

The Invitation of a Lifetime

Psalms

By Mark Rice

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Medina Bible Church

3593 Medina Road #186
Medina, OH 44256

Website: www.medinabible.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/medinabible

Well, this morning looking at Psalm 1, I want you to think about it as an invitation of a lifetime. Back in the early 1990s when I was working as a field engineer for a company involved with a fiber optic industry, I did a lot of traveling, installing fiber optic cable systems, troubleshooting those systems, and also teaching our customers how to do those things, and at one point I got an invitation or an assignment really, to go to Camp David, that's the presidential retreat in Maryland, and to teach a course on fiber optics to the security team that was using that to help protect the president at that site. Now imagine, as neat as that was, imagine being invited to be a guest there with the president even if you didn't agree with his politics, it would still be an honor to be invited to be with the president. Have you ever received like a really grand invitation, one you just couldn't turn down? Or think about where you would like to be invited to, maybe the White House? Buckingham Palace? Who would you like to be invited to meet? Think about it that way.

Well, this morning Psalm 1 serves as an invitation from the most high God to come sit at his feet and to learn from him, and he does this by way of contrast. He's going to show us the righteous man and the wicked man, and in contrasting these, he's going to show us that the benefits, the fruit of the righteous man, and what it leads to, the reward of that. And so with that in mind, let's read Psalm 1 together. Psalm 1.

1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his
delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and
night. 3 And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in
whatever he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, But they are like
chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand
in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the
Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will
perish.

Well, this morning the Lord gives us an invitation to absorb his wisdom, an invitation to delight in his wisdom by giving us a portrait of the righteous man in contrast with the wicked man, and showing us the end of the righteous and the end of the wicked man. First, I want us to see and painting this portrait of the righteous, I first want us to see the

reward, the reward of the righteous man. Yes, it starts with the reward and look at verse 1, it says, "How blessed." In fact, in Hebrew it just begins, "Blessed." It is the very first word that you encounter in this Psalm. The Lord is setting this out as an invitation for those who want to receive the blessing of God, right? That's something people talk about that they want the blessing of God, and so God is inviting people. Do you want the blessing of God? Do you want to be blessed? Well, he puts this out there at the very start again to lure us in, to invite us to absorb his word, to adopt his word.

Now the term "blessed," it really just means happy. It can mean a state of prosperity. It can mean a state of happiness. But we need to understand that it's not happy like we kind of use the term in our culture. It's kind of frivolous. It's kind of cheap. We talk about being happy. We can think of a blessed man or woman as a happy man or woman as long as we don't think of it as merely like a happy feeling, something superficial, something skin deep, something that the least offense will then wash away and it's gone. Commentator William VanGemeren explains the word happy is a good rendition of blessed provided one keeps in mind that the condition of bliss is not merely a feeling. Even when the righteous do not feel happy, they are still considered blessed from God's perspective. He bestows this gift on them. Neither negative feelings nor adverse conditions can take his blessing away. That's the kind of blessed we're talking about. We're not talking about like you're happy on the way to work and someone cuts you off and then you're just mad for the next two hours, right? I know you're still mad.

But the point is, the kind of blessedness we're talking about goes beyond what's happening in your life right now, right? And in fact, if you could see it, it speaks to you right now. It just speaks to the better condition of the right now. If you are in Christ, then you are truly blessed. When someone asks you how you're doing. I mean, you can honestly say if you're in Christ, you can really say, "I'm blessed," even if you had a flat tire, and then after you got the flat tire you got pulled over for speeding on the way to work. You could still say, "I'm blessed," right, because none of those things matter. And that's so important in today's age where our society is like screaming and going full throttle towards God's judgment, towards really the damnation of our nation. I mean, that's where we see things going but despite that, if you are in Christ, you are a blessed person. And we must understand that when we're talking about a blessed person, that it's not that we deserve this blessing, right? So when the Psalms talk about the righteous, they're not talking about the self-righteous. This blessing is not deserved. Psalm 1 isn't a self-help sermon, you know, teaching just the strength of yourself, pull yourself up by your bootstraps. It's not that. God condemns man's self-righteousness time and time again.

