

## Psalm 1 LSB

- 1     *How blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor **stand** in the way of sinners,  
Nor **sit** in the seat of scoffers!*
  - 2     *But his delight is in the law of Yahweh,  
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.*
- Psa. 1:4 The wicked are not so,  
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.*
- 5     *Therefore the wicked will not rise in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*
  - 6     *For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked will perish.*

## Freedom to Thrive

In the spring of 1942, in response to Franklin Roosevelt's 1941 speech in which he envisioned 4 basic human freedoms, Norman Rockwell painted 4 images depicting Freedom of Speech, Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear, and Freedom to Worship.

What neither Rockwell or Roosevelt had analyzed, or perhaps they had, was that those four freedoms are the building blocks of human thriving. It wasn't something the United States invented, it was code for humans written by the Creator who loves them.

To thrive we need these four building blocks. Basic needs. Food & shelter, safety, dignity, and worship.

What's interesting is that 80 years ago when Roosevelt defined those goals, and Rockwell painted the pictures, those things were intact in America and were very much worth fighting for to keep. It was World War II.

But looking back at the four pictures and trying not to be simply romantic about them, some of us who are old enough have to look at them and say, "What happened?" For septegenarians, this *was* us. But for our grandchildren, and their children each of these is challenged and disappearing.

You might be thinking, what does this have to do with Freedom in Christ? And if we think about it, they have everything to do with Christ who created us to thrive and who has something to say about what is necessary for humans to thrive.

It turns out our nation, even though it's bitterly disputed now, was founded on biblical principles. In order for freedom to thrive, it was understood that God's 10 commandments were the base line.

Freedom and thriving are not quite the same thing. We think we want freedom, but what we really want is to thrive. We think we want success, but what we really want is well being and happiness.

God built into His creation some principles that have to be in place and observed in order for humans to thrive. Just like He built in gravity and we instinctively respect physical laws of acceleration and rapid deceleration at the bottom of the cliff, or the heat of fire and the natural boundaries our bodies that we are in must maintain from too much heat, God also designed spiritual barriers and limits. He codified those principles for Moses on Mount Sinai and we have them intact, 4000 years later, as the 10 commandments.

What slipped in the 75 years since Rockwell so elegantly painted those pictures? What changed. Because every one of them is challenged and about

to dis-appear. Freedom to speak is being challenged every day by what some people call political correctness. Freedom to worship is being challenged every day in our courts as somehow a challenge to others rights.

Freedom from want and freedom from fear are a house of cards being only supported by a debt that is untenable and non sustainable. We have leveraged and borrowed on the once great wealth and thriving of the past, but we all sort of know it's a house of cards with no foundation or structure. Tell me who is really going to be surprised when it all collapses like that building in Florida?

What happened is that we didn't understand freedom and thriving. It turns out freedom isn't a blanket pass to do anything you want. No holds barred.

It turns out that God instituted restraints that would maximize freedom. Think about that. Restraints are what maximize freedom. That sounds counter-intuitive, but it is built into the creation by God Himself.

Lets talk about 4 restraints on freedom. We could probably come up with more, but these will suffice to understand how the Creator designed us. Marriage. Family. Personal accountability. Church.

Each category can be defined biblically. Marriage to one person for life. No other intimate partners. Just one who has full trust and confidence. Two people become a complimentary team. A force to reckon with.

That provides a stable foundation for family. Families are communities that can accomplish great mutual things like freedom from fear, freedom from want, training in righteousness, education so that you can speak with clarity. All four freedoms have their roots in family, and family has it's roots in biblical marriages.

Personal accountability is based in family. Standards and lines that are not crossed, understood for the mutual good of not just you, but the entire family that is counting on you.

And finally, the restraint of education in righteousness. Church. Worshipping a God who has standards. A God who speaks. A God who has revealed truths in a way that they become non-negotiables. Crystal clear dogmas revealed in a book that claims to be God's very words, and not open to someone challenging and changing those truths. A God who ultimately will judge sin based on those crystal clear truths.

