

I don't think that it will come as a shock to any of you that the evangelical church (whatever that term even means anymore) has not only abandoned delighting in the word of God, but that it has now embraced, to one extent or another, what can only be described as a blatant disregard for the word of God. For some time now we have been witnessing a mass erosion of scriptural authority in the church and the exclusion of that doctrine as central to the Christian life. Instead, the latest idols of our society are being erected in what was once the place occupied by the word of God. Doctrines that were once held to be essential and foundational have now been replaced by those deemed less 'offensive' or 'intolerant' and more 'inclusive.' Rather than finding joy in and delighting in truths clearly delineated in scripture, many of those truths are being cast to the wayside. These doctrines are not merely those 'secondary' issues that often serve as debate fodder amongst evangelicals, but they are rather those that serve as the very foundation of the Christian faith. A *short* list of these might include: 1) Christ's virgin birth 2) Christ's deity 3) The triune nature of God 4) Christ's sacrificial atonement 5) Christ's bodily resurrection 6) Human depravity 7) Christ's Ascension 8) God's wrath against unbelievers and 9) The reality of Hell. Guys, compromising on *any one* of these core doctrines not only exhibits scriptural malpractice, but more so undermines the message of the gospel and subsequently the ability of the unrepentant sinner to comprehend the necessity of salvation through Christ. This is nothing short of devastating to Christian witness. And we know this because we have seen it play out in far too many churches that claim the name of Christ.

So what then can be done? Well, we're here this weekend to learn how to be faithful men who live uncompromised lives in the midst of not only a compromised world, but as we

just saw, a compromised church. So what is it that we can do to fight the diseases of cultural contextualism, spiritual spineless-ness, and doctrinal delusion? After all, **we** are the ones called by the Lord to lead, are we not?. We are to lead in our marriages, in our homes, in our work, and in the church. So how do we faithfully answer this call? I am **convinced** that it **must begin** with each one of us cultivating the discipline of learning to delight in the word of God. If we are to live lives of faithfulness to our Lord, then we must be faithful students and defenders of His word. And how are we to faithfully teach and defend the truths of His word amongst the church and the world if we find no joy and delight in it? The simple answer is that we will not. So then, we are left with one option. But how do we cultivate this delight and what does it look like? Well, we can be thankful that we serve a God who in His wisdom and providence knew that we would need an example to follow. After all, we often learn best through observing others and building disciplines that we see in them into our own lives. So for our example we will look to the 'Righteous man' of Psalm 1. My goal for us today is to use his example as a guide in considering what it takes to be a man who delights in God's word, and then conclude by looking at both hindrances and helps to growing in our delight for God and His word.

So if you have not already done so, please open your copy of God's word to Psalm 1

Introduction to Psalm 1

Most certainly Psalm 1 is a very familiar text to many of us here today. It's one of those Psalms that almost everyone seems to know and that you hear referred to by everyone from Sunday school teachers to pastors from the pulpit. And that's a good thing. Having a familiarity with passages of scripture is a great blessing. It helps to stick in our memory more effectively,

or it causes us to meditate on it. But occasionally what will happen, and I've experienced this myself, is that when we hear the same things repeated over and over we can start to zone them out. Rather than continue to seek to grow in our understanding of a familiar passage we can begin to gloss over it. And when this happens we can lose an appreciation for the truths contained within the passage. So, if that's the case with any of us here, hopefully we'll be able to set aside that familiarity and instead allow the Spirit to deepen our understanding of the truths contained within this text.

I don't think it's by accident that this Psalm was the one chosen to be placed at the beginning of the Psalter. In many ways it introduces two of the most common themes that run throughout the course of the entire book itself: the way of righteousness and the way of wickedness. The way of that which leads to blessedness, and the way which leads to damnation. So many of the psalms illustrate or build on the foundation of righteousness or wickedness that is found in Psalm 1. Yet, even though it offers two contrasting lifestyles, it offers an obvious hope. One commentator has said that, *"It (Psalm 1) treats of the blessedness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, topics which constantly recur in the Psalms, but it treats of them as if all experience pointed only in one direction. The moral problem which in other Psalms troubles the ancient poets of Israel, when they see the evil prospering and the good oppressed, has here no place. The poet rests calmly in the truth that it is well with the righteous."* And that is where I want us to place the intensity of our focus today, so let's dive in.

