

THE BLESSED LIFE

Psalm 1

Intro: When we speak of the Beatitudes, we are all inclined to think of those found in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc. But in reality Beatitudes are to be found throughout the OT as well as many places in the NT. Looking at all of them would certainly be overwhelming evidence that the Lord wants His people to be happy! That is the meaning of the word "blessed."

As we go through the Beatitudes in the Psalms, it is not going to be my purpose to expound each Psalm. But I will keep in mind that "a text without a context is a pretext." A pretext is that which is merely assumed in order to make a point. Often preachers will have some point that they want to make, and so they will choose a verse which seems to say what they want to say, ignore the setting of the verse, and go on to use the Scriptures the way they want to use them, rather than saying what they really say. I do not want to do that. That is playing with the Word of God.

Let me give you an example of what I mean.

A verse which is often used for missionary messages is the latter part of Psa. 142:4, "... no man cared for my soul." And the idea is that people all over the world are waiting for the Gospel, but no one seems interested in taking it to them.

In response to that we can say that the people of the world are not waiting for the Gospel; they do not want to be saved. But, in addition to that, the 142nd Psalm was written by David when he was fleeing from Saul, and he was saying, "... no man cared for my soul." It seemed to him that everybody was against him, and no one cared. So it has nothing to do with missions.

So we must always take into consideration what the context is or we will most certainly arrive at a false interpretation, and then a false application.

Therefore, I am going to deal especially with the Beatitudes, but look at them in the light of the Psalms in which they are found.

This first Beatitude is a little different because it is the theme of this Psalm. This has been generally regarded as the prologue to all of the Psalms, and it deals with the subject of how man can be happy.

For my own purpose I want to deal with:

- 1) The word, "Blessed."
- 2) The three words, "walketh ... standeth ... sitteth ... "
- 3) The two words, "delight ... meditate ... "
- 4) Finally, the promises given in verse 3.

So let us consider, first of all,

I. THE WORD, "BLESSED."

Perhaps someone has already pointed out to you that this word is plural in the original Hebrew. For this reason Mr. Fausset in the JFB commentary says that it speaks of being happy, not in just one respect, "but in countless ways" (Vol. III, p. 105). And then he added that it implies "the manifold aspects of his happiness" (Ibid.).

So the Psalmist was preparing to tell his readers not only how to be happy, but how to be supremely happy! No other joy could even begin to compare with the joy that he was about to describe.

Such a word was bound to attract the attention of the person who was serious in wanting to be happy. I hope that this has gotten your attention.

But now let me go on to the three verbs that I mentioned a moment ago:

II. THE WORDS (all of them verbs), " ... WALKETH ... STANDETH ... SITTETH ... "

To be sure he was pointing out where we will not find happiness, i.e., in sin in any form where it progressively takes a greater and greater hold upon our lives. But those words indicate that he was speaking about the way a person lives! He was not saying that happiness is the result of what we possess, nor does it come from isolated experiences that we might fortunately have. No, happiness comes as a result of the way we live! The person who is unhappy needs to stand back and look at his whole life—the direction in which he is headed. He may do a lot of good things, but those good things may not have anything to do with God. Not all sins are scandalous, but they gradually get a tighter and tighter hold upon a person's life, and sin ultimately brings with it not manifold happinesses, but manifold unhappinesses.

So, if you and I are not happy, we need to take a close look at our lives.

And this leads me to my third point:

III. THE WORDS, " ... DELIGHT ... MEDITATE ... "

The word "delight" is a word which pictures what we might call the primary BENT of a person's life. That is, what has the greatest drawing power in your life? What do you do when you have a spare minute? In fact, what do you make time for in your life? What really gives you the greatest pleasure? Whatever that is, is your "delight."

You and I need to look back over our lives this past week for the answer. What do we see as the one thing that we were inclined to do, or want to do, more than anything else? Was it sports? Was it TV? Was it being with some friend? Was it your job? Was it some project that you are working on? What was it? What do you try to make room for even though you have many, many things to do?

HOW WONDERFUL IT IS IF YOU AND I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT THE ONE THING THAT BRINGS US THE GREATEST JOY IS OUR BIBLES! I do mean that we are to sit around reading it all of the time. We do have other things that have to be done. But I do mean that it is to the Word of God that we find ourselves continually drawn.

The Psalmist here called it, "the law of the Lord."

Please do not interpret this as meaning just the Ten Commandments, or even just the Mosaic Law. This is an expression which is used in the OT for all of the Word of God!

What did he do with it? Did he just read it? No, he meditated in it! How often? Just in the morning, or just in the evening? No! How often? "Day and night." What did this mean? It meant continually! He found such joy and blessing in the Word of God that he could not get enough of it. He read it. He enjoyed hearing others read it. He went to hear it taught. We would say today that it was no problem for him to go to church. And the object of all of this was that he would be able to understand it so that instead of walking and standing and sitting in sin, he was walking and standing and sitting in the Word of God. He wanted his life to be lived as the Word of God said that he should live.

Jeremiah must have known this truth because he wrote in Jer. 15:16,

Thy words were found, and I did eat them;
and thy word was unto me
the joy and rejoicing of my heart:
for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

But we still have to look at that word, "meditate." What does it mean to "meditate" on the Word of God?

The Psalmist here used a very interesting word. Its basic idea is that of making a low muttering sound. It is used in Isa. 31:4 of the growling of a young lion after he had found his prey, and he is enjoying eating it. It speaks of contentment and delight.

When it comes to meditation, it means that we may be speaking quietly to ourselves as people often do when they are deep in thought.

It may suggest that the Psalmist read the word softly, read it to himself, noticing every word, so as to let nothing escape his understanding. And the reading he was doing was not for anyone but himself! He was not reading just to get through all of the Scripture that he had, but he read to get the Word of God into his heart so that it would transform his life. This is what it means to meditate in the Word. The Psalmist did not consider any part of the Word unimportant. He wanted to understand it all, and he found his heart being continually drawn back to the Word of God.

Now we know that no person would say these things if he did not know the Lord in salvation. The person who is not a Christian takes no delight in the Word of God. In fact, he would never think of turning to the Bible to find happiness. But this is where the Psalmist, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said that happiness is to be found. The tragedy is that many of the Lord's people have not found their joy in the Word of God.

When the Lord Jesus was here on earth, after teaching His disciples, He said to them,

These things have I spoken unto you,
that my joy might remain in you,
and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

If our joy is "full," we do not need to look any place else for our joy to be complete.

But I have one other thing to point out concerning this First Beatitude of the Psalms:

IV. THE PROMISES.

I am speaking now of verse 3. There are four promises. Look any place else you want to, you will never find such promises, nor such assurances of happineses, as we have here.

- A. The promise of what we will become: "Like a tree planted by the rivers of water."

The tree speaks of stability; the place where the tree is planted, "by the rivers of water," speaks of a constant supply is the refreshing water which is so necessary for the life and health of the tree.

- B. The promise of what we will bear: "That bringeth forth his fruit in his season."

"Fruit" in Scripture has to do with character. It has to do with service. Dawson Trotman of The Navigators used to say that "the fruit of a Christian is another Christian."

This brings great joy to any Christian, to see that we are growing and that God is using us in the lives of others.

- C. The promise that our outward life will not fail: "His leaf also shall not wither."

You have seen people whose outward love for the Lord, and whose outward life, begins to wither. How sad it is to see this! How can it be prevented? By delighting in the Word of God and living our lives in obedience to the Lord.

- D. The promise of continual prosperity: "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

The Lord was not promising us here that we will become rich. Nor was he saying that we will always be able to accomplish all that we want to. But this was a repetition of the promise that the Lord gave to Joshua when he took over the leadership of Israel after Moses died. Do you remember Joshua 1:8? This is what the Lord said:

This book of the law shall not depart
out of thy mouth;
but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,
that thou mayest observe to do
according to all that is written therein:
for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous,
and then thou shalt have good success.

Is this not the kind of a life that you want to have, a life that pleases God, a life that gives you joy, and a life that carries no regrets with it. The rest of the Psalm tells us that to go any other way you will be disappointed now, and filled with grief from which there

is no comfort in the day when we stand before the Lord in judgment. Which will it be with you?

Concl: Beatitudes are in and of themselves, promises.

Psalm 1 is God's promise to us. Let us believe it, and pray that the Lord will enable us to "delight" in His Word. We now have all of Scripture. It is completed and in our hands. How much greater, then, should be our joy than even the Psalmist had experienced! May God grant that it will be so in our lives.

A Happy Faith
Psalm 2

Intro: The Beatitude is found in verse 12, at the end of the verse: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

The same verb is used in Psa. 5:11. And again in Psa. 34:8.

The word "blessed" is the same as in Psa. 1:1. It speaks of manifold blessings. Strong, in his concordance, suggested the translation, "How happy . . . !" It is the kind of joy that David had in mind when he wrote in Psa. 23:5b, "My cup runneth over." There often are things or experiences which we think will give us joy, but they are a disappointment to us. There will be no disappointment here! Satisfaction is GUARANTEED!

But now I hope that you remember what I said last week, and have said many times before, about the context. What was the Psalmist speaking about when he closed on such a joyous note?

There is no question but that this is a prophetic Psalm, prophetic of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is both Jehovah's King and Jehovah's Son. The NT makes this very clear. No other Psalm is quoted more often in the NT than this Psalm. That fact alone suggests how very important it is.

It is also prophetic of the reign of Christ upon the earth. See vv. 8, 9.

But, as we shall presently see, this is also a Gospel Psalm. It has to do with salvation.

But let us get an overall picture of the Psalm so that we can see the reason for the Beatitude which comes at the end.

The Psalm opens with a picture of . . .

I. A WORLD-WIDE CONSPIRACY (Psa. 2:1-3).

It makes no difference what the particular time might be because every generation portrays this attitude toward God. The kings and their peoples may not know that this is the nature of their objective in life, but it is! It is what one writer has called, "a battle for freedom" (K&D, Psalms, I, p. 93). They want to be free, free to live as they want to live. Submission to God is to the unregenerate heart a complete bondage. Nothing could be more intolerable to the sinner, whether he be a king, a ruler, or one of the common people. This is one thing upon which the nations of the earth can be united.

But the question in verse 1 suggests that such action is senseless. Would mere men, as great as they might be among men, agree to take on the Lord, Jehovah, and His Anointed One? That is what men in every generation do. They even want to get rid of any evidence of divine control that they might discover as being upon them.

But how does God view this? And this is really a picture of all of human history. Is He worried about His plans and purposes? Is He trying to find out what He ought to do? Has all of this taken Him by surprise? Are the Members of the Godhead foiled by the fact that men are united against Them?

Let us look at . . .

II. THE RESPONSE OF JEHOVAH IN HEAVEN (Psa. 2:4-9).

We have a response toward the kings and the nations, but we also have a response toward Jehovah's Son.

A. His response toward men (vv. 4, 5).

And here we also have a threefold response:

1. Jehovah laughs with scorn at them (v. 4).

Shall omnipotence fear impotence? Is God ever afraid of man, regardless of how many men may stand against Him? The question is almost too ridiculous to ask, isn't it?

2. Jehovah gets angry (v. 5).

He does not ignore them, but even before the end times He has frequently displayed His great displeasure with the ways of wicked men. For men to be vexed means that they are seized with fear at the sudden and devastating outbursts of the wrath of God. And yet they are so blinded by the desire to have what they want that they continue on in their opposition of God.

3. He reaffirms His original purpose (v. 6).

Sacred history makes no mention of any of the kings of Israel or Judah ever having been anointed on Zion. Thus this king is the King of kings, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. All of the opposition of all of the nations of all times can never thwart the purpose of God concerning His Son.

But what was Jehovah's second response?

B. His response to His Son (Psa. 2:7-9).

Christ is speaking here, but He was saying what the Lord, Jehovah, had said to Him. There are three parts to this also, and together the three make up the decree of God.

1. Concerning the Son: the declaration of His Sonship (v. 7).

When did this take place? Cf. Rom. 1:3, 4.

2. Concerning His kingdom (v. 8).

This has nothing to do with present-day missions. This has to do with the return of the Messiah in glory. This is not a promise to us; it is a promise to Christ!

3. Concerning His enemies (v. 9).

They will be utterly destroyed, and will no longer pose any threat to the purposes of God.

Looking at all three of these we can see:

- 1) Christ's first coming.
- 2) Christ's second coming, and the gathering of His elect from the uttermost parts of the earth.
- 3) The final judgment of the wicked.

The decree of Jehovah is all there. No one will be able to say that it was never made known. It is written in the Word. If men do not pay attention to it, they have no one but themselves to blame.

But as we come to the end of the Psalm we see an amazing group of three verses: 10, 11, and 12. And we have our Beatitude at the end:

Blessed are all they
that put their trust in him.

Let us call it:

III. JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS APPEAL (Psa. 2:10-12).

What does it include?