So the righteous man that we talk about is one who has learned and been taught the righteous ways because of God's work in his life. Even Abraham knew that the righteous must live by faith. So living by faith isn't just solely a New Testament thing. Anybody that's ever been saved and become righteous has done that by faith in our God to provide a Messiah, to provide a substitute, to provide that alien righteousness that one needs. And so all the blessing that flows to God's people flows through our Messiah, Jesus Christ. The blessed man is really the man who stands in a covenant position. This really gets to

the heart of it. You're blessed in Christ because you stand in a covenant position. God could no more abandon you than he could dishonor his word and not keep his word, right, because he's adopted every child of God. Everyone who believes in Christ and has experienced that transformation of God's power coming into your life like God now has a covenant relationship with you, and he promises to take care of you no matter what. And if you don't hear anything else, know that you're blessed to stand in that covenant relationship with God, realize that that blessedness is a fruit that God produces and a result that he produces. It's not something that you earn, is what I'm saying. So like if you go to the New Testament, we talk about that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ but that faith, even that faith is not of yourselves. You're called to exercise faith, you're commanded to exercise faith in Christ, and yet we know that even that faith is not your own. It's a gift of God so that you don't boast. So that's really what we're talking about, is that as we set ourselves to pursue the path of righteousness so that we might be blessed by God, that that righteousness is not something that we earn, it is something given to us and yet we must seek after that, the righteous way.

Now when we get beyond the first really the reward, the blessing, blessed, then this man, right, this person is described first negatively and then positively. And if you're going to walk in righteousness, that's sort of what you're going to have to do. You've got to draw a line in the sand and you're going to say, "There's things that I just cannot do, I cannot say, I cannot think." And that's just the way it is. People say, "Well, you're legalistic." Well, you have to draw a line. God's word draws a line. There are things you cannot do, right? And so when we're talking about righteousness, pursuing the path of righteousness there's what you cannot do, and there's what you can do and this sermon isn't, and really this Psalm is not about the do's and the don'ts, it's about where is your heart's delight? What are the influences of your life, to put it another way? There's the negative influences, and then there's the positive influence.

So there's three different ways in which these negative influences are stated. Right there and you see it in verse 1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers." So the righteous are defined first by what they don't do. They don't walk in the counsel of the wicked. Now we think about walking, we've talked about before that's a metaphor for living. It's a metaphor for living, so he says, the psalmist says that the righteous man, that blessed man, is one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.

Now let's take a moment to understand what the word "wicked" means, because in our society it's generally we use that word "wicked" for like the very worst of humanity and we save that for those who are like guilty of rape or guilty of murder, especially mass murder. You know, we don't have any qualms with calling Hitler a wicked man, right? But we don't often think of ourselves as wicked, but wicked, the word "wicked" really means one who is guilty of a crime, right? It means being guilty of a crime. It means one who is deserving punishment, one who is guilty of hostility to God or his people, ultimately one who's guilty of sin. And the Scriptures teach us that those of us who aren't, say, a murderer, you haven't murdered anybody, you wouldn't consider yourself wicked, yet the Bible says that if you have hated anyone then you're also guilty of murder. And

James 2:10 tells us that whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at one point he has become guilty of all. Guilty of all. So just hear what we're saying, Scripture says even if you've broken one part of the law, only one and none of us in this room can make that claim so we're speaking theoretically, but Scripture says if you only broke one of God's laws that makes you guilty of the whole law. You are therefore under that condemnation of being wicked. All of us are. We all start out that way. It's hard to think of ourselves like that, but that's how the Scriptures think about us prior to Christ.

So we don't walk in the counsel of the wicked. Now the Psalm someone uses various synonyms for the wicked and I want us to go ahead and see these. Look at how that's developed. There's the wicked, there's the sinner, there's the scoffer. So the sinner is someone who misses the mark. They fall short of God's perfect standard, that either means doing something God says not to do or not doing something that God expects you to do. There's both of those that are illustrated in there.

So a sinner is someone who is going the wrong way, right? So you know, most of you drive, there's a few that are underage that can't drive yet, most of you drive and as you approach some of the highways that are divided, you'll see a sign that says "Wrong Way," right, and they're big red signs on both sides of the roadway so you don't miss it, and yet people still do it. They still go the wrong way. What happens when people go the wrong way? Bad things happen, right? Accidents. People's lives are changed. Some people get killed in accidents like that.