I love the beginning in verse 1, "How blessed!" You can hear the enthusiasm of the Psalmist in this statement as he introduces this man who is righteous, this man who delights. It's as if he's saying, "Just look at the magnitude of blessing that this man enjoys! Can't you see

the joy that he has?” In fact, if you look at the literal renderings of the Hebrew you’ll start to notice a theme. Many of them translate the word for ‘blessed’ in a plural form; i.e. the blessings or the joys. This isn’t just a mediocre amount of joy or blessing, but rather, as is stated by David in Psalm 16, this man is blessed with ‘fullness of joy’ as he walks in righteousness before His God. Or to borrow from the imagery of Psalm 23, his ‘cup overflows’ with blessedness.

But why? Why is it that this man is abundantly blessed? What has led to the pronouncement of joy and happiness upon him? Look at how he conducts himself; specifically, take note of what it is that he **does not do**:

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!*

This blessed man simply refuses to put himself in situations that would fly in the face of his Lord’s commands. And not only does he avoid these types of situations, but he never surrounds himself with those who would seek to lure him into these scenarios; he doesn’t even consider it. Now, as an aside, most of the lessons we’ll see here aren’t news to us. We often know what it is we **need** to do in order to walk in righteousness, but the difficulty usually isn’t in the ‘knowing.’ The difficulty is in the doing. Just as it says in James chapter 1:

Verse 22: But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers

Who delude themselves.

And then in verse 25:

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of Liberty, and abides by it,

Not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer,

this man will be BLESSED in what he does.

Like the righteous man, we too must act with conviction based upon what we have come to know and understand through the revelation of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. More on this later.

Back to the text. Obviously, to a certain extent we don't get to choose who we will surround ourselves with. We can't pick the folks that we share a workspace with or sit next to on the airplane, but that isn't the idea in play here. What we see in this example is the conscious, willful, and deliberate choice on behalf of this man to refuse to involve himself with the wicked in anything. Those whom he *chooses* to associate with will never fall under the categories of unrepentant wicked, sinner, or scoffer. They not only offer no benefit to him in his pursuit of righteousness, but rather throw massive stumbling blocks in his path. Notice, too, the progression that's outlined within the verse. Walk, Stand, Sit. What is this illustrating for us? It shows the danger of exposing oneself to the influences of sin. Continued exposure to sin *will* eventually dull your senses to the point where you no longer just tolerate it, but you will begin to engage in it and ultimately reap its 'rewards.' Men, we cannot fool ourselves into believing that we will remain immune to the schemes of sin and temptation if we continue to place ourselves into situations that expose us to it! The blessed man understands this and does whatever he must in order to separate himself from the insidious nature of those characterized by and engaged in wickedness.

But how does he do this? I love this; verse 2:

But his delight is in the law of the Lord,

In the Hebrew it literally reads, ***“NO, on the contrary, the instruction of YHWH is his delight.”***

You can hear the emphasis there. This is no man of worldly passions! His counsel is sought at the feet of YHWH and in *HIS* instruction. For there is the ultimate source of truth! There is the perfect example of righteousness! There is fullness of joy! The man of righteousness shuns the pitiful offerings of this world in order that he may feast on the wisdom of the one true God, for in so doing his soul will be satisfied. His Lord’s instruction is so comprehensive, so complete, that he has no need of looking elsewhere. All he will ever need is contained within it. Now, there is some disagreement amongst scholars regarding the scope of what ‘torah,’ the word for law or instruction, is referring to in this context: that is, is the Psalmist referring specifically to the Pentateuch, or is it more general and inclusive of the whole of God’s instruction (i.e. The Canon of scripture)? Personally, I would lean towards the use referencing scripture generally, but regardless of what amount of God’s instruction is being referenced, the important thing here is recognizing the principle in play. That is that ***God’s law***, whether it be a portion or all of it, is the object of this man’s delight. It is not man’s ‘wisdom’ or counsel; it is God’s counsel. And in that counsel, this man finds great joy.