A. A call to the Word of God (v. 10).

B. A command (v. 11, 12a).

Here is the first mention of joy in the Psalm. However, there can be no rejoicing apart from serving the Lord, doing His will. And it is impossible to serve the Lord unless we "kiss the Son," i.e., submit to Him, believe in Him, do homage to Him. Even the kings and judges of the earth have no hope apart from the Anointed One, our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. A warning (v.12m):

" ... lest he be angry,
and ye perish from the way,
when his wrath is kindled but a little"
(or, when His wrath is suddenly kindled).

What a solemn thing, what a terrible thing, to fall forever under the judgment of God from which there is no escape! The end can come so suddenly, and without any further notice.

But, finally, we come to:

D. The Beatitude--A DIVINE PROMISE (v. 12b).

How amazing that God would make such an appeal after having made such a provision for those who were rebels against Him, those who in their hearts, wanted to have nothing to do with Him.

Manifold, unique, numberless blessings are promised:

1. To all -- regardless of whether they be kings, or rulers, or judges, or paupers, or anywhere in between. There is only one way that any can come: through the Son of God. Anyone who will not come by Him, cannot come! He alone has made provision for the sinner's rebellion against God.
2. What must they do who would come?

"Put their trust in him."

You don't have to do penance. You do not have to try to correct the damage that you have done. You do not have to remember each sin, and confess each one. You simply have to trust Him. The word speaks of taking refuge in Him. It speaks of fleeing to Him to protect you in absolute safety from the wrath of God. Make Christ your strong, confident refuge, and you will have nothing to fear from the Father. Not only that, but the blessings of the Father will be poured out upon you in ways that will cause you to be

amazed now and for all eternity.

When you and I put what we deserve along side of what we have in Christ, there is only one word that will adequately explain it all: GRACE! It is the grace of God--nothing more, nothing less, nothing else!

Concl: Is your hope in Christ tonight? Have you fled to Him for refuge? Is He your Saviour? We all are rebels, you know, rebels against God. By nature we look upon God as our Enemy, and we want to have nothing to do either with Him, nor with Christ. Unless we take refuge in Christ, in His redeeming, cleansing blood, we will fall forever under the wrath of God. You won't find happiness in Christ because your parents are Christians. Nor because you know some Bible verses, and go to Trinity Bible Church. If you are not happy in Christ tonight, it may be because you have never turned to Him for salvation.

Let me close with two final verses. You will find them in Romans 5:10, 11 where Paul was detailing some of the blessings of salvation. See if this is the way you feel about the Lord.

For if, when we were enemies,
we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,
much more, being reconciled,
we shall be saved by his life.
AND NOT ONLY SO,
BUT WE ALSO JOY IN GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
by whom we have now received the reconciliation.

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

FORGIVENESS MEANS HAPPINESS

Psalm 32:1, 2

Intro: God's ideas of what brings happiness and man's ideas are very different. But God is always right, and man is never right unless he agrees with God. The tragic fact that we have to face in this connection is that most men do not have the slightest idea as to what God has said about happiness. Man is inclined to believe that he knows what will bring him happiness, and rarely does it occur to him that he might be on the wrong track. He persists in seeking his own goals even though he is surrounded with all kinds of evidence that they do not bring true and lasting happiness.

Our first two beatitudes in the Psalms have gotten us off to a good start. In some ways the first beatitude is connected with this third one because it had to do with sin. There, in Psalm 1, however, the Psalmist warned against sin, and indicated the right way to go: to delight ourselves in the Word of God (with all that that means)--not only knowing it, and believing it, but also in obeying it.

The second beatitude showed the joy that can be ours by trusting in the Lord. The kings of the earth treat God as their Enemy. True joy is ours when we look upon the Lord as our Friend, and seek from His hand the salvation which only He can give.

It seems that this third beatitude may have to do with a child of God who has gotten into sin, although the truth certainly applies to anyone who comes to the Lord for salvation. Many feel that David wrote this Psalm in connection with Psalm 51, both of which had to do with those tragic sins of his life when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then finally had her husband killed in his attempt to cover up his adultery.

But this truth applies to all sin. The only answer to sin is forgiveness. Sin, once committed, cannot be undone. The memory of it, and sometimes the effects, remain with us. But the answer is to find forgiveness. And this is where God comes in. Even the scribes and the Pharisees recognized that the only One Who can forgive sin is God! Cf. Luke 5:21.

I believe that it was Spurgeon who referred to the word forgiveness as "the sweetest word in any language." Let us examine our text to see why he would say that.

Again, as I have done on both occasion in the past when we were considering, first, Psalm 1, and then Psalm 2, let me explain the word,

I. "BLESSED."

It is plural in form, suggesting not just one blessing, but many blessings, blessings multiplied, blessings over and over. Forgiveness may be a single blessing, but it brings many other blessings with it. The word suggests that the rewards are so great it is impossible to calculate them, or to determine what they will be.

And here we have it twice!

And we learned from Joseph that God doubles things, and we can say, multiplies them, in order to show the certainty of the promise and that it will be quick in coming. What Joseph actually said about Pharaoh's two dreams was this (cf. Gen. 41:32):

And for that the dream was doubled
unto Pharaoh twice; it is because
the thing is established by God,
and God will shortly bring it to pass.

So the twofold "blessed" would indicate:

- 1) The absolute truth of these statements.
- 2) You and I do not have to wait a long time for their fulfillment.

But notice a second thing about these beatitudes. (I am counting them as one because they both deal with the same subject, but actually there are two here.) The second thing is this:

II. THIS BLESSING IS PERSONAL.

Note that David said,
Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
~~whose~~ sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord
imputeth not iniquity,
and in ~~whose~~ spirit is no guile.
"The man" is emphatic in verse 2.

Forgiveness is not a national matter (although there are times when nations need forgiveness). Nor is it even a church matter, or a family matter. Forgiveness is a personal matter. We are not forgiven just because others to whom we happen to be related in some way are forgiven. We are forgiven only as we come to the Lord personally for forgiveness and cleansing. And the blessing that is promised comes upon individuals who individually seek to get right with God. If we have been involved with others in sin, but they will not seek forgiveness, this does not and must not keep us from seeking forgiveness.

But now let us look at David's use of:

III. THE WORDS FOR SIN.

There are three of them:

- 1) "Transgression."
- 2) "Sin."
- 3) "Iniquity."

What is the difference between them, or what do they bring out about sin?

A. "Transgression."

This is probably the most serious of all sins. It is the sin of a person who knows that what he is doing is contrary to the Word of God. It is the sin of a rebel, the sin of one who refuses to submit to the sovereign authority of God. It is the sin of one who knowingly turns from God to do what he wants to do.

For such sins there was no sacrifice provided under OT Law.

B. "Sin."

The idea in this word is like the NT counterpart. It means a missing of the mark. It is that which is displeasing to God. It makes an offense a matter in which we have to reckon with God, not just with men.

David seems to be adding this to the word "transgression." That which is a "transgression" is also a "sin."

C. "Iniquity."

This word in the Hebrew indicates that there are certain consequences to be expected when we sin. We may think it will be happiness, but it never is! Sin always carries judgment with it. It may not come immediately (and that is the reason some persist in iniquity), but there is a day of reckoning coming. A holy God cannot overlook sin.

None of that presents a very happy picture. What is the answer?

Let us notice now:

IV. THE WORDS WHICH DESCRIBE THE REMEDY.

There are three of them:

A. "Forgiven."

The word that David used here is a very frequently used word in the OT, and it is used in many different ways. Basically it means to bear, or to pick up and carry away.

It suggests not something that a person does for himself, but something that is done for him by someone else. It is a perfect expression of what our Lord did on the Cross. He bore our sins. He lifted them up, and carried them away. They are removed as far as the east is from the west. They are cast into the depths of the sea. They are GONE!

Blessed is the man who knows that, although he sinned against God as a rebel, knowing what he was doing, his sin has been picked up by the Saviour, and carried away.

B. "Covered."

This speaks of sin, not being covered from our view, but from God's view. He does not see it anymore. It means that the sin is not only forgiven, but the sinner is cleansed. Amazingly it is as though the sin had never been committed at all! "Covered"! What an marvelous word, and what blessing there is even in finding this in the Scriptures.

C. "Imputeth not."

To impute something to a person is to charge them. We are talking about sins against God, sins for which we are charged in heaven. It is against our record, and there is a penalty to be paid!

The only time charges are dropped in the courts of our country is when there is not sufficient evidence to charge a person with a crime, or when the person has been proven innocent.

But that is not the case with us. We have sinned. Unfortunately we continue to sin. And we will sin against God in the future--not necessarily because we want to, but because we still have a sinful nature and are still very capable of sinning against God.

So there is no question about our guilt! The incredible fact is that here is a case of a guilty, rebellious, repeat sinner, not being charged.

But there is one more expression that I must take up before I am finished.

It is indicated in the words:

V. "NO GUILE."

What is "guile"? Guile is hypocrisy, deceit, a cover-up.

David tells us that there was a time, perhaps a rather long period of time, when he had tried to hide his sin. See verses 3 and 4. It was only when he acknowledged his sin to God that the blessings came and began to be poured out upon him in such a promised measure.

So there must be the confession of our sins to God. We may not know all of them, but we are to confess those that we do know about. We must not hide them, excuse them, nor act like we never committed them. Our spirits must be cleanse. And we see in the latter part of verse 5 what David experienced when he confessed his sin to God.

Cf. 1 John 1:6-2:2.

Concl: How can we possibly account for the fact that there is such a thing as forgiveness? Why would God clear us of all charges against us when many times we deliberately have done things that we know were wrong? We have been rebels against Him. We have dishonored His Name. And it may be that there are things in our lives which have never been straightened out with God--and we know it!

How can we explain this?

There is only one way. It has to do with GOD! It is because of His love, it is because of His grace, that He sent His Son to bear our sins on the Cross, taking upon Himself the penalty that should have fallen upon us, and paying that penalty in full, so that God is fully satisfied, nothing more needs to be done, that we are forgiven, our sins are covered from His sight, and all charges are dropped!

And for any who are truly saved, this does not become an excuse for more sin, but it causes us to cry out to God to deliver us from all sin. That is expressed in the words of the hymn (#400 in our Hymnal),

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be;
Let thy grace now, like a fetter,
Bind my wand'ring heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for thy courts above.

Perhaps as you have listened to the description tonight of the words, "transgression," "sin," and "iniquity," you have seen that this is your problem. You have never come to God through Christ to have your sins forgiven. You may have even been trying to do enough so that God would give you His blessing. Let me tell you that you can never do enough to cause God to forgive you. Neither could I. That is why I came to Christ, and that is the only answer for you. Look to the Cross as the place where God dealt with the sin question. Trust in Christ. Claim Him as your Saviour, and the blessings of forgiveness will be yours. There can be no true and lasting joy apart from the forgiveness of your sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us,
For he hath made him who knew no sin
to be sin for us,
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Is Christ your Saviour? If not, will you trust Him tonight, right now? Your sins are great, but the sacrifice of Christ is even greater. Come to Him tonight, and be saved.

THE HAPPY PEOPLE OF GOD
Psalm 33:12

Intro: My text tonight is verse 12 of Psalm 33:
Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord;
and the people whom he hath chosen
for his inheritance.

We could all say this. If it were simply a verse standing by itself, we would all know that it is true. As a statement of fact, no understanding person would doubt it.

But as you read this Psalm, you can see that it is not just a statement of fact, but it is a conclusion that the Psalmist has reached after considering a great deal of evidence. And when the evidence is considered, then the statement takes on even greater significance. As one commentator has said, this is clearly "the central thought of the Psalm" (Fausset, JFB, Vol. III, p. 171). The Psalmist seems to be reveling in the fact that such a God as the Lord is would be his God, and the God of the people of whom he was a part! It seemed amazing to him.

It is all the more unbelievable because of the way in which his people, or, in the case of Israel, his nation, had become the people of such a God. He had chosen them for His inheritance. (See the last part of verse 12.) It would have been one thing for the people to choose the Lord to be their God. But it was the most amazing thing that God had chosen them. Even though they should have chosen the Lord, because of the blindness and sinfulness of their hearts, they never would have done it.

The latter part of this verse should remind us of what Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers in Eph. 1:18 when he told them that he was praying that they would know "what" were "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Note: It was not their inheritance in Him, but His inheritance in them!

The word "Blessed" is again in the plural form. So the blessing that the Psalmist was talking about was not a single blessing, but blessings over and over, blessings abounding, blessings in a never-ending supply.

The more you think about a verse like this, the more wonderful it becomes.

But let us look a little closer at the Psalm, and perhaps we will see that this verse has more in it than it would if it just stood by itself.

In the first three verses we have:

I. A CALL TO WORSHIP (Psa. 33:1-3).

- A. Verse 1: "Rejoice in the Lord."
- B. Verse 2: "Praise the Lord . . ."
- C. Verse 3: "Sing unto him . . ."