So God right here is laying out for us that those who are the ones who are disobedient to God's word, who have broken God's word, those who are going the wrong way, the righteous cannot listen, cannot be influenced by them. Yet he goes one further, scoffer. A scoffer is someone who is proud and haughty, someone who's proud and haughty, someone incapable of discipline, reproof, or rebuke. Why can't you reprove or rebuke a scoffer, right, because if you reprove the scoffer, he's going to turn it and throw it right back at you. He won't hear anything. He'll mock you, make fun of you, and call you the wicked man, right? That's what's going on a lot in our culture today, right? When sin is called out, when ugly, wicked things are being called out, our culture turns it around and says, "No, you're the wicked one because you saw it," even though you're calling out what someone else did. You're wicked, right? So it's sort of like the person, the investigative reporter who identified or spotlighted the fact that abortion clinics were selling baby parts. What did our culture do? Was there outrage that there was baby parts being sold? No, the outrage was that it got identified. So the person that did that is, I think still under lawsuits and all sorts of legal trouble. And that's what our world does. They're scoffers. They're mockers. You rebuke them, they turn around and tell you that you're the one that's in the wrong.

So that's the scoffer. Cambridge Dictionary tells us that a scoffer is someone who laughs and speaks about a person or idea in a way that shows that they think the person or idea is stupid or silly and that's what these people do to God. They hear God's word and they think, "Oh, that's stupid. Oh, that's old fashioned. That's silly. You think only men can be

pastors? That's silly. That's so old fashioned." That's the kind of attitude of a scoffer and a mocker.

Now go back to kind of the beginning of verse 1. It says, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked." What does it mean to walk in the counsel of the wicked? Basically, it means to come under the influence of the wicked, to come under the influence of those who disobey God's word. In other words, they have no concern for God's word and they just live anyway they want to, so coming under their influence, the influence of the world. Now, as a child of God, we are not to live under the world's influence. This is part of way Romans in Romans 12 where Paul says, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind," because the world is trying to press in and conform you. It's taking you. It's taking your children and it's trying to conform them to a certain way of thinking, a certain way of living. As children of God, we can't be influenced like that. We have to be on guard and beloved, I plead with you, be on guard that these influences are very, very subtle at times. Sometimes they're very overt, but other times they're very covert and they're just subtle, but they have major impact on your thinking and your living. God's wisdom runs contrary to the wisdom of the world, to the counsel of the wicked, and the counsel of the wicked is not helpful to us, for those of us who want to honor the Lord, who want to walk in the way of righteousness, and for those of us who are in that covenant relationship with our Lord and our God.

So this morning, I don't just want to explain Psalm 1 to you, I want you to take what I'm saying and take Psalm 1 and press it into your life, apply it. Think about your life, what influences you and how you live and the decisions you make, the entertainment you watch, how you spend your time. Examine those influences. Are there any influences of the wicked in your life that are calling your or pulling you away from walking with the Lord? If there are those, we must do what Jesus tells sinners to do who need to repent of their sins, that is, we need to cut that off. In talking about repentance in Matthew 5:30, Jesus said if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Now he's speaking in hyperbole, he's speaking with exaggeration. He's not calling you to self-mutilate yourself. He's calling you to take serious actions to get rid of the very thing that's causing you to sin.

So examine yourself. Friends. Do you have friends that pull you away from godliness and Christ-likeness? And I'm not saying don't misunderstand me, we are to have friends that we are evangelizing but these must not be close friends. If there are friends who are pulling you away from Christ, who are corrupting your morals, you must cut off that friendship so that you can walk with Christ. That's what we're talking about. Think about media, movies, videos, music, books, even conservative talk shows to a certain extent. So we like their conservative politics, but many of those men are not saved. And so you just listen and listen and listen and pretty soon you're influenced by all the political jargon and stuff that's going on, and it begins to impact how you make decisions and what decisions you make. A lot of people don't read books these days, but if you read books, then those can have a major influence on your life as well. So you just have to examine these, even your career, what kind of work you do can have a very negative influence upon your walk with Christ.

So God's word calls us to examine our lives. What are the influences? Where are you tempted to fall into the influence of the wicked, the counsel of the wicked? So the righteous do not walk in the counsel of the wicked. The second negative defining characteristic of the blessed man is that he does not stand in the way of sinners. The righteous do not stand in the way of sinners. So to stand just means to put yourself in a certain spot, to set one's self up in the way of sinners. Now remember that sinners are those who have missed the mark, who've gone the wrong way. They are missing the mark. They're going the wrong way.

So the way is a metaphor for living and you'll get this. So one of the more popular Star Wars little series that has come out is the Mandalorian and what is the phrase of the Mandalorian when he has to live a certain way? It's like this is the way, right? In other words, Mandalorians have to live a certain way. There's a code of conduct that Mandalorians have to live. Well, God is just saying – they stole that from the Bible, by the way. So God is just saying there's a certain way. This is the way. This is the way, beloved, those who are in covenant relationship with God, this is the way, not the other way, right? Sinners are those who are going the other way or going the wrong way. Don't listen to them. Don't come under their influence. So standing in the way of sinners, just think about yourself. So this is in a way, there's a little bit of progression. I'll talk more about it in a minute, but here you're not only just coming under the slight influence of evil, but now you're starting to walk and to do the same things that the wicked and the sinners do.

