

The Man That Is Blessed (Preparatory, Confession Faith)

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We turn in the word of God to Psalm 1. Psalm 1. The text for the sermon will be the first three verses. This is the word of the Lord.

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. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

There ends our reading of God's inspired word. May he add his blessing to it.

Beloved congregation in the Lord Jesus Christ, God ordained that the scriptures should be written and moved holy Men of God to speak and afterwards to write them. He ordained that this should be placed first in a prominent place amongst the 150 Psalms, Psalm 1 and these 6 verses would have this place. In this position, Psalm 1 serves as the gateway, the gateway through which one passes to come into all the other beauty and all the beauty and the riches of all the other Psalms, all the truth, the warnings, the blessings and admonitions of the rest of the Psalms. And by itself, it's not something we simply pass through, but it's a beautiful porch, it's been described as. I don't recall at the moment which commentator described it this way, but it's the front porch of all the Psalms and from it we learn about what we can expect in all of the other songs and prayers of God's people that are inspired for us we. We can look through this Psalm, Psalm 1, and we can understand the rest of the Psalms properly. It foreshadows the blessedness that's in store for the righteous, it warns the wicked of the destruction that is coming to them, and it establishes God's sovereignty through it all.

The main feature of Psalm 1 that's so important for all the rest of the Psalms is that it makes a clear divide between two groups of people. There are the godly and the ungodly,

the righteous and the wicked, and unless one understands that a man is one or the other and that all of the blessedness of salvation and of God's covenant is only reserved and given to the righteous, then you cannot properly understand the Psalms. And this text will serve us well for our double occasion of confession of faith of these two young men, and of our preparation for the Lord's Supper. It will serve us well and serve you young men well because the Psalm is the identification of that man that is blessed, and the confession that you have made is a confession that you are the man that is blessed, that you are planted like a tree by the rivers of water and that your delight is in the law of the Lord, and that you want no part with the ways of the ungodly and to encourage you in that identification and encourage you as you live according to this delight in the law of the Lord. And for all of us, the same can be said in our confession, but also as we look forward to the Lord's Supper next week.

The identification of the man that is blessed leads us to be men and women who are worthy partakers of the Lord's Supper, and while I believe that all three elements of self-examination can be implied here in these three verses, especially in that delight in the law. When we delight in the law, we will abhor our sinful flesh. When we delight in the law, we delight in Jesus Christ who fulfilled that law. And when we delight in the law, it's especially the third element of self-examination that's on the foreground for us this evening, this is the life of the blessed man, this is the life that the worthy partaker resolves to live, not partaking with the ungodly in their counsel or their way or their reproach but delighting only in that which the law declares to be good and acceptable unto our God.

Let's consider then the man that is blessed. First, his antithetical life; second, his constant delight; and third, his great blessedness. The blessed man cannot be identified unless you see him in contrast to the ungodly, and although the objective is to identify the man that is blessed and encourage him in his godly walk, the wicked here are plainly identified and described as well. They have three names: they are ungodly, sinners, and scornful. All of those terms are found in verse 1. The ungodly, that they are ungodly means that they behave wickedly and they are known not only by an occasional departure from the law, but that their delight is always in working contrary to God's law. Their lifestyle is a lifestyle of gleeful enmity with God. What they know of God they hold in unrighteousness. What they have heard of his commandments they despise, reject and mock. And in heart, soul, mind and strength they don't even show the faintest inclination toward that which God requires, and that which resembles or reflects God's nature. They are ungodly. These same men are called sinners and that term emphasizes that their wicked character is of great consequence, because not only are they unlike God but they have provoked God in that they have fallen short of what he has required of them, and they have transgressed the law that forbids their wicked activities. They therefore incur a deadly guilt and are liable to receive the punishment of sinners from the God of perfect holiness and justice. They are ungodly sinners, and they are also the scornful. They scorn and scoff at God, at God's truth, at God's covenant, at God's Christ, and they scorn and scoff at God's people. They are mockers. They taunt God's people. They take great delight in making life difficult for God's people and try their utmost, like the devil himself, to turn that which is good into evil and that which is evil into what is good.