The Lord was to be the sole object of their worship.

And again, no true child of God should have any argument with these exhortations. It is right that we rejoice in the Lord, that we praise Him, and that we sing unto Him.

As you know, the longest book in the Bible, the Book of Psalms, was Israel's hymnbook. In the OT and in the NT we are exhorted again and again to praise the Lord. But there probably is not as much true worship as there is singing because we are not really aware of the reasons why we should be praising the Lord continually.

But it is given to us here, as it was given to the saints of the OT, as a reminder of what we ought to be doing continually!

Verses 4 and 5 form the next section, and are:

II. A GENERAL SUMMARY OF REASONS TO PRAISE THE LORD (Psa. 32:4, 5).

There are four of them:

- A. His Word (v. 4a).
- B. His works (v. 4b).
- C. His righteousness (v. 5a).
- D. His goodness (v. 5b).

The Psalmist said that the Lord's word is "right," i.e., not wrong. It is straight, not crooked. It is easy and pleasing, not hard and offensive. It is dependable. Its promises are sure. What would we do without the Word of God. And yet how seldom we praise the Lord for His Word.

The Lord's works "are done in truth," all of them. This means that God is faithful. He is true to His Word. He never has failed to stand by His Word, and He never will!

He "loveth righteousness and judgment." The Lord never, I say, NEVER, is wrong. He has never sinned; He has never even come close to sin. He never acts prematurely, nor is He ever late--EVER!

And when we look around at all of the good things in the earth, it all testifies to the goodness of the Lord.

These are all general statements. If the Psalmist had made verse 12 the sixth verse, we could understand how blessed we are to be His people.

But at this point he got a little more specific. But all of the remaining things that the Psalmist had to say have something to do with the mighty power of God.

So let us make the third point,

III. THE POWER OF GOD (Psa. 32:6-11, 13-19).

And here let us note, first of all,

A. The power of God as our Creator (vv. 6-9).

How did He create the world? Just by speaking the word!

B. The power of God in fulfilling His purposes--even when the purposes of men stand in their way (vv. 10, 11).

We will skip our text for the moment.

C. The power of God in protecting His people (vv. 13-19).

The Lord does not close His eyes to what is taking place upon the earth. He sees, He knows, all that is taking place. Kings and their armies cannot overpower the Lord. He is not troubled by the strength of a man, such as Goliath. Horses mean nothing to an army when God is against them. But the Lord stands with His people against overwhelming opposition.

Now can we see the reason for what the Psalmist said in verse 12?

IV. THE BEATITUDE (Psa. 33:12).

What joy, what multiplied joys and blessings are ours because the Lord is our God! None of us really has

anything without Him. But the blessings come and come and come because we are His people and He is our God!

The blessings would be far more than we could ever deserve if we had chosen the Lord. But when we stop to think that, as Spurgeon once said, "Election is at the bottom of it all" (Treasury of David, Vol. I, p. 107), then they become more wonderful than ever. All that we have in our Lord we would have missed if God in His grace had not mercifully intervened with us, choosing us, calling us to Himself, and keeping us as His very own.

And so our praise should seek to be commensurate with our blessings—more than it otherwise would be, because of God's marvelous grace.

Calvin expressed it like this:

Lest it should be thought that men obtain so great a good by their own efforts and industry, David teaches us expressly that it proceeds from the fountain of God's gracious, electing love that we are accounted the people of God (Treasury of David, Vol. I, p. 116).

What, then, was the Psalmist's response? What should our response be?

V. THE PSALMIST'S RESPONSE (Psa. 33:20-22).

The first was:

A. Faith (v. 20).

The second was:

B. Obedience (v. 21).

This is a response to the first verse of the Psalm.

The third was:

C. A prayer (v. 22).

We all need the continuing help of the Lord, and it is given as we call upon Him in prayer.

Concl: This Beatitude was designed to bring from the hearts of all believers, joy, praise, singing, faith, and prayer.

Are you thankful that the Lord is your God? Would it not be wonderful if our nation could claim Him as our God? But we

have despised Him, ignored His Word, and daily we are reaping the results of what we are doing. Our hope is not that our nation will repent, but we should be praying and hoping that God in His grace will turn the hearts of His elect people to Himself. The Lord is our only hope in these evil days. May our lives reflect the true joy and peace that we have because the Lord has chosen us to make us His people that He might be our God.

This closing word.

Many have linked Psalm 32 and Psalm 33 together. As we saw in the Beatitudes of Psa. 32:1, 2 last week, Psalm 32 commemorates the forgiveness of sins. Psalm 33 follows from that and speaks of the joy that the redeemed of the Lord find when the Lord has become their God.

THE JOY OF TASTING AND TRUSTING

Psalm 34:8

Intro: In at least four of the Psalms we have the promise that multiplied happiness always accompanies genuine trust in the Lord.

We had one of these in our Second Beatitude: Psalm 2:12b: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Tonight we have the second of these in Psalm 34:8: ". . . blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

The third is in Psalm 40:4: "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust . . ."

The fourth is in Psalm 84:12: "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

In each of these four instances the word for "blessed" is exactly the same. In fact, the word "blessed" is found three times in the last of these Psalms, the 84th--in verses 4, 5, and 12--and it is the same each time. But tonight I am only speaking of the 12th verse of Psalm 84.

When it comes to the word trust, we have two words used in these four verses: the first two of these beatitudes use one word for "trust," the third and fourth use another word.

Again let me say that I am not really going to deal with all of these verses, but I want you to be aware that we have had one, and that more are coming after tonight.

The word that David used in Psalm 2, and the word that he used here in Psalm 34, are the same. It is a word which compares God to a rock or a shield (Girdleston, p. 103) under which, or behind which, the child of God takes refuge. It indicates that the safety of the one trusting has been threatened, and he has taken refuge in the Lord for his protection and, perhaps, preservation.

The word is used in Isaiah 30:2 where the Lord was rebuking His people because they were trusting "in the shadow of Egypt" instead of in Him. That is, they had looked to Pharaoh and to Egypt for their protection, presumably, from Assyria, instead of putting their trust in the Lord.

This was always a very serious sin in the eyes of the Lord. Regardless of what the dangers might be, or the problems, or the troubles, the Lord ALWAYS wanted His people to trust in Him--and in HIM alone! To turn to anyone else always would indicate either that God was not sufficient, or that He was

not willing to help His people. Both of these suppositions were wrong. And David wrote Psalm 34 to proclaim the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord toward him in a time of great danger. The superscription of the Psalm says that it marked his deliverance from Abimelech, the king of Gath. David's faith was not all that it should have been, but God was faithful to him anyway.

But now let us look at the Beatitude. The first thing that we have in Psalm 34:8 is:

I. AN EXHORTATION: "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

One reason we do not trust the Lord as we should is because we have not tasted and seen that the Lord is good. David had tasted and seen the goodness of the Lord, and he was sure that anyone else who would do that would have no argument about trusting the Lord first, and trusting only the Lord!

But what did he have in mind? What does it mean to "taste" the Lord, or to "taste and see that the Lord is good"?

Anyone who reads the Bible carefully and thoughtfully knows that this idea of tasting and seeing is not an uncommon expression, or the general idea of feeding on the Lord. Our Lord said in John 6:53, 54,
Verily, verily, I say unto you,

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man,
and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,
hath eternal life;
and I will raise him up at the last day.

Peter wrote to the Jewish believers of his day with these words:

As newborn babes,
desire the sincere milk of the word,
that ye may grow thereby:
If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious
(1 Pet. 2:2, 3).

And later in the same Epistle he told the elders to "feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5:2a).

There are other verses I could mention, but this is enough to show that tasting and feeding are figures of speech used in both the OT and the NT.

But what does it mean?

Well, the first thing that we can say about tasting is that it has to be personal! You do not know how anything

tastes until YOU taste it! Others may rave about a certain kind of food, but until you taste it for yourself, you do not know what they are talking about.

So David was calling upon each and every child of God to taste the goodness of the Lord.

But how do you do that?

The first way you do it is by reading your Bible. Tasting means, among other things, learning--learning about the goodness of the Lord in the Word. You see that over and over again, do you not? Read the life of Abraham, and you will learn about the goodness of the Lord. Read the life of David, and you will learn about the goodness of the Lord. Read the Gospels, and you will learn about the goodness of the Lord. But the greatest place to look for the goodness of the Lord is at the Cross of Christ, and all that the Lord accomplished there. In fact, as you look at all of the Scriptures you will come away saying as the Psalmist said over and over again in Psalm 107,

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,
and for his wonderful works to the children of men
(vv. 8, 15, 21, 31).

But there is a second way (and the word "taste" indicates this also). Look at your own life. Stop and look at your own life, and see how the goodness of the Lord has been manifested toward you in so many ways! Think of the parents you have. Think of your health. Think of how the Lord has met your many needs. Think of the friends He has given you. Think of how you were saved--the greatest of all blessings! Think of the truths you have learned. Think of how God has kept you from many sins you could have committed. Is it any wonder that the Psalmist said,

Blessed be the Lord,
who daily loadeth us with benefits,
even the God of our salvation (Psa. 68:19).

Our first conscious taste of the goodness is when we were saved. If you have not tasted of salvation, then you need to start at the starting place. But once you see how good God has been in saving you, then you recognize that long before you knew the Lord, and ever since you came to Him, He has literally poured out good things upon you so that you cannot possibly keep an accurate record of them.

But tonight, as I speak to you, while you sit there listening, just now take a few minutes to taste again of

the goodness of the Lord in your own life. How delightful such a meal is! And how it will change your outlook and mine on all of the troubles we have. When you "taste," then you "see," i.e., then you understand.

But will you notice that David did not say that the Lord just does good things, but that He Himself is good! He does good things because by nature He is a good God! This means that God is morally right. God is good because He is holy. He is without sin. But His goodness also means that he is of "the disposition to promote happiness," as Charles Hodge says in his Theology (Vol. I, p. 427). It is His nature to love, to show mercy, to extend His grace to sinners. All of God's works, whatever they may be, give abundant testimony that He is good. Learn about God, learn about the Lord Jesus Christ, learn about the Holy Spirit, and you will be learning about pure goodness! "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

The exhortation means that this is what you need to do; this is what I need to do--not just once or twice, but every day. But why?

Perhaps this is a ridiculous question to most of you, but let us notice what David had to say in this Psalm about:

II. OUR NEEDS.

I am not going to try to expound this whole Psalm tonight, but I do want you to look with me at the words that David used to describe his needs, and ours.

They are pictured in the following words:

A. "Fears" (v. 4).

Do you have any fears? Of course you do. Paul had his fears. Job had his fears. David had his fears. Peter had his fears. I have my fears, and you do, too.

We may fear death. We may fear failure. We may fear loneliness. We may fear sickness, the loss of health. We may fear the loss of friends, or the loss of money.

David said,

I sought the Lord, and he heard me,
and delivered me from all my fears (v. 4).

Let us look at the second word.

B. "Troubles" -- mentioned twice (vv. 6, 17).

This word primarily speaks of anything that causes us to be under pressure. It is anything that distresses us. "Troubles" is a good translation because it means to be in trouble.

It can mean to be in some difficult circumstance. It can mean to have someone against you. Hannah was in trouble when she was distressed because she was not able to have children.

Listen to what David said because he knew a lot about "troubles":

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,
and saved him out of all his troubles (v. 6).

In v. 17 he said,

The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth,
and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

C. "Hunger" (v. 10).

This may not be a problem to us tonight, but it could be some time in the future. And it is tonight with many people in our own country, and throughout the world.

What did David say about this?

In v. 10 we read,

The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:
but they that seek the Lord shall not want (lack)
any good thing.

D. "Afflictions" (v. 19).

This is something which seems to break us in pieces. In itself it is evil. It is something that seems designed to hurt us permanently. What Joseph's brothers did to him was an affliction. What Judas did to the Lord was an affliction. Paul suffered many afflictions during his lifetime. What Saul did to David was a grievous affliction. He was intent on killing David.

But what did David say?

Many are the afflictions of the righteous:
but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

What a testimony to that God is good, and that He does good things! And so this brings us to the Beatitude which is found at the end of verse 8:

III. THE BEATITUDE: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."

First we are exhorted to "taste and see that the Lord is good." We see it in the Word. We see it in our own circumstances. Now we have had an opportunity to see it in the life of David. We, too, have our fears, our troubles, our needs (materially), our afflictions. We can either trust in what we can do for ourselves, or we can trust in how other people can help us, OR WE CAN PUT OUR TRUST IN THE LORD! WILL WE TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD? WILL WE LOOK TO HIM TO HELP US? IF OTHER PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED, CAN WE STILL SEE THAT IT IS THE LORD WHO HAS PUT THOSE PEOPLE IN A POSITION TO HELP US?

None of us likes to be in difficult circumstances. We do not like problems, troubles, afflictions. But they come anyway! And it is when we are in those tough places that we learn in a greater way how good our Lord is! And the more we learn of His goodness, the greater our joy will be. That is what this Beatitude means.