Are there areas of your life that where you have accepted an ungodly lifestyle, it's just kind of like normal? Just normal. You know, one of the things that's very helpful is to read a biography of someone who lived a few hundred years and go far back. Take someone like John Bunyan, read some of his things. You get perspective. Get some of J. C. Ryle's stuff, you get perspective because our culture has so influenced us that sometimes we're doing things today that would shock Christians who lived 100 years ago, or shock Christians that lived just 200 years ago. There's like, they would look at you and they'd say, "And you call yourself a Christian?"

So what I'm saying is that the culture influence, there's things in your life that you might be doing today or in a regular habit that are just like the world. I mean, just think about just go through your daily life. Do you drive like a Christian? I didn't for a while until God convicted me. I tried to. But the point is, does it impact you? Do you drive, you know, like a pagan? Or do you drive like a believer? If you drive like a pagan, please don't put a bumper sticker, "I love Jesus" bumper sticker on your car. So if you do that, you have to live it out, right? So live credibly. But like cheating on tests or exams, very commonplace today because of the pressures on students, right? But as a believer, right, that's not right. You can't accept that. What about the common habit today of couples living together before marriage? Or having physical intimacy together before marriage? That is accepted as commonplace even by many churches, even by many who call themselves Christians, right? That's another example. Examine your life.

There's just so many examples of this. Our world presses in. How many churches today actually have a biblical view of women's ministry? How many churches today have a biblical view of abortion? How many churches today or Christians today have a biblical view of gender, something that God's word makes very, very clear? It's not difficult. But our world is conforming and pressing in upon Christians, and where the rubber meets the road is in your daily life as you interact with unbelievers. When your employer begins to force some of this, you know, some of this equity training. You know, they force you to embrace this conversations at the workplace. Do you remain silent or do you try to be a witness for the light and the truth? But again, we're talking about the influences. All these things influence us and begin to conform us more and more to the world instead of being transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Think about your life this way. If an unbeliever were to examine your life and some of the things they probably don't know about you, would they be shocked by what they saw? Or would they say, "I do the same thing"? There's a sense of which the way that we live is antithetical to how the world lives and should be shocking to them. They should mock us, not that we want that, it's very uncomfortable when it happens, but we shouldn't even really care. We just care about honoring the Lord in this.

So think about what influences, the worldly influences that you might have adopted as normal, thoughts, attitudes, relationships, clothing is a huge one, right, music. The righteous don't adopt the ways of sinners, right? The third negative defining characteristic of a blessed man is he does not sit in the seat of scoffers. So this phrase of sit in the seat of, it sounds strange to us, but it's a description for learning. When you sit in the seat of someone you are sitting to learn from them. I remind you a scoffer is someone who mocks God. VanGemerer describes mockers as those that have no regard for God and his commandments. The righteous don't mock God's wisdom, right?

So why is it, how is it, back up and say, why would anybody who would claim to be in a covenant relationship with God sit in the seat of scoffers, of those who mock God? Well, you do that a couple ways. One is you actually learn from those. Some of our universities have a lot of scoffers and you learn from them. So you have to be very careful who you are learning from which speaks well for the benefit of universities like the Master's University and others that are committed to biblical truth that don't scoff at God even in their math and science. But another way trying to apply it directly to our lives, another way that we do this is when someone enters our assembly or you see them and they are obviously taking some of God's word more seriously than you do and then how do you think about them?

So I was listening to Paul Washer's sermon on this. I'll just give him the credit for this. He had hit a really good example of this. So on an average Sunday morning, we're meeting together and let's say we have some visitors come in, and one of those visitors is a lady who her dress goes all the way down to her ankles and she has her head covered. What do you think? What do you think about her? Now, obviously we need to avoid legalism like the plague. That's obvious, it's bad, but why is it that that's our first response when we see someone like that? Why isn't our first response, "Well, there's someone who

is trying to live with a clear conscience before God"? She not living that way because it's cultural. That's obvious. She's living that way because she wants to honor God and why isn't it that our heart cry is like, "Amen. There's someone that wants to honor God." Now, God's word doesn't teach her that she has to live that way, and as long as she doesn't take that standard and try to force that upon others, but if she's doing it out of a clear conscience, to try to have a clear conscience before God, if she's doing it as a desire to honor God in how she dresses, then we should give her a hearty Amen, may her tribe increase. Not that we want everybody to look like that. Please, please hear me.

