

Meditation

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[0 : 0 0] Shall we turn together now to the book of Psalms in the first psalm. The book of Psalms in Psalm 1. The book of Psalms in Psalm 1.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the running of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in its season. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psalm 1 is obviously at the very beginning of the book of Psalms. And most commentators think that this psalm was placed there, as it were, as an introduction to all the other psalms.

And the psalm that is very centred, as so many of the psalms are, upon the law of God. And here we read of two choices.

[1 : 1 5] The choice of either following the Lord and his law, or not following the Lord and his law. The two lifestyles that follow from that, enjoying the company of the scornful, enjoying the company of the wicked, or following the righteous.

And also the two ends, where you will be brought into judgment, and we will all be brought into judgment. And we will either be able to stand in that judgment before the Lord, or we will be cast down before him.

There's these two choices before each one of us. Two lifestyles, and the two ends. Every one of us makes a choice. Whoever will be in heaven from this gathering, we will be there by our choice.

Yes, God has a choice in it as well, but there will be no one in heaven, but by choice. And those who will be lost, and who will be cast out into the darkness of hell, they will be there by choice as well.

That would seem to be the scriptural teaching. But what we want to talk about this morning, is about happiness. True happiness.

[2 : 3 1] You see that first word in the psalm, what is it? Blessed. Now that word can be translated happy. Oh, happy is the man.

There are two words, at least in Hebrew, that you can translate blessed. But this one is one that you can translate happy as well. Happiness.

Happiness. What is this true happiness that we want to talk about this morning? It's a happiness that comes from delighting in the word of God.

Do you know anything of that delight, of that happiness, that comes from being centered upon the law of God?

Where do we find the law of God today? We find it in these pages. Each of you before you this morning will have a book called the Holy Bible.

[3 : 3 0] Well, my friend, do you have happiness as you hold that Bible, as you read it, and as you study it, and as it controls your life?

If you have that kind of happiness, then you are blessed indeed, because blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord.

Now, most people say that happiness and law don't go together. Do you remember the Great Flower Movement in the late 60s and early 70s?

It was a movement away from law, away from institutions, away from scripture, and they thought we can just lay under the banner of love.

And they thought that's how they would find happiness. They never found happiness that way. They needed drugs to induce themselves to be stimulated so they could keep on going from day to day.

[4 : 31] They never found happiness in ignoring law. And they will never find happiness today in our generation by living without the Bible.

But you might say to me, that's nonsense. You know plenty in your streets, in your towns, in your countries, where people are very happy even if they don't read the Word of God.

Well, I think you're right. They do have a certain happiness. They seem to smile. They seem to get on well from day to day.

They have good jobs, some of them. Their family are turning out quite decent and respectable. Yes, there's a happiness. But you know this, it doesn't compare with the blessedness of a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, whose life is centered around this book.

Because blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. Why? Because his life will be productive.

[5 : 50] productive. Have you ever felt that you're achieving nothing? Well, it may be because you're not living your life around the Word of God.

Because what we'll find before is described here is that the man whose life is a delighting in the law of God, he says, he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth fruit in its season.

You know what it's like? Especially in this kind of weather here, you wouldn't dare try to transplant something in a garden, would you? You raise it, break its roots just now and transfer it somewhere else, the ground's just dry.

And with a little bit of heat, it'll shrivel away. That's why all the gardening books say if you're going to transplant, leave it till late autumn or do it in early spring.

Do it in the months where there's an hour in the month. But don't do it in the summer months. Why? Because you want that bush or that tree to have moisture.

[6 : 59] Just like this tree in Psalm 1 is beside the river of water and the water is feeding up through the branches, out through the stems and it's producing fruit.

It's productive. Well, you see, that's what happens for the person who's a Christian. Because they're living on the law of God, because their roots in their lives are going down into the pages of Scripture, they are productive.

They are bearing fruit in their season. You know, have you ever thought of it? Water comes up through the tree, up and then out into the branches, but it doesn't come out as water, does it?

It comes out as fruit. Now, there are many people who, they'll tell you, oh, we have a Bible in our house, and they'll quote the Lord's my shepherd to you.

They'll quote some of the things they learned in Sunday school, but it's just like water's coming up and it's coming out as water. It's doing, they're nothing but just channels as it were.

[8 : 23] It hasn't really affected them one little bit, but what you want is the water to become fruit. You want the Bible teaching to come out into a holy life.

You want the Bible to affect you in such a way as you read it and understand it that you will be holy, pleasing to God.

Now, that's productivity. That's the productivity we would like to see in ourselves and in every Christian. You know, some people, they're not Christians for long before they die.

