesians 1:7:

***[7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of his grace,***

So being blessed is more than a feeling. **Instead, it is an enduring state of joy and gratitude that comes from having the undeserved favor and blessing of God upon us as his people.**

But that does not mean that it doesn't require anything of us. If you think back to the covenant that God made with the people of Israel on Sinai it was definitely a free gift, but at the same time the ongoing experience of that covenant required them to walk in obedience to God.

In a similar fashion we have received the free gift of fellowship with God through Christ and yet Christ himself implies that this ongoing favor and fellowship with him requires something of us when he says in John 14:15:

[15] “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And according to the psalmist if we want to continually experience the lasting blessings of joy that flow from our union with Christ, it requires us to do two things.

One, it requires us to put off or disassociate with the loves of this world.

As it says again in Psalm 1:1:

*[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;*

Now if you remember what I said at the beginning about Hebrew poetry, this is **synonymous parallelism**. Which means that the hymn writer is not trying to communicate three different kinds of activities of evil people, but instead he is describing a comprehensive evil that is focused on or devoted to self-pleasure and earthly gain, rather than the delight of God and his Word.

Meaning that this he is trying to make it clear that our experience of the godly joy that comes from our fellowship with and favor from God requires us to reject the self-centered and self-pleasure-seeking ways of the world around us.

And if we are honest, I think this is something that we struggle with.

Oh sure, we don't murder, and we don't steal (at least not in the criminal sense. Yet how many in this room “borrow” a streaming service from somebody they know). We aren't beating our spouses (I hope) and in general we try to act like decent human beings.

But let me ask you, what do you worry about the most? What stresses you out the most? (Money, retirement, work load, inflation, gas prices, banks collapsing, political agendas, what Target's doing, losing your civil liberties, your child's behavior, etc...)

And if were honest, what do we desire the most? (Security, relaxation, vacation, ease, leisure, well-behaved children, successful children, the good ol' days).

I'm not saying that these things are always unimportant. But the truth for many of us, is that if we are honest with ourselves, and truly assessed our deepest fears and longings, we would probably see a person who is more devoted to their own comfort, their own pleasure, and their own gain than they are to the kingdom of God.

And you might want to even defend yourself at times and say, “No Lord, I am ready to follow you wherever you call me.” Are we really? Or are we like those that Jesus spoke to in Luke 9:57-62.

[57] As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” [58] And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Meaning, You will lack physical comfort) [59] To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” (Meaning, let me bury my father and get the inheritance) [60] And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” (Meaning, the Kingdom of God is more important than money) [61] Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” (Meaning, I cherish my family more than you) [62] Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Following me is more important than even your family)

Each of these would be disciples were exposed and it became apparent that there was something that they wanted more than they wanted Jesus. **They were about their own comfort, gain, and pleasure.**

And if we are to be true and genuine joy-filled Christians, then we are called by the palmist to reject this kind of thinking. To reject the self-centered and self-seeking desires that can rule our lives. **Because we cannot say we love God while at the same time loving and living for what the world seeks after.**

As Jesus says in Matthew 6:24:

*[24] “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and money (mammon, possessions, comforts).**”*

So, we must reject what the world loves.

But we can’t stop there. Our continual experience of a blood bought, Holy Spirit wrought joy doesn’t just rest on our ability to turn away from what the world loves, but it is also dependent on being people who delight in God, who love his word, and walk in his ways.

As it says in Psalm 1:2:

*[2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Now, the word “**delight**” means “*to take pleasure in, to desire, and to see something as supremely valuable.*” Secondly, the word “**meditate**” means “*to care for, to attend to, and to practice and be diligent in.*”

So the psalmists point is that if we are to be people who are supremely happy in God than we need to take pleasure in and see his word as supremely valuable. And along with that we need to people who attend to it, saturate ourselves in it, and put it into practice.

And you can see how these two things work together. When we believe that something is unbelievably valuable and worthwhile and that it is something that is pleasurable, and to be desired. Then we will think about it, we will saturate ourselves in it, and we will orient our lives around it.

For some people today this might be health and wellness, as they orient everything they do around their exercise routines and diets. For others it might be leisure as their whole year is scheduled around vacations and down time. **And still for others it might be orienting their whole existence around kids as their sole focus and purpose.**

Yet, as Christians, we are called to taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8). We are called to see Christ and his Word as the greatest treasure that is more pleasurable and worthwhile than anything else in all creation. **And this treasuring and delighting in God’s Word should overflow into a life that is saturated by the Word and oriented around it.**

And we can see this same idea presented elsewhere in the Psalms. As it says in Psalm 112:1

***[1] Praise the LORD!
Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
who greatly delights in his commandments!***

Then in Psalm 119:1

***[1] Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD!***

This is both delighting and treasuring and orienting our lives around God’s Word.