But it's just the attitude. There's a person who's taking holiness and righteousness seriously and our culture, let's just say the Christian culture wants to take righteousness and holiness and say, "Oh, that's a thing of the past. You're so old fashioned." Well, fine, call me an old fashioned preacher. This is what God's word says. We are to be holy for the Lord is holy, right? We are to be holy people. We shouldn't mock or belittle people even if they're misguided because they're conscious, they're not fully informed because of the word of God, we shouldn't mock them in our minds. We would never say that, of course, but just in our minds don't mock them or belittle their efforts to live a righteous and holy life.

So we see here at least these three things. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers." So notice the parallelism that's being used here in this by the psalmist: walks, stands, sits; there's the counsel of, the way of, the seat of; there's the wicked, the sinner, the scoffer. So these three sets of parallelism that's going along here, and all of this profoundly portrays the totality of evil. That's the way William VanGemeren describes it, that these things come together to show us the totality of evil and really the deadly influence of those. And yet the Psalm says the blessed man, the righteous man does not do these things, and at the same time, at the same time we say that they're synonymous, there does seem to be some progression, as I mentioned, between where as the Psalmist walks, he stands, he sits.

And so many, many commentators and pastors draw out significance in this progression and Jim Boice says this, he says, because of this common feature of Hebrew poetry, that is the parallelism, a number of writers are reluctant to see any special progression in these terms, but it is hard to believe that the phrases are not saying that the way of the wicked is downhill and that sinners always go from bad to worse. C. H. Spurgeon says this, "When men are living in sin, they go from bad to worse. At first they merely walk in the counsel of the careless and ungodly who forget God. The evil is rather practical than habitual. But after that they become habituated to evil, and they stand in the way of open sinners who willfully violate God's commandments. If left alone, they go one step further and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they sit in the seat of the scornful. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true doctors of damnation, they are installed." We must be on guard against the influences of the world. Those who are in a covenant relationship with our Lord and God must examine our lives and to see where you are being influenced because I guarantee you there are influences in your life that are

trying to pull you away from God. They may not be being successful, but they are nonetheless there and we're wise to identify them and be on guard against them.

So the righteous are first defined by what they do not do but that's not all, there is the positive element. They are defined for what they delight in, and we see this verse 2, the contrast there, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night." So there are two distinct descriptions of the righteous person, the one who's blessed of God. And really, it's a good way to think about it. When you think about blessed, if you were to look at the word blessed, think about it this way: it's the person who delights in God's word and meditates on God's word. Does that describe you? And if not, it shows you where you're falling short.

Delight, what does it mean to delight in the law of the Lord? Well, delight just means to treasure. You know what that means. You delight in your wife. You delight in your firstborn, right? So these things bring you joy, bring you pleasure. It speaks of a chief desire, what grabs your heart, and here succinctly the psalmist says he delights in the law of the Lord. That's the law of Yahweh. Yahweh is God's name, his covenantal name. He knows all things and it's his law. Ultimately, this isn't just talking about the Torah, the five books of Moses, this is talking about all of God's instructions, right? We're talking about that we delight in the law of the Lord.

Now think about that. Let's use an illustration. Do you drive down the highway delighting in the speed limit? No. Who does that? Right, but you do take delight in the fact that there's "Wrong Way" signs and at least most of the time it keeps people from driving the wrong way on the highway that you're on. And you do delight in that, even if you haven't thought about it before because it is keeping you safe. But it's kind of strange that there's the word delight, and then the law of God. We think about law in a very negative connotation, but we've got to change our thinking. The law of God is good, and it is a delight to those who love the Lord. It fills us with wisdom. It gives us wisdom and instructs us and protects us. It keeps us from great harm.

So think about this. Do you delight in God's word? I mean, really, all the time? This is where we need to be really honest. Be honest with God. Even I don't delight in God's word all the time. I wish that I did. And one of the things that you've got to realize is that you've got to be committed to the direction of delighting and teaching yourself God's word and realize that sometimes it's going to be a fight. And again, I just want to borrow an illustration from Paul Washer. He was talking about a friend who recently came off a respirator and he was talking to him asking about how he is, and he said, "Every breath hurts but I have to breathe." That's how you've got to be in regards to thinking about God's word. Sometimes it hurts. You don't want to read God's word. But your life depends upon it. You've got to do it.

