

**THE LORD'S WAY TO HAPPINESS IN 2005**

## Psalm 1

**Intro:** I am well aware of the fact that if there is one passage of Scripture that I have spoken on as much, or more, than any other, it is Psalm 1. And I have usually done it on the first Sunday of the year. I have done it because it carries a message which I believe we all, I included, should be thinking about, and acting upon, at a time when many people, even some who are not Christians, are thinking about how their lives can be happier, more enjoyable, and even more profitable. Surely we as the Lord's people should be thinking about this continually.

I suppose that you have asked yourself the question, "What do people mean when they greet me with, 'Happy New Year'?" Maybe they are just thinking about happiness in a general way, or most probably it is that whatever it takes to make you happy, is what you will experience in the new year.

The Bible has a lot to say about happiness, or joy. The Lord did everything He did at creation for the good of Adam and Eve, and for the good of the human race who would come along after them. Thanksgiving is an evidence of joy or happiness, and we are taught in Scripture to give "thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). "The fruit of the Spirit is," among other qualities, "joy." One of the reasons we look forward to heaven, is because, as King David said, "in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasure for evermore" (Psa. 16:11). Even prayer is designed by God for our blessing and joy. The Lord Jesus told His disciples as they walked toward the Garden of Gethsemane, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). The whole epistle of Paul to the church at Philippi carried the theme, "Rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 3:1; 4:4). This does not mean that life will always be what we want it to be, free from trials and difficulties. But it does mean that true joy and happiness can be ours even if you are sitting in a Rome prison like Paul was when he wrote to the Philippian believers. Every beatitude in the Bible (and you will find them in the OT and in the NT) is proof that the Lord wants us to be happy.

The difference between God and the world, is that the world, blinded by sin, has its own way of seeking happiness, but it is diametrically opposed

to God's way. We see it every day, and it is revealed to us very clearly in Psalm 1, as well as in many other passages of Scripture. There is a clear contrast between the people spoken of in verse 1 as compared with the people spoken of in verses 2 and 3. But the distinction is even clearer in the last three verses where the psalmist spoke of "the ungodly" as distinguished from "the righteous."

"The righteous" person is a person who knows the Lord and who belongs to the Lord. He is righteous because God has declared him to be so by faith in the Redeemer. When this psalm was written the godly Jews were still looking for Him to come. Now we know Him because He came roughly two thousand years ago, born of the virgin Mary, and He died as a sin offering to God, bearing the sins of all who had ever, or would ever, believe in Him for salvation. This is the only kind of a person who would ever delight himself, or herself, in "the law of the Lord," which is an OT expression meaning *the Word of God*, or, in other words, *the Bible*.

So we know that people in the world have their way of looking for happiness which is altogether different from the way a Christian looks for happiness.

Now I have given my message from Psalm 1 the title, "The Lord's Way To Happiness In 2005." And I have given it that title because I want to impress upon your mind that true happiness today is to be found in exactly the same way and the same place that it was to be found at least three thousand years ago when Psalm 1 was written. Our world has changed tremendously in those three thousand years, but people have not changed. The people we read about in the Bible were just like we are. They may have spoken different languages, but by nature they were the same. They wanted to be happy just like we do. But the problem is that man, because he is a sinner, looks for happiness in all of the wrong places. And instead of being happy, the things that he does makes him not happy, but miserable. That is why the Bible is so important for all of us. When the doors of our schools are closed to the Bible, the administrators and teachers who enforce such a rule are committing moral suicide. The Bible gives us the truth about everything that is important for us to know, and among everything else, it tells us how to be happy. That is why Psalm 1 is so important, and many of those who have studied the background of the Bible believe that this psalm was placed first in the collection of psalms, not because it was written first, but because its teaching is foundational, is basic, to all of the other psalms. If you really

understand this first psalm, then you won't be able to get enough of the others psalms, or, in fact, the rest of the Bible. But remember as you read it, that the psalmist was saying that this happiness which is the only true happiness, is only for those who know God. And the only way you can know God is through Jesus Christ, through having come in your life to understand that you are a sinner, in need of someone who can save you from the judgment of God, a Savior from sin. Jesus Christ is the only One Who can do that because He died bearing our sins that we might be forgiven, cleansed, and made acceptable to God. If you don't understand the importance of trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you are not going to find the happiness that the psalm addresses.