The blessed man lives in a world filled with these ungodly sinful scorners but he rejects it. That's his antithetical life. He does not walk in their counsel, he does not stand in their way and he does not sit in their seat. The wicked are so hardened in their sins that they are never content just to go their own way, they must take their own words and their own ideas and their own imaginations and they invent a vain thing that they then cast with their words at all those who think to themselves that they will follow the ways of God. They try to influence God's people with their wicked counsel and advice and all their advice is devilish because it comes out of a heart that is totally enslaved to Satan, like we are by nature, and they try to make their counsel appear to be pleasing and acceptable, like the devil who calls attention to the good appearance of the forbidden fruit, but the Godly man does not walk in that counsel. He does not. He does not take heed to their words. He rejects even the suggestion that he should walk in their way.

He does not stand in the way of sinners. This is another way in which the ungodly try to subvert the godly, to take them away from the way of righteousness. They make their lifestyle to appear very good and attractive. So if I cannot stand over here in the ungodly way and say, "Come over here! Come follow me! Do that which is pleasing in your eyes. You don't need to torture yourself with righteousness. Who says it is righteous anyway?" There is their wicked counsel. Besides that, the ungodly stand in the way, the way of sinners, and they make it appear, without their words even, to be very attractive. "This is the way that you can go," that's the testimony of their way of life.

You'll never find happier men, it seems, from outward appearances than the ungodly in the way of their own delight. Their way is easy. They have lots of vices to unburden themselves. And they don't ever have to deny themselves either. What a pleasant way, the way of sinners, but the blessed man, the godly man, rejects it. He sees through the evil of their vices and their sinful pleasures, and he will not stand in the way of sinners. Neither does the godly man sit in the seat of the scornful. While they try to entice with their words, they try to entice with their own walk and make it seem very pleasurable and attractive, but when all else fails, the ungodly show who they really are and their real attitude towards the godly and they sit in the seat where they can scorn and mock and taunt and persecute those who follow after God and his law. This is their most aggressive and their least hypocritical way in which they try to entice sinners. They try to influence by inflicting pain and embarrassment and shame. They want the righteous to forsake their way, and they will hurt them to do so.

Today we can see all of these efforts of ungodly sinners toward us and toward our children. They bombard us with their ideas, their plans, their arguments and their agendas. They make a great show of their so-called freedom and highlight all the temporary pleasures that they have as they walk in the way of their own choosing. And in due time, they do and they have and they will turn violent, especially in their words against God and his truth and in their hateful labels of God's people. They place a black mark on all those who will not join them in their rejection of God and his law, and they mock them and scoff at them. The blessed man stands firm in his rejection of the ungodly and their way, and he's willing even to bear their reproach. He understands their evil

motives and the consequences of walking with them. He rejects their lifestyle, like Moses choosing rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, he chooses to bear the reproach of being numbered with God's people. And instead of being of scorning in their seat, he's willing to be scorned by them. He separates himself from the ungodly and all of their words and ways. Separation, that's the antithesis.

Young people, you young men in particular, you have been taught the importance of living an antithetical life, and in word and deed you have been shown what that means and you know now in the age of maturity the difficulty and what is required of us in denying ourselves day by day when all the world is enticing us, attracting us and attacking us to be holy as our God is holy. That's the vow that you've made. That's the vow that we've made and Psalm 1:1 is instructive for us, reminding us that this is the calling of God's people. It's not the option of God's people. It's not the inevitability of God's people. This is our calling. This is the way we should walk, and in this way of godliness we stand and we reject all that is abhorrent to the truth. But Psalm 1:1, while it instructs us by implication, it also encourages us. As difficult as it is, beloved congregation, as painful to our flesh to put off the old man, put off the old man that's so attracted to everything the world throws at us, it's painful but it's blessed. The man that is blessed lives a life in which he's always rejecting a temptation of the world, always rejecting an enticement of Satan, always enduring the reproach of the world and not joining them. There's happiness in being separate from the world.