I was just reading recently a story and I'm sure most of you have heard. It's a very old story. It's about a man called Mr. Stewart. He was a minister in Kiltern in Evanston, just six miles north from here.

And that day was a man called the Laird of Sordale and he was a very decent man but he wasn't a Christian. And this man became ill.

[9 : 40] Mr. Stewart, the minister, went in to visit him and he was only in a very short time speaking to him about the gospel and the man was converted.

there and then he was changed and brought from death to life. In a very short time after that, that man died before the minister left the house.

And when the minister reached home he said to his wife that he saw a very strange thing today in a home. I went in, he says, and the man was in the kingdom of sin.

Then he was converted and entered the kingdom of grace. And before I left the house he was in the kingdom of glory. In such a short time.

Well, you see, he only had a few moments as a Christian in this life. And yet these few moments were the most productive of his whole life.

[10 : 49] You hear people who are Christians and they say, oh, as they look back over their unconverted years, the years before they knew the Lord as their Savior, they say, the years that the locusts have eaten, years that they lived under the judgment of God and they weren't bothered about pleasing God.

But, oh, now that they are living to him, now that they are living on the Bible truths, they feel that they're achieving something.

Or they're not happy with themselves. They feel they're not getting on all that well. They bemoan the sins in their hearts, of course they do. But it's because they want to please him.

They want to please the Lord. Well, do you have that productivity, that fruitful life? Well, it's because your life is founded on the Word of God.

If you ignore the Word, if you don't use your Bible, then your life will not be productive to the glory of God. the second thing that comes into this man's happiness as he delights in the law of God is that he has perseverance.

[12 : 10] Perseverance in the will of God. Remember the tree. There's the tree planted by the rivers of water and the roots are going right down under the stream.

and the stream is feeding that tree. The sun comes and the sun's hot and the sun begins to be down upon the tree and in the heat of the trial, what happens to that tree?

It keeps on going. It keeps on living. It perseveres. It's under the heat. It's under the stream.

It's crushed by pressure. But it keeps on living. Keeps on growing. Keeps on going. Well, you see, that's what happens to the Christian.

When he has his roots going down into the Bible and he then goes into a time of difficulty in his life, perhaps bereavement or ill health or losing your job or some criticism from your friends or whatever.

[13 : 23] Some people buckle under but not the Christian. The Christian keeps on going. Why? Because he is finding comfort, strength in the Word of God.

Do you know this? there is never a situation in which you or I will be in when the Word of God will be useless for us.

There will never come such a situation into the life of anyone when you can say there is no point in opening my Bible.

The Word of God is always relevant for your situation. You know, the Christian, I believe, will understand this because surely by definition what is true of every Christian here is that they want to be holy.

Well, do you know what James Parker once wrote? He said, those who cope best with the pressures and difficulties of life are those whose life's quest is to be holy.

[14 : 53] Do you understand that? You see, when you face pressures and difficulties and you're wanting to be holy, you'll say, my Father in heaven sent this trial into my experience so that I will be made holy.

Whereas, if you're not wanting to be holy, but just to live a life with your own comfort to your own pleasing, to reach your own grades and your own marks, then you'll say, I don't like this trial.

Why has he brought this into my life? I don't need it. But the person who sees his own sinfulness and who wants to be made holy and more pure, he'll say, I need it.

I need it. Well, where does such teaching come from? From the scripture. Because the person, you see, who's grounded in scripture will persevere in trial.

Because the scripture abounds with people and their experiences of having to learn from their trials. Perseverance.

[16 : 20] The third thing that contributes to the happiness of this man is prosperity, success.

In verse 3 it says, whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Isn't that strange? You probably think that these words are the biggest lie written in scripture.

Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. prosper. All that he does shall prosper. He shall have success in everything he puts his hand to.

But you might say, well, I know a Christian and he started a business. He got a loan from the bank and he went out there and he worked hard, he employed people and he did a big job for somebody and they refused to pay him the bill and he went bankrupt.

So how can you say that a Christian prosper in everything that he begins? You might say that you know of a Christian who have a bereavement in their families, perhaps a young child, perhaps you know a Christian and they're very old themselves in their bodies and their minds.

[17 : 41] How can you say that all that they do shall prosper? On the other hand, you might say that you know plenty of people who are confirmed atheists.

No time for church, no time for the Bible. They resent our teaching in school and they're all for the liberal attitudes of the world today. And yet they're prospering.

Children will understand this. You know you get these little jars, plastic jars, and you get a little spoon with a hole in it and you dip it into the jar.