Concl: You know, with the world the way it is, and being the kind of people that we are, it is amazing that there is any joy in this life at all! If there is joy for the people of God, it is certainly amazing that unregenerate people ever have any joy about anything. The fact that they do, is further evidence of the goodness of God.

But for us who know the Lord, the question is whether or not we are really going to be trusting the Lord. If so, there will be blessing upon blessing in an endless stream. If not, the Lord will continue to work with us until we do trust Him. Trusting the Lord does not put an end to the difficulties of life, but it takes the sting out of them, and in their place we know what the Lord's peace and joy as our strength to see us through the hardest of times.

At least four times in this Psalm David said that the Lord heard him, and/or the Lord hears us when we cry out to Him for help. It is no wonder that he began the Psalm as he did.

Let me conclude by reading verses 1 through 3.

WAITING AND TRUSTING

Psalm 40:4

Intro: Our Beatitude for this evening is the third one we have had so far that has indicated that trusting the Lord, and having His blessing, go together. Cf. Psa. 2:12b; 34:8.

Why should I bring another message on this same subject?

I can think of several reasons, but let me give you three:

- 1) Because of the very fact that it is repeated in Scripture. The Lord does not waste His words. And so, if it is repeated, it is because He knew that it was necessary. Repetition in Scripture causes us to notice truth which we might otherwise pass over.
- 2) Because the context is different in each case. The Psalm in which each appears gives us the context. We need to see that trusting the Lord is what is needed in a variety of situations.
- 3) Because there are probably some of us who are present tonight who still are not trusting the Lord as we should.

I would like to ask for a show of hands tonight (but I am not going to do that) of those of you who are here who still have some unanswered prayers, some of what you might call, "unfinished business with the Lord." You are not asking for a fortune. You are not asking to be famous. You are not even asking to escape from trials. But you are asking the Lord for something that He has not yet been pleased to give you. You have searched the Scriptures as carefully as you know how, but cannot find that your prayer is contrary to anything that you can see in the Bible. In fact, it might even be a request that would result in greater glory for God.

But God has not answered. Perhaps you have even quit praying about it, and then you have started again. You are finding what every child of God has to learn: that it is not easy to trust the Lord, and to continue trusting Him.

I told the men yesterday morning in our prayer meeting that there are several words used in the Psalms which we might say are very similar to trusting.

There is the word seeking, or waiting on the Lord, or waiting for the Lord, or hoping, or calling upon. They all express a deliberate expectation from the Lord. Sometimes a child of God will start to wait upon the Lord, but then, when no answer is forthcoming, he (or she) will turn to others, or will take matters into his own hands to try in some other way to get what God has, at least, not yet been pleased to give. That is the idea in our text. Let me read it for you in the

NASB. It goes like this:

How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust,
And has not turned to the proud,
nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

"The proud" are too proud to turn to the Lord. They think that they can handle things for themselves. And those who turn aside to error do not know that God is pleased when we trust Him. They think that it is foolish to wait for God, especially when you have been waiting, but nothing has happened.

If you are perplexed and disappointed tonight because your trusting seems to have meant nothing so far, then I think that most of us can sympathize with you—and perhaps some of us are where you are right now!

How can Psalm 40 help us?

It was written by David who had his share of troubles. The Psalm has a triumphant ring to it. You can see as you read that David had been trusting the Lord, and he wrote this Psalm to encourage all of us to trust the Lord. He had waited on the Lord, and he had not found it to be in vain. But what is involved in this blessing? What are some of the joys of trusting the Lord? Why is this true: "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust"?

Let me take you through the Psalm and point out why it is a blessing to be able to trust the Lord, and this comes to us from King David who spent a great deal of his life waiting on the Lord, not for just one thing, but for first one thing and then another.

- I. IT IS A BLESSING BECAUSE TRUSTING THE LORD CAUSES US TO LEARN PATIENCE. Cf. Psa. 40:1.

Note those words, "I waited **patiently** for the Lord."

Sometimes we wait because there is nothing else that we can do. But we do not wait "patiently." We wait impatiently! We fret. We become irritable and critical. And in most instances the Lord makes us wait, not because He wants to make things difficult for us, but because He wants us to learn patience.

Learning patience does more for us than we can really understand now. We are all lacking in patience. If we are under a burden, we want out! And we want out NOW.

If Abraham, or Joseph, or Moses, or Daniel, or Paul, or Peter, or John could speak to us tonight, what amazing

stories they would be able to tell us about how God taught them patience. He gave each one of them patience when they were in situations where all they could do was to trust the Lord, to wait for Him, but to wait patiently.

- Let me give you a second reason why trusting the Lord is a blessing.

II. IT IS A BLESSING TO TRUST THE LORD BECAUSE IT IS THEN THAT WE LEARN TO PRAY. Cf. Psa. 40:1.

David did not just wait passively; he waited prayerfully. He cried to the Lord. And this means that he was crying for help in a time of great distress. The need was urgent, and only God could meet that need. It is hard to be patient when you are in real trouble, but that is what David did--by the grace of God. If the Lord failed him, all would be lost. It was not a question of who would help, the Lord or people. It had to be the Lord. People were not enough.

If you and I know anything at all about prayer, it is because the Lord has providentially put us in circumstances where all we could do was trust Him. We may have said prayers up until that time, but then we really prayed.

- But that was not all.

III. IT IS A BLESSING TO TRUST THE LORD BECAUSE WE LEARN, IF WE WILL WAIT, THAT GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS US. Cf. Psa. 40:1b, 2, 3a.

To be blessed, as we have learned, is to be happy--to be happy with multiplied joys. Look at all of the blessings that are mentioned here.

- A. God changed his circumstances.
- B. God changed the course of his life.
- C. God gave him "a new song." This is a song which only those can sing who have been down and almost out, only to be lifted up.

And David follows this up with a fourth great blessing:

- IV. IT IS A BLESSING TO TRUST THE LORD BECAUSE OF THE WAY THE LORD USES YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS. Cf. Psa. 40:3b.

The Lord works in other people's lives through the way He helps us in our trials. Notice the word "many," and notice the word "see." We may witness and preach, as David said in verses 9, 10 that he had done, and this is important, very important. But people also need to "see" that we are trusting the Lord, and that trusting the Lord is not in vain.

When we pray for revival, we need to realize that the Lord may give us trouble first because that is the way that revivals usually come. This should not make us back away, but it should make us understand something of the ways of the Lord. Those family members we are praying for may only be reached as they see the sufficiency of the Lord in our trials. And the trials do not have to be great. They can be in the simple frustrations of life that people begin to see the marvelous hand of the Lord.

Let me mention another blessing.

- V. IT IS A BLESSING TO TRUST THE LORD BECAUSE WHILE WE ARE WAITING ON THE LORD WE REMEMBER MANY BLESSINGS THAT WE HAD FORGOTTEN. Cf. Psa. 40:5.

It is so easy to take the blessings of the Lord for granted, and to accept them as a normal part of life. I am speaking of our freedom, our health, our families, our homes, our food and clothing, our friends, our safety.

It is in our times of waiting and trusting that we see how richly God has blessed us, and that in itself is an added blessing.

Two more:

- VI. IT IS A BLESSING TO TRUST THE LORD BECAUSE IT IS THEN THAT WE REALIZE WHAT THE LORD REALLY WANTS.

This morning we in the Adult Class spent much of the time in Hebrews 10. In verses 5 through 7 of that chapter the writer of Hebrews quoted from verses 6 through 8 here in Psalm 40. And they are words that he related to our Lord Jesus Christ. So these verses are a prophecy relating to our Lord. This is why we can call Psalm 40 a Messianic Psalm, because it speaks of the Messiah, our Christ.

But let me tell you something else. David was not only speaking prophetically of the Son of God, but he was speaking personally of himself. These are not only our Lord's words, but they are David's words. They express our Lord's ministry, but they also express what David learned as he was waiting on the Lord, trusting the Lord

to deliver him in a time of great need.

What was it that he learned?

He learned that the service that he could give to the Lord was not the most important thing in his life. To put it as simply as I can, the Lord wanted his works, his service, BUT THE LORD WANTED HIM! The Lord not only wanted David to do His will; He wanted David to delight in His will--even though the will of God meant trials and testings, as it meant for our Lord the Cross!

It is so easy for us to serve the Lord, but to do it with a divided heart, or to do it without that wholehearted love for the Lord which means so much to Him.

When we see that the Lord uses our trials to change us, that will help us to wait patiently as we continue to cry unto the Lord.

I could say something about David's crying to the Lord at the end of this Psalm, but let me pass over that tonight by simply saying that it seems that David was facing a new trial of some kind, and knew that he needed to cry out to the Lord for help.

But I want to make verse 12 the last verse to comment on. And I do it for this reason, thinking of why it is such a blessing to trust in the Lord.

VII. IT IS A BLESSING TO TRUST IN THE LORD BECAUSE THERE WE LEARN MORE AND MORE ABOUT THE GRACE OF GOD. Cf. Psalms 40:12.

David learned during his trials, and while he was trusting in the Lord, what a great sinner he had been. His sins had taken hold of him, i.e., they had overtaken him. It is one thing to recognize that we have sinned; it is another thing to have them overtake us. When they do, we will say what David said in the latter part of this verse. (Read.)

God's blessings had overtaken David, but so had his own sins.

When we get impatient with the Lord because we are having to wait upon Him, let us remember how many times the Lord has had to wait upon us, how many times we have sinned against Him. And this alone will cause us to do as David said that he had done in the very first of this Psalm: "I waited patiently for the Lord, . . ."

How thankful we can be that God has not dealt with us after our sins! His grace is abundant. And, as David reviewed his blessings in the light of his sins, he saw things in a new light, and could praise and glorify God with "a new song."

— Concl: Therefore, I think that you and I can see that it is always best to wait on the Lord, to wait patiently for Him. We have seen tonight that though we wait long, we cannot wait in vain. And if the Lord does not give us exactly what we want, He always give us something better.

THE COMFORTER'S JOY

Psalm 41:1-3

Intro: When we think of "the poor," we are inclined to think of the street people who seem to abound in every city of any size throughout the United States. Or we think of those people who call churches to ask for money to pay their bills, and who often get very angry if their requests are not granted. We live in a society that has encouraged laziness, has even paid people more when they are out of work than they can make when they work. And so hundreds of thousands of them choose rather not to work. Even in our prisons, the days of "hard labor" are over, and criminals often commit crimes after they are released so they can get back in prison where they have a nice place to sleep, and plenty to eat.

Does the Bible encourage this sort of thing? Should churches make the care of "the poor" a priority in their ministry?

Anyone who reads the Proverbs will know that the life of a sluggard is condemned over and over. Many of our Lord's parables had to do with people who work. The Apostle Paul taught that

. . . if any would not work, neither should he eat.
And then he added,
For we hear that there are some
which walk among you disorderly,
working not at all, but are busybodies
(2 Thess. 3:10b, 11).

We are told that the believers in different parts of the Empire sent gifts of money to the poor saints of Jerusalem, but it was carefully monitored and given to those who were genuinely in need. Giving money to people was never used as a means of evangelism. We have a society that needs great changes, but it may be too late. Socialism does not work. Neither does Communism. And yet we have plenty of politicians today who strive for a society in which everyone has the same. They do not know that our Lord said, when His disciples were critical of the woman who had anointed Him with precious ointment, ". . . ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" (Matt. 26:11).

All of this does not mean that we are to be cold-hearted when people are legitimately in need, but there was a lot of difference between what used to be done, and what we are being told that we need to do today. The church is certainly to care for her own people when they are in need, but this is not the ministry of the Church worldwide. Many of our religious and political agencies for relieving the poor are corrupted by greedy people who are trying to make a fortune for themselves, as we are presently learning from the HUD

scandals. There is a great need for our leaders, both in government and in churches, to do a lot of serious thinking about things that are being done today in the name of "the poor."

Now, having said what I have said, we have this Beatitude before us in Psalm 41. (Read.)

Our first task in knowing what this Beatitude means is to make sure that we understand it. And so let us spend some time on:

I. THE MEANING OF THIS BEATITUDE (Psa. 41:1a).

This is a Psalm of David. We need to understand what he meant by "the poor," and by the word "considereth."

There are at least 11 words in the OT which are translated, "poor." The one that David used here is a word which only in a secondary sense means one who is poor materially, one who is in poverty. It can mean that, but is not its primary meaning. And we can see that from the fact that David seems to be describing himself when he spoke of "the poor." And he certainly was not in poverty.

What did he have in mind?

This word speaks of a person who is weak, who is powerless, who is thin and emaciated. In the context it would have to do more with a person in illness rather than a person in poverty--although the latter could be included. It speaks of a person who has experienced some difficult circumstances, and has now reach the bottom--physically, emotionally, and perhaps also as far as money is concerned.