Even as I consider that they's so much trouble that our young people endure and so many difficulties and trials and so much anxiety and so much grief, don't neglect this instruction of the word and this encouragement of the word, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the ways of the ungodly." Turn away from them. Have no part in them. You know that they'll come to destruction. Live an antithetical life. Live an antithetical life in every aspect of your life. Where is your attention? Where are your relationships? What is your heart's desire? What do you allow into your life? What influences you, young people and congregation? What influences you? Well, I'll tell you what influences you: your company and your communication with those around you and the things around you. Let it be godly communication and not evil communication that corrupts.

The antithesis is that life of holiness, which is separation from sin and wickedness and opposition to it, but it also has a positive element and that positive element comes out in now the second verse of the text and in the second point of the sermon: his constant delight. Really, we're continuing the antithesis, but now we're not only looking at the negative, we're bringing in the positive. We're rejecting this one way and we're devoting ourselves unto God through the law of the Lord.

The constant delight of the blessed man is in the law of Jehovah. These are God's counsels. The law of Jehovah is God's counsels. They are so beautiful and holy and delightful, and they are always good. The law of the Lord marks out God's way. God's way for our heart and for our soul and for our mind and our strength. God's way in relationship to God himself, and in relationship to our neighbors. And the law of the Lord, marks out that which is true and that we are called to believe, even when the world

scoffs and scorns. It also includes that which the world hates and that we believe and embrace, and at the heart of what the world hates and scoffs and scorns at is Christ himself who is revealed in the law of Jehovah, covenant God.

We delight in the law of Jehovah, and that must be understood broadly, not merely as the 10 Commandments. If we limit the law of Jehovah in Psalm 1 to the 10 Commandments, we do so unnecessarily and inappropriately because the scriptures in the Old Testament especially view the law of God broadly as including all of the revelation of God and his will concerning our redemption and our life in covenant with him. Law here, the broad meaning is instruction, the instruction or the counsel of God. It includes the promises of the law. I think law in terms of the law of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and think about the breadth of instruction that's contained in the law of Jehovah as written through Moses. And it's appropriate for us to take heed to those promises in those books and the blessings and the warnings and the admonitions, and it does include commandments, and it does include the 10 Commandments, and it's appropriate for us even to put those on the foreground. Even if we have all of the scriptures in mind, particularly in this Psalm, the Old Testament scriptures, we can then bring the commandments to the foreground because that is the instruction of Jehovah that pertains most directly to our heart and life, and the way of our life and our calling in our life. The rest of the word can be viewed as a commentary on those commandments, explaining it, verifying it, showing us the goodness and necessity of it. From a certain point of view, there's nothing new revealed in the commandments themselves because if we know God and we know his nature, then we know the way he would have us to go, but God is merciful to us and he desires to speak clearly to us, and so he makes plain, "Thou shalt not. Thou shalt. This is the way that you should go." And it is an antithetical way.

The man of God knows this law of Jehovah and he delights in it. This is probably the strongest possible word that could be used. He does not merely agree with it, he does not only half-heartedly follow the law, he does not only externally govern himself by the law, then we rule out delight of the heart. It begins in the heart. In his heart he delights in the law of Jehovah. He loves it and he rejoices in all the truth revealed in that divine instruction of his covenant God, the God who changes not, the God who is almighty and sovereign over the relationship, the blessed relationship he has established with us. And the man of God finds true and holy pleasure in knowing that way, and in obeying the commandments God has given to him. He finds great pleasure, that's delight, great pleasure in the law of God. His delight. Delight.

There are only a few examples that capture this delight that consumes the heart in other areas of our life, and I think of a bride and a groom on their wedding day, and as they see one another, and as they're joined together, the one whom they love, and as we're joined together and we're in their fellowship in that awesome, mysterious, wonderful way, our hearts are full of delight. Or what overcomes the emotions positively of parents at the sight of the child whom they have longed for, whom they have prayed for, who has now been delivered safely, and is in good health, and is in their arms, and they're filled with delight. We love that child and we hold it dear. It's a strong feeling. It's so strong that it

powerfully drives away any other sorrows or griefs and any hesitation that might come with embracing the law goes away because we delight in the heart of the law, and we delight in the God who gave that law, and we delight in the Christ who fulfills that law for us, and who makes this, then, a perfect law of liberty. And having such a strong feeling, such a great delight in the law, then we can't get enough of it.

