

Psalm 1

Observations:

Maybe you choose counsel from unbelievers because you are an unbeliever!

This is not a matter of wills but a description of unbelievers!

Here, God is not so much telling you what you should do, but more so describing people

1. God promises believers that he will keep them close (v.3)
2. God promises believers that he will work through them (v.3)
3. God promises believers that they will endure (v.3)
4. God promises believers spiritual prosperity (v.3)
5. God promises unbelievers judgement (v.5)
6. God promises unbelievers separation from believers (v.5)

Important passages:

Wheat and tares

Separating what from tares

Luke 12:49 Christ separating people

Introduction:

Promises today are a dime a dozen. Online there is a site that tracks recent presidents and shows the percentage on whether they were faithful to their promises. For the recent presidents, they were only able to keep less than 50% of their promises.

Man's promises are so many and broken so easily. But if we were to keep track of all the promises that God makes from the Bible and run the numbers, we would see that God has kept 100% of his promises!

So today in Psalm 1, we're going to see what God promises for your future.

The description of a blessed man (a Christian)

Before we go on to the promises of God, we first have to identify which group we belong to. Because God makes completely different promises based on the group. And here in Psalm 1, there are only two groups: the believers and the non-believers.

Many people when reading Psalm 1 automatically think, 'oh, this is saying that I should not be friends with non-Christians, not live a sinful life, and not be a scoffer got it!'

However, that is not the point of the first verse! You see v.1 is not commanding you to do anything. It is only describing to you the type of person that is blessed.

So the way we really apply this to our lives is ask ourselves, ‘am I the blessed man? Do I take advice from non-Christians on how to live my life? Am I living in a sinful life intentionally? Do I side with unbelievers when push comes to shove?’

So knowing this in mind, let’s look at v.1

To be blessed means to have a deep joy and contentment. And that deep joy and contentment comes from having favor with God, who had showed you favor by dying for you on the cross and saving you from your sin! Our freedom from sin is what ultimately makes us blessed!

Look at Romans 8:1-8

As we can see in v.2 God saved us from condemnation through his Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Life who freed us from sin and death! Then we see how God freed us by sending Jesus to fulfill the law in v.3 and now we walk in the Spirit in v.4. Because those who are in the spirit, have their mind set on spiritual things but those who are unbelievers have their mind on sin as we see in v.5 and v.6. But then we see that those whose minds are set on the Holy Spirit have life and peace that’s the end of v.6.

So from all of scripture, we see where our blessing comes from, and we see that it comes from the Holy Spirit who frees our mind from sin so we can have life and peace!

That’s what it means to be blessed.

Back to Psalm 1, we see the results of the blessing that God gave in the blessed man's heart through the Holy Spirit. One result is that the blessed man does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.

This means that the blessed man does not think like unbelievers nor receive advice from them in matters of life. And that's what we read in Romans 8 that the Holy Spirit, freed our minds from constant sinful thoughts and instead set our minds on God himself giving us life and peace.

So you need to ask yourself, 'is my mind set on fleshly things? Do I look to unbelieving friends for advice? Do I watch secular self-help videos or books to find answers to my problems?'

The next result we see here is that the blessed man does not stand in the path of sinners. Meaning his behavior, his life, is not the same as unbelievers. His life is not on the road to destruction. The first result we see is the blessed man's mind, but here we see the blessed man's actions. Christians do sin and fail, but when they do they immediately regret it and come to God for forgiveness. Unbelievers when they sin, they want more of it not less of it! So ask yourself, 'is my life in habitual sin? Am I looking at things that I should not be looking at online? Am I doing things with the opposite gender that the bible would say is impure? When I look back at my life, do I see a life led solely by money or influence?'

The next result here is that the blessed man does not ally himself with non-Christians. He does not side with them. When the unbelieving coworker starts mocking God, he doesn't join them in there mockery. I'm not saying that if you've ever been ashamed of God you're not a Christian, Peter was ashamed of Jesus, but

again he immediately regretted of it and repented of it. The difference of unbelievers is that they always mock God, whether it's through their mouth or in the way they live their life. Are you always ashamed when a group of unbelievers shame you for not joining them in getting drunk, or listening to their filthy music?