Delighting in God's word leads you to meditating on his law, on his word. Can you imagine for a minute a man who says that he loves his wife but spends no time with her? He doesn't love her. A husband who loves his wife but doesn't spend time talking to

her, that man doesn't love her. So you cannot claim to delight in God's word if you don't spend time in God's word meditating on it.

Now when the psalmist wrote this, like believers then didn't have copies of God's word. They might have the 10 Commandments written out on something, but they didn't have God's word so what did they have to do? They had to memorize it. They had to get it in their head. They had to think upon it, even if it was just one part of the sermon from the last gathering of the assembly, a portion of that. They had to think upon it and this is what he's talking about, he's meditating on his law day and night. And the idea of meditating is not the kind of the Eastern religion idea of meditation. That's not what we're talking about. This is a mind fully engaged, and you are mulling over what the word of God means. You know, cows, you know, it's amazing we think about cows, about how big they get eating grass? Only grass? God has designed them that way, obviously, but he's also, it's a good illustration for us as they eat the grass and then swallow it and then do what? Bring it back up and chew it some more. And then swallow it and bring it back up and chew it some more. And swallow it. It's gross. It's chewing the cud, right? But that's what you need to do with the word of God. You need to chew it. Get it in your life. Let it come back up. Chew it some more, right?

So that's what God's word is talking about. It's talking about meditating on it. Don't just like read it, "OK. I've done my reading for today," and you move on, right? It's reading and then bring it back up, remind yourself. And you might have to write a note because we all get forgetful and especially the older you get, the more you forget. So you know, write a little note, Psalm 1, whatever it is, whatever you're working on, studying, reading that week, that day. You've got to chew the cud of God's word to get the most nutrients out of it, right, that God's intended for you. I mean, like that illustration of breathing, you've got to do it because your life is dependent on it. Your very walk with God is dependent upon God's word. It's the only thing that helps you understand what is true and what is right because there's so many influences out in the world that are going to conform your thinking about a whole slew of things if you're not in the word of God. You've got to be in the word God so that you know what God says, so you'll know how to live and honor him.

I mean, just think about it just again, Psalm 1 sets an invitation to come study wisdom from all the Psalms. So you know, the way that the Psalms were organized, they were written individually, but then they were collected together. Psalm 1 is Psalm 1 by intention, right? It sets the whole framework for understanding the Psalms. So what we read today in Psalm 119, God's word is set up by Psalm 1. I'd like to read some verses from Psalm 19 regarding how we need to think about the law of the Lord, beginning at verse 7. "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your slave is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors?" God's word. Isn't the Spirit working

through God's word to help you discern your errors and where you need to change or where you need to grow?

Alan Ross kind of summarizes this nicely, says that the godly person is influenced not by unrighteous people but by his meditation on the word of God. Such meditation necessarily involves study and retention. This is possible only if he has a desire to do so and here referred to as a delight. The psalmist found direction, not drudgery from the word of God. Is the word of God your chief desire? You might say, "No, it's really not," right? But if you are in Christ, right, you must commit yourself to have that delight, and if you commit yourself to have that delight, ask God to change your heart so that you do delight in his word, and just keep doing it like you breathe every day, the Lord will give you that delight. He will change your heart because that's what he wants.

Steve Lawson notes the significance of the hunger for the word of God in our lives or the desire or the delight for the word of God in our lives, he said this hunger for the Bible is a clear indication of the new birth, as his new nature longs for the truths of God. This new appetite for God's truth leads him to meditate upon the word day and night. He constantly sets his mind on the truths of the Bible throughout the day, focusing on Scripture because it reveals the glory of God and his supremacy.

So maybe you're a believer and you just need to refocus, you know, get rid of the influences, the negative influences and work towards the positive influence of delighting in the word of God. But if you've never delighted in God's word, reading the Bible has always been a chore, you never want to do it, maybe it speaks to the fact that you're not really regenerate, you don't have an appetite for God's word. And so for you, you need to turn to the Lord and ask him to save you and redeem you. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved. And we talk about salvation, that's not just something theoretical. Salvation implies a new heart, a transformation changing you and you will know that from within, the Holy Spirit will confirm that in your life that you are a child of God. So believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Well, we understand that the Psalms cause to delight in God's word, to pursue the path of righteousness. So going back to Psalm 1, there's a picture of the righteous man. So not only do we have the reward of the righteous man, he's blessed, we have a description of the righteous man and what he doesn't do, what he does, the negative influences, the positive influence, the word of God, but we see a picture of the righteous man in verse 3, "he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." This is a beautiful illustration here for us. The illustration is that of a tree that's been intentionally planted. This isn't like the wild tree that just happens by God's providence and whim to fall in the right place and, you know, happen to be near the stream. So Ohio's got lots of nice parks and in many of those parks as you hike through them, you'll notice the trees that are closer to the water grow taller and that's the imagery here.