Our nation, in its pursuit of freedom has abandoned every one of those God ordained building blocks for restraint and maximum thriving. Marriage is a joke. Family is something we laugh at on TV. The more dysfunctional the better. Personal accountability has become personal gain for me, me, me no restraints on the cost to you. And Worship has for the most part ceased. A telling 1966 cover of Time magazine stated ***God is Dead.***

Where does that leave us. Well certainly the ease and ordinariness of those freedoms on a national level is massively changed. We abandoned God. We abandoned all restraints in the cause of greater freedom, and the result is we watch helplessly as our beloved nation is collapsing from within.

But God was God and people were people before the United States. And the point of this discussion is that God's people can thrive in an easy, friendly environment, and also in a hostile environment. The United States abandoned God, and we may find that God's people may have to abandon the United States.

Christians answer to a higher King. Our God can bring thriving to individuals and families and groups no matter what the ruler of this world throws at us. It's nice if the nation is on board and those are the standards everyone is sort of living by, but we look down through history and God has had His elect people separated from the world in every kind of culture.

It may become really really difficult and costly to be a Christian. But we thrive because Jesus bought us a place at God's table, and we have come out of this world and are separated unto Him. He owns us. We are His people, His family, and He will provide enough of those 4 freedoms for us to thrive no

matter what our culture throws at us.

Freedom is being owned by Jesus, and comes from studying and observing His commandments until we see His face.

Let's look at Roosevelt's and Rockwells four freedoms from a christian world view.

**Freedom of Speech;** Our Creator not only guarantees this freedom but He compels us to do it. In fact we are not free to not speak. We are ordered to speak the truth to a fallen world that does not wish to hear it. 1Cor 9:16 says; *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.*

If our nation rules in some way that we may not speak, comes up with so-called hate speech laws that would punish us for speaking the truth, we answer to a higher power, and like Peter and John when the authorities imprisoned them in Acts 5;

*27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.*

Freedom of Speech is a biblical mandate, not a right given by the United States. In fact I do not have the freedom NOT to speak.

*How blessed on the mountains are the feet of them, who bring good news;*  
GOOD NEWS! Ro. 10

**Freedom from Fear;**

Psalm 118:6 *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*

Matt. 10:28 *"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

In 2020 and 2021 we have witnessed a fear that I had never even thought much about before. People are so traumatized by the fear of death from some disease that they literally put all of their freedoms on hold and hid from death until the threat declined.

Irrational fear. The numbers didn't add up. 5 - 7 in 10,000. And yet this book says that God is in control of each and every breath that every human ever takes. They cease on His command. And we are told that eternal punishment awaits each and every person who has sinned, and then it tells us, all have sinned. Yet there is no fear of God or eternity?

As soon as the threat diminishes and ultimately, even before it did, we go right back to parading our so-called freedom from God. We shake our tiny fist at God and parade our sin.

The only possible freedom from fear belongs to those who know that they are the possession of and under the protection of the ownership of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus. Apart from that, the people should fear.

Over and over we read, *the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom*. Thriving begins with fear. We understand our sin and that we have angered our Creator, and then we understand that forgiveness and reconciliation are possible because of the shed blood of Jesus, and when we give ourselves completely to Him, real freedom and real thriving, with no fear, is finally possible.

I see those "**NO FEAR**" bumper stickers and license plate frames and I think to myself, how foolish. You *should* fear! And then you should address that fear with repentance to the creator Who you have rebelled against. Hint: You are tiny, He is big.

## **Freedom from Want;**

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not \_\_\_\_\_. Ps. 23*

*Give us this day our daily \_\_\_\_\_. Mt. 6*

*Mt. 6:31“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32“For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

*31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Romans 8*

Roosevelt and Rockwell pictured an America with a chicken in every pot, and at thanksgiving, a turkey with all the goodies at the table. And we were so successful that we left God in the dust. These days we are shocked at all the in-alienable rights that people come up with. Things the founders and indeed, Roosevelt and Rockwell never even dreamed of.

