

**THE HAPPY LIFE**

## Psalm 1

**Intro:** For the past several years I have chosen to speak on Psalm 1 on the first Sunday of the new year. And I decided to do the same thing this year – not the same message, but the same text. At the first of the year most people, even many who are not Christians, think back over the past year in particular with the purpose of making the new year better than the last year, or the last years, have been. We all have a God-given desire to be happy, and yet we all know that no life is trouble free. We all have our trials. Many times our troubles are physical, and these seem to multiply as we get older. Sometimes our physical problems stay with us throughout life. A lot of people in these days are unable to find work, and this leads financial problems. We all have times of trouble in our relationships with other people, sometimes with people who are very close to us and very dear to us. Frustrations and disappointments seem to be our lot frequently. And then there is sorrow and grief which touches all of our lives when those we love are taken from us in death. We live in a world in which on most days we run into situations or experience that we would like to have avoided. So probably most of us have wondered at some time, or times, in our lives, if it is possible to be happy in the kind of a world we live in.

There are certain things that we all need to recognize from all of this.

I hope you all have started to read your Bible through in this new year regardless of how many times you have gone through those sacred pages before. Even in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, we learn that God created man in His own image. That He made man without sin. He put Adam and his wife, Eve, in what must have been the most beautiful garden that there ever could have been. We have many beautiful places in the world today, but none of them could compare with the Garden of Eden. God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, provided everything necessary to met their needs. And it seems that their greatest joy was in those times of fellowship that they had with the Lord.

But God told them that they could eat of all of the trees of the Garden except for one. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was the one restriction that God placed on them. But one day the Devil came to them. He had already experienced the unhappy results of his own sin, and he was intent on bringing the whole human

family into the same plight that he was in. And you remember how he began with Eve, sought to get her to doubt the goodness of God, and contradicted God Who had told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate the fruit. His explanation was that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that they would be like God, and that God didn't want them to be like He was.

Well, they ate of the forbidden fruit. Eve ate it first, and then she got Adam to eat it. Well, they didn't drop dead like a person would who had taken poison. But they died! They died in their relationship with God. They died spiritually. The evidence was that when God came to have fellowship with them, as He apparently did each day, they tried to hide themselves from God. They had died spiritually.

Adam and Eve had two sons. The firstborn was Cain. His younger brother was Abel. They both brought sacrifices to God. Cain brought the fruit of the ground; Abel brought an animal sacrifice. God accepted Abel's offering, but He rejected Cain's offering. This made Cain very angry. So as soon as he had the opportunity, in his anger he caught Abel by surprise, and killed him. And as we go on reading in the book of Genesis we find that the descendants of Adam and Eve followed them in death, physical death. Read Genesis 5 and you will read over and over again, "and he died . . . and he died . . . and he died."

Finally, the world's population got so bad, so evil, so sinful, that God destroyed the whole human race, world wide, with a flood. But he spared one man and his family: Noah and his wife, and their three sons and their wives.

Why am I going over all of this if I am going to talk about *the happy life*? It is to show you that the troubles of this life are all traceable to sin. God never intended that we would be able to do whatever we want to do, to live any way we want to live. When you hear people talking today about demanding their rights, just remember that that is a deadly formula of life. God intended that people should depend on Him, should put Him first.

So the first thing for us to learn about a truly happy life is that it has to be a life of trusting God, and doing what He wants us to do, and not doing what He does not want us to do. But it is our sinful nature which makes us intent on doing what we want to do. And it is sin that has brought us to the chaos which is characteristic of our world today.

Sin is the world's #1 problem. Sin is America's #1 problem. Sin is my greatest problem, and it is your greatest problem. We can't change our nature, but the good news is that God has manifested His grace, and His love, for us in sending His Son to take the penalty of our sins to the Cross where the Lord Jesus paid the wages of sin by His death that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ might be forgiven on their sins (all sin) and receive the gift of eternal life. It is then, and only then, that we will have the desire to please God, and the ability to please Him. The Bible tells us, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Christians have their problems like everyone else, but the Bible teaches us that God works through those problems in the lives of those who know Christ to make us more like He wants us to be, which is to be more like the Lord Jesus.

So in dealing with our #1 problem, we need to believe on the one and only Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him Who by His death took upon Himself the penalty for our sins, and so has secured forgiveness for us, making us, as the Bible also tells us, "new creatures in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Now we don't really know who wrote Psalm 1. But we do know that when he spoke of blessedness, he was speaking of happiness, which he had found in knowing and learning about and trusting in the same Savior that is our Savior today. People in the Old Testament looked forward to the coming Redeemer. We know now that He has come. We look back upon His redeeming work on the Cross. As the Son of God He became the Son of man, born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit, without sin, the only Savior that there ever has been or ever will be. So before you can know the happiness that He alone gives, you must know Him as your personal Savior.

Now the sad thing about us as Christians, is that we don't always show the happiness that the Lord gives by the way we live. So the fault is not in the Lord, but it is in us. However, in Psalm 1 we have revealed for us by God the way we as Christians can find true and lasting happiness.