It’s such a great picture. It illustrates the great affection that this man has both for God and His word. The love this man has for God flows directly from what he knows of God, and what he knows of God he knows through the word of God. Rather than being repulsed by it he finds great joy in it. To him, it is a fountain of living water that he draws from continually. It is live-giving. It invigorates his heart and soul. It is his ultimate pleasure and pursuit. All that he does, all that he longs for begins here. Everything he does can be traced back to the source of his delight for God’s word. It’s fascinating in its simplicity, yet comprehensive in its scope.

So what then does he do with God's word? Look at the end of verse two:

*And **IN** His law he **meditates day and night***

I like how the NAS translates the phrase "*IN* His law." It seems to paint a picture of the depth to which this man goes in his desire to know God's word. Because of his great delight for it, he immerses himself in daily contemplation and study of it. He sees the ocean of truth contained within and seeks to plumb its depths in order to give vitality and vigor to his soul. Discontent to merely pick at the surface of the scriptural text, he takes his shovel and begins to dig until he uncovers the truths he so desperately seeks.

And the great thing is that we aren't left guessing as to what means this man uses in his pursuit of the word. The Psalmist tells us how *and* to what extent. The man *meditates*, and he meditates *continuously*; both day *and* night. Literally, the text says he 'mutters' it to himself. Kinda like one of those people you think is crazy when you see them from a distance mumbling to themselves what looks like is incoherent babble. That's this man. The content of the Lord's instruction is always in his mind, filling his thoughts. He is constantly mulling over and considering the scripture that he reads and memorizes.

As I was reading this verse, one of the passages that came to mind was Deuteronomy 17:18-20, which reads:

"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

it shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he

may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.”

The concept of time spent in the study of and meditation on God’s word is so foundational to the life of a believer that God instructed each man who would serve as King over His people to read it “all the days of his life.” We can never allow ourselves to neglect the necessary daily discipline of contemplating the truth of God’s word. But don’t make the mistake of thinking that once you’ve spent a portion of the day in consideration of the text you just read that you can check a box and move on. Rather, build the discipline of filling your mind throughout the day with the scriptures and see the transformation that will begin to take place in your heart and soul as you do so (Unknown commentator p.55).

So, we’ve seen what the righteous man **does not** do, where his focus and delight **is**, and what he **does** do. What then is the result of all of this? 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.*

We see here four separate blessings that the righteous man will enjoy.

First: The man who grounds his life in the word of the Lord is just as steadfast and immovable as a massive tree growing along the banks of a water channel. Each drought he takes from God’s word grows his roots deeper in the soil of wisdom and sanctification. And this supply will never dry up; for as often as he desires to drink from the word so too shall his soul be quenched.

Secondly: He will bear the fruit that accompanies faithful obedience. In His grace, the Lord will cause the man who follows faithfully after Him to grow in sanctification and the fruit of the Spirit. There will be no doubt as to the authenticity of this man's faith for his actions will be evidence of it.

Thirdly: Just as a tree that has a constant source of nourishment will not die-out, so too the man who daily feeds his soul on the word of God will not 'wither' in his faith. Literally it will not languish or fade; rather the opposite is true. As one feasts his soul on the truth of God's word he will be invigorated.

Fourthly and most emphatically in the text: Because this man delights in God's law, meditates on it, and **obeys** it, the Lord will grant success to him in his pursuits. Now, don't think for a moment that this means anything like the drivel peddled by health and wealth prosperity teachers. We're not talking about guaranteed material wealth, prosperity, or success. In fact, a brief survey of scripture would seem to indicate that those things are more often a hindrance to us rather than a blessing. Regardless, this righteous man will succeed in his ways because he is faithful in seeking after the will of his Lord and carrying **that** out in joyful obedience. His desires are so grounded in the truth of God's word that he cares only about what God has instructed him to care about. And **God causes him** to prosper in pursuit of those things.

