

## **Psalm 1**

**HUMC, June 6, 2021**

**Pastor Paul**

Daniel Webster, who was born and raised in New Hampshire and rose to be an early American statesman once said (paraphrased), "If we work on marble, it will eventually crumble. If we work on brass, time will cause it to fade. If we rear temples, they will crush into dust. But if we work on our immortal souls and imbue them with principles with the fear of God and the love of our neighbors, we engrave on those tables of our hearts, something that will brighten to all eternity".

I would agree with Mr. Webster, that the most important and lasting thing that we can do for ourselves is cultivate our spiritual lives.

My text is Psalm 1 and this talks about when we what happens to when we follow the good path and the consequences of those who stray. Psalm 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,<sup>2</sup> but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.<sup>3</sup> 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.**

**<sup>4</sup> Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.**

**<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.<sup>6</sup> For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. This is the Word of God.**

King David wrote Psalm 1, and in his 70 year life span, he saw and experienced it all. Among many things, he was a shepherd, a warrior and a king. With regard to faith, he was devout and zealous of the things of God.

We can see from the pages of scripture that when David walked with the Lord, he enjoyed his share of military victories and diplomatic successes. With the blessing of God upon him, he was delivered out of many troubles.

But it was when he strayed and broke some of the commandments, especially in the adulterous relationship with

Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah Hittite, the result was a personal upheaval in his family and he almost lost his kingdom. Though forgiven, he had to endure personal disgrace the rest of his life.

But if there was anyone who could write about the eternal truths from Psalm 1, it was David, because he experienced the right way of living and for a very brief period of time, the wrong way. And as a king, he also had the opportunity to see firsthand what happened if his subjects followed the Lord or if they chose another path.

Psalm 1:1 begins this way. **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.**

When a person who follows the Lord, they will want to choose a good or a righteous path. I think it would be out of character to take spiritual advice from someone who is ungodly or whose moral choices violate the laws of God. Or to associate with

someone whose lifestyle or conversations mocked and cursed God.

For me, I find it hard to be around those who are scornful, critical or disrespectful of the things of the Lord. If I am around them for a period of time, it drags me down. Sometimes, we have no choice to attend family gatherings or be in a negative work environment. But it is always a pleasure to meet fellow believers or dedicated church folks, out in the community. It is uplifting to meet like-minded Christians for it makes such a difference in our spirits.

Psalm 1:2 shows how we can secure the blessings of God. **But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**

You won't hear this on the news, but happiness comes when we develop a strong desire for God's Word, but we need to take it a step further and nurture that disciplined habit of meditation.

The image people often get from meditation is when an individual sits down in a lotus position, with arms folded and remains quiet for long periods of time. Biblical meditation is when we sit down and slowly and thoughtfully read a passage of scripture. It is like we have a mental discussion that goes on in our heads on how we can apply it to our lives or worship.

When we read and meditate on passages of the Bible, it brings satisfaction. Psalm 119:103 says the Word of God is "sweeter than honey." Psalm 19:10 says it is to be "more desired than gold" (Ps. 19:10).

I remember there was one college writing course that I took and the professor gave us the following assignment. We were to write about something that is valuable in our lives and why. Many of my classmates wrote about valuable heirlooms or pictures.

But to the surprise of my professor, I wrote how my personal Bible was my most prized possession because it pointed me in the right direction and was food for my soul. My professor thought it was too spiritual, oh well.

In eastern meditation such as in Buddhism and Hinduism, the goal is to empty their mind and concentrate on an object, word, phrase or riddle (What does the sound of one hand clapping in the air). However, in Christian meditation, the goal is to fill our minds with the word of God. This can be done by carefully thinking about each word and phrase, applying it to one's self as we are in a spirit of prayer.

Using animal husbandry, meditation is like chewing the cud, and getting the sweetness and nutritive virtue of the word into our heart and lives.

Now if we do this, we will find ourselves like one of those trees along the Contoocook River whose continual source of water enriches the roots, the trunk and the leaves and looks healthy.

But if we find ourselves deficient in our spirit or spiritual life, we might want to ask if we are spending enough time by the rivers of living water.

I remember when I was stationed at Tripler Hospital in Hawaii, there was a time I felt tired and run down and I couldn't understand why. So, I asked a doctor and he ordered a blood test. And the results came back and to my surprise showed that I was dehydrated. In that warm tropical climate, I had become lackadaisical in drinking water.

Sometimes if I get too busy in ministry and do not nurture my spiritual life as I should, I will feel sluggish or distant from the Lord. There will be a lack of motivation to read or pray. When I notice those signs, I know it is time for me to get back into those spiritual disciplines.

Even during difficult, barren times, the Word of God will sustain life. But there will be dry seasons that we will go through and we can draw from the reservoirs of living water to get us through our tough times.

So let me ask, what makes you happy? What is important? What floats your boat? If it is personal pleasures such as food, drink, travel, entertainment or the meeting of physical desires? If yes, then you could be narcissistic or self-centered.

If true happiness is being with your family or friends, that would be much better, but it still falls short.

What Psalm 1 tells us is that the righteous person finds their delight and satisfaction in the things of God; however, the ungodly person will not prosper and will not share in the glorious future of the righteous.

Let me close, the psalmist sets forth two directions or destinies—the way of the righteous and the way of the ungodly.

If we choose the way of the righteous, we can experience the blessings spoken about in Psalm 1 is to invite Christ into our lives. To be born from above. To invite the Holy Spirit to empower us in our Christian walk.

Let me encourage you to get on a reading program. Make it part of your day and when you do; your faith will begin to grow. It will be a delight not a chore. If you are already reading on a daily basis, increase your daily devotion time, listen to Bible tapes during the day or do an extra reading at night. God will continue to guide you through His Word.

God bless.