The blessed man can't get enough of it. "In his law doth he meditate day and night." Constant meditation all day, day and night, every day the word of God is on his mind and in his heart hidden away. He meditates on it. He thinks about it. He thinks about the law and what God requires in the law, and even in that word "meditation" there is some instruction for the manner of meditating because that word indicates something of an utterance. When we meditate on the law, we don't just open the Bible and open it up and give it a scan and think, "Well, now I've done my reading. Now it's time to do my prayer and then I'm done with my devotions." That's not the way the blessed man interacts with the word. The blessed man delights in the word. He makes it the priority of his day. He eats it up, and when he meditates, he speaks it, he utters it, and whether or not one utters it out loud I don't believe is the point that I am trying to make, I'm not trying to make that point, though I personally find it helpful to read it aloud, but the pace and the carefulness that is required of us when we read it, and read it aloud so that our brain doesn't rush through, and so that our heart can speak it, and our ears can hear it, and we can turn it over and turn it around, and we can take that word and we apply it to ourselves, we can take that word and we can examine the beauty of it and see how this word reveals to us our God and our Savior and the goodness of the way it marks out, we can take that word and we can open it up and we can plumb the depths of it and we can see the riches of the wisdom of God, that he has given us this instruction, and we can see in the mirror of that word the folly of our own flesh. Now we must reject that way, and we can take that word and we can hold it up and see the wicked way and hear the wicked counsels and we can see how it does not accord here, there is nothing good in what is being proposed to me, then we can see here the scorn of the wicked against us as we embrace this word, and we know out of that word that this shall not always be, and we shall have a reward, and they shall have theirs. We meditate on it. We take that word and we examine it and we examine it, and we study it until we understand it, and as we understand it not only as it is before us but in relationship to the whole of what God has revealed to us and in relation to the life of the covenant which God has established with us in Christ and in relationship to the cross on which our salvation and our life with God is founded, all of the word of God, all of the law of God speaks to our hearts and our lives in a delightful way.

We can't get enough of it. Like the bride and the groom who have longed to embrace one another, or maybe like the thirsty man in the desert who has finally been given a spring, overflowing spring of water, we're like the shipwrecked sailor who's now cleaving to the dry land, or the lost and lonely soul who sees in the distance and runs to his former friend. What place does the word have in our life? You can look at your habits and give it a few more minutes every day, but the blessed man, his relationship to the word begins in the heart. May God grant us true delight in his word. And there is a connection between his rejection, the negative aspect of the antithesis, the rejection of the wicked in their way, and the positive aspect which is his embrace and delight of the word and his

meditation on it day and night. There's a couple of different ways we can connect these things.

The first way is the simplest and that's the way indicated by the transition word "but," the conjunction "but." It's a contrast, on the one hand not this but that, not this but that, and those two are mutually exclusive. You can't serve God and mammon. You can't serve two masters. Not this but that. You also can't do the one without the other, and if you think you've done the one and you're not doing the other, maybe you ought to consider whether you are still grappling and struggling with truly putting off the old man and his relationship to the world.

Another way that we can connect these is by way of emphasis. He does not do this, he rejects the ungodly man and his way and his counsel, and not only in contrast, but yea, yea indeed more than that his delight is in the law of the Lord. That's the translation of the Psalter, actually. In verse 1 we have a versification of verse 1 of the Psalm. It's all negative. In verse 2 yea, yea, blessed is he who makes God's law his portion and delight. It emphasizes the positive over against the negative.

There's another way that we can connect these two verses, and that's when we understand that there's a logical connection between verse 2 and verse 1, and we must keep in mind in this connection that we're viewing the law broadly. If we only have the 10 Commandments, then we have to say that the 10 Commandments, as the law of God, have no strength, to impart no strength to us for a life of godliness, and they do not point out a remedy for our sin. But when we understand the law of Jehovah very broadly as the divine instruction, which includes a revelation of Christ and him crucified, then we can see that there's a logical connection that gives us motivation and gives us a reason and gives us strength and gives us power to lead this antithetical life.

