

Give thanks unto the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. Amen

¹ Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

⁴ Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. **This is God's Word.**

Dear Friends,

As our children were growing up we used to read to them. We had a lot of books but I think the neatest books we read to them were a series of Disney books that let you make decisions about the path the characters would take at various points in the story. You could read these books a number of times, pick different paths for the characters and have a different ending to the story. They were great! They let our children participate in the direction of the story.

As we journey through life we get to make decisions at various points in our lives about what path to take as well. But the big question is, "Which Way Should We Go?" As we consider this portion of scripture before us this morning, we want to ask ourselves, Are we traveling "The Way of the Righteous" or are we taking "The Way of the Ungodly?"

I. As we consider these Two Ways, we can almost divide this psalm in half. Verses 1-3 talk about The Way of the Righteous and verses 4+5 talk about The Way of the Ungodly. Then verse 6 gives us the end of the story: the results of taking one path or the other.

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers." Do you see the progression in these words from walking to standing to sitting? In a way it's a warning to not let sin creep into your life. Sin doesn't always come at us in an all out frontal attack that we can recognize. Sometimes it comes into our lives in a slow, subtle way. Like when we **"walk in the counsel of the wicked."**

You may be thinking, "I don't walk in the counsel of the wicked," because we don't usually talk that way about the world in which we live, but if we let the ways of the world be our guide in life we are walking a path where unbelievers set the boundaries for right and wrong. Unbelievers are guided by the prince of this world – by Satan, and you can be sure that even though the path he shows you may be smooth, it will lead you away from God.

We also want to be sure "we don't stand in the way of sinners." It's easy to stand by and not say anything when surrounded by sin and yet in that way we give silent approval to what is going on around us. The believer is a sinner too but a blood washed sinner. And as a blood-washed sinner we don't want to stand and condone sin or a sinful lifestyle. We want to speak out against it either with words and/or actions by not hanging around. Keep on moving.

We definitely don't want to sit in the seat of mockers. Those who would make fun of God's plan of salvation and everything Jesus did for us. The seat of mockers is very close to the gates of hell – a comfortable place for the ungodly but a distant place from God. Those are all the things we don't want to do. We want to be careful that we don't stumble onto this path because it will eventually separate us from our Savior.

Therefore we delight in God's Word. The psalmist tells us, **“His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”** The law of the Lord isn't just the 10 commandments. It's all of God's Word: both Law and Gospel. The Gospel is our delight because it tells us how our Savior made us his own. How he paid for our sins and bought us with his own blood. The Law is not a burden because in addition to showing us our need for a Savior it also tells us God's will for our lives and helps guide us in our decisions – the law of the Lord keeps us on the right path. Therefore the **“Law of the Lord,”** is not a curse or a burden for the believer but a delight.

That's why we want to meditate on it day and night. When we think about meditation we usually think about sitting someplace quietly and trying to clear our mind – to get away from distractions so we can think. But to meditate is to be “employed in words.” That includes Bible studies by yourself or with your fellow Christians where you not only think about God's Word but you chew on it for a while to get the full flavor of what it means. Where you savor the words, not only the ones that point to our Savior but also the ones that show us our Savior's will for our lives and help us make decisions.

Then, as we let the Word of God guide us we will yield fruit. The psalmist describes God's people as being like a tree which is planted by a stream of water. We're not just a wild sprout that has come up but a tree that has been specifically planted and nourished by the stream of God's Word. Remember that God chose you as his own and sent the Holy Spirit to create faith in your heart so that you can serve him as one of his dear children.

Therefore as a child of God, we can stand strong during times of trouble because we are sustained by the Word – the water of life. And whatever we do according to God's good and gracious will, will prosper. It too will bear fruit. That is our encouragement to follow the path of righteousness – the path God has laid out for us because God will bless us and sustain us as we travel that path.

II. The opposite path – the path of the wicked or ungodly – is quite different. They are described as chaff which the wind easily blows away. Chaff does pretty good while it is connected to the kernel of grain and we have to admit the ungodly sometimes seem to prosper while they are living in this world, but when it comes to the time harvest – to judgment day – when the chaff and wheat are separated, then we see what the ungodly lifestyle brings.

Chaff really has no substance – it has no worth – no value and if not blown away it is gathered and burned in the fire. As we confess our sins we would have to see we really don't have value either. It is only the blood that redeemed our sins that brings us value. It is only the seed of faith that separates us from the chaff of the ungodly. And it is the Holy Spirit that plants that seed for us.

Because the wicked or ungodly don't have that seed of faith the results are disastrous. **“Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.”** When the ungodly face judgment they can point to all they have done in life but that only earns them condemnation for the wages of sin is death. So the ungodly sit down in defeat they can't even stand.

And they aren't part of the assembly of the righteous either. Here on this earth we have believer and unbeliever mixed together in our visible congregations but the assembly in heaven is only for the righteous. Those blood-washed sinners who have been made perfect through the Lamb of God. The ungodly are just sinners who didn't have time for the grace of God. Who were caught up in the ways of the world and when it comes to the final judgment will be left on the outside.

The final outcome, **“For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”** The Lord is with the righteous – watching them and caring for them but the wicked – the ungodly – will perish in hell.

That's the cold hard facts. So what path are you taking? Where does God's Word fit into your life? Are you following the way of the righteous or the way of the ungodly? It's God's Word that keeps us on the right path. Even when we stumble onto the wrong path, it's God's Word that pulls us back onto the path of righteousness. As we get into this new year, resolve to meditate on God's Word not only at home, but by joining together in Bible Study with your fellow Christians. Bring your children and grandchildren to Sunday School and encourage them to listen to and to let God's Word be an important part of their lives. Set the example for them and as you do this you will be one of God's blessed children walking the path of righteousness. Amen.