One excellent example of a poor person in Scripture is Job. Another we have in the story of the good Samaritan. Paul lived in "poor" circumstances much of his life as an Apostle.

I hope you get the picture from this.

What about "considereth"?

There are at least 15 words in the OT that are translated, to consider. This one means to look at, to consider, and then to attend to.

This is what Job had done many times for others. This is what the good Samaritan did for the man traveling from

Jerusalem to Jericho who had been robbed and beaten and left half dead. Cf. Luke 10:25-37.

It is possible for us to go through life so concerned about ourselves, or our families, that we are oblivious to the troubles that others are having. We do not see them, and, if we do, we are glad to turn away and think about something else--like the priest and the Levite did before the Samaritan came along. Job's friends thought that that surely must have been what Job did, but Job truthfully defended himself as having helped people time and time again. No one can help everybody, but there are those about us that we can help.

But notice also that David said, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

Will you note that this is in the singular?

It does not say, "Blessed is the family", nor "Blessed is the city", nor, as in the case of Israel, "Blessed is the tribe", nor "Blessed is the nation". Surely any family or city or tribe or even the whole nation of Israel, would have been blessed if they considered those who were destitute. But that is not what the verse said.

There are always those who are trying to make a big project out of needs that they see. And they want to put everyone under pressure to do what they want to do. This often leads to needless expenses. It can lead to corruption. People often do things because they are forced into doing them, rather than doing them from the heart. David was not concerned that everybody do it. I am sure that he would have been thankful if they had. But that is not what he said, and since he was writing under the direction of the Spirit of God, this is not what God said, either. The verse says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

This is a masculine participle, so "he" is a good translation. It does not exclude the women. But it would suggest that the men lead out, and that the women follow. But the point is that this Beatitude is given to any INDIVIDUAL who sees the need, and sets out to meet the need!

What a difference it would make if all of us had our eyes open to the needs about us, and would do what we can to comfort, to encourage, to visit, to give practical help when we can. We do not have to wait for others; we need to be like the good Samaritan and do what we can ourselves!

I hope you can see this. The longer I live, the more suspicious I get of people who are trying to get a big movement started. We can be a part of a movement without having our hearts in it. The emphasis on Scripture is for us to do what we see needs to be done, if it is at all possible.

But this leads me to my second point:

II. THE PROMISED BLESSINGS (Psa. 41:1b-3).

I have been telling you ever since we started these Beatitudes that the word "Blessed" in each case so far has been in the plural, meaning we can translate it, "Oh, the blessednesses . . ."

The Spirit of God has not promised just one blessing, but many blessings, multiplied blessings!

Now we have some hints before as to what some of those blessings might be (as in Psa. 1), but this is the first time we have had them spelled out!

There are 7 blessings here. Count them!

And here is an interesting thing about this. The word "poor" is also in the singular. It, of course, could be used collectively. But it could also refer to a single incident, again like that of the good Samaritan. We do not know if he ever did that again. The Lord did not say. But he did it once. He did it what he saw the need. And that thought is here. And it means that for one act of kindness (as long as that may take) we can be assured of at least seven blessings!

You see, the point is this: TOMORROW YOU OR I COULD BE THE POOR PERSON, THE NEEDY PERSON, THE WEAK, DISCOURAGED, PERSON WHO IS IN NEED OF HELP. Who is going to help us? THE LORD WILL! If you can understand what David was saying here, you will see that he meant that when we help someone in need, it is really the Lord who is working through us. And so when we are in need (should that time ever come), the Lord will not forget us. He will work on someone else's heart to move them to take care of us.

On one occasion our Lord said,
 And whosoever shall give to drink
 unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water
 only in the name of a disciple,
 verily I say unto you,
 he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matt. 10:42).

This brings me to my final point:

III. THE LESSON OF THE BEATITUDE.

The Beatitudes teach us not only what the Lord wants us to do, but what He wants us to be! He wanted the Israelites to be comforters. He wanted them to have tender hearts. He wanted them to be compassionate and loving. He did not want them just to be looking out for themselves, but he wanted them to be looking out for others.

The Apostle Paul taught this same truth when he wrote to the Philippian church. Listen to what he wrote. You will find this in Phil. 2:4:

Look not every man on his own things,
but every man also on the things of others.

And do you remember who he used as an illustration of the way we should be? It was our Lord when he went on in verse 5 to say, "Let this mind be in you . . ."

And when he wrote to the Corinthian church he blessed the Lord Who "comforteth us in all our tribulation . . ." (2 Cor. 1:3, 4).

Concl: The Beatitude that we have tonight not only has to do with the opportunity to help people materially, but also physically and spiritually. Needy people are all around us. Most of them are struggling with the same kind of problems that you and I have, but the big difference is that they do not have the Lord.

And so let me leave you with this word from Paul, written originally to the Galatian churches:

As we have therefore opportunity,
let us do good unto all men,
especially unto them who are of the household of faith
(Gal. 6:10).

I hope that Psa. 41:1-3 will bring back to your mind this great opportunity for ministry which we all have, and the blessings that the Lord has promised to give when we help others because we want to please Him.

BLESSED TO BE CHOSEN
Psalm 65:4

Intro: (Read the Psalm.)

This is another Psalm written by King David. Like most of his Psalms, this one is personal, expressing the truth which he knew, and the feelings which welled up in his heart.

There seems to be little doubt but that in verse 4, the Beatitude, he was speaking of himself. But what applied to him in the truth he was expressing, was not something that just pertained to him. It was true of all who had been chosen by God.

But before we look into the verse itself, let us note the description we have here of the God David was addressing. This will help us to understand the Beatitude.

I. DAVID'S GOD.

Verse 4 not only shows how David had been blessed, but it is also an expression of his praise for God. God is the One Who has chosen certain men, or certain people. God is the One Who has caused them to come to Him. God has provided a dwelling place for them. God has satisfied them.

And so it follows that the person who has God dealing with him in such a way is best described by the word, "Blessed." Again, it is plural. Again, it speaks of multiplied blessings, blessings too numerous to count. We probably should consider this to be the First Beatitude because this speaks of the beginning of man's relationship with this God, and we see that God is the One Who initiated it, and not man!

How did David describe God in this Psalm?

A. He is the God Who rules in Sion, or Zion (Psa. 65:1).

His subjects in that place (which was Jerusalem) were willing subjects, offering praise to the glory of God, submitting themselves to Him, trusting Him to work for their greatest good.

B. He is the God Who had answered their prayers (Psa. 65:2).

From this they could see that God was not limiting Himself to them, but His work in Sion would produce results in the hearts of the people of the Gentile

world everywhere! David expressed positive conviction when he said, ". . . Unto thee shall all flesh come."

But most important of all, and yet not separated from what had gone before,

- C. He was the God of the salvation of His people (Psa. 65:3, 5).

He is the God Who purges away the sins of those who come to Him. David said that the sins which prevailed against him and overcame him, were sins which God purged away. No other could have done this for David, nor for the people of Israel, nor for the Gentiles throughout the world. And this constitutes one of the greatest of all reasons as to why we should praise and glorify His holy Name.

Cf. Isa. 55:6, 7: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found," etc., concluding with, "and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

It is not that salvation comes in many forms from many different gods. There is only one God Who saves, and that is the God Who at that time had his special dwelling place in Zion, in Jerusalem.

But there was a third thing that David had to say about his God. And we find that from the middle of verse 5 on down to the end of the Psalm.

- D. He is the sovereign God of all creation (Psa. 65:5b-13).

David found encouragement for His faith in everything that had to do with God.

The wonders of nature, the crops of the fields, and the animal world were all under the direct and almighty direction of David's God! It is important to know all of this even when we are considering the truth of salvation--because that was really David's theme in this Psalm, as our Beatitude in verse 4 indicates.

All of this is important to keep in mind as we come now to contemplate this Beatitude. For such a God to have anything to do with any one of us is a blessing in itself. But to see what He has done in our salvation increases the blessing many times over as the word, "blessed," indicates.

And so let us turn now to:

II. THE BEATITUDE (Psa. 65:4).

David firmly believed that salvation was of the Lord. He believed that it was of God from start to finish. He had no question about the sovereignty of God in creation, nor did he have any question about the sovereignty of God in salvation. When the Reformers re-discovered the truth of divine sovereignty, it was just that: a re-discovery! David and all of the OT saints believed and taught these truths long before the Protestant Reformation.

And will you notice that these truths to David were not to be disputed. They were not truths to upset the people of God. These were truths which brought manifold blessings to the people of God, and the person who closes his mind to these truths is cutting himself out of a lot of rich and wonderful blessings.

I would call your attention to four truths regarding David's salvation, and our salvation--because we have the same salvation. And all four of these truths are in the Beatitude that we are considering tonight in Psa. 65:4.

A. The first blessing: the doctrine of election.

It is found in those words, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest."

David did not believe that we originated salvation. He believed that God did. And He believed that He did it by sovereignly choosing His own people, those whom He would give to His Son to be saved.

When was this done?

Most of you know the answer, but let me remind you again of those words in Eph. 1:3, 4 which I am sure you love like I do. (Quote.)

Now the thing for you and for me to do is to do what David did, and what Paul did: Rejoice in it. Praise God for it. Worship the Lord for it. You are blessed many times over because in the counsels of the Godhead before creation God chose you for Himself. He chose me for Himself.

Can you and I ever get over such a truth?

Yesterday afternoon as I sat with Al deSmet by Julia's bedside up at Providence Hospital we read

together John 17. The nurse had told us that she could die at any moment. Al had read John 17 to Julia that morning, and he wanted me to read it again. What was going on in his heart? As his wife of 64 years lay dying, his heart was comforted in the truth that God had chosen them both for salvation before the foundation of the world. We did not argue about it; we just rejoiced in it, and took comfort from it.

Look at the second truth:

- B. The second blessing: the doctrine of efficacious grace.

David had discovered another great truth that we all need to know. He wrote it in Psalm 14, and it was so important to him and to the Holy Spirit that he wrote it again in Psalm 53. What was it?

He discovered that there was no one who would come to God on his own. No man seeks God. So what difference does it make if God chooses His people if none of them will come.

Have you noticed carefully what David said in our Beatitude? God not only has chosen His people, but He is the One Who causes us to approach Him for salvation. The only reason any of us sought the Lord is because He was seeking us, and He caused us to come to Christ. So he is the One Who gets all of the glory for our salvation.

Cf. John 6:44, "No man can come to me . . ."

But there is a third blessing.

- C. The third blessing: "That he may dwell in thy courts."

What was David teaching here?

What is the last verse of Psalm 23 which we have been quoting in Sunday School each Sunday morning?
"Surely goodness and mercy . . ."

David undoubtedly was speaking of the joy of his fellowship with the Lord in temple, but he also knew that when he approached God for salvation, he entered into a relationship with God that would never be dissolved!

We do not go in and out of salvation. We are not saved over and over again. We are talking about the God of the universe Who has saved us. He not only saves us, but He keeps us. We walk with Him. We seek to please Him. But we could never do it if the Lord were not continuing His gracious work which He planned before the foundation of the world.

Talk about blessing! They get better and better, do they not?

But there is still one more:

D. The fourth blessing: Perfect peace.

Listen to David's words:

. . . **we shall be satisfied**
with the goodness of thy house,
even of thy holy temple.

Do you know what it means to be satisfied?

It means to have that which brings you pleasure and contentment. It means that you have had all of your needs met. It means that you are not in the least disappointed.

Satisfaction is one thing that everybody is interested in. But unless we are seeking our satisfaction in God and in His salvation, we will never find it. When we are dissatisfied, it is because at least for the moment we are seeking satisfaction in other people, or in things, or in some goal, instead of finding it in God.

David had wealth. David had political power. He had a great position as the King of Israel. He had wives and children. He had the affection of his people. But the One Who brought real, unchanging, eternal satisfaction into his life was GOD! And the crowning truth of salvation is that some day we are going to be "forever with the Lord." What more could we possibly want than what we have, and will have for all eternity, in Christ our Lord?

Concl: So there we have the whole story of salvation: its origin, its attainment, its permanence, and its satisfaction.

It is no wonder that David wrote this as a Beatitude. If we want true and lasting happiness, or happinesses, then let us know, and tell all others, that it is only in God our Savior.

A THREEFOLD BLESSING

Psalm 84:4, 5, 12

Intro: Here we have three Beatitudes in one Psalm, truly a threefold blessing. (Read them.)

The background of this Psalm is uncertain. It is clear that the writer of the Psalm was not in Jerusalem at the time, but he wanted to be there. He longed, and even fainted, "for the courts of the Lord." He envied the sparrow and the swallow who had made their home there, the place they had chosen to raise their young.

All of this reflection caused the Psalmist to declare the first of the Beatitudes in this Psalm:

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:
they will be still praising thee. Selah.

