

Psalm 1 – The Blessed Person

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Well today we are looking at Psalm chapter 1 as we take a 1 week break before we begin a short series in Luke's gospel next week.

#blessed

And as we come to look at Psalm 1 today, I want ask you: What is the good life?

What are the key ingredients to having the good life and being happy?

Now I think that's a question which everyone wants the answer to and is on a quest to find. No matter who you are, where you're from, or how old you are, having a good life is something we all want. We all desire to have the good life.

And this question of what the good life is, has led to many different answers from many different people. If you take for example, the world of social media, there are many answers put forward as to what the good life is.

If you're a user of social media then you may have come across the hashtag "blessed". Now this was much bigger a few years ago. But it involves people on social media, both famous and not-so-famous, posting comments or photos and then tagging their post with the word "blessed". It's a way of telling and showing people that you're experiencing the good life.

Whether it's the photo of you with your family or good friends, a picture of you on holidays somewhere, a photo of a delightful meal that you're about to eat, or a life success that you've had. All tagged with the word 'blessed' – telling people that you are experiencing the good life. And even in the way we talk to others we reflect what we think the good life is. I know last week when someone asked me about a recent trip down the south coast I said that we were blessed with some great weather! That having great weather is the mark of the good life. Maybe right now you're on holidays tuning into church with a nice coastal view or you might be out in the peaceful countryside. Is that the measure of the good life?

So what is the good life? How do you have the good life?

Well to answer that question, let's turn to God's Word and listen to what He says. As we read Psalm 1, let's listen to what our loving Heavenly Father says to us, especially as we seek a life that is pleasing to Him.

Pray + Read Passage

So if you have a Bible, please have it open to Psalm 1.

But first let me pray before we read Psalm 1 together.

Pray.

Psalm 1 (pg 463)

¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers. 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. ⁶ For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

The Negative: A Blessed Person Does Not... (v. 1)

Well as we seek to find out what the good life is, the psalmist firstly tells us what the good life is **not**. We are given the negative. We are shown what the good life according to God is **not**.

Did you see in verse 1 that the good life involves not participating with the wicked. That the blessed person, the one who wants to live the good and happy life, **doesn't** act in line with the wicked – their actions are not like those who are wicked. The blessed person doesn't walk, doesn't stand, doesn't sit among the wicked. They don't participate in the way of the wicked.

There's a well-known saying that, "Bad company corrupts good morals". And here the blessed person is one who does not involve themselves with the wicked and sinners. They are different. And the psalmist wants to stress from the beginning of this book, and this psalm, that the person who wants to live the good life does not get tangled up in the way of the wicked and sinners. This echoes what we looked at last week at the end of 2 Corinthians chapter 6. That God's people don't share fellowship with unbelievers. It doesn't mean that we don't talk to and interact with unbelievers, but as God's people we don't share in that way of life. We are to be different, or as the Bible repeatedly says, God's people are to be holy – distinct.

And this might seem rather obvious. That as Christians, God has saved us through His Son to live differently. That we walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. That we live differently to the world. But we can so easily participate in the way of the wicked. We can so easily and subtly become selfish and impatient with others and think that's ok. We see others living that way and think it is alright to do the same.

And during this season we are in, there is one area that I think we Christians can easily walk in the way of the wicked and join in the crowd of mockers. And that's in how we speak about and

relate to our leaders and those in authority. As people's frustrations surface with the way life is now, it can be easy for us as God's people to be swept up and join in with condemning and criticising our leaders.

But as Christians, as those who are blessed, we are called to pray for our leaders and submit to them, rather than joining in with the wicked.

This is just one area where we need to be careful that we don't end up participating in the actions of the wicked.

The Positive: A Blessed Person... (vv. 2-3)

So we have the negative – that the blessed person does not participate in the way of the wicked. But the psalmist then gives us a contrast. We are shown the positive. Rather than participating with the wicked, we see in verse 2 that the blessed person delights in and meditates on God's law. Rather than seeking the counsel of the wicked, the blessed person seeks God's counsel.

The blessed person is guided by God and His Word and so the good life is seen in a love of God's law. While the wicked and the sinful are guided by their own desires and walk according to their own will, the blessed person walks by God's law. They are not a law unto themselves but rather they submit themselves to God's law.

And this is one of the key differences between the blessed person and the wicked person. The blessed person sees themselves as someone under God's loving rule and lives according to God's good word. They delight in God's law because they know the God who gives this law. They see that God's Word and His law and His ways are good. That God's words of instruction are the loving and guiding words of a Father to their child. The psalmist delights in God's law because He intimately knows the good and loving God who gives this law. And we've caught a glimpse of this already today in our readings from Psalm 119.

And that's why the blessed person meditates on God's law day and night. They are so devoted to hearing from God and being guided by Him, because they trust Him.

Now when we read that the blessed person meditates on God's law day and night, it is so easy to feel guilty because you don't measure up. And you could conclude that I just need to meditate on God's Word more regularly. And that's not a bad thing to do. It's helpful to reflect on what stops us from meditating on God's word – whether that be distractions like the endless entertainment options we have – especially online, or your phone or computer buzzing with notifications for

you to see what's happening in the world. There are many things that stop us from meditating on God's word.

But more importantly the psalmist is quite deliberate here in his order. He is saying that the blessed person delights in God and his law, and that leads them to meditate on it day and night. It's a matter of the heart and the will, and our desires.

So meditating on God's law isn't done out of obligation or guilt, but out of delight for the God who so generously loves you. As Christians we only need to look at God sending His own son for us to see his goodness to us and how He has our best interests at heart. That's why we take great delight in Him, and that's why we hunger and thirst for his words to us.

