

Sermon Outline

“The Way of the Righteous”

Psalm 1 – Jeff Purswell – August 22, 2010

Introduction

1. We live in a “connected” technology world that has its benefits and dangers. One of the many dangers is the countless ways technology can distract us and compete for our attention. What is dangerous about these distractions is that they come with a promise of entertainment, knowledge or inclusion.

“The compulsive search for diversion is often an attempt to escape the wretchedness of life. We have great difficulty being quiet in our rooms, when the television or computer screen offers a riot of possible stimulation. Post-modern people are perpetually restless; they frequently seek solace in diversion instead of satisfaction in truth. As Pascal said, ‘Our nature consists in movement; absolute rest is death.’ The postmodern condition is one of over-saturation and over-stimulation, and this caters to our propensity to divert ourselves from pursuing higher realities.” —Douglas Groothuis

2. Psalm 1 provides a divine interruption to our distractions. It breaks into the clutter of our minds and the clamor of competing voices with a penetrating presentation of reality. Psalm 1 presents an uncompromising claim and a hope-filled promise: the exclusive path to enduring joy is devotion to God’s Word.

The Way of the Righteous (verses 1-3)

1. Psalm 1 opens with an exclamation, “Blessed.” This word carries a congratulatory meaning—this righteous man is celebrated, admired and approved. He is the one who has the richest, fullest experience of life.
2. The psalm begins by saying what the righteous DOES NOT do (verse 1). He does not:
 - a. “Walk in the counsel of the wicked”—he doesn’t accept the world’s advice nor is he influenced by the world’s perspective on life.
 - b. “Stand in the way of sinners”—he doesn’t linger in their paths; this man doesn’t engage in the world’s sinful ways.
 - c. “Sit in the seat of scoffers”—he doesn’t settle in to the world’s way of thinking, adopting its attitudes as they scoff at holiness, belittle the righteous, and mock the pursuit of godliness.
3. Verse 2 explains what the righteous DOES. The righteous:
 - a. Devotes himself to the word of God—this is what captivates and preoccupies him.

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- b. Delights in God's word—"delight" is deeper than emotion: it's a combination of "delight" and "attention." In other words, there's a "joyful immersion," a diligent, satisfying application of Scripture to his life. It is his chief desire.
 - c. Meditates on God's word—he murmurs, recites, rolls it over in his mind, thinks out loud, processes it, and memorizes God word.
4. The devotion of the righteous produces delight, and delight, in turn, produces devotion. In our reading of Scripture, we can often desire or expect some immediate, ecstatic experience, or we become disappointed. This psalm doesn't have in mind momentary bursts of bliss. It is advocating a lifestyle—a lifetime of reflection and meditation and application. This is true Biblical spirituality—not momentary experiences that dissipate, but gradual transformation by the Spirit, through the Word, that's solid; that's durable; that lasts.
 5. The righteous' devotion and delight in God's word produces RESULTS (verse 3). The tree sent its roots deep into the streams of living water. Even in drought or adversity, the tree will receive all the care and nourishment it needs to be fruitful, to be productive, and to bring blessing to others. And so this man experiences prosperity in his soul and life in everything he does, despite harsh or unfavorable conditions.

The Way of the Wicked (verse 4-5)

1. The wicked are like chaff (the outside husk of the grain) which blows away in the wind. The psalmist uses this imagery to say that the wicked are useless, worth nothing, and transitory.
2. As well, the wicked have no future. They will face eternal judgment and condemnation.

The Divine Evaluation (verse 6)

1. Up to this point, we've only seen the righteous and the wicked. Now God appears for the first time, and the entire psalm is given a divine perspective.
2. How can we be certain of a final and just judgment? How can we have confidence about the truth of this psalm? Here's why we can have confidence that an allegiance to God and a devotion to his word will bring a solid and enduring joy: "the LORD knows the way of the righteous. In the OT, "knowledge" isn't just intellectual. It's experiential and relational. God cares about us. He identifies with us and is committed us.
3. God also knows the way of the wicked. Their path ends with a frightening word—"the wicked will perish". Their ultimate end will be ruin.

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4. God intends this psalm to bring clarity to our lives. There are not an endless number of lifestyle choices in the world. There are only two—the way of the righteous or the way of the wicked. On which path are you?

Fellowship Starters:

1. The main idea of Jeff's message was that "the exclusive path to enduring joy is devotion to God's Word." What things distract and compete with your devotion to God's word? Where are you tempted to believe that joy and satisfaction can be found in the things and pursuits of this world?
2. From verses 1-2, what are the distinguishing marks of the righteous? What doesn't he do? What does he do? As you compare yourself to this portrait, what area would you identify for growth and change?
3. What is the good fruit that verse 3 promises to those who are devoted to God's Word? How does this encourage or convict you about your devotion to reading, studying, memorizing, and mediating on Scripture?
4. Jeff taught us that the word "delight" means a "joyful immersion, a diligent, satisfying application of Scripture to life ... a chief desire." How would you evaluate your affections and delight for God's word? If necessary, what steps of repentance should you take to rekindle a hunger and love for God's word?