This is the way of righteousness. The grounding of one's life in God's word that is pictured in verses 1 through 3 is the way of delight which will lead us into greater communion with God and growth in Christ-likeness.

But continuing to verse 4 we see a stark contrast depicted. The Psalmist moves from describing the man of righteousness to describing the man who walks in wickedness and sin.

Look at verse 4:

The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff

Which the wind drives away

In the Hebrew it's even more emphatic. Literally it reads, '**Not so the wicked!**' All of the characteristics and blessings that belong to the righteous man who delights in God's law are not to be found in possession of the wicked. All who would walk in wickedness and rebellion against their Creator should not expect to garner His blessings towards them.

Rather, as the verse goes on to say, those who delight in wickedness are promised the opposite of what is given to the righteous. Far from being firmly planted, those who run after wickedness are carried off like rootless chaff, subject to the ever-tightening grip of sin in their life. They have no foundation upon which their life is built; instead, they are just like the man that Christ describes at the end of Matthew 7 who fails to ground himself in the truth of Christ's teaching. The Psalms often use chaff as an illustration because it would have been very familiar to the original audiences. Many commentators have noted that in Israel the threshing floors were often elevated above the areas inhabited by the people. During the time of harvest the workers would cast the separated chaff into the breeze and allow it to be carried off where it would never be seen again nor sought after (Leupold, p37). It had no worth or value, so it was gladly discarded and quickly forgotten. Such is the life of the wicked.

This same idea carries over into verse 5:

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

What a terrifying reality! Here we fast-forward to the end of time and see the courtroom of God; the wicked unable to even pick themselves up before the blazing glory of the Lord seated on His throne. Just as the chaff they were likened to, these guilty ones will be carried off, only not by the wind. Here they will be swept away by the judgment of God and cast into the blast furnace of His righteous wrath where they will be tormented for all of eternity. Unable to hide any longer amongst the sheep, God will separate them as goats from His righteous ones who will forever enjoy His presence and blessing.

This picture carries over into a final contrast in verse six:

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous;

But the way of the wicked will perish.

The word used here for 'know' communicates a closeness or intimacy that the Father has with regard to His children. They are His and He watches over them. Because He is sovereign and faithful, not one of them will go missing, but instead will be brought into eternity as His adopted sons and daughters! What hope we can have in this reality! Each of us that belong to Christ can be confident that God will fulfill to us all that He has promised through His Son. But for the wicked, they have no such hope. They too are known by God, but not in the gracious way that He relates to His chosen ones. All they have done will be uprooted and stripped away, and their reward for walking in sin will ultimately be separation from God and subjection to His judgment.

These are the two realities that stand before each one of us. Will we be known by God, or will we perish in our wickedness? It's my prayer that each of us would come to know Him through faith in His Son and obedience to His commands.

So as men who claim this reality as our own, how then can we cultivate a desire and delight for God's word that we've seen in the example of the righteous man? What can we do to grow in the way of righteousness and shun the path of wickedness? Drawing both from the text and firsthand experience, let's look at some hindrances that we might face, and then we'll conclude by considering some helps to encourage us in our pursuit of the Lord.

Hindrances:

- 1) Failing to delight in God Himself:** It all starts here. If we were to boil it down to one primary point, this would be it. If we do not first learn to delight in God, how will we ever learn to delight in His word? In order to value the gift of scripture, we must also value the gift-giver. One necessarily flows from the other. But in order to learn about God, (what He is like, what He has done) we must seek Him *through* the scripture. Yes, He has revealed Himself through creation, but only partially. The true beauty of the Creator is found in the revealed truth of His word. Think about it for a second; how did you get to know those who are closest to you? You spent time with them, you listened to them talk about themselves, and you asked questions of them. We get to know God in the same fashion. The only difference is that He wrote it all down for us to read about. So if we do not engage with His word, we will never develop a delight in Him.
- 2) Living in unrepentant sin:** Hebrews 4:12 – *'For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.'* If we are engaged in unrepentant sin, the last thing that we will want

to open ourselves up to is the conviction that the Holy Spirit will bring when we expose ourselves to the truth of God's word. So rather than risk this, we will distance ourselves from the Word for as long as we live in that sin.