I. THE FIRST BLESSING (Psa. 84:1-4).

It probably was David who wrote this. It would have been a very proper Psalm for the exiles. We are probably safest in assuming that it was David. Whoever it was, it was a person who had once enjoyed the "tabernacles" and "the courts of the Lord," but when this Psalm was written, the writer no longer enjoyed that blessing.

The reason he loved ("How amiable," or much loved) "the courts of the Lord" was because it was there that the Lord dwelt. The tabernacles were His. The courts were His.

Verse 2 expresses the way in which the Psalmist's whole being cried out "for the living God." The Psalmist had found a peace and a joy in the Lord that he could find in no other place, nor with any other person. And he longed to be back there! Time spent away from the Lord was a great agony to his soul. "Longeth" speaks of a pale countenance; "fainteth" indicates that he was at the point of total exhaustion. There are few, even in the Scriptures, who had such a desire for God. If David were the writer of this Psalm, it is no wonder that he was called a man after God's own heart.

At the end of verse 3 he recognized the Lord again as the "Lord of hosts," but also as "my King, and my God." So the king of Israel was worshipping the Sovereign over all the earth. Even the king had One Who was King over himself.

In this first Beatitude of this Psalm, David recognized the many blessings that were enjoyed in the presence of

the Lord, one of them being the privilege of praising the Lord. Many were the blessings. ("Blessed" in all three of the Beatitudes here in this Psalm is plural, as has been the case with all of the Beatitudes thus far.) How unusual that David should single out the blessing of being able to praise the Lord.

Now from this we all must ask ourselves two questions:

- 1) Do I have anything like such a longing for the Lord?
- 2) Do I look upon the privilege of praising the Lord as a blessing, a blessing to be preferred above all others?

But this leads to:

II. THE SECOND BEATITUDE (Psa. 84:5-8).

Here it seems that the Psalmist has found that, although he cannot get to the courts of the Lord, yet God has been teaching him that he is not cut off from blessing altogether.

There are a lot of different ideas about "the valley of Baca." A valley is an expression in Scripture which pictures "a sunken condition" (JFB, III, 283). "Baca" means weeping, or tears. The way back to Zion is a pilgrimage of great weeping, but the exiles tears become an abundant source of strength. The rains, in themselves blessings, add to the supply. The result: great strength for the pilgrim, found in the Lord, which could not be gained in any other way.

And so the end rest is going from "strength to strength," from one degree of strength to greater strength. Having come to the place of great weakness, being separated from the presence of the Lord, the pilgrim find the strength, the inexhaustible strength that he needs in the Lord.

Illus: Paul's thorn in the flesh. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

This second part of the Psalm (concluding with the "Selah"), ends with a prayer. Note the two names of God that are used.

So, regardless of how gloomy the present may be, the very circumstances which cause our tears, are those which can lead us to find our strength in the Lord. It was David's troubles before he became king, and his trials after he became king, that kept him conscious of his need of the Lord that he might find his strength in the Lord.

But then we move on to:

III. THE THIRD BEATITUDE (Psa. 84:9-11).

The Psalmist has found that God is his "shield," a sure defense against all enemies.

And he has also come to the place where he understands that being lowered from the royal house of the king to being one who sleeps on the threshold of the house of God, is BETTER!

Then he rejoiced (v. 11) in what the Lord is,
 in what the Lord gives,
 and in what the Lord does (which also
 means giving).

And so we come to what we could call the Beatitude of the Beatitudes. Cf. Psa. 2:12; 34:8; 40:4.

Evidently the one thing that the Lord is after in all of His dealings with us is to teach us the value of trusting Him. There is a very important reason for the repetition of this Beatitude. We will study the Word. We will give ourselves to prayer. We will serve the Lord. We will worship the Lord. BUT UNDOUBTEDLY THE HARDEST THING FOR US TO DO IS TO TRUST THE LORD. IT SOUNDS SO SIMPLE, AND SEEMS SO EASY, BUT IT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING FOR US TO DO.

But this is where the blessing is--multiplied blessings!

Concl: We do not hear much about trusting the Lord in these days. We have "experts" who will tell us how to get money out of our people so we can build churches, or do whatever else takes money. We have "experts" who can tell us what methods to use to fill our churches with people, and even how to win people to Christ. In denominational circles there are those who can tell a young preacher how to climb the ladder to get a bigger and better church. But what we need to learn is how to trust the Lord. And it is the Lord who has taken that "in hand," as the British would say.

Solomon said, "Trust in the Lord . . ." (Prov. 3:5, 6).

The Book of Hebrews tells us about men and women who did such and such "by faith," or something else "by faith." What is the Holy Spirit seeking to teach us from those references? He is teaching us that these were people who learned to trust God. We are saved by trusting the Lord, and the Christian life is a life in which we learn to trust the Lord for more and more things, and in more and more circumstances. So let us trust Him. We can do that wherever we are, and whatever our circumstances might be. Let us keep trusting Him!

THE JOYFUL SOUND

Psalm 89:15-18

Intro: We had three Beatitudes last Sunday night because there were three in one Psalm: the 84th. Tonight we will go back to one Beatitude, #12 in the Psalms, verse 15 in Psalm 89.

The Psalm is rather long (52 verses). The word "Selah" divides it into five stanzas. See vv. 4, 37, 45, 48--the first stanza contained in the first 4 verses; the last stanza beginning with verse 49.

But as far as the content of the Psalm is concerned, there are three main sections:

- 1) Wv. 1-37.
- 2) Wv. 38-45.
- 3) Wv. 46-52.

The first section is one of great joy and elation. In the second one we have the Psalmist's complaint. The last section gives us the Psalmist's prayer. Our Beatitude is found in the first section.

To state it another way we see the Psalmist's ecstatic condition in the first 37 verses. But then he was greatly troubled because he could not understand why, in view of what had given him such joy in verses 1-37, he should see what he was describing in verse 38-45. And so he called upon God to have mercy upon him, and to change his circumstances. It is especially important to note that, in spite of all that he said in vv. 38-51, the Psalm ends on a note of praise to the Lord, indicating that:

- 1) He was trusting the Lord.
- 2) The burden of his prayer was not for his own glory, but for the glory of the Lord.

Now let me read the first 15 verses so that we can get a better understanding of what the Psalmist was speaking about when he got down to that 15th verse. (Read vv. 1-15.)

Let us ask, first of all, a very important question, if we are to understand this Beatitude. And this is my first point:

I. WHAT IS "THE JOYFUL SOUND"?

A "joyful sound" is a sound which expresses great joy, but it is also a sound which produces great joy in the hearts of those who hear it.

As we look into those first 15 verses, where do we see

any evidence of a sound being made?

Look at v. 1--there is singing.

Look at v. 5--the heavens are praising the Lord, and the people of God were praising the Lord "in the congregation of the saints."

What is the reason for all of the singing and praising?

It is because of the character of the Lord. It is because of the promises of the Lord. It is because of the majesty and power of the Lord. It is because God in His nature is both just and merciful. "The joyful sound" is that of all of creation giving testimony to the existence of God and to the goodness of God.

And this great and "joyful sound" of praise carries right on down through verse 37.

This sound is like the sound of a trumpet, carrying its message of great joy for all to hear.

This is like the message the angel gave to the shepherds in the field announcing the birth of the baby Jesus. The angel said,

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings
of great joy, which shall be to all (the) people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10, 11).

And then a multitude of angels joined the one angel
"praising God, and saying,"

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men (Luke 2:13a, 14).

Truly that was a "joyful sound."

One hymn writer has taken that theme and told us what for us is "the joyful sound":

We have heard the joyful sound:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Spread the tidings all around:

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Bear the news to ev'ry land,

Climb the steeps and cross the waves;

Onward! 'tis our Lord's command;

Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

So actually, all through the Scriptures, "the joyful sound" is the message of salvation.

But these manifold blessings of which the Beatitudes speak is reserved for only those who "know the joyful sound." Who was the Psalmist speaking about?

II. "THE PEOPLE THAT KNOW THE JOYFUL SOUND."

Here we need to look at the word, "know."

It means the same that it means in the NT, and the same way that we often use it in the English language.

To "know the joyful sound" is to have heard it, to understand it, to believe it, and to be thoroughly convinced that it is true!

No one can really understand his need for salvation until he knows something about God. Then, in the light of who God is, he will see his own need. That is why the Scriptures convey a "joyful sound." They tell us about God, the revelations of the OT, but finally and fully revealed in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who are "the people that know the joyful sound"? They are the Lord's people, those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear. There is no blessing in all of life that can be compared with the joy of knowing God and possessing His salvation which He has freely provided for us in Christ. But it is not just one blessing, or two, or three, but countless blessings! And they are all ours because of the mercies of the Lord, and they continue to be ours because of the faithfulness of the Lord.

Does this strike a responsive chord in your heart? If not, perhaps you do not really "know the joyful sound." Oh, you may have heard the message many times, but it has not yet become yours. Make sure that you know it.

How can you identify a person who "knows the joyful sound"? The Psalmist has answered that question for us, too.

III. "THEY SHALL WALK IN THE LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE."

What are we to understand by this expression?

We have been told many times that "to walk" in Scripture means "to live." So to walk in the Lord's countenance is to live in His countenance. His countenance is actually His face, and it is used with the idea of having His approval and being able to enjoy His fellowship. To walk in the light of His countenance is to be the recipient of those special manifestations of His love.

There is nothing that those who have heard the joyful sound enjoy any more than the Lord Himself. And to walk before Him with His approval upon us makes every day a joy and a blessing. You identify the people of God, not by their talk alone, but by their walk also!

This grand and glorious theme continues, as I have said, down through verse 37. But then the confusion sets in.

IV. THE PSALMIST'S COMPLAINT (Psa. 89:38-45).

Things had not continued as they had begun. And the man of God took His complaint to the Lord.

Why had this happened?

Because of the sins of the people. The OT makes that very clear. The judgment had been heavy, and the Psalmist was greatly dismayed. But the one who has heard "the joyful sound" is not content to let it remain that way.

And so the Psalm ends with:

V. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER (Psa. 89:46-52).

Time was running out for him. His heart continued to long for God. And he prayed for the restoration of the blessing that he once knew. The people who have heard the joyful sound, and who have walked with the Lord, cannot, in the final analysis, be content out of the Lord's favor. The Lord withdraws His blessing so that we will once again seek Him with the whole heart.

Concl: We do not know who "the anointed one" was who is mentioned in this Psalm. He had to have been the one who was king at the time. But whoever he was, he was jealous for God's glory, and the reason that he wanted to see the blessing of the Lord restored was because he was jealous for the glory of God.

And so the Psalm ends with a doxology. Whatever the specific reasons may have been for the withdrawal of the Lord's blessing, it was not the Lord's fault. And so it is always fitting for us to bless His name "for evermore. Amen, and Amen."

(Conclude by reading Simeon's conclusion of his message on this verse, Vol. VI, pp. 109, 110. He lived and ministered as a pastor in the Church of England at Cambridge during the closing years of the 18th cent. and the beginning of the 19th cent. Started Inter-Varsity.) (Read Psa. 89:15-18.)

A STRANGE PATHWAY TO BLESSING

Psalm 94:12, 13

Intro: God's blessings often come to us in strange and unexpected ways. As humans we are inclined to think of happiness as only being possible when we have what we want and when things are going like we want to see them go. But the Bible teaches us that happiness often comes when we do not have what we want, and when things are going wrong. Such is the message of our Beatitude in Psalm 94:12. (Read it with v. 13.)

I. WHAT IS CHASTENING?

The word has several meanings.

A. It means to correct, or punish.

But it is not always used in this sense.

B. Sometimes it means to teach, or to train.

A parent will chasten his child to teach him, or to restrain him, or to encourage obedience.

II. HOW AND BY WHOM IS A PERSON CHASTENED?

One who chastens another can do it basically in two ways:

- 1) By words.
- 2) By actions.

We all know what that is because we all have been, some still are, children of our parents. Our parents have told us what we are to do, or not do. Then, when necessary, they have told us what is going to happen if we do not obey. And, finally, they do what they have said that they we do if we are not obedient to them.

So, while chastening is the task of the teacher (or it should be), and chastening is the right of civil government, yet, on a human level, chastening is the responsibility of parents. Any parent who does not chasten is not worthy to be called a parent. Chastening encourages good character traits and good habits. We never like it, but it is very necessary for all of us.

Our text, however, is not speaking about chastening by a parent. It speaks of chastening by the Lord. And, being stated as a Beatitude, we are to believe that the end result of God's chastening is good, not bad.

Often, especially in the Psalms, the chastening which the

people of God experience is aggravated even more when they see that the wicked usually seem to get by without much trouble. The Psalmist in Psalm 73 wrote in verse 14,

All day long have I been plagued,
and chastened every morning.

In Psalm 118:18 we read,

The Lord hath chastened me sore:
but hath not given me over unto death.

That was certainly the case with Job. Satan was allowed by God to go so far, but no farther. He could afflict Job's body, but he could not kill him.