Again, we are living on the credit card of a previous wealth that is now hollow. No substance. Real freedom from want is actually contained in giving everything to Christ and then being thankful for the abundance that He gives to each of us that we do not deserve.

Our freedom from want comes from a source apart from the United States. Our bank is Jesus, and we have no worry of His riches ever failing, no matter what happens to this nation.

## **Freedom to Worship;**

Like freedom to speak is not a right given by the United States, it is an order

from a higher potentate. We worship the King of kings.

It's nice if the United States allows that and offers protections for that, but it isn't ultimately necessary. Christ's church existed with and without the United States. In fact we could say the United States exists because Christ's church and people paved the way for those freedoms.

The United States thrived for 200+ years because of christians, not the other way around. And like the first century christians who dwelled in a system that opposed them, we will thrive with or without the United States, because our King is on His throne and rules all of the nations.

How interesting that since I first wrote those words about 5 years ago, that freedom of religious assembly was actually challenged by the different state authorities and at least some christians in different places after the initial shock of the claims about Covid, people began to meet exactly because of the mandates in scripture that specifically tell us to not forsake assembling together.

Some of those challenges made it all the way to the Supreme court, and for now at least, the hindrances are throttled. But we got to see first hand how fragile our freedoms to worship in this land actually are. The first wave came and somewhat receded, but like the sea, that tide will change. Other waves will come.

Our freedom and mandate to worhsip comes from God Almighty on His throne above and we must meet together and worship corporately until He comes to receive us unto Himself.

During the Covid challenges I wonder how many times I heard people quote; well you know, "*where two or three are gathered, there am I in their midst.*" That verse isn't about worship. It's about church discipline. Look it up. We have a clear mandate to assemble together for worship and fellowship. In fact it says we need to do that more, not less, as the time approaches.

We began our little 4rth of July special this morning with a most familiar Psalm. We've hopefully read Psalm 1 many many times before and marvelled at its succinct clarity. It's brilliant. Psalm 1 is a recipe for thriving. A recipe for thriving.

Have you noticed lately when you open a new tab on your computer or pad thingy these things called; ***Recommended by Pocket***

It turns out that everybody everywhere is having an ongoing conversation about thriving. All of those different little click bate articles that have a picture and a title that you can hardly resist are someone's voice in the ongoing conversation about thriving. Here's how to thrive. Ad infinitum ad nauseum. Trillions upon trillions of written words coming at me from every angle, telling me how to thrive.

Well, it also turns out, God has a formula for thriving, and it's written down over 700 years ago, and it's ubiquitous, anyone can find these words, free of charge, almost anywhere, it isn't hidden away at the end of some conspiracy theory journey through ancient tombs and forgotten church archives.

And the words are so simple that Dick and Jane and nearly their dog spot can understand God's simple formula for thriving. This isn't rocket science. Let's spend just a few remaining minutes looking at these words that glisten like gold to us and are rejected as dung by the world.

First I'll ask, is the world happy? Does the world seem happy to you? Is there satisfaction and wellness and thriving in the world who have abandoned God's truth? Now that we've eliminated God and His moral laws, are we happy? OK, then, I rest my case. Maybe we should consider this simple formula for thriving.

1     How ***blessed*** is the man who does not ***walk*** in the counsel of the wicked,  
      Nor ***stand*** in the way of sinners,  
      Nor ***sit*** in the seat of scoffers!

See that word blessed. That's it. That's what we want. Perhaps it seems a bit old fashioned to speak of happiness and wellness and thriving in the old fashioned terminology, but that's what the word means. Real joy. Real inner peace. Real thriving in all we do. Real contentment.

Isn't that what we want. Even the people in Portland burning down the city, if you asked them, why are you doing this, they would eventually tell you, we can't be happy, we can't be well until this ideology that we think will bring the wellness and the happiness is actually completed. At whatever cost.