And the last result here is that the blessed man loves God's word as we see here in v.2. He finds pleasure in reading in understanding scripture. He finds enjoyment in meeting mid-week bible studies to learn more about God. He loves it so much that he meditates on it day and night. Meditating in the Hebrew is like a cow that chews the cud slowly over the whole day, so that it can digest in the it's many stomachs. So Christians meditate by thinking and contemplating on God's word through the day. Many of us are still growing in our faith but even if we are not always meditating on God's word day and night we want to, and as years pass we grow and we are meditating on God's word more and more so that eventually it does become day and night! So ask yourself, 'do I actually enjoy the bible or do I find it boring? When it's time for the sermon on Sunday service am I just waiting for it to be over so I can get Jollibee? Do I actually care about God's word and carefully contemplate how to obey it throughout my day?'

If upon asking yourself these questions, you notice your life does not match up to Psalm 1's description of a blessed man, then maybe you should ask yourself, 'am I actually a Christian?'

Too often do we assume that we are Christian when we are actually not. When my wife was saved by the Lord, some of her relatives began ridiculing her for her faith, bragging that they were Christians much longer than her. They did indeed

attend church on Sunday, but their lives spoke something completely different, unmarried couples living together for many years, which is sexual immorality.

Jesus said that in the church, there will be people in the midst of believers that are fake. Look at Matt 13:24-25 that Satan plants fake Christians in the church to confuse and harm the real Christians.

So again, do not assume you are a Christian just because your parents raised you as a Christian or because you've been attending church for many years. Instead I ask you to examine yourself to see which group you belong to. Don't just assume you will receive these promises if you're not a believer because you won't.

So for those who upon and understanding God's description of a blessed man, let's actually look at what God promises for you.

1. God promises believers that he will keep them close (v.3)

Look at v.3

I will be like a tree? That doesn't sound very promising! I don't want to be stuck in one place forever soaking in sunshine and rain!

Well that's not what the psalmist intends here!

You see in Israel, the land was primarily arid, meaning lush green trees were far and few between dry land and some deserts. This is completely unlike here in VA

where we see big green trees everywhere. But when trees are more scarce like in Israel, you begin to appreciate them!

So unlike the rest of the world, unbelievers, who are dead like a tree in the desert, instead you are alive and flourishing even in a harsh land!

And this is because what you, the tree is next to, streams of water.

But even before we get that we have to remember that this tree did not get to the stream on its own! The tree did not say, 'you know what it's really dry and hot here, I need to get up on outta here and get to some water!' And then uproot itself, walk miles to find water, dig a hole and firmly place it's roots in the hole near the water.

No this tree was as we see in this verse, firmly planted there.

As Christians, we're not Christians because we made ourselves Christians. We are only Christians only by the grace of God. Not by our will but by God's will as we see in John 1:12-13.

Remember that the right to become children of God was first of all given by God, meaning they never even had the right to begin with. And finally we see that scripture explicitly says here that is not by any one's will but the will of God, that we are born as children of again or in other words born again.

Ok, so we now that we didn't plant ourselves and God was the one who did it. But where did God plant us? It says in v.3 by streams of water.

Trees need water. Without it they shrivel up and die. People need water, without water they shrivel up and die. Some researchers say that people can only survive a few days without water.

And yet Jesus called himself water in John 7 37-38 when he offered people to come to him and drink as water. Jesus is saying that if you don't believe him in like you believe in water to survive, you will die.

And so what is the first promise that God promises to believers? That God will keep believers close to him forever.

For God is the water, and we are the tree. With him we have life.

Without water we have desert, dryness, and death. That is the life of unbeliever. But with God who is our water, we have lush greenness, we have overflowing life.

So if you are a Christian and you hear this today, and you feel God is far. Maybe you are going through a hard trial and everything feels like it is going wrong. Remember this promise, that God is always with you. He firmly planted you next to him.