But don’t misunderstand me. I’m not saying that you need to leave here today and have longer quiet time (though that is good), it doesn’t mean you need to memorize more verses (though that is very helpful and worthwhile), and it doesn’t mean that you need to be doing a deep dive study on every book of the Bible (even though I would commend that kind of study as very fruitful).

But it does mean that we need to be people that treasure our God and Savior Jesus Christ in such a way that we vigorously commit ourselves to seeking him, communing with him, and living out his truth in the totality of our daily experience.

Brother Lawrence said it this way in the book *Practicing the Presence of God*:

“We should put life in our faith. We should give ourselves utterly to God in pure abandonment (giving ourselves fully to and delighting in him), in temporal (earthly) and spiritual matters alike, and find contentment (joy) in the doing of His will (orienting our lives around him), whether he takes us through sufferings or consolations.”

This truly is the path of unspeakable, inexpressible, and lasting joy. It is the root of Godly Joy.

Now, I realize that I spent a ton of time on that first point, and I did that because it is the most important one. And everything else is what flows from either choosing to live into that Godly Joy or the result of living apart from it. So my last two points will be a much quicker walk through the rest of this Psalm.

The Fruit of Godly Joy

Psalm 1:3-4

*[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.*

The person who delights in Christ, orients themselves around his Word, and experiences his lasting joy is a person that is rooted and planted by streams of living water. Meaning that they are drinking deeply from Christ and his Word in such a way that they are flourishing and bearing fruit.

But let's be careful here. Because it is too easy for us to hear the words **“yields its fruit”** and **“prosper”** and assume that means that we will be blessed materially.

Now that may happen, and praise God if it does, but the reality is that trees bear fruit for a purpose. And the purpose of a fruit trees that bears fruit is so that it can nourish the people and the animals that may eat from it.

Meaning that the fruit that Christ produces in our lives as a result of delighting in him and orienting our lives around him is ultimately others focused.

First and foremost, it is about pleasing and glorifying God. As Paul writes in Colossians 1:10.

[10] so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Second, the fruit that God produces in our lives is meant to be used to serve and build others up. As it says in Galatians 5:13–14:

[13] For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. [14] For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

So then the fruit that God produces in our lives should be recognizable as it clearly displays the greatness and glory of God and in so doing it works for the good of others.

But if we are people that don't treasure Christ and don't orient our lives around him, we need to understand that we are still producing something.

Verse 4 of Psalm 1 tells us that we are wicked people who produce “**chaff.**” Now chaff is basically the husk of the wheat and unfortunately it isn't useful for anything. **And it is either blown away or its burned.**

Meaning that the fruits that come from a life that doesn't treasure Christ won't last. This kind of person won't be storing up treasures in heaven, what they do won't have any lasting or eternal value, and they will come to the end of their life and will realize on that day that they have wasted it.

So the question is what kind of fruit are you producing? God glorifying, kingdom building, others focused fruit? Or is it chaff that won't last?

Finally, now that we have walked through the root of Godly Joy and have seen the fruit that Godly joy produces, we are ready to conclude this psalm with the sobering reality of the results of Godly Joy.

Results of Godly Joy

Psalm 1:5-6

**[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.**

The psalmist doesn't mince words here. He doesn't hold back in verse 4 about the reality that delighting in and living for something else besides Christ will produce worthless fruit in your life. And he doesn't hold back here from letting us know what the results of that kind of life will be.

If you are here this morning, even if you call yourself a Christian, and you are not seeking to treasure Christ and orient your life around him and his word, then you are living a life that will ultimately end in an eternity apart from God in hell.

You will not stand in the judgement nor in the congregation of those who are made right by Christ, but instead you will perish.

But if you are someone who desires to treasure, trust, and delight in Christ above the self-seeking pleasures of this world and you are seeking to orient your lives around his Word, will, and ways, then I have good news for you.

You have the promise of the present and lasting joy of God's favor. You also, have the promise that God is working in you and through you to produce lasting God-glorifying, others focused fruit. And, you have the promise that you are intimately known and loved by God, and have the glorious hope of an everlasting eternity that will be filled with treasuring and enjoying him.

So my question for us this morning is who are we? Are we the fruit tree or the chaff? Are we rejecting the self-centered ways of this world or are we walking in them? Are we delighting and orienting our lives around Christ or something else? **And are we experiencing the favor and lasting joy of being God's people?**

Because only the path of fruitful Christ honoring delighting leads to life and joy, while the path of empty and worldly pleasure-seeking leads to death.

Let's pray.