But in this imagery, this is an intentional planting. When he says that he will be like a tree planted by streams of water, and notice it's streams of water. Not stream of water, but

streams of water. There's lots. It's implying that there is an abundance of supply, right, and it's done intentionally. This is like a tree in a cultivated garden being taken care of by the gardener, right? That is exactly what the psalmist wants us to get out of this, but he's going to be like that tree even if there's an arid environment it's no concern because that tree has got plenty of nutrients.

And it says "which yields its fruit in its season," right? So understand that Lord is going to bring fruit from a tree that he's planted near the water. The imagery is the water is God's word, God's wisdom. So as you take in God's word, there's fruit borne in your life and note its fruit in season, right? There are very few trees that bear fruit all year long. So keep in mind that there may be seasons of your life where you say, "Well, I don't seem to be bearing fruit." Well, maybe it's just a time of rest, it's a time of taking in the nutrients, it's a time of preparing. Again, we don't want to read too much into this illustration, but understand the beauty of the illustration.

"His leaf does not wither." Like, no matter what the circumstances are, the stock market can crash tomorrow and you'll be just fine if you are in Christ and blessed. Our world could change, we could enter into World War III tomorrow or later today and you're going to be just fine because you're blessed and have a covenant relationship with your God. You will not wither.

And notice he brings it all home, "And whatever he does, he prospers." So here we're not talking about a tree, we're talking about the blessed man. Now this isn't talking about that whatever you set your hand to, you're going to be like your business is going to be successful. This isn't a promise, a blind promise and you can say, "Well, God promised me that whatever I did, it would be successful." Well, okay, whatever you are doing that's in alignment with God's word. That's how you need to think about that. If you have the influence of God's word, you're delighting in it, you're meditating on it day and night, then the things that you do, the decisions you make are going to please God, right, and that's going to be honoring, that is going to be prosperity from God's standpoint. He will bring blessing, even if not in this life, he will bring blessing for that.

So understand that, and then then there's kind of the contrast in there, "The wicked are not so." That's not the way that the wicked are. They're like, what? Chaff, right? Chaff. What's chaff? So when farmers would grow wheat or barley, then when they go to harvest it, they harvest the whole thing, the straw and all the little pieces and parts of that, and there's only a small part of that that's actually good for making food from, bread from. So that gets thrashed and, you know, there's different ways of doing it. They would crush it sometimes, a threshing floor. But then when they had the threshing floor, then you had all the good nutrients and the chaff which is all the extra stuff, the stuff you can't eat. So all that's together and so one of the ways that they would separate the good nutrient, a kernel of the wheat or the barley from the chaff is that they would rely on wind, they would just toss it, right, and the chaff which is light would get blown away by the wind, right, and the good nutrients which are heavier would fall down straight.

So that's the imagery that's being used here. This is chaff. The wicked or just chaff which the wind blows away. What did they do with that? Nothing. That's the point. It's a total waste. A person can think they're doing grand things, they can build an empire, they can build these big businesses, they can even rule over nations, but in the end if they're walking in their own ways and not walking according to the ways of God, they're chaff, they will amount to nothing. You know the least significant person in the kingdom of God will be more significant than any of the kings on this earth. That's what God's word is saying. It's valuable.

So look at that future, and speaking of the future, God even tells us what the future is like for both the wicked and the righteous. Look at verse 5. "Therefore," because the wicked are like that chaff which the wind drives away, "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment." So what judgment are we talking about? God is declared to everyone everywhere that Judgment Day is coming, Acts 17:31, and he's saying he has appointed the man, the man Christ Jesus, who is going to judge this world and he's calling everyone everywhere to repentance and faith in Christ and those who don't will face judgment. And this judgment right here is a courtroom type language. The judge is going to call you. You see, what happens if you don't accept the invitation to come to Christ, if you don't accept the invitation to come to the word of God, you're going to receive next a summons. Do you know what a summons is? You're not given an opportunity to decline a summons. Now in our lawless society, sometimes you can get away with it for a little while but no one can get away from a summons from God. God is going to summon you and he's going to summon you to his courtroom, and if you can't plead on the mercy of Christ, if you haven't already done that before you got there, he is going to judge you for eternity.

