

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Restoring Your Soul...in God's Word
Psalm 1

For the past month, I've been on sabbatical with my family and the Lord. And, on behalf of our entire family, I want to thank you for giving us that time to rest and be renewed. I also want to thank our pastors for the ways they serve our church family, whether I'm here or not. It's a privilege to be part of a team of godly men who work together to lead and shepherd and teach this fellowship.

We had an amazing time away. We spent the first couple of weeks in California, where we visited some national parks and then made our way down the Pacific Coast highway. One of our favorite parts of that trip was a hike we did in Yosemite National Park. It's called the Mist Trail. The route we took was a little over 5 miles with about a half mile in elevation gain. The trail goes along a beautiful river and up the side of a 300-foot waterfall. The climb was so close to the waterfall, that we were absolutely drenched by the time we reached the top, that's why it's called mist trail.

It was stunning. It was amazing. And it was exhausting. Multiple times, we had to stop and sit down just to catch our breath and have something to eat and drink. And that didn't catch us by surprise. We knew that's what would happen. So, we loaded up our backpacks with water bottles and trail mix and beef jerky. We knew we would be spent and would need to be renewed. That's just part of the journey up a mountain.

And that's just how life is, as well. Sometimes it's stunning and amazing. Sometimes, it's exceptionally difficult and trying. Even the good parts can be incredibly difficult. That's just part of the journey. So, we need to stop and spend time restoring our souls on a regular basis. And that's what our next short series of studies is going to be about. Lord willing, we will walk through 7 or 8 Psalms for the sake of Restoring our Souls. Whether you are in times of waiting or spiritual turmoil or relational conflict, there are powerful truths in the Psalms that God uses to strengthen and renew us in our spiritual journey.

And the first Psalm we are going to study is Psalm 1. It's a great place to start, not just because it's the first Psalm but because it describes a life that is blessed and fruitful and strong enough to withstand the trials of life and the test of time.

So, look with me at Psalm 1.

Psalm 1:1–6

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

One of the first things we see in this Psalm is that it is a study in contrast between a righteous person who is blessed by God and a wicked person who is cursed by God.

But the contrast is really more specific than that. It's not just about a righteous and a wicked person. It's a contrast between what influences and impacts the lives of righteous and wicked people.

Look back at verses 1-2:

1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

The blessed, righteous person delights in and meditates on the law of the Lord, that's a reference to the Word of God. By contrast, he does not live according to the counsel of the wicked or the way of sinners. Simply put, this Psalm tells us there are two primary influences in the lives of people. The first influence is the Word of God. The other influence is the counsel, or way, of this world.

And verse 2 clearly says the way of blessing is directly linked to the word of God. And that gives us our big idea for today.

Big Idea: God blesses people who delight in and meditate on His word.

Friend, if you want a life blessed by God, you will not get it apart from His Word, the Bible. It is God's revelation of truth to us. Each word is inspired by His Holy Spirit. Each truth is infallible and without error.

That's why 2 Peter 1:19 says, *"we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."*

Nothing will renew your soul or strengthen your spirit like the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Only God's word can shed light into your life in the midst of this dark world. The blessing of God is poured out into the lives of people who delight in and meditate on His word.

That's the point of Psalm 1. But this Psalm doesn't just tell us that God blesses us in connection with His word; it provides a vivid description of the various ways God blesses us through His word.

So, in the remainder of our time together, I want to share with you five blessings that come into our lives when we delight in and meditate on God's word.

Do I want this kind of blessing?
How am I pursuing it in my day-to-day life?

Blessing #1 – Happiness

The word "blessed" in verse 1 literally means "happy." It's not some shallow, surface-level happiness that can be momentarily derived from the things of this world. It's the deep and satisfying happiness that is marked by joy and satisfaction and contentment...the kind this world cannot give you and this world cannot take away.

You remember when you were a kid at Christmas? In my life, there was a dynamic that would go something like this. I would see a commercial for a toy on television. By the time the commercial was over, I was convinced that if I could just get that toy, I would never need anything else to make me happy. Some years, I actually got what I wanted, and I was literally as happy as a kid at Christmas, until the second week of January when that toy either broke or just got old.

And most of you can identify with that feeling. The world keeps promising happiness. The toys just get more expensive.

houses and cars and cellphones and entertainment and physical health and financial wealth and power and success in our careers are advertised as sources of happiness. All the while, we see with our own eyes and many of us can testify by our own experience that the pursuit of those things has absolutely zero bearing on whether or not we will actually be happy.