Chastening, then, can come directly from Satan. People are often instruments that are used to chasten us. Sometimes God acts directly upon us. But, whenever and however we are chastened, it is important for a child of God to know that his chastenings are from the Lord. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law" (Psa. 94:12). And the Psalmist said that after writing what he did in the first eleven verses of this Psalm. (Read.)

But now we come to the important part. Let me state it as a question:

III. HOW CAN CHASTENING EVER LEAD TO HAPPINESS, EVEN TO MULTIPLIED HAPPINESSES, AS OUR PSALM INDICATES?

There are many answers to that question. Some are in this Psalm, and we will find some elsewhere. Let us turn to Hebrews 12 for a couple of answers.

A. Heb. 12:5-8.

This is a quotation from Prov. 3:11, 12. It tells us that we can rejoice in times of chastening because it is evidence that we are members of the family of God. It is evidence that God loves us. If He did not love us He would do as He does with many people: He would let them go on in their sin.

We must not say that God loves everybody the same way. Or even that He loves everybody. He loves His own. He loves them with a very special, unchanging, eternal love. He loved us from eternity past. And He chastens us because of His love for us.

So rather than thinking that it is an evidence that He does not love us, think just the opposite.

But I cannot mention that without mentioning a second

point that Hebrews 12 gives to us, otherwise we might think that God's love is a very strange love.

B. Heb. 12:9-11.

God's chastening has as its purpose our perfection in holiness.

We have two choices when things go wrong:

- 1) We can submit to the Lord and accept His will, or
- 2) We can resist and resent what He is doing in our lives.

When most of us here were going through some difficult times a few years ago, somebody (it may have been one of my own sons) gave me a cartoon of Noah during the time of the flood. He was looking up into heaven and saying, "Why me, Lord?" And the Lord answered from heaven saying, "Why not?"

I have read that many, many times, and have thought about it when I was not reading it. When we look at our lives, our weaknesses and sins, our lack of love for the Lord, our half-hearted service which we render to the Lord, it is amazing that we do not get a lot more than we do!

We as parents can be mistaken in our discipline, but God never is! Every trial that touches our lives is an instrument in the hand of our God to make us more like our blessed Lord.

And there can be no real happiness without genuine holiness. That is what God wants, and that is what He is working toward in our lives.

Those are two excellent reasons for rejoicing when we are under the discipline of God.

But now let us go back to our text, and I want to point out two or three more.

C. Psa. 94:12b.

It is during times when we are under the chastening hand of the Lord that we get better acquainted with our Bibles. We are looking for help. We notice verses and phrases and words to which we had paid no attention before. It is not without real meaning that Psalm 119 which carries many requests for teaching also contains many references to afflictions. Psa. 119:71 says,

It is good for me that I have been afflicted;
that I might learn thy statutes.

And then he added in verse 72,

The law of thy mouth is better unto me
than thousands of gold and silver.

When we are going through trials it is surprising how
our values change. Money becomes less important; the
Word of God becomes priceless.

Remember what Jeremiah wrote when he was under the
chastening hand of God. Cf. Jer. 15:16.

But there is another reason that chastening brings joy.

D. Psa. 94:13.

It seems as we read this that the Psalmist said that
the Lord gives us trouble so He can deliver us out of
trouble. He does that, and I want to mention that in
just a moment. But I do not think that he was saying
that here.

The Psalmist was speaking of this life in this world
in which we live as "the days of adversity." The
Hebrew word which is translated "adversity" is the
common word in Hebrew for evil. It does not just
mean sin, but it means the hurtful, mischievous,
destructive things that people do to each other.
When we look at society in our day, what do we see?
Not only murders, but terrible murders. We see
terrorism (which can easily break out in our own
country). We see the effect of drugs on people.
These are truly evil days.

Now God takes us through trials of our own to bring
us to a place of "rest," Delitzsch says, "inward
rest" (Psalms, III, 81). Because it is in our trials
that we get our eyes off of people and circumstances,
and turn ourselves to the Lord as we have never
turned before.

It is only then that we can be untroubled, not
fearful, but quiet even though everything else around
us is in turmoil. It is not that we do not care, but
it is that we look at things in a new light: in the
light of all that the Lord is.

Remember that our Lord said in Matt. 11:28-30,
Come unto me, all ye that labour
and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;
for am meek and lowly in heart:

and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Let me mention one more reason why the Lord's chastening can produce happiness in our lives. And it is not unrelated to what I have just pointed out.

E. Psa. 94:16-19.

We have a new appreciation of the Lord's ability to take care of all of our needs, overcoming any enemy-- and what is especially worth noting: even while the chastening of the Lord is still upon us.

These verses are an OT version of Phil. 4:6, 7. "The peace of God" is ours even before the trial is over.

Concl: I have not given you all of the evidence that the Scriptures contain concerning the multiplied happinesses that are ours because of what God does for us with His chastenings. But if there were no more, this would be enough to chase the clouds away, and to leave us enjoying the peace of God.

The question that is now before each one of us is: Will we take this to heart? These are eternal truths I have been dealing with, but they must be "mixed with faith" by those of us who have heard them. It is not just in knowing, but knowing and trusting in God that produces the joy that only a child of God can experience as he looks to the Lord in his times of testing. May the Lord turn our eyes away from all of the problems long enough to see Him as our faithful God and heavenly Father, so that we may deal with the needs that are upon us with hearts that are happy in Him.

THE JOY OF SUBMISSION

Psalm 106:3

Intro: Verses 1 through 6 give us the introduction to this Psalm. Verses 47 and 48 give us the conclusion. In between these two sections we have one of the many accounts given in the Psalms of the journey of the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan.

The story, as we all should know, is a story of Israel's continual rebellion against God, on the one hand, and of the mercy of the Lord time and time again, on the other hand. During those times when the people of Israel followed the Lord, and did His will, there was blessing. When they rebelled against Him, they were in trouble. In spite of all of the miracles, and repeated evidences of God's goodness, the people even forgot the greatness and faithfulness of God, and turned against Him.

This is the first of the Hallelujah Psalms, so named because of the way it begins, and ends. (The following ones are Psalm 111-113, 117, 135, 146-150. Only Psa. 111 and 112 do not end with "Hallelujah.")

The Hallelujah Psalms have different purposes. This one is a confession of sin, or what is usually called, a Penitential Psalm. We can see this in Psa. 106:6, 7. The appeal is given in verse 47, and then the Psalm ends in praise to God: "Hallelujah!"

Our Beatitude is in verse 3. Let us see what it means.

I. THE WORD, "BLESSED."

Again, as I have mentioned each week so far, the word "blessed" is in the plural which means that there is not just one blessing, but many blessings, multiplied blessings, day after day, as long as the conditions of the Beatitude are being met by the people of God. It is an exclamation, an outcry made with strong emotion. It is a statement of truth. It is also a promise. These, for the most part, are not only revelations from God, but they are the testimony of the people who have found in their experience, or in the experience of those before them, that the Beatitudes are true, and always will be true. The Beatitudes in the Psalms (as well as in all other parts of Scripture point the way to a truly happy life.

So we should never tire of this word. We can read it, "O the happinesses, the joys, the blessings, that are in store for those who do such and such things."

But now we are ready to consider:

II. THIS PARTICULAR BEATITUDE.

A. The form of the Beatitude.

Remember that we are dealing with Hebrew poetry here in the Psalms, and Hebrew poetry abounds in parallelisms.

A parallelism is made up of two statements that are similar in meaning. Sometimes they can be in contrast with each other. But they are both designed to bring out the same truth.

It is very apparent that the two lines of this verse mean essentially the same thing. Keeping is the same as doing. "Judgment" is similar to "righteousness." And "at all times" gives us the point as far as both statements are concerned. In other words, it is not the person who occasionally does what is righteous who finds multiplied joy and blessing in life, but the person who makes that a way of life. God, in His grace, often blesses isolated cases of righteousness, but what the Psalmist was speaking about here had to do, and has to do, with a life that is full of happinesses of all kinds.

B. The meaning of the words, "keep judgment."

"Judgment" to us seems like the very thing that we are trying to stay away from. The history of Israel shows that when they were under the judgment of God, they were not happy. In fact, those were most unhappy times! So it seems that there is something we need to learn about "judgment" as the Psalmist was using it here.

We have already determined that to "keep" means to do (from the latter part of this verse). And from the words, "at all times," at the end of the verse we can see that it means to do something as a way of life, not just occasionally.

But what did the Psalmist mean by the word, "judgment"?

It is true that it often means punishment in Scripture. It is used many, many times in the OT for "judgment" in that sense. But that meaning does not fit here.

Many of you will remember that in Psalm 119 the Word of God is referred to by several different words, and one of them is the word, "judgments." You will find this word used 21 times for the Scriptures in that Psalm alone. An example is in Psalm 119:7,

I will praise thee with uprightness of heart,
when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
In Psalm 19:9b we are told that "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." For "righteous" to be used unites these two words together like they are in our Beatitude.

So we can see that keeping God's judgments is obeying His Word. But this still does not explain why His Word is called, in this instance, "judgment."

Let me explain it further.

Inherent in the word "judgment" is the idea of sovereignty. It speaks of determining that which will be enforced, and that which will be forbidden. And the purpose is to bring about what some have called, "the rule of right" (Wilson, p. 235).

We have in the Scriptures the will of our sovereign God concerning what is right, and what is wrong. These are God's judgments. To abide by them is to be righteous; to depart from them is to sin.

So God's Word is God's "judgment," His will, His revealed will, as to how we are to live, and how we are to live "at all times"! It is called "righteousness" because it sets the standard for the life that will have the blessing of God.

This brings us to:

C. The message of the Psalm.

Why would the Psalmist begin as he did, then review the history of Israel (which most Jews knew very well anyway), and then conclude as he did?

The history of Israel was given as an illustration of the truthfulness of the Beatitude.

We are to read through this Psalm and ask ourselves the question as we read, Am I going to be happier if I obey the Word of God, or if I ignore it (which means that I will disobey it)?

How would you answer that question?

Remember that the Word does not need to be proven. God did not have to furnish us with illustrations. But the problem is our own spiritual dullness, and the rebelliousness of our hearts. We have all kinds of examples in Scripture to show that blessing comes with obedience to God, and that disobedience only leads us deeper and deeper into trouble. BUT YOU NEED TO SEE THE APPLICATION THAT IT HAS TO YOUR LIFE. See what the Psalmist wrote in vv. 6, 7. He was acknowledging that he and his generation were no better than the people who came out of Egypt. God would have been just in doing far worse than He did to the Israelites, and the only reason that any of them got to the promised land was because of the undeserved mercy of God.

How have you answered my question? Is it better to obey God, or to disobey Him? Which is the happiest life?

The Psalm leaves no doubt as to what the answer is.

We have been learning in our study of Jeremiah that Judah did not profit from Israel's sins and captivity. In fact, Judah even did worse--and they, too, were carried out of the land.

One of the verses we are learning in SS has these two words in it: "judgment" and "righteousness." Listen to it in the light of what we are seeing in our Beatitude.

Thus saith the Lord,
 Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
 let not the mighty man glory in his might,
 let not the rich man glory in his riches:
 But let him that glorieth, glory in this,
 that he understandeth and knoweth me,
 that I am the Lord which exercise
 lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness
 in the earth, for in these things I delight,
 saith the Lord (Jer. 9:24).

Concl: Now let me say this in conclusion.

The way you answer the question which is proposed by the Psalm, and what you do about it, are not necessarily the same! It is very possible to see something like this in the Word, and then go on living the same disobedient life, disregarding the Word of God.

We all want to be happy, but we think that we know how we can be happy. And so we set aside the Word of God. Let me

remind you of something else that Jeremiah wrote. You will find it in Jer. 17:9, 10. It reads like this:

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The answer:

I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins,
even to give to every man according to his ways,
and according to the fruit of his doings.

What is the only course of wisdom?

It is submission to the authority of our sovereign God Who has the sole right to tell us what will make us happy, and what will make us unhappy. Psa. 106:3 is really saying what Psa. 1 said, only in a different way. You may have missed it in Psa. 1, as clear as it is there, and so the Lord is repeating the warning here, and holding out the prospect of blessing far greater than you and I can possibly imagine. May God give us the wisdom to submit ourselves to Him, and to pray that our lives will be directed by the Word of God.

A good thing for all of us to do every day is stated in Psa. 119:59. The Psalmist said,

I thought on my ways,
and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

JOYFUL FEAR

Psalm 112:1

Intro: Psalm 111 and Psalm 112 have one thing in common: they are both acrostic Psalms, i.e., they are written using the Hebrew alphabet as the first letter of the first word of each statement--after the original Hallelujah, or "Praise the Lord." Some call them Alphabetical Psalms.

These two Psalms are related in that Psalm 111 speaks about God and His ways, while Psalm 112 speaks of God's ways with one who is truly a man of God. It is clearly about "the man that feareth the Lord."