It's the law of Jehovah that equips a man with an understanding of all the appeals and temptations of wicked counsels because God's wisdom exposes them for what they are and our knowledge of God makes us to understand that there is no greater pleasure than to live unto the God who is the only good and the highest good. And it's the law of Jehovah that gives a man the motivation to deny his flesh and to depart from the way of sinners, like Joseph who knew God and knew God's law and said in his temptation, "How can I commit this great wickedness against my God?" And it's the law of Jehovah that whereby we have the power to turn away from sin, and the sinful way, because in the covenant of God that he has revealed through these scriptures, we understand that God has broken our relationship to our sinful flesh, and that the great chasm that was between us and God has been taken away by the sacrifice of the Messiah, a Messiah for the psalmist that was to come but who would surely come in whom he believed through the sacrifices that God showed him from day-to-day and week to week. And it's the law of God as it's brought to our ears and our minds and our hearts as we who are in Christ, through which God confers the grace to lead a new and holy life. He delights day by day even to read through and to digest and to contemplate those basic and fundamental commands that he's always known, sometimes, especially young people who have an enthusiasm for learning and they undertake their devotions with great excitement

thinking, "I need to learn something more today out of the word." There's nothing wrong with that, that's good, but don't overlook the fact that we need to hear admonitions of what we already know and understand so that through it we might be equipped for the day ahead, and so that through it, even if we're not given some piece of information or some tangible reminder that's going to have a direct application so that the law of the Lord and the voice of the Lord, as it were, can speak to our hearts and shape our hearts, so that regardless of what words we have read in the morning, our heart has communed with God and we are ready for a life of godliness.

The man who doesn't know and doesn't delight and doesn't meditate on the law of God really has no part in Christ, and they therefore lack understanding and the motivation and the power to separate themselves from godliness. And so even though the passage here begins with the visible, verse 1, the visible, his life, he rejects this way, verse 2, the invisible in his heart, he delights in the law and meditates on it, it's that heart life that logically is first and is the cause and through which we have the power for a life separate from godliness and a life of blessedness. A life of godliness cannot be lived without the word. It's demanded by the word and we are equipped through the word. And as a congregation ready to commit ourselves again and to renew our vow as we come to the Lord's table, that we are ready and desiring to lead a life of godliness and turn away from our former ways of sin, let us make this fundamental part of the Christian life to be part of our self-examination. You can think about your antithetical life, and you ought to, "What must I put off and what must I put away that is in my life because of the influence of the ungodly and the attraction of my flesh to it?" But dig deeper and commit ourselves to the discipline of the heart to cleave to Jesus Christ as he's made known to us in his word, and to look into his perfect law of liberty that we walk in this way, and we learn this way, and we delight in this way, delight day and night in the word.

So far, we have observed the antithetical walk of the blessed man negatively and positively, and now we come to the thrust of the text which is that this man is blessed. This man is blessed because as he follows his heart's delight which is in the word, God prospers him. God prospers him in the way that he loves. There's not a disconnect here between the blessedness of the man and his delight in the word, as though he's going through this great hardship of rejecting the wicked, and this great hardship of going and diving into the word and eating it up, but he loves that word, and he's shaped by that word, and as he goes that way marked by that word, God prospers him and his happiness is that God is prospering him in whatsoever he doeth. Now, that's not our nature to delight in the word and to go the way marked out by the word. By nature, we have itching ears for the counsels of the wicked, and by nature we have wandering feet inclined to the way of sinners, and by nature our hearts are at home and feel safe in the seat of the scornful because we're protected from their attacks. By nature the law and God's word is repugnant to us. What we have heard tonight from these young men and what confession we make together is not a natural confession. We are not blessed by nature but by grace. Through Jesus Christ we have been delivered from the power and corruption of sin. Our former bondage, our chains were broken by the death of Christ in whom we live, and our polluted hearts are cleansed and renewed by his Spirit and blood, and we are renewed so that we have a new appetite for the word, and what used to repulse us now delights us,

and the ways that we used to think were so enjoyable now fill us with remorse and godly sorrow. "I don't want that way anymore, and I don't want the grief that that way brought to me and to my household." And the commandments that we formerly looked at as a burden and were such a grief to us, now we boldly proclaim, "I love them. They're so delightful and I meditate on them day and night. They tend to my benefit, to my neighbor's benefit and to the glory of God."