### **The Message of Psalm 1**

Before I get to the message of the Psalm I want to point out what the writer was seeking to convey to us readers how tremendously excited he was about what he was about to write. And I am speaking of the word

with which the Psalm begins, the word, “Blessed.” In the Hebrew it is a plural. So that our translation could begin in these words, “Oh, the blessednesses of the man . . .” He was seeking to convey to us that knowing the Lord did not just bring a single blessing, a single source of happiness. Nor was it a life in which we experience blessing once in a while. But it is a life in which he had experienced blessing after blessing, one after another, so many that he would not have been able to relate what they all were. David may have been the writer of this Psalm because in a Psalm we know that he wrote, he spoke like this. I am referring to Psalm 40, verse 5, where David did say:

Many, O LORD my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

So if you were to ask the writer of Psalm 1 if there was any happiness, any blessing, in being a Christian, a child of God, he would have answered that is blessing after blessing. It was like David said in the twenty-third Psalm, “My cup runneth over.” This is why the Apostle Paul could write, as he did, to the Philippian church telling them to “rejoice in the Lord always.” And then he went on to say, “And again, I say, rejoice.”

But let me add a very important word. You and I will only find the Christian life to be a life of abounding and continuous happiness if we live like David lived, and like the Apostle Paul lived, and, if the writer of Psalm 1 was someone else besides David, then like him. And the good part about Psalm 1 (since this is the passage we are considering together) is that he told us here how he lived.

The Psalm is divided into two parts. The first three verses tell us how the Psalmist lived, or how a godly man lives, or should live. The last three verses are devoted to the ungodly man.

### **I. The godly man (Psa. 1:1-3).**

He is not called *godly* in these verses, but by contrast in using “ungodly” in verse 1 and in the last three verses, we can say that the person described here is *godly*. Verse 6 shows us that we might call the man in the first three verses a righteous man.

Now a godly person is a person who puts God first in his life. He is concerned about knowing God and pleasing God and about glorifying

God in his life..

If we are going to live a happy life, we need to know that we are not going to find it in sin. In fact, you will notice by looking closely at verse 1 that the Psalmist was indicating that the more your look for happiness in sin, the worse your life will get. If you walk in the counsel of the ungodly, this means that you are more concerned about human wisdom than you are about the wisdom of God. Or to state it another way, you are more concerned about human philosophy than you are about the book of Proverbs.

Sin always looks so inviting. It seems like the people of the world are having more fun than we are. But looks are deceiving. A person starts of live like the world (“walketh”), then he stands, or adopts, the way of sinners. And finally it leads to “sitting in the seat of the scornful.” “Sitting in the seat” is the description of a teacher. Walking a path of sin ultimately leads to teaching others to sin, or instructing them in scorning. What do they scorn? They scorn the ways of God. There are a lot of scorners in our world today. They want to do away with anything that has to do with God, or with Jesus Christ, or with the Bible, or with a holy life. And many there are who go this way. They know nothing about the ways of God. Anything having to do with God is distasteful to the person who is looking for happiness. Sin blinds people to the extent that they know that they have not found happiness in sinful living, but they think that they will find it if they keep trying.

Well, if following the desires of our hearts and living in sin is not the way to find happiness, where do the godly find it? Look at verse 2. (Read.)

When the Psalmist spoke of “the law of the Lord,” he was speaking of the revealed, written, Word of God. He didn’t have as much as we do, probably just the books of Moses. How blessed we are to have it all! But what is your attitude, what is my attitude, toward the Word. Do we read it? And if we read it, do we read it because we feel obligated in some way to do so. Or do we “delight” in it? Do you look forward to reading it each day? When you have a spare moment, do you turn to the Word of God? Do you delight in it? Do you treasure it? Is it your favorite book?

And then let me go on to ask in connection with this verse, do you meditate on the Word? And in order to meditate, do you memorize verses? If I were to ask you what verse was a special blessing to you from your

reading this morning, what verse would you give me? If you have no answer for me, it is questionable if you have found real delight, real joy, in reading the Word.

Now verse 3 tells what is going to happen to you if you are reading the Word because you love it, and you are meditating on it so that you will understand it, and then live it. You will be growing! Growing like a tree. Growing like a fruitful tree. Growing like a tree with healthy leaves.

I think any serious Christian gets disturbed because of the inconsistencies and failures in our lives. Trees can fall. But trees that are well nourished, as the Psalmist said, by “rivers of water,” are most likely to flourish. You and I need the Word to give us stability and to make us fruitful. And then look at the promise at the end of verse 3: “And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Spiritual prosperity is what we all need.

Even for us as Christians we can only live in victory over those sins which so easily beset us (see Heb. 12:1) by feeding our souls daily on the Word of God, not just once in the morning, but as often as we can throughout the day, or as the Psalmist said, “day and night,” not day *or* night, but “day *and* night.”

Now look at the contrast in verses 4 through 6 where the Psalmist tells us about the person who has no place for God in his life. (Read.) He lives for himself. He is not interested in the Bible, or in going to church where he would be bored if the pastor were to teach the Bible. And we are slowly destroying our nation by opposition to God and to Christ and to the Bible. Nations that love their sin and want to have their own way, are walking the road that leads to eternal judgment. The Lord knows what we are doing. He knows everything that we are doing. A day of judgment is coming. The consequences of ungodliness are terrible beyond description.

**Concl:** As you read through the Psalms, you find yourself reading about all kinds of situations and people. You will find that the people of God have to face all kinds of circumstances and difficulties. Knowing the Lord, and really seeking to please the Lord do not make us exempt as far as the trials of life are concerned. But there can be joy in the midst of our trials. We can smile through our tears. And it is all because we know our God, that He is working all of the details of our lives *together* for His glory and for our good. Even in days like we are living in, is it not only

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possible for us to be happy, but to enjoy *happinesses*? Thank God that the answer to that question is, Yes. The foundation for a happy life is to be seen in the Bible where the leading them is Christ. Let us give ourselves to God and to His Word in 2009 so that we can sing from our hearts,

On Christ the solid Rock I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

From Tim Huggins Christmas letter, close with Heb. 11:24-27.