It's got bubbles in it. And then you blow into the bubbles and you get this beautiful bubble. If you're really very gentle in the way you blow, you'll get a beautiful bubble.

And you know what you think? It's great. You've got great success. And you see it coming down and you're trying to keep it up. But sooner or later, gravity will bring it down.

[18 : 49] And the heat of the room itself will just burst it. It looked beautiful, but it came to nothing. And you know this, the life of someone who ignores the Bible, however prosperous it might have seemed, however many businesses, however many bank accounts, however many homes, however great the reputation, however many thousands packed into their funerals, however ornate their tombstone.

As soon as they entered into the presence of God, the bubble burst. There was nothing, because without faith it is impossible to please God.

God, the Christian, the Christian on the other hand, he has a different set of ambitions, he has different goals, he wants to live to the honour and glory of God, because he knows his Bible so well, he knows how he can please his God and his heavenly Father, and he begins by putting his faith in him and then living to his glory.

He might start the business, the business might collapse, but he sees the hand of God in it and he honours God, and he says something like, Lord, I don't know why you allow this, but I'm not bitter.

Just like Robert Louis Daphne, when he was standing, watching his own little son's coffin going down to the ground, he said, Lord, I am not bitter.

[21 : 01] You know, in the world's eyes, you might say, they're not prospering. In God's eyes, that testimony of faith in God is prosperity itself, that success, when in everything you are able to give thanks.

can you do that? Because that's the greatest success that a Christian could ever have. That's the greatest prosperity in whatever trial you're found in, that you're able, perhaps with tears streaming down your face, to say, hallowed be thy name.

too many Christians today, when they become converted, they get this mad idea that Jesus is there for them, whereas the truth is, they are there for Jesus.

if you live your life thinking that Jesus is there for you, you won't be happy. But if you live your life realizing that you are there for the Lord, then it affects the way you look at everything, everything else.

Some weeks ago, perhaps some months ago, I was telling the children about a lady back home in my own area in Ness and Lewis, and I was saying that this lady was blind, been blind for 14 years, I think.

[23 : 08] Do you know, she died just nearly two weeks ago. Do you know how long she had been a Christian? She'd been a professing Christian since 1924.

72 years she was following the Lord Jesus Christ. For the last 14 years, she was blind.

Now, you might say, well, what success, what prosperity could a blind person have? love? Well, I don't think any of the Christians who visited this lady would be at a loss for words when you ask that question.

They would say to you, just go in and see her. Go in and see the smile. Her eyes are open, she doesn't see you, but she smiles.

And she knows the Lord, and she talks about Jesus. She prays, and her prayers are being answered, I believe, even now.

[24 : 20] There is someone, you see, who loved the Lord, who had faith in God, and who was successful.

All that she did shall prosper. So these are the three things productivity, perseverance, prosperity, a fruitful life to the glory of God, perseverance in the will of God, success in her labors for God.

all these are part of the blessedness, the happiness of the man or woman whose roots are in the law of God.

Question though, how, how can we gain this delight in the law of the word? How can we really gain this true happiness?

well, you notice what it said in verse 2, his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law does he meditate day and night.

[25 : 42] There are Christians, and we fear that we ourselves are among them as much as any. There are Christians, and if they are honest with themselves, they do not delight in the law of the Lord.

they don't find us through in scripture. They are not stimulated by the Bible.

The Bible is not the central point of their life. Oh, they have the Bible, they carry it to church, they lay it out in the pew, they'll carry it home, they'll read it before bed, they might read it in the morning, they might even teach it to their children, but do they delight in it themselves?

I don't think it's possible to delight in the law of the Lord unless you meditate on the law of the Lord.

and that takes a while. Let's be practical. If you read a chapter from the Bible at night, with your eyelids drooping down, your body weary from the day's work, and you hold in the Bible and it crashes down onto the blanket, and then you realise you might as well just close it and go off to sleep.

[27 : 23] You could say next day will I write my Bible before I went to bed last night. Yes, but you never meditated on it. You read it, but you never thought about it.

You read it, but you never thought and did it. read it. The Bible is a delight. When you read it, think in it, ponder it, and say, what relevance does this have for my own life?

For example, we're reading at the moment in Jeremiah. Jeremiah. So when we read Jeremiah, Jeremiah is very much a prophet of judgment.

He's saying to the people of Israel, to the nation of Judah, he says, you have forsaken the law, you have forsaken God, you are following other gods, if you do not turn back to him, God is going to bring the army of Babylon against you.

Now all the people are saying, no, it's not going to happen. Jeremiah, be quiet, you're weakening the hands of the people. It's not going to happen, we've got the temple, we've got our churches, we've got the back, it's not going to happen.