How close does God keep us? Look at John 13:23 where the apostle John was reclining on Jesus' bosom during the Passover! People in those days would recline at dinner on their left elbows and at times their head would be close to the person's chest. This was the case for John who was reclining directly in Jesus' bosom. This brings us to remember John 1:18 where only Jesus has seen God, and that Jesus is in the bosom of the father. So as Jesus is in the bosom of the father, we are in the

bosom of Christ. So how close are we to God? We are as close as is possible! We have an intimate close relationship with Jesus! So remember that no matter what is going on in life, that God always keeps you close to him.

2. God promises believers that he will work through them

We see this in the next phrase.

As Christians we bear fruit. In the bible bearing fruit means a life that brings forth a holy and loving character.

We see this as the fruit of the spirit from Gal 5:22-23.

But not only are sweet like fruit in character but also sweet in taste, as we serve others and bless them.

Now we all know that Christians are to bear fruit and be a light to the world. But what's interesting here is where it says 'bear fruit in its season'. Meaning there is a timing to when the fruit comes.

So if you're a Christian and you're struggling with a particular sin and you're fighting it but you're wondering, 'how come I haven't beat this yet?' Don't worry, because you will bear fruit in season! For Christians, the fruit we bear is according to God's timing!

And note too, that fruit grows slowly and quietly! As soon as spring came this year, you didn't immediately see trees full of berries, and oranges! Even now many of these fruit are still growing until full ripeness, after enough time passes!

So if you're frustrated with spiritual growth in your life, don't worry because it will happen in God's perfect timing. He will cause you to bear fruit!

Look at Eph 2:10. We are God's creation, created for good works! And note that God already prepared beforehand that works that you would walk in them! God has already planned for you to overcome that particular sin in your life you want to overcome!

Does this mean we should stop trying? Not at all, in fact God is using this word right now to encourage you to fight your sin! He wants you to trust him. But if you look at this as an excuse to go and sin, then again go back to v.2 and ask yourself do you love God's word or sin? If you love sin you may have to reconsider if you are truly a Christian.

3. God promises believers they will endure

What is the main thing we look at trees to tell if it is dead or alive? Leaves!

And for Christians, God promises that our leaf, our eternal life will not wither!

If you've ever wondered at any point in your Christian life whether you are truly saved, that's ok every Christian wonders that at some point!

I want to encourage you with the promise that God will ensure that you endure to the end, that's what we see here that your leaf will not wither!

Look at 1 Cor 1:8. Jesus promises to confirm us, or sustain us, endure us to the end, where we will stand blameless before him.

So if you're thinking, 'I don't know if I'm going to make it. I don't know if I will stand for the Lord when persecution comes.' Don't worry because God promises to endure you to the end!

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4. God promises believers spiritual prosperity

We see this in the last phrase.

Now does this mean that God will make you wealthy and rich? No, because when the Bible talks about Christians prospering it talks about spiritual riches.

For example Eph 3:8, Paul calls the gospel that he preaches the 'unfathomable riches of Christ'.

And Jesus commands us to store treasures in heaven and not treasures on earth, Matt 6:19-21.

So the reason why Christians will prosper in everything they do as God promised, is because when a believer is following God through his word and submitting to his will, God will always bless what he does, because what he is doing is God's

will. So even when things seemingly go against him, like perhaps you don't get the job offer you wanted after many hours of interviewing, you are still prospering because your heart still rejoices in Jesus who saved you and set you free, and you just trust God, that this is not where he wants you to be right now. That's true prospering. To the outside world perhaps it may not look like prospering at present, but between you and God, you are indeed prospering because your soul rests on the rock that is Christ.

So if you feel any fear, that what you might do is going to fail. Don't! As long as it's according to scripture, go ahead and go for it because God will prosper you no matter what you do! He will prosper your soul amidst and challenges and setbacks that come your way!

So those are God's promises for believers. Now we move on to God's promises for unbelievers.

But before we do, just as how the psalm started by describing believers first, God is now doing the same with unbelievers here in v.4.

So God does not have much to say about unbelievers other than that they are not like believers. They are not close to God, they do not bear fruit, their leaf is withered, and they do not prosper spiritually.

They are the dead tree in the desert. While some may look alive and well as there are many famous and rich unbelievers, they are dead inside.

