

THE SOURCE, SYMBOL AND SECURITY OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Psalm 1

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, August 1 2010, by Rev Bobby Lee at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

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Introduction:

Psalm 1 talks about happiness and what is needed for happiness. It starts off with the word “blessed.” That word “**blessed**” is so bland in the English language. The Hebrew word is much more descriptive, especially with its plural ending. A workable translation is “**Oh, the happiness, many times over**”.

There are two words in the Hebrew language for “bless.” The first word speaks of God’s blessing. The second word, the word used by Psalm 1, speaks of what man does to bless himself, of how you can be a blessing to yourself and others. So, what can you and I do to be a blessing?

There are two objectives in studying this Psalm.

- a) To examine the blessedness of the righteous, in stark contrast to the desperation of the wicked
- b) To note both the negative and positive elements that lead to the truly happy life

1. The Source of Spiritual Blessing

Why does the psalmist begin, “**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**”?

The contrast he wants to draw is **not wickedness versus righteousness**. The contrast he wants to draw is **being influenced from one place versus being influenced from another place**. Being shaped in one way versus being shaped in another way. Being shaped in our thinking and feeling by the wicked, the sinner, and the scoffer versus being shaped by the law of the Lord—the instruction of the Lord found in the Psalms.

Is the following statement true: “**Nobody walks in the way of the wicked out of duty. Nobody stands in the way of sinners out of duty. Nobody sits in the seat of scoffers out of duty. We walk and stand and sit there because we want to.**”? If it is true why do we find ourselves walking in the way of the ungodly?

We want to follow them because we have been watching them so intently that what they do is now attractive. We have meditated on them (without calling it that). And we now delight in them. That is how worldliness happens.

That’s why the contrast in verse 2 refers not to duty and obedience, but to delight and meditation. The point is that the only hope against the pleasures of the world is the pleasures of the Word. And just like the pleasures of the world are awakened by looking at them long enough, so the pleasures of the Word are awakened in the regenerate soul by looking at them long enough—day and night.

Meditate day and night on the instruction of God in the Psalms and delight will be awakened. That is what the Psalms are designed to do: inform your thinking in a way that delights your heart. Meditating day and night leads to delighting which frees us from the pleasures of the wicked, the sinner, and the scoffer.

Study Question:

How do we “meditate” on the Word together? In what ways do we take delight in the study of the Bible?

2. The Symbol of Spiritual Blessings

The psalmist wants us to see that the life of the godly is like a tree bearing fruit, not like a labourer picking fruit. Here’s the picture of the Christian life: There are streams of water. This is the life of God flowing through the word of God, the Psalms. You are planted there by God’s sovereign grace. Your roots reach the water of life that makes your leaves green during the drought and makes you fruitful when others are barren. This not a wild tree, but “**a tree that is planted**” chosen, considered as property, cultivated and secured from the last terrible uprooting, for “**every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up:**” Matt. 15:13

The root system is not mechanical or automatic. The roots work by meditation, that is, by giving attention and thought to the Psalms. Meditation on the Psalms is the way the roots touch the water. The result is delight, spiritual pleasure in what we see of God and man and life. And from this delight comes all kinds of changed attitudes and behaviors.

The battle to avoid the counsel of the wicked and the way of the sinner and the seat of the scoffer—the battle to be righteous and holy and humble—is a fight that is won by delight. And that delight is nourished through meditating on God’s instruction in the Psalms day and night.

If you delight in the Word of God and meditate on it day and night your leaf does not wither. The point here is that the hot winds are blowing and the rain is not falling and all the other trees that are not planted by streams are withering and dying, but in spite of all the heat and drought, your leaf remains green, because delighting in the Word of God and meditating on it day and night is like being planted by a stream. The happiness of this person is durable.

The person who delights in the Word of God and meditates on it day and night speaks like the prophet in Habakkuk 3:17-18: *“Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.”*

Study questions:

What are we rooted in? How does studying God’s Word together help us to be like trees providing fruit or leaves for others?

3. The Security of Spiritual Blessings

But now that leads to the question raised by the third illustration of blessing and happiness in verse 3. **“And in whatever he does, he prospers.”** Really? What does this mean? Does it mean that, if you delight in the Word of God and meditate enough, your business will make a big profit and your health will always be good and there will be no food shortages or car accidents or violence against your house?

Well, there are some reasons to believe that such a person will have some of those blessings. For example, when you delight in God’s Word instead of walking in the counsel of the wicked and standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of scoffers, you will be doing the kinds of things that God approves of, and he is likely to bless what he approves. And when you are delighting in the Word of God, you are trusting it, and we know God works for those who trust him and wait for him (Isaiah 64:4; 2 Chronicles 16:9).

But there are reasons to believe that God does not always spare his most faithful people. There are many passages of Scripture that tell us **“many are the afflictions of the righteous”** (Psalm 34:19; cf. Acts 14:22). Psalm 73 expresses the reality that often the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper.

When this Psalm ponders the value of being wicked or of delighting in the Word of God, it measures the value finally by what happens at the judgment. There may be some prosperity in this life for the wicked, but in the end they will be swept away like chaff, but those who have delighted in the Word of God will go on flourishing because God sets his eye and favor on them. He “knows” their way.

“The Lord knows the way of the righteous.” He is constantly looking on their way, and though it may be often in mist and darkness, yet the Lord knows it. **“He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”** Job 23:10

But the man who delights in God’s Word, being taught by it, brings forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial, and holy joy in the hour of prosperity. Fruitfulness is an essential quality of a gracious man, and that fruitfulness should be seasonable.

Study Questions:

Are we delighting in God’s Word? Are we bearing spiritual fruit? And are we using the spiritual fruit that God has given us to minister to others?