I am sure that if a pastor could start preaching when he is in his early twenties, and would speak though all of his adult life on Psalm 1 once a year, though he lived to be a hundred, he could never really exhaust all of the truth that is in this psalm. So I am not going to cover it all, but I trust that we will see enough to make us understand where true happiness is to be found.

Now we need to get a good start at the beginning. And so my first point is:

## **I. THE FIRST SIX WORDS OF THE PSALM.**

Most of the children who are here today could tell me that the first six words of this psalm are: "Blessed is the man that walketh ..." Now remember that this psalm was originally written in the Hebrew language, and so what we have in our Bibles is a translation from Hebrew to English.

The word "blessed" is a word which expresses in the Hebrew that the writer felt that he could not adequately express the happiness that the Lord gives us even in his own language. "Blessed" means *happy*, but the word he used could best be translated, "O the happiness." Or some feel that it should be translated, "O the happinesses," like the happiness which God gives us is *multiplied happinesses*. So if the one who wrote this Psalm under the direction of the Holy Spirit, really felt unable to tell us how wonderful the happiness that God gives, really is, then I have to make the same confession. What God gives is really too wonderful to be able to express it in any language, or even in all languages together! That is what we are thinking about this morning.

Next look at the word, “man.” It might seem like this is a “men only” kind of happiness. But the word used here means men and women, young middle aged, or old age. It means people of any nation, in any generation, past, present, or future. This is a happiness for anyone and everyone who knows the Lord.

But then look at the word “walketh.” This is a psalm about walking. That is a Hebrew expression which speaks of the way we live. We all not only live a day at a time, but a step at a time. But the emphasis is on how we are walking in the present, right now. The first time you have this expression used this way in the Bible is in Genesis 5, verses 22 and 24 where we read, “And Enoch walked with God.” This means that step by step he was living in fellowship with God. When it says that Enoch walked with God, it means that he was living so as to please God.

This all means that happiness is not dependent upon where you live, or when you live, or who you are, or what you have, but on *how you live*. That is different from what most people think although they do think that their way of life is going to bring them happiness. But the psalmist began what he had to say by saying how we are not to live.

So as my second point let us think about:

## **II. TWO WAYS WE CAN WALK.**

The first is the way that most people walk, or live, but the psalmist specifically tells that the way most people walk is not the way they are going to find happiness. I heard the other day about a woman who felt that life was passing her by, and so she decided to live like she wasn't married and to do whatever she wanted to do. She didn't want a divorce, but neither did she want to live like the wife of her husband, nor as the mother of her children. She thinks that she is taking the path to happiness, but she is headed in exactly the opposite direction, possibly of disease and death. Who knows what is going to happen to her?

So the psalmist tells us, first of all (because this is the way that most people live), how not to walk. So we notice that the word “walketh” has a “not” before it, followed by two nor's. Let me read the who verse to you. (Read v. 1.)

We all need “counsel.” Counsel is advice. It is guidance. It has to do not

only about where we are going to walk, but with whom we are going to walk. There is one book of the Bible that is designed for the specific purpose of giving us counsel, of showing us how to live, and that is the book of Proverbs. But you find good counsel all through the Bible. But “the counsel of the ungodly” comes from a person who is not at all concerned about pleasing God, and so he is going to lead you farther and farther astray. And young people, don’t think that just because a man or a woman has a Ph.D. after his or her name, that they are going to give you good counsel. Be careful about your peers. They may be even more confused about life than you are. It seems like the people who are headed in the wrong way, aren’t happy unless they are getting someone else to go along with them.

And if you walk in the counsel of the ungodly, you will find that their way seems less and less offensive to you, and you find yourself “standing” and then “sitting.” You are content to *stand in the way of sinners*. And you forget what Solomon tell us twice in Proverbs that “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). God’s ways are not our ways, and our ways are not His ways. The downward trek usually begins with rebellion against parents, and this throws us with other rebels, and nothing but trouble lies ahead. The way is so dangerous today, and there are so many human wrecks along the road, that the worse thing you can do is to get started that way.

Finally, if you listen to the people of the world, you find yourself sitting in the seat of the scornful. They scorn what is good. They scorn God and anyone who is interested in walking with Him. Hollywood and TV bring the ways of ungodly men and women right into our homes if we are not very careful. But those are people who are among the worst examples that anyone could follow. Moral rotteness is everywhere these days. People are looking for excitement, but they are looking for it in the wrong places and in the wrong activities.