We have to burn down everything and start over to get to happiness, wellness, thriving. And we're willing to do that. It'll be better when the old patriarchal systems of oppression and unequal distribution are demolished and we can build our perfect world where everything is equal.

We're destroying the culture that brought the most thriving the world has ever witnessed in one place at one time, in order to have what? Thriving. Blessing. Except they would never use that word because it somehow encompasses a blessing. Someone who actually provides the blessedness. And their ideology has eliminated the source. No blessing. We have to do it. Ourselves. The arrogance is frightening. The arrogance is shocking.

God has *designed blessing into His creation*. Even without Him, do this formula and blessing and thriving come, because it's a built in component of His creation. Apart from God even, blessing comes.

*1 How blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the wicked, Nor **stand** in the way of sinners, Nor **sit** in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

I've often as I drive through Utah, considered it as something like one of the enclosures that the BLM puts up. Make a fence. Keep the cattle out. You have a comparison, inside the fence and outside. Grass outside is 4 inches tall. Inside it's 12" tall.

The mormons are like that in a way. They don't know God. But they keep His moral law. And you drive through there and you can't not see the thriving. Even devoid of God, if you keep His laws, thriving comes.

On a bigger scale, we could say over a long period, our nation proved that phenomenon. When it was normative to live according to God's moral laws, more or less, we thrived more than any other nation on earth.

In my lifetime we've jettisoned God's moral law. First the pill. Then no fault divorce. Then the first sexual revolution of the '1960's. Until where we are at in 2021. Are we thriving? It's built into the universe. Abandon God. Abandon His moral laws. Chaos and poverty ensue.

Thriving without God is one thing. It's real. We've seen it firsthand. But thriving with God is altogether better. Knowing God. Having your sins removed by the blood of Jesus. Walking with Him daily. Enjoying communion with Him every day, in His word. Having peace and joy in the midst of this world's chaos. That's otherworldly thriving.

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.*

There it is. The formula for thriving. It works on a singular level and it works on a national level. The credit card our nation is charging against is based in previous thriving that came straight from these words. How much longer can we charge against an empty account? That's a question to ponder on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

The answer is in the remainder of Psalm 1. We know what's coming. The only thing we don't know is God's timing. Listen again to the warning, direct from God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

*Psa. 1:4 The wicked are not so,  
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.*

5     *Therefore the wicked will not rise in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

6     *For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked will perish.*

We've only scratched the surface of the truths of this Psalm on this July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration morning.

Even so, it should be readily apparent that I have good news and bad news. I'm going to get the bad news out of the way first. As far as universal thriving of a people because they for some reason intrinsically normatively honored the morality of God and therefore found themselves in a condition of thriving;

What can we say about our situation nationally? We can say either the hammer is falling and we are currently living in the shadow of the wealth of our former self;

Or God isn't real, He didn't create everything, He didn't write this book as a corrective and a warning, and we're going to be just fine. It's one or the other. Because this Psalm says that wickedness leads to failure, both now and for eternity. If God doesn't judge this swamp, you can throw this book away based only on the words of this Psalm.

Did He judge and destroy other nations who were collectively less wicked than we currently are? Hmmmmmmm. Might be worth studying. I think you all know the answer. He is real. He means business. Judgement is already upon us.

The good news. This Psalm works individually for anyone who honors God's morality. Even non-christians can thrive if they obey God's design. But we don't want to stop there.

For christians we understand that God is sovereign and in full control of those

who He possesses as His own. And if that is us, we WILL be living according to His design and we will thrive marvelously no matter what He does to the nation we dwell in, or the people who live around us.

God blesses His own. Even if it gets difficult. That only pushes us closer to Him and our dependence on Him in rough times only adds to the blessing of walking daily with Him in every thing.

We are citizens of another world living in a foreign land. We are sojourners here in this world. But we take comfort that our King has sovereignty here, even though an evil ruler has usurped authority in this place. Our God will care for every need and bring peace and joy yes, thriving and prosperity to our souls as we delight in walking in His ways and we honor Him by shouting His truths in a lost place.