God calls them chaff. Chaff is the protective casing that holds seeds. When we look at wheat, the part of the wheat that you want is the grain and they are these small seed looking things. You don't want the chaff, which is the big yellow stalk that you automatically think of when you think of wheat. The chaff is useless it has no value. It is trash.

God calls the wicked useless.

And just how you keep what is good, and throw out the trash, God promises the same for the chaf, the unbelievers.

5. God promises unbelievers judgement (v.5)

We have all seen trials on TV. Sometimes however, the guilty are let free. Issac Turnbaugh was found innocent of a murder in 2004. But years later in 2011, he confessed to the police that he was guilty. However, because of the double jeopardy law, they cannot retry Issac for the same case to change the outcome. You can only be tried once and not retried. So Issac even though he confessed with his own lips that he was the one who murdered, will get away scott free.

That won't happen in the final judgement. Because God promises that the wicked will not stand in the judgement. The guilty will not get away in God's court, who is the perfect judge. Every guilty person will be justly punished by the Lord.

So for Christians, whenever we see injustice in this world like abortion and we see people all the time getting away with murder, we can trust God will bring ultimate justice when he judges the world. We still pray for people to be save, but we don't

try to become vigilantes ourselves and take the law in our hand, or become excessively active in politics, because God will bring true justice.

6. God promises unbelievers separation from believers (v.5)

We see this in the final phrase. In the end, not a single unbeliever will be in heaven with believers. They will not get to enjoy fellowship with Christians as many fake Christians are enjoying fellowship with Christians in many churches today.

Not a single unbeliever who brings all his good works to God will make it in. They will be separated from believers forever.

Jesus talks about separating unbelievers from believers in the judgement in Matthew 13:24-30.

Jesus teaches that the tares, the fake believers whom Satan plants in churches all over will be separated at the time of harvest. When a farmer harvests his wheat, he separates the grain from the chaff in all his wheat. When God harvests his church, he separates the fake from the real Christians. And Jesus even gives his reasoning as to why he tells us to go looking for fake believers ourselves because we might hurt real Christians in the process. Instead when God returns, is when he will finally separate them.

As Christians it pains us to not be with unbelieving friends ever again. But we know God is just.

GOSPEL

And so if you're in the unbelieving group, I urge you today to repent of your sin and to accept Jesus as the only way of salvation from sin. That your works are worthless to him, and that all you have to do is accept the free gift of Jesus dying on the cross for sin and offering his life to you. You can accept this by faith alone, and if not, well you know God's promise to you.

To end this, sermon God gives us the underlying reason as to why the Christians will be saved and the wicked won't. We see this in the final verse, v.6.

Because God knows Christians. And the word know here, doesn't just mean knowledge. Like you know who the current president is, or you know some coworkers. No, the know here is an intimate knowledge and care. God knows every single thing of what is going on with his children, and not only does he know, he cares about everything that we are going through, and has plans for us, and to help us. That is why in the end, believers are blessed and won't be judged because God loves and care for them.

Not so with unbelievers, God does indeed know them, but he ultimately does not protect and help them the same way he does for his children. If there was a burning building, and there were two guys in there one of them being your son, and you could only save one. Who would you save? I don't think anyone here would not choose to save their own son. And nobody would get mad at you for doing so.

Same with God. It's not that he has only one choice, God can save whoever he wants to and he offers everyone the free gift of salvation. But ultimately God cares for his children, and judges the wicked.

Conclusion: Famous preacher Charles Spurgeon was visiting a friend who had a wind vane on the top of his house. A wind vane is one of those devices with 4 points that mark N,W,S,E to point to where the wind is blowing. But on this particular wind vane, it said on it, 'God is love'. So Spurgeon asked his friend 'what do you mean by this? Do you mean God's love is as changeable as the wind?'; And his friend replied, 'No, I believe that God loves no matter what direction the wind is blowing.'

No matter what direction the wind is blowing in your life, if you are a Christian remember that God knows you, loves you, and cares for you deeply. But if you are not a Christian, the wind will blow you away.

Let's pray.