Don’t look for happiness among the ungodly, or among the sinners, or among the scornful, *because happiness, true happiness, lasting happiness, is not found where those people are going. And the end of that road is hell.*

But let us move on to:

### III. THE PLACE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

The answer to our search for true happiness is found in verse 2. And remember that we are still talking about “the man” of verse 1 – the man, the woman, the boy, the girl. There are not age limitations here. There are not ethnic limitations. There are no language limitations. The Bible has been translated into the Arabic language and hundreds of other languages. Probably all of us who are here this morning own our own Bible, and maybe several different versions. The question is, How do we treat our Bibles? How much do we read them? As you think about your Bible can you use the word “delight”?

The word “delight” includes many ideas. You delight in it if it give you great pleasure to read it, or to hear it read, or to hear some person who knows the Lord, teach it. When you get up in the morning, how long is it before you are thinking about your Bible, so you can read it before your day gets started. Job valued the Word of God above food for his body. Can you and I say that? Of all of your possessions, do you consider it the most valuable of anything that you have?

Notice what the psalmist said would be the case with a person who really takes delight in the law of the Lord (which became a title for all of the Bible as other books were gradually added to it. *He meditates in it day and night*. What does this mean? It mean that he thinks about what he reads, or what is read to him. It means that he asks the Lord to help him to understand what he reads. But it means one other thing. There are two objects to meditation: the first is understanding, and the second is application. We read. Then we meditate, we think about what we read as we read and after we read. And then we pray that the Lord will help us to do what He wants us to do, and not to do what He doesn't want us to do. If we really delight in the Word, it will be the first thing we think about as we get up in the morning, and the last thing that we think about as we are going to sleep at night.

Now I am not going to have time to deal with every detail of this psalm, but let me conclude by pointing out that the psalmist spoke of two results.

### IV. TWO RESULTS.

So far we have gotten through verses 1 and 2. The results that are observable in the lives of people in the world, which includes you and me

because we all live in this world – the results are like a tree, on the one hand, and chaff, on the other.

The tree is strong, unmoveable, fruitful, healthy, and prosperous. The chaff is worthless “which the wind driveth away.”

There was a man in the church in which I was raised in Tacoma who operated a grain elevator. He took me and one of my brothers through the elevator where the wheat was prepared for shipping. I was fascinated with the whole operation, and the way the wide belts carried the grain to the ships which were docked nearby. Years later I fell in love with a young lady whose father owned a rice mill. And whenever I went through that rice mill, it always reminded me of the grain elevator in Tacoma. One handled wheat; the other, rice. But there was one similarity between the two. All over both places was chaff. What is chaff? It is the husks that are removed from the grains of wheat or rice as they are prepared for market. “Chaff” has become in our language a word which describes anything that is worthless.

The Bible describes the ungodly as chaff. A man may have millions or billions of dollars, be able to buy anything he wants, go anywhere he wants, do whatever he wants, but if he is ungodly, he is like “the chaff which the wind driveth away.”

The Jews of our Lord’s day tried to blow the apostles away, telling them that they were not to speak at all about Jesus. But they found out that those two apostles were tree-like, unmoveable, ready to face imprisonment, or even death, rather than to keep silent about the Lord. But there was another apostle who was just “chaff.” I’m speaking, of course, of Judas. He had a chance to make some money by betraying the Lord. And so he did. Later he knew that he had done the wrong thing, returned the money, and went out and committed suicide.

Why are ungodly people, people who do not know God, and don’t want to know Him, and aren’t interested in pleasing Him – why are they chaff. Because even though they have stood in the way of sinners, they will not stand in the judgment to come. All of the good things that they have done will be worthless chaff, just like they are, and the way of the ungodly shall perish.

**Concl:** Every word of God is important, but it would be difficult to find

words that are more important than these which we have considered in Psalm 1. You see, it is the Word of God which separates us into two classes: those of us who delight in it, and those who find it very easy and pleasant to live without it. You see, the testing ground is the Word of God. I trust that 2005 will be a year in which all of us will be able to say in the words of another psalm, "O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119:97).

If you are truly saved, you are going to love the Word. If you read it, you are going to delight in it. And if you meditate on it, your life is going to be changed to become what the Lord wants all of us to be, conformed to the very likeness of Christ.

So if you haven't read the Word yet today, go home and read it and meditate on it, and delight in it. The results in your life will bless you as you become like a fruitful tree unmoved by the ungodliness of the world we live in.

If you don't love God's Word, then you need to seek the Lord, repent of your sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who died that sinners might stand in the judgment, cleansed by the precious blood of Christ.