And all the while, God is saying, "I want to make you truly happy, and I actually know how to do it."

The person who is truly, deeply happy is the person who is so focused on God's Word and so influenced by God's Word that God's mind becomes his mind and God's heart becomes his heart and God's priorities become his priorities. That is where happiness is found. Because all joy and all pleasures and all good things flow from God. And the more we know God in His Word, the more we find life and joy and pleasure and happiness in Him.

Blessing #2 – Rootedness

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water...

What's the point of planting a tree by a river of water? It's that the water of the river will enable the growth of the roots. And what's the point of having deep roots?

For one, deep roots provide stability. We have two oak trees in our backyard. A couple of years ago, a hurricane came through. As those winds blew, I watched those old oak trees. At times, their branches waved violently, their leaves were blown to kingdom come but those trees stood strong. You know why? Their roots are buried deep in the soil. Those roots make them steady and stable. And that's what it's like for people who delight in the Bible in a way that they meditate on it each and every day.

You can know that the Psalmist intends for us to draw this conclusion because of what he says in verse 4. **The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

People who live according to the course of the world and not the word of God will eventually be blown away like the chaff that blows off the grains of wheat.

And church, you likely don't need me to tell you that these are unstable times we are living in. Many of you can feel the wind picking up. There's instability all around us. Our government and economy. The social and moral climate of our nation. For some in the room, your personal lives are in the middle of a stormy season. Your job is in jeopardy. Your health is failing. Your family is going through turmoil.

What can you do to steady your soul in unsteady times? Delight in and meditate on the Word of God each and every day.

Blessing #3 – Fruitfulness

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,

Spiritual fruit comes into our lives by way of the Word of God. Connect this with what we learn in *Galatians 5:22–23* *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Spiritual fruit is characterized by love and joy and peace and patience. But some of you might be wondering whether it's the Holy Spirit that produces spiritual fruit or the Word of God in us that produces spiritual fruit. And the answer is, "Yes." The Spirit worked in the human authors to produce the Scriptures. The word of God is the sword of the Holy Spirit, the tool He uses in our lives. The Holy Spirit living in us uses the work of the word to produce spiritual fruit.

Do you want to grow in love or joy or patience? Do you want to be a more faithful person or have more self-control? Well, you can't do it. That's why you need Jesus and the power of His Spirit living in you and the way you encounter Christ and hear the voice of His Spirit is through His word, the Bible. We'll come back to this in a minute.

Blessing #4 - Endurance

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Several months ago, a group of us went on a mission trip to Guatemala. Like most mission trips I've been on, our trip included some pretty long bus rides. At one point, we were driving across a long stretch of what appeared to be parched farmland. It was mile after mile of dried-up pasture. But every once in a while, I would see a long strip of lush green trees and grass where rivers and streams were coursing through the landscape. The plants that were by the water didn't shrivel up and die even in the oppressive heat and drought. They prospered and endured.

And that's part of the blessing that comes from the word of God. Your life isn't sustained by your circumstances. Your life is sustained in spite of your circumstances by the power of God as your life is rooted in His word.

My grandfather on my mother's side lived to be 96 years old. He was one special guy. He was strong and tough, the way they used to make men before my generation came along. He survived the great depression and worked in the coal mines of West Virginia as a teenager after his mother passed away. Then, he went to France to whip Hitler and the Nazis. He never had the opportunity to get an education so, after the War, he raised a family on almost no income. He took care of my grandmother through decades of failing health until she finally went to be with Jesus. He remarried and became the caregiver to his second wife in her final years, as well.

If you just read bullet points to my Papaw's life, I wouldn't blame you for assuming he grew old and bitter after living through so many difficult and trying circumstances. But that's not who Papaw was. In spite of the challenges, he grew more loving and joyful and gentle and kind. His leaf didn't wither. You know why? One of my prized possessions is one of many Bibles my Papaw owned. It's nearly falling apart, not from neglect but from something called "daily use." Papaw was in the Word every day and every day the Word was in Him.

His leaf didn't wither because his life was rooted in God's word.

Blessing #5 - Righteousness

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

This psalm ends the way it began, with a contrast between the righteous and the wicked. Not just important because of this life, eternity is coming, judgment is coming. And it would be easy to read this psalm and think that we earn our righteousness by delighting in God's word and doing what He says.

But that's not what God's word actually says. As a matter of fact, that's not what the Psalms say.