The man that is blessed here is the man who is the workmanship of God, created in Jesus Christ unto Good works which he hath before ordained that he should walk in them. The essence of the blessedness of this man is that he is in Christ, and in Christ he has a new delight in the law of Jehovah, and in Christ he's been delivered from his former ways and his flesh, and in Christ he has the strength to stand firm against all the attacks and influences of the wicked. And that's not me imposing this idea of our union with Christ on the text, that is part of verse 3. It's really the heart of this text, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water."

What is the blessedness of the man? Well, we can identify the blessed man by his walk and his separation from sin, and we can learn something about the man from his delight in the law of the Lord and his meditation on it day and night, but the source of that life and the source of that delight, and the source of all of his blessedness, it comes from the water by which he is planted, and apart from the river, apart from that planting, he's like the ungodly which are like the chaff not planted at all. They're cut down and they're driven away by the wind and they will not stand in the judgment. But the man of God, the man that is blessed, is like the tree and he is planted not in rivers of earthly water, but he is planted in Christ, the source of living water and eternal life. He's engrafted into him by a true faith, and he's blessed with the abundant riches of Christ's righteousness and wisdom and his holy and incorruptible life, and he's blessed with the appetite, as it were, of Christ, for what is true and what is good and what is holy in God's word. And he drinks it in, and he drinks it in, and he drinks it in, and he never runs out, and he never is satisfied. He wants to meditate on it and take it in day and night.

That's the blessedness of the godly man. His new heart is comforted and strengthened and equipped for a walk that is pleasing to God, and as he walks in God's ways, he has the assurance that the Lord knows his way and he will not perish, and as he grows and matures, he bears fruit. He is fruitful in his due season in the time that God has ordained and with the opportunities that God has ordained. He bears that good fruit to the glory of God. Being in Christ, being planted in him, his leaf is green, his fruit is sure, and thus his works abide. His happiness, his blessedness is that when he reads the word and studies the word, there's all kinds of promises and blessings, and there's salvation, and there's joys and pleasures forevermore that are all promised to the people of God, and being planted in Jesus Christ he reads that word, that law, and he says, "These promises and these blessings are for me. They're for me, a sinner, therefore me graciously because I am in Christ and he gives me all these things." And nothing, no pain, no suffering of self-denial or worldly reproach can take away the joy that he has of living life in Christ and out of Christ to the glory of his grace.

So when we come to the Lord's Table next week, our coming will be a testimony of our Spirit-worked confession of sin and guilt. It will be a testimony to our conviction of our faith in Christ. And even our coming itself will be a testimony of our resolve to lead a new and holy life. And when we partake of his broken body and poured out blood through the broken bread and poured out wine, we will be strengthened and confirmed and nourished in that union and communion that we have with Christ. And then being confident that the sins we abhor are forgiven, and being mindful of the great cost whereby we might be forgiven in Christ, we shall also be strengthened in our resolve to bring forth fruits to the glory of God, and we will even bring forth the good fruit of this confession that, "God has planted me in Christ, my Savior and my Lord, like a tree by the rivers of water, and he has assured me that all the promises of the gospel and all the benefits of his cross and his resurrection are for me. And thus today and for as long as I live, I will live unto him." Amen.

Our Father which art in heaven, we thank thee that we are a people that is abundantly blessed, and we confess freely and readily this blessedness finds no origin in us, or anything that we do or could do or have done or will do. Our blessedness is that thou hast given us Jesus Christ and that thou hast chosen us in him, and that thou hast redeemed us through his work on the cross and thus we have hope of abiding with him in holiness forever and ever. Grant that our life may measure up to our confession and pardon us when day by day we fall short.