It is truly an occasion to praise the Lord when we see either the ways of God or the ways of God with His people.

Obviously the key to Psalm 112 is to be found in understanding what it means to fear the Lord. And so let us begin there.

I. THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

A. The text itself (Psa. 112:1).

The first idea most of us have when we see that word "fear" is that of being afraid. Such fear can have several degrees--from simply avoiding a person because you do not want to be injured in any way by your contact with him, or the idea of being terrorized by a person who might have the potential and the desire to kill you.

But that seems inconsistent with this Psalm because the Psalm begins with, "Praise the Lord," and we are told in the following part of verse 1 that the person who fears the Lord will be "blessed," abounding in joy, happy over and over again.

So we must assume that "the fear of the Lord" is not something to terrorize us, but something that is a blessing, something that makes us happy.

Let us look further into the context.

Is there anything in the Psalm itself that will help us to understand this expression?

Yes, there is. Look at the second part of verse 1. Keeping in mind what we have learned about Hebrew parallelisms, we can assume that the third line of

the verse is an elaboration, or an explanation, of what it means to fear the Lord. It is this: to delight "greatly in his commandments, i.e., the commandments of the Lord. This does not sound like a person who is afraid of God,

does it? To delight greatly indicates just the opposite. This is a person who loves the commandments of the Lord, and who find his greatest joy in doing what the Lord wants Him to do. That is where he find blessing.

B. The remainder of Psalm 112.

Is there anything in Psalm 112 that will help us to understand what it means to fear the Lord?

Most of the Psalm tells us about the blessings that come to the person who fears the Lord, but if you will look at verse 7 you will see another clue.

1. Psalm 112:7.

The person who fears the Lord is described there as one whose "heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

This would lead us to understand that fearing God and trusting God are very, very similar. There is more to fearing God than trusting God, but no definition of the fear of the Lord would be complete without the idea of faith, trust, dependence, believing.

Is there anything else? To this question we again can say, "Yes."

2. The terms that are used to describe the man who fears the Lord.

Look at the word "righteousness" in verse 3. And see the words, "upright . . . gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous" in verse 4. He is called "good" in verse 5, and a man of "discretion." Again in verse 6 he is called "righteous." He is unselfish and generous in verse 9, and righteous again.

These words are not descriptive of a man who is living in sin. He is a man whose desire is obviously to please the Lord. And so it is not surprising to read in Prov. 3:7, ". . . fear the

Lord, and depart from evil." Job is described by the Lord Himself to Satan as "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8). This means that he turned away from sin, he did everything that he could to keep from doing anything that was displeasing to the Lord.

So we can see the this gives us more information about what it means to fear the Lord.

It does not describe the person who lives in terror of what God may do him. In fact the Apostle John was speaking of this kind of fear when he wrote 4:18 where we read,

There is no fear in love;
but perfect love casteth out fear:
because fear hath torment.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

No, the fear of the Lord is a fear of doing anything that might displease the Lord. That is why a man who fears the Lord will love the Word, and seek to learn from the Lord how he can please the Lord, and then he will do whatever is necessary, with God's help, to obey the Lord.

And we cannot begin too young to please the Lord.

Just this morning as I was reading Colossians again I noticed those words, thinking of my message for this evening,

Children, obey your parents in all things:
for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

A young Christian who fears the Lord will obey his parents. It may not always be easy, but it pleases the Lord, and will, according to our Beatitude for this evening, bring the blessing of God.

I was speaking to all of you this morning about thanksgiving. And I quoted Heb. 13:15. Let me give it to you again with verse 16. Listen carefully to it:

By him therefore let us offer
the sacrifice of praise to God continually,
that is, the fruit of our lips
giving thanks to his name.

That is one sacrifice. Then verse 16 adds two more with an important statement:

But to do good and to communicate forget not:
for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

The person who fears the Lord is going to want to

please the Lord. And here are three ways to do it.

Let me give you one more verse, and then you can look for others in your own reading. Of course, any act of obedience is pleasing to the Lord, but it seems that the Lord has emphasized certain things, and the verse that I am going to give you now was really the life-purpose of the Apostle Paul. You will find it in 2 Cor. 5:9:

Wherefore we labour, that,
whether present or absent,
we may be accepted of him.

Let me give it to you in my own paraphrase. Paul was saying,

Wherefore we are ambitious,
or we make it our aim,
that whether we are living on the earth,
or absent from the earth
and present in heaven with the Lord,
that we may be well-pleasing to Him.

We know that Paul feared the Lord because he wanted to please the Lord.

But is there anything to indicate that the fear of the Lord also includes a sense of fearing the Lord as we usually use the term? And the answer to that question is also, "Yes."

C. The fear of the Lord in Psa. 34:11-16.

The one who fears the Lord does fear the consequences of sinning against the Lord. The Scriptures have a great deal to say about this. One of the condemning things that the Apostle Paul said about Jews and Gentiles alike who are still under sin, was this: "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

One other thing:

D. Psalm 33:6-9, 18, 19.

To fear the Lord is to reverence Him, to remember that He is God, and that He is worthy of our worship, our praise, our trust, and our obedience.

But let me conclude by just referring to:

II. THE BLESSINGS WHICH COME WHEN WE FEAR THE LORD.

Our Beatitude gives us the promise of blessings--not one blessing, but many blessings. What are they?

To answer that question we would have to look through the whole Bible. The Lord's blessings may differ from time to time. Psalm 112 tells many of the blessings that the people of God could expect in that day. Read through the Psalm, and note what they are.

Concl: This is a subject that is very appropriate for us if we are concerned about seeing the blessing of the Lord in our day. Cf. Acts 9:31.

Let us make sure of ourselves in this matter--that we show proper reverence for the Lord, that we love Him, that we delight in His Word, that we keep His commandments, that we stay as far away from sin as we can, and seek to get others to fear the Lord also. And remember our Beatitude. (Read it again.)

THE HAPPY LIFE
Psalm 119:1, 2

Intro: There is just one more Beatitude in the Psalms after the two that we will be looking at tonight, and that is the Beatitude found in Psa. 128:1,
Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord;
that walketh in his ways.

Since I spoke last Sunday night on the fear of the Lord, I am not going to speak on it again now. So the message tonight will conclude this present series on The Beatitudes in the Psalms.

I hope you have learned at least three things from our study of the Beatitudes:

- 1) That the Lord wants us to be happy.
- 2) That He has told us in the Beatitudes how we can be happy, truly happy.
- 3) That we will seek happiness in those ways where the Lord has indicated that we will find it.

It would be very discouraging to find out that these three truths have escaped any of us.

Tonight we have the two Beatitudes which stand at the head of the longest chapter in the Bible. The fact that they are located where they are, and that they are double, certainly is designed of the Lord to attract our attention to them.
(Read them.)

These Beatitudes are not new to us in our study of the Psalms. In fact, this is the very point which the first Beatitude in Psalm 1 made: Happiness and the Word of God go together. Sin looks promising as far as happiness is concerned, but it cannot produce true happiness. It is only by living according to the Word that there can be a really happy life.

Since these two Beatitudes go together, it seems certain that we are to learn more about them by comparing them. And then the following verses show at least some additional details to throw light upon what constitutes a truly happy life.

Let us examine the first and second verses first. Remember that Psalm 119 is an acrostic in which every verse in each section begins in the Hebrew language with the same letter. So all of the first eight verses begin with the letter aleph.

I. THE WORD "BLESSED."

Both are plural. Both are exclamatory and rapturous. The Psalmist was obviously excited about what he was writing.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO STATEMENTS OF VERSE ONE.

The second helps to explain the first part. When the Psalmist spoke of "the undefiled in the way," he had reference to walking "in the law of the Lord." And walking was not an occasional act of obedience to the Lord, but it was a life lived that way.

But before we go on with that idea, let us look at the word, "undefiled." Who are "the undefiled"?

The word speaks of something that is complete, or whole. It can also be translated perfect.

Perhaps a good NT illustration of the use of a similar word in the Greek is found in Phil. 3:15, 16 where Paul said,

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,
be thus minded:
and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded,
God shall reveal even this unto you.
Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained,
let us walk by the same rule,
let us mind the same thing.

Just before this in Phil. 3:12 Paul said about himself,
Not as though I had already attained,
either were already perfect . . .

So, in effect, he was saying, "I am not perfect yet, but I am perfect." What did he mean?

The answer must be that he was speaking of the "perfect" in two ways. There is a sense in which every child of God is perfect, and yet he is not perfect. He is perfect before God because he is saved in Christ, but from a practical standpoint he is not yet as perfect as he one day will be.

The Psalmist was not making the distinction that Paul was making, but the point that I want you to see is that he was speaking, when he used the term, "undefiled," of one who has been saved. The Beatitudes in the Psalms do not overlook the necessity of being saved; they always assume it. But here the Psalmist specifically mentioned it.

It will not do for just anyone to try to find happiness by walking in the law of the Lord. A person who is not a child of God would not only draw back from such a life, but he (or she) does not possess the power to live that way. So the Psalmist wants us to realize right at the outset of this Psalm that he is talking to a special group of people--those who, while they may not be perfect in all that they do, yet they are perfect, complete, and

whole because they are saved.

But let me take this a step farther now.

The Psalmist was not saying that every child of God is going to be happy because he is a child of God. A person has to be a child of God in order to enjoy the kind of happiness that the Psalmist was talking about, but he will not be a happy Christian unless he is walking in the law of the Lord.

We have recently had more than one occasion to discuss this Bible word, "walk." We have seen that it has reference to the way that we live.

Now no child of God will always do everything that he should do according to the Word of God, but that can certainly be his objective. He looks upon the Scriptures, not as something optional, but as "the law" of his God. We are not talking now about the Mosaic Law, but the Word of God generally. God has told us in His Word what we are to be, what we are to do, what we are NOT to do, and so on. The more we seek to live our lives according to the Bible, the greater will be our happiness. God's Word is very important to Him. We cannot ignore the Word and still have His blessing. To be "in the way" (the first part of verse 1) is to "walk in the law of the Lord." This is where real happiness is to be found--when a child of God lives his life in obedience to the Word of God.

But now let us move on to verse two: the second of these Beatitudes. And here let us seek to determine:

III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST PART OF VERSE TWO AND ALL OF VERSE ONE.

Walking "in the law of the Lord" is the same as keeping the Lord's "testimonies."

There have been many attempts by students of the Word to explain the word "testimonies," but the one that seems to me to be the most accurate is that this word expresses the fact that this is God's witness, His testimony coupled with His encouragement, to live in a certain way. This would be closely parallel to saying that what we are talking about is the Word of God. It has come from Him, from His mouth, from His heart.

Keeping them is to observe them diligently, faithfully, not just once in a while, but every day.

Perhaps we need to start out doing God's will because it is His law. But then we come to the place where we have more delight in the Lord's way, and we do it because we want to please Him.

The different words which is used of the Bible in Psalm 119 show how important the Word of God from many different points of view.

But we are not finished with these two verses yet. Let us look now at:

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE LAST STATEMENT OF VERSE TWO TO THAT WHICH HAS GONE BEFORE.

I hope that I have been able to picture for you the progress that I see in the statements of these two verses. There are four in all, and the first three lead to the last one.

What is going to be the result when a child of God sets out to obey the Word of God, living that way day after day?

The latter part of verse 2 gives us our answer.

We will find that there will be a growing desire in our hearts to seek the Lord, and to enjoy fellowship with Him. Many try to have fellowship with the Lord as a merely emotional experience, but they may not be giving any attention to the Word of God as it relates to their lives. But when we begin with obedience, ultimately that leads us to a real and growing fellowship with the Lord.

Let me illustrate that with what our Lord said in John 14:21, 23. (Turn to it, and read.)

You see, obedience to the Lord does something to our hearts. It makes us seek the Lord. The Bible is not just a Book of do's and don'ts, but it is the revelation of a life of fellowship with our Lord. And this is where we experience the greatest joy.

Do you remember what David said in Psa. 16:11? "Thou wilt shew me the path of life, in thy presence is . . ."

I wish I had the time to go into the rest of the verses in this first stanza of Psalm 119, but since I do not, let me just point out three things that are:

V. THE RESULTS OF SUCH A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE.

I have already mentioned two from our text:

- 1) Happiness. This is THE HAPPY LIFE.
- 2) Greater fellowship with the Lord--which increases our joy. Cf. 1 John 1:6, 7.

Let me give you three more as I close.

- A. Deliverance from sin (Psa. 119:3).
- B. Increased prayer, and greater earnestness in prayer (Psa. 119:5). The Word makes us conscious of our need of the Lord to help us live such a life.
- C. Praise to God (Psa. 119:7).

Concl: After the Lord had given His disciples an example, He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

There is nothing that I can say that would be better. Knowing is not enough; knowing and doing, when it comes to our obedience to God's Word, lies at the very foundation of THE LIFE OF HAPPINESS.