Psalm 14:3 They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

The psalmist himself acknowledges that there is no one who does good. This is the verse Paul quotes in Romans 3 as the basis for saying that there is no one who is righteous by their own works except God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

So, how can the Psalmist say in Psalm 14 that no one is righteous by their own work but in Psalm 1 say that there is an entire congregation of righteous people who will stand in the day of judgment and over whom the Lord will watch over?

Well, the Psalmist knows something that is woven all throughout the Scriptures.

Psalm 32

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity...

5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

The psalmist knows that the person who is blessed and righteous is the person who confesses their sin and turns to the Lord for forgiveness. We don't earn our righteousness by our work, we receive God's righteousness through the work of Jesus Christ in His life, death, and resurrection.

As a matter of fact, the only person who has ever lived out Psalm 1 perfectly is Jesus. Only Jesus perfectly chose not to walk in the counsel of the wicked and stand in the way of sinners. We've already blown it. That's why we need Jesus. Only he can do this for us and through us.

That's the central truth that's woven throughout the entire word of God. Christ is the centerpiece of the entire Bible. His gospel is the scarlet thread that runs cover to cover and is in and over every page. And when you delight in God's word and meditate on it over and over again, you encounter that good news about Jesus over and over again. And when God's word stirs up faith in you and you believe that truth about Jesus, then God makes you righteous through your faith in Christ, which means you will stand in the day of judgment, you will inherit eternal life, you will spend eternity with God as your Father.

That's how God's word brings you righteousness. You encounter Jesus in the word and find that Jesus is your righteousness when you trust in Him.

So, if you want the blessings of God, if you want happiness, rootedness, fruitfulness, endurance, and righteousness, then come to God's word. He gives those blessings through His power to people who delight in and meditate on His word.

And as we close, I want to give you two practical applications of this message.

1. Pray for a heart that delights in God's word.

Do you know why you spend hours every day on your smartphone? Because you delight in it. You want a kind of pleasure that you get from picking up that phone and playing games or sending texts or browsing social media.

Do you know why you spend hours every day watching television? Because you delight in it. You want a kind of pleasure that you get from the shows you watch throughout the day or at night before you go to bed.

Do you know why you can spend countless hours listening to your favorite music, memorizing all the lyrics and singing them to yourself throughout the day? Because you delight in it. You want a kind of pleasure that you get from your favorite music.

I'm not condemning smartphones or television or music. Not at all. Those things can occupy a good and healthy place in our lives.

But do you know why we are able to spend hours on phones and in front of tv's and immersed in music, but we don't make daily time in God's word a priority? Because our hearts don't naturally delight in God's word. And the truth is, we need a work of God's grace to cultivate a right desire for God's word.

That's why the psalmist prays the way he does in Psalm 51.

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

God has to use His creative power to give us the kind of heart that delights in the Word. He has to renew a right spirit in us. The kind of spirit that hears what God says in His word and responds by saying, "Yes, Lord, that's good, that's right, that's the way I need to live."

So, if you find in yourself a lack of delight in the Word, don't roll up your spiritual sleeves and try to push through. Fall on your knees and ask God to change your heart. Ask Him to give you delight in the word that cultivates a desire to be in the word each day.

2. Practice Meditation on the Word.

When many of us think of meditation, we picture someone who has their legs crossed and their eyes closed and their minds emptied, saying something like, "OHMMM."

That's not what the word meditation means in the bible. The word "meditation" means "to murmur or speak repeatedly under your breath." In essence, meditation is simply speaking God's word to yourself over and over again.

When you come to the bible, grab hold of a particular truth and speak it to yourself throughout the day. Don't just read to read. Read to get truth that you can grab hold of by faith and carry with you throughout the day, truth you can speak to yourself over and over again.

This is where Bible memorization becomes so life-giving. Memorizing scripture allows you to meditate on Bible truth in whatever circumstance of life you might be facing.

When you encounter something that makes you afraid, meditate on Isaiah 41:10 – *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

When you encounter your own weakness, meditate on Psalm 73:26 - *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength[a] of my heart and my portion forever.*

When you encounter circumstances that make you weary and tired, meditate on Matthew 11:28-29 - *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Meditate on God's word as an expression of your belief in Psalm 1 that God blesses people who delight in and meditate on His word throughout their days and nights. And you will be like a tree planted by streams of water. You will bear fruit in due season. You will not wither and will prosper in all that you do. And, ultimately, you will stand in the day of judgment as you delight in and depend upon Jesus as your One and Only source of righteousness.