[28 : 48] Jeremiah says it's going to happen. And it happened. Reading this morning, the army of Nebuchad Nebuchad came in and just destroyed Jerusalem.

Now you think, well, that's what we read. Now let's meditate on it. Today we're living in a world and God is not pleased with the world, is he?

God is not pleased when life has been taken away from young ones. God is not pleased when there's so much immorality, so much divorce.

God is not pleased when there's so much hypocrisy and so on. And God has promised he will judge the world. But he's told us to go out with the gospel and to proclaim Jesus as the only way of salvation.

And we think, yes. But then we think, well, when we go out into the world, nobody seems to believe our message. Nobody seems to change. We preach the sermons, we say to ourselves, but nobody seems to pay any heed.

[30 : 05] Nobody in you comes to the prayer meeting. Nobody in you seems to be starting to pray. Nobody seems to be coming up to ask any questions. Nobody seems to be following the months asking about their soul salvation.

Nothing seems to be happening. So you're living and you know the judgment's going to come. It's going to come, you say to yourself. What shall we do? Do we stop and do we start preaching smooth things, easy things, people like?

Jeremiah was tempted and he said, no, I won't do that. See, by meditating on that portion of scripture, you're beginning to delight in the law of the Lord.

Could be reading as well then, in 1 Samuel chapter 1, Hannah, childless, she wants a baby, she wants a boy, so that she can offer that boy to the servants of the Lord.

And she gained Samuel from the Lord, and as soon as Samuel was weaned, probably a little bit older than that, then she took him up to Shiloh and left him with Eli, the old priest.

[31 : 27] Well, you read it, you think, well, let's meditate on that. Are the children the Lord has given us in the church gifts from the Lord?

Yes, they are. What do we want these children to do? We want them to be given to the Lord. Lord? So we offer them to the Lord in prayer, even as we meditate on that portion of scripture.

Might be reading in Romans 1. Paul there describes himself as a servant of God. Well, we read it and we say, yes, how much of a servant am I?

We read that Paul says he set apart for the gospel of God. We meditate and we say, well, is that the center of my life, to live for the gospel of God?

Then you read about Jesus Christ, that he was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and you begin to think in the person of Christ. Yes, he was a man, he was of the seed of David, a king, but he was also the son of God.

[32 : 43] son of God with power. And you begin to think, you see. Now, you read the Bible, but then you meditate on the Bible.

Let's apply very briefly. If you're not a Christian this morning, if you're not a converted person, you've so often been asked by the minister, by your friends and family, to read the Bible.

You say, I have read the Bible, and I'm still not converted. Well, can I ask you to read it and think about it.

Don't just read it and drop off to sleep. Read it and think about it. Read passages that talk about sin, and be honest and say, does this really apply to me?

Am I really the kind of person that the Bible describes as a sinner? Don't read the passages about Christ being offered as a Savior.

[33 : 55] Read it and say, does this really apply to me? What does the Lord want from me? He wants faith. Believe in the one whom God has sent.

Think about it. Don't just read it and close it. Read it and meditate on it. Those of you who are Christians and you're wanting to grow as Christians, and we need people who are growing as Christians, we can talk about that lady, 72 years professing the faith, and a beautiful aura of holiness in her life.

She's gone. Who's to follow her? We can see godly people being taken from our own congregation, but who's going to take their place?

People like yourselves, who read the Bible, meditate on it, think on it, apply it in your life.

That's why Joshua, and we read Joshua 1 today, Joshua was to take the place of Moses. He was to be a man of immense activity.

[35 : 23] Joshua was to be the leader, he was going to lead the army of Israel against the cities of Canaan. A man of activity, activity, but he was told God would be with him if he was obedient to the word.

And he was expected, remember, to read that same Bible. He would only have had a few verses of it, a few chapters of it, compared to what you and I have today.

But remember what is written there in the scripture. The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have success. And are you not the same?

Do you want to do great things for the Lord? Do you want to be greatly used of the Lord? Then get to know your Bible. Read it, think on it.

[36 : 42] Think in it day and night if you have to. And then live it, and God will be with us as a church again.

Let us pray. Lord, our sovereign God, we would pray that the Holy Spirit would bless to us that teaching from your own Holy Scripture, enable us, Lord, to be like the Lord Jesus himself, who knew his Scripture so well on earth, who was able to quote it so freely, who was able to apply it to his own life and to the lives of others.

He lived it, he breathed it. Enable us, Lord, to love it the same way that he did. Grant, Lord, that the word of God might a free caution be glorified among us today.

We ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.