



THE
WORD

SESSION SNAPSHOT

AN UNCHANGING WORD IN A CHANGING WORLD

NARRATIVE PASSAGE:

Psalm 1:1-6

GOSPEL FOCUS:

Romans 7:21-24

TAKEAWAYS:

- Success for a Christian lies in your obedience
- Our obedience looks like reading the Word, listening to Jesus, and following Him

LAST WEEK'S READING:

- Psalm 51
- 2 Samuel 24; Psalm 24
- Psalm 1; 19
- Psalm 103; 119:1-48
- Psalm 119:49-128

KNOW THE WORD

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

In the first Psalm, the ungodly and the Godly are contrasted with competing images set against each other. The ungodly man is shown slowly stopping his forward motion and becoming like chaff in the wind, but the Godly man is compared to a tree planted by never-ending streams of nourishment. As we unpack the first Psalm, remember that this dilemma—the decision to follow the pattern of the world or to follow the paths of righteousness—is presented to us every day, and that we must wake up each morning, intentionally pursue righteousness, and submit ourselves to Christ.

COMMENTARY AND STUDY MATERIALS

- v.1 German author Walter Kaser wrote that the expression “blessed is” refers to the blessings of covenantal life and the joy of living continually in the presence of God. “Blessings” in this context has little to do with physical possessions or prosperity.
- v.3 In Wisdom literature, trees are used as metaphors for wisdom itself (like in Proverbs 3:18). Both healthy trees and the wise are deeply rooted in good soil, they are provided the resources they need to survive, they stretch constantly to the sun, they withstand harsh conditions with grace, and they prove their health by bearing the kind of fruit they were planted to grow.
- v.4 Chaff is the stiff, straw-like stuff that grows around grains of wheat. When harvesting the wheat, the chaff must be removed. It is a useful metaphor for how the wicked will end because it reveals two things: how utterly useless a wicked person is and how easily God will deal with them. Chaff only gets in the way, and it is blown away by just a breeze. The thresher has only to toss it into the air and it will not even be remembered.
- v.5 “Assembly” refers to the people of God, not necessarily to just the Israelites. This language suggests that, even as far back as the composition of this Psalm, it was understood that God’s judgment would come on circumcised Israelites who refused to live by God’s commands.

STUDY THE WORD

When would you say was the happiest time in your life?

We all experience moments that we would describe as happy. The times when everything seems to fall into place. The many plates you've been juggling seem to be balanced, it all just feels "right."

But when the Bible talks about happiness, or blessing, that isn't exactly what it has in mind. Instead, it is far, far bigger than that. And it leads to one of the most important things we can practice: obedience.

OUT LOUD, READ PSALM 1:1-6

This is a short Psalm, but notice how it is broken up into two different sections: verses 1-3 are talking about the obedient person's blessing, and verses 4-6 talk about the futility of wickedness.

The Psalmist says that the godly will be "happy" or "blessed." What do you think it means to be "blessed"?

How does the world promise to make us happy?

What should a believer consider to be a happy life?

We live in a world that tells us how to be "happy" all the time—buy this, belong to that, date them, follow your heart, etc. It can be easy to lose sight of what Biblical happiness is. One commentator described it this way: "Happy expresses the sense of joy and satisfaction in one's state or circumstances. It often is the result of blessing that comes from trust in and obedience to Yahweh." This kind of joy is found elsewhere in Scripture, too—notably in James 1:2. It is a joy that is not dependent on one's circumstances, but rather a joy that is present despite one's circumstances.

The Psalmist writes that whatever the righteous person does will prosper. Does that mean that believers are always going to be successful? Why or why not?

For the believer, what do you think true prosperity looks like?

We must be careful defining prosperity, just like happiness. Remember that Jesus called the poor, those in mourning, the hungry, and the persecuted "blessed." He told His followers to store up their treasure in Heaven, rather than focusing on just acquiring them on earth. He told the rich young ruler to rid himself of his earthly riches if he wanted to enter the Kingdom of God. While many Christians can lead physically wealthy lives, that should not be their aim. Aligning ourselves with Christ does less to make us "rich" and does more to replace the broken alternatives of the pattern of this world with the joy of the Lord. With a new heart will come new definitions of happiness, joy, blessing, and prosperity—they will be found in nearness to the Father.

How does the Psalmist contrast the two types of people in this chapter?

How do our surroundings (the things and people we surround ourselves with) give us a clue about which of these people we are?

What do you think that your surroundings, in particular, say about you?

The one surrounded by the wicked is shown in a downward progression—from walking to standing to sitting—while the righteous one is shown flourishing like a fruit-bearing tree planted beside streams. The wicked will not survive judgment and will be blown away like chaff in the wind, while the righteous will survive, have his path protected, and will weather storms because of his strong roots.

Are you surrounded by wicked, sinning, scoffers? Or are you surrounded by streams nourishing you with the Word and Spirit of God?

Verse 1 talks about “delight.” What are some of the things that delight you?

How can we learn to delight ourselves in God’s Word?

How do you think delighting yourself in God’s Word will affect the way you think, act, and speak?

Delighting in God’s Word will not happen unless we are diligent to practice it. Unless we make it a habit to spend time in it, hiding it in our hearts. As we do that, we’ll find that when our thoughts drift, they drift to things of God. It will flavor our speech. It will affect the attitudes of our hearts. God’s Word is a source of endless fascination, instruction, and joy, but it is also more than that: the closer we get to it, the closer we get to its Author.

OUT LOUD, READ ROMANS 7:21-24

How have you seen the struggle Paul communicated in this verse in your own life?

How does Psalm 1 address it, even if it is just indirectly?

APPLY THE WORD

We are never going to get to the point where we perfectly obey everything that God has commanded. We are incapable of it. But that's okay--Psalm 1 is not about perfect adherence to a list of commands, but rather delighting ourselves in the things of God. We'll all feel like Paul did in Romans 7.

But the first step toward fighting this fight is to understand where we are planted, to address what we delight in, and to discern where it is we get our sense of what we should and shouldn't do. Is it going to be a somewhat fickle worldly standard or is it going to be the unchanging Word of God?

Before you close your time in prayer, encourage those in your group to take a few minutes when you are done to answer the following and share updates next week:

In what area of your life are you most prone to giving in to wicked counsel?

What step do you need to take in order to address where you are planted?

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK

Next Week's Reading:

- ***Psalm 119:129-176; 139***
- ***Psalm 148-150***
- ***1 Kings 2***
- ***1 Kings 3; 6***
- ***1 Kings 8; 9:1-9***