Notice what he says there. It's not my words, right? "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment." To be able to stand when you're in judgment, it means that you've been acquitted. Your sins have been forgiven. So those of us in Christ, we can stand in the judgment because of what Christ has done for us, otherwise we wouldn't be able to do that. But those who haven't embraced Christ, when they get before the judge they won't be able to stand. In other words, they're going to be condemned. They're going to be declared guilty and then taken off into punishment. That's what he's saying.

"Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous." There's going to be a separation between those who are truly believers in Christ and those who are not. This is the separation of the wheat and the chaff. This is the separation of the tares and the wheat, to use a different analogy. There are people even within our own congregation who might look like they're Christians but aren't, and if you don't trust in Christ, if you don't accept the invitation to come to Christ, then you're going to be separated out. You will not be with the righteous.

And notice where he goes next in verse 6. Look at our future, "For the Lord," that's Yahweh, "For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous." Now we see the word "know" here, it's implying more than mere facts. It's not just saying God knows us. God knows everybody. He knows even the wicked, in this sense, right? He knows the wicked exist. He knows everything the wicked do. So what's the psalmist doing? Well, he's

calling upon Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God, "For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous." Here this knowledge is talking about the knowledge that one has in a covenantal relationship and a close intimate relationship. This is the same word that God even uses of the conjugal relationship between a man and a woman in marriage, a man knows his wife. So what it's saying is God cares for you and God is going to provide for you. He's going to be there with you. Nothing is going to happen to you. Remember, the imagery is that of a tree firmly planted by streams of water who produces fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither. Why does that tree prosper? Because God knows the tree. He knows you if you're in a covenant relationship with him.

So think about the illustration we talked about earlier about we talked about sinners are those who are going the wrong way. If you choose to go the wrong way, there is a Mack truck coming and on the front of it is written "God's judgment," and you're in a Toyota Yaris, what's going to happen? Alright, we laugh because the propensity of it, but it's really serious. Why would you choose to go the wrong way? Why would you choose that?

The Lord ends with this, "The way of the wicked will," what? "Perish." That's not talking about annihilation. You're going to fall in judgment. There's a Mack truck of God's judgment coming and you have an invitation to accept Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of your sins, and be invited to embrace his wisdom. Why would you reject that? There's no way to avoid judgment day other than through Christ.

Let me end with this. The imagery of the tree planted in the desert is found in multiple places, but I want to go to Jeremiah. Jeremiah 17 if you want to turn there, beginning at verse 5. Remember that Jesus says to his disciples and those who lived in his day to enter through the narrow gate, that the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it, for the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Most are mockers and scorners, but if you're hearing my voice today, a child, a youth, an adult in the prime of life, or a senior, flee to Christ. Embrace his wisdom. Know that Jesus is that narrow gate and will save all those who call upon him.

Jeremiah 17:5 that is the first phrase, "Thus says the Lord." Thus says Yahweh, this this is God's word. There are a lot of people that want God to speak directly to them. I'm going to speak, but it's God's voice. He's speaking directly to you. "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be like a bush in the desert He will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit. The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart; I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds. As a partridge that hatches

eggs which it has not laid, So is he who makes a fortune, but unjustly; In the midst of his days it will forsake him, And in the end he will be a wicked fool."

Don't be a fool. Accept the Lord's invitation to come to him, and most of you this morning have already accepted that invitation. Embrace the Lord's word. Reject the influences of this world and cling to the word of God in an ever more delightful way to make it your meditation day and night.

Let's pray.

Our Lord and our God, we are just so thankful that You have chosen to love us, that You've chosen to bring Your children into a covenant relationship with You. You didn't have to do that. You did it because of Your love. And Lord God, I would just pray that You would transform each soul here, that the word of Your grace would be, Lord, powerfully active and at work in their lives. I just ask that You would just cause the word of God to dwell richly within each person here this morning, that You'd cause them to believe if they're not already believing, and that You would cause us, Lord, those who do believe, You would cause us to run with new energy and vigor, with new delight towards Your word that we would understand Your word better, meditate upon it, apply it to our lives. And Lord God, I just ask that You would just help us to be those who delight in Your word and, Lord, that allow Your word to be the dominant influence of our lives and then we had root out, Lord, the influences of the wicked and the sinners and the scoffers. O God, do Your work in us as Your people even today. It's in the name of Jesus...