3) Choosing friends who love the world: I would be willing to wager that most of us have seen the affect that this can have on our behavior and desires. When we walk in the wicked's counsel we will eventually end up standing around with sinners before we finally sit down with scoffers. Hanging out with world-lovers will not only numb us to that which is good, righteous, holy, and lovely; it will lead to us pursuing the lusts of the world.

4) Failing to prioritize time in God's word: Or said another way, prioritizing stuff ahead of God and His word. When we let our interests or hobbies that lie outside of the realm of spiritual discipline dominate our time, we will gradually lose interest in the word of God. This has the potential to be particularly dangerous because it can happen so gradually that we often fail to recognize it.

These are just a few of the things that will stand in the way of growing in delight and desire for God's word. Or, to be more explicitly biblical, they would be called 'put-offs.' These are characteristics or actions or habits that we must rid ourselves of before growth in righteousness can take place. However, it's not sufficient to simply put-off these things. To be faithful to the commands of scripture we must also 'put-on' (to borrow from my buddy, Keith) the righteous replacement. If we fail to put on the new man, then we will find ourselves once again engaging in the habits of the old man. So with that said, here are a few righteous replacement helps to growth in delight.

Helps:

- 1) Spend time reading God's word.** Yes, this is incredibly basic, but it is also the foundation that we must begin with. Just like the righteous man in Psalm 1, we must discipline ourselves to open it daily. The more frequently we seek its counsel, the more fully we will begin to comprehend, by God's grace, the depth of its riches and wisdom. The Word is the primary tool that the Holy Spirit will use to grow us in sanctification and Christ-likeness, therefore we must expose ourselves to it.
- 2) Memorize & Meditate on it.** Again we can take from the example of the righteous man. First we must read the word, and then we can memorize it and meditate on it. If we are to fill our minds with the content of scripture, we must employ methods that help us to keep it there. And the more our minds are occupied with the words of God, the less time we will have to focus on the enticements of the world.
- 3) Pray.** Ask the Lord to give you a desire to delight in His word. There are going to be many days when we just don't feel like getting up and cracking our bibles open. Or there may even be prolonged periods where we struggle to maintain consistency in the word. When this is the case, don't give in to the temptation to try do it on your own. Go to your Father and ask Him for grace. Lean on His sufficiency and trust in Him. He wants you to do this, so don't ever be afraid to.
- 4) Practice repentance.** As was mentioned above, one of the beauties of regularly exposing ourselves to the living & active word of God is that it will convict us of any unconfessed sin we may be harboring. When our hearts are illuminated by the light of God's word nothing can remain hidden in darkness. A man who walks in righteous

obedience will welcome this exposure and confess his sin to the Father in order that he might continue in fellowship with Him.

And lastly,

5) Surround yourself with godly influences. We cannot overlook the importance of this consideration. If we want to get serious about growing in delight for God and His word then we will learn to use discernment in who and what we allow to influence us. Search out godly men in your church who will challenge and encourage you in your pursuit of godliness. Spend time with men who delight in God's word because their influence will have an effect on how you view God's word. Read Christian authors whose writings exemplify a high regard and love for the scripture. And be sure that you're looking for these things in the right places. Don't go to the places that the world delights in and expect to find these types of influences. The righteous man in Psalm one didn't do that, so don't think it'll work any differently for you.

Each one of these five items listed has led to a greater desire and delight for the Lord and His word in my own life when I am faithful to practice them. But, as soon as I begin to neglect any one of these areas, it has a noticeable effect on the extent to which I seek joy and delight in Him and in His word. Disciplining ourselves in these ways takes effort; it takes a lot of work. As Christ said, in order to follow after Him we must deny ourselves and daily take up our cross. And we can be comforted in knowing that He will grant us the grace to do this faithfully.

So, how do we pursue righteousness and grow in delight for our Lord's instruction? We continually expose ourselves to the truths of His word, consciously submit ourselves to His

commands, walk in the example of His Son, by the strength of His Spirit, for the ultimate purpose of magnifying His glory.