But what often stops us from delighting in God and His law is that we have such a small picture of what the good life is. So often we set the bar too low when it comes to what we think the good life is. We set the ultimate in things that are temporary and fading. Whether it's family and friends, holidays and leisure, career and achievement, good food and thrilling experiences. But the psalmist corrects our narrow view of the good life by showing us that the good life is seen in mediating and delighting in God's law. In verse 3 the psalmist says that the blessed person is: *...like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers*

It's a picture of the truly good life. The person who has ultimate and eternal prosperity. The person who bears fruit. The person whose life is guided and shaped by God's word. That is the good life!

If you've been a Christian for a while, it's can be easy to see reading the Bible as 'just reading the Bible' or a duty. But the psalmist wants us to see the importance of drinking in and feeding on God's word. In verse 1 the blessed person doesn't participate in the way of the wicked because in verse 2 they are anchored in God's word and can discern God's way. The good life is found in listening to God's voice rather than the voices of others: walking obediently and faithfully to God rather than walking in the way of the wicked.

The psalmist even says there in verse 3 that for the blessed person who delights in God's law, "whatever they do prospers"!

Now, that's a massive claim to make. It sounds a bit too good to be true. Because if it is, that really is the good life!

So what does the psalmist mean when he talks about prospering?

Well the good life and true prosperity is seen in light of eternity and where you stand before God. I'll say that again: the good life and true prosperity is seen in light of eternity and where you stand before God.

The Wicked Person (vv. 4-5)

And the psalmist shows this by drawing us back to the wicked person and their fate. While the blessed person prospers, we see that not everyone prospers and succeeds. In contrast to the blessed person who is like a tree that bears fruit and does not wither, the wicked, in verse 4, are like chaff that the wind blows away.

You could not get a more contrasting picture of the difference between the blessed and the wicked person. One is a deep-rooted tree which bears fruit and is full of life. The other is a lifeless piece of waste that just vanishes.

And so the psalmist is quite emphatic about the outcome of these two group of people. While the blessed person will prosper, *Not so the wicked!*

So the good life is judged by the context of eternity and what will really last in the end. And so God's judgment is brought into focus by the psalmist. As verse 5 says:

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

At the judgment seat of God, the wicked will be brought to their knees. They will not join in the assembly of God's people in eternity. But the righteous and blessed person will prosper and enjoy the fellowship of being with God and His people.

That is the context for knowing what is ultimately good and what will ultimately prosper. True prosperity is seen in what will last into eternity and where you stand before God. True prosperity is about being counted among the righteous and participating with God's people into eternity. And so that is the true prosperity gospel.

The Two Paths (v. 6)

And with eternity in mind, the psalmist points to the two paths that people can walk along. There are two types of people: the blessed and the wicked. The righteous and the sinner. And they both walk along two different paths. One path is participating with the wicked, while the other path

leads to participating with God and His people into eternity. One is a path with God's presence and guidance and the other is a path leading to destruction.

And the psalmist here offers both a word of assurance and a word of warning.

For the righteous there is an assurance in verse 6 that as they walk along the path of righteousness according to God's law, He is watching over them. God does not abandon his people but He is with them every step of the way.

And that is an enormous comfort for the blessed person because we know that on the road to eternal prosperity it is not always easy and the path is far from smooth. The Bible never promises that once you turn to Christ that everything will be smooth sailing. If anything it promises the opposite! And this psalm highlights the fact that along the way, God's people will encounter the wicked, the sinners and mockers, and not to mention the imperfections which we all experience in a world tainted by sin – which as an aside, makes a complete mockery of the prosperity teaching movement which says that you will have health and wealth and success in this life. The road is bumpy.

But along the way, God is with his people. He watches over them. He watches over you every step of the way. And He is not silent either. He gives us His word which guides us.

And there is also a warning from the psalmist. The warning in the last line of the psalm is not to get caught up in the way of the wicked. That the good life is **definitely not** found in walking along the path of the wicked – the path leading to destruction.

One Christian writer has said that this psalm acts as the gatekeeper for anyone who reads this book. It makes you ask where you stand. Are you amongst the righteous or with wicked?

There are two paths with two different ends.

The Blessed One (Eph. 1:3–14)

So do you want the good life? Do you want to be blessed?

Well how can you have the good life? How can you be blessed?

Well in this Psalm we see that being blessed is about listening to God's Word. Not just listening but meditating on it – thinking about what God says and how that should guide our path. That is how you can have the good life into eternity.

But you see, it doesn't take long to realise that we fail at that.

If you look back to the start of this psalm, those words in verse 1 actually describe you and me.

How often do we walk in the way of the wicked? How often do we take the path of sinners? How often do we sit in the company of mockers and join in with them?

We are all among the wicked and so we don't naturally live the blessed and good life.

And the only way that we can live the good life and be blessed is because of the One who lived the perfect life: the Lord Jesus. The blessed One.

And it's only through Jesus that we are blessed and have the good life. In the opening of Paul's letter to the Ephesians he spells out that it is in Christ that we have every spiritual blessing. We aren't blessed by pulling our socks up or trying harder. Even good company does not automatically result in good morals.

No, we are blessed through the blessed One. Jesus was unswervingly faithful to God. He did not corrupt himself by walking in the ways of the wicked. When he was faced with the temptation to participate with the wicked, Jesus entrusted himself to His Heavenly Father and delighted in God's law. He lived perfectly. He was the truly blessed one who fulfilled God's law.

But not only is he the example of what it looks like to live the good life. Jesus makes it possible. Through his death for our wickedness and sin, we can live the good life and stand in the assembly of the righteous.

So while we quite rightly delight in God's law and meditate on it, we must also delight in Jesus – our Saviour.

So let's delight in the Lord Jesus, the one whose power is at work in us so that we are blessed and can live the good life.

Let's Pray.