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“For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish,” Psalm 1:6.

The Two Ways

Lesson Aim: To inspire Godly conduct.

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Topic: Righteousness: Of Believers.

“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the water, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding her fruit,” Jeremiah 17:5-8.

Anything which God has said must be important, but when God repeats a matter, it must be of extreme import. Jeremiah 17:5-8 is a repetition of Psalm 1:1-6. The wording is a little different, but the message and symbolism is the same. Both the Psalmist and the Prophet have set forth two ways of life. **“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God . . . and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God . . .”** Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

Two ways are still open to men. You must choose the way of spiritual commitment and obedience to God, or the way of sinful rebellion and disobedience to God. It is very important that you know the course and consequence of each way. This lesson is a study of Psalm 1 where the two ways are clearly defined. It aims to help you to choose the good and right way—the way of blessings and not the way of curses.

I. THE WAY OF BLESSINGS

The way of divine blessings may be described in both a negative and positive way. It is as if the Psalmist were saying, “The way of blessings is not . . .” and wrote verse 1. Again, the Psalmist said, “The way of blessings is . . .” and wrote verses 2, 3, and 6.

The term, “blessed,” in Psalm 1 may be properly translated “filled with spiritual joy.” It speaks of a deep, abiding, and spiritual delight. It speaks of soul-gladness.

It is also significant that “blessed” is plural in Psalm 1. The multiplicity, perfections, and greatness of the term is thus expressed. It might be translated “manifold blessedness” or even “blessednesses.” The form is unusual, but so are the multiplied joys which come upon the man who walks the way of blessing. The testimony of the Psalmist concerning the way may be summarized, “Oh, the multiplied blessednesses of the man whose life is wholly committed to God!”

Nothing short of whole commitment is sufficient to go the way of blessings. The grammatical forms used in Psalm 1 indicate that a blessed man “never does” the things prohibited but “always is” the things recommended.

With that background, observe the qualities of the way of blessings. Let them become guidelines to direct you into that same blessed way.

A. Its course. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly . . .” verse 1.

Be constantly aware of the direction which your life takes. By an act of your will, keep your life directed toward God. Never permit yourself to neglect spiritual things. Never permit your interests to center upon yourself.

Such a course is possible only when you live by God's Word and not by the “counsel” (advice, suggestion) of those who are “ungodly” (without God). Blessing is never to be found in the way of neglect of the Holy One.

The course of sin is always downward, away from God and glory. The course of holiness is always upward: **“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,”**

Proverbs 4:18. Watch the course of your life!

B. Its company. There are three classes of people who know no blessedness: the ungodly, the sinners, the scorners. The “ungodly” are those who are without God, who by an act of their will have rejected God. The “sinners” are those habitual offenders who constantly order their conduct according to self rather than God. The “scorners” are those who habitually

ridicule all that is holy, good, and sacred. God warned, “There is no blessedness in the company of those who willfully reject God, whose conduct is in violation of God's law, and who scorn all thought of religious obligation.”

Christian, watch the company that you keep. Be warned that “. . . evil communications corrupt good manners,” I Corinthians 15:33. The ungodly, the sinner, nor the scorner knows any real inward joy. Neither can you find soul-happiness through association with them or imitation of their manner of life.

C. Its conduct. Happiness is vitally related to conduct. Spiritual joy depends upon what a person is; what one is will determine what he does.

Observe the progress indicated in the verbs of Psalm 1, “walking, standing, sitting.” He who **walks** in the counsel of men who are out of touch with God will become accustomed to the way of sin. Soon he will **stand** at ease in the midst of sinners without feeling himself out of place. Finally, he will **sit down** and make himself at home among those who scorn the holy. No wonder God said that the man marked by spiritual blessedness never walks, nor stands, nor sits among such companions.

Perhaps some Christian with a heavy heart reads these words. Perhaps he has lost the joy of salvation. God may be speaking directly to him through Psalm 1:1. Here is the place for him to begin his spiritual inventory. Through sincere repentance he can walk the way of blessednesses again.

D. Its guide book. God said of the blessed man, “**His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night,**” verse 2. The Holy Bible, the Word of God, is the guidebook for those who walk the way of blessings.

The blessed man “delights” (finds great joy) in the Word of God. Meditation therein is neither a burden to be borne nor a task to be performed. Seeing the Word as a Father's personal message to His children will enable one to delight to study it.

The believer's delight in God's Word is neither occasional nor temporary. “He delights . . . to read it by day and to think upon it by night. He takes a text and carries it with him all day long; and in the night-watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, he museth upon the Word of God . . . 'The law of the Lord' is the daily bread of the true believer” — Charles H. Spurgeon.

When your heart is in the Word, the Word will be in your heart. When the Word is in your heart, your conduct will conform to God's design. Stay close, therefore, to the Word of God. Devote your heart, mind, and will to it, and true happiness will be your temporal and eternal reward.

E. Its security. Rejoice your heart in these blessed words of assurance: **“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper,”** verse 3.

The believer is like a planted tree. The wisdom and purpose of the Keeper of the . . . vineyard has determined the specific place where he is to be. His place is by the rivers of waters — an unfailing supply. Being planted in good soil and beside sufficient water, he brings forth fruit, and his leaf never withers. What security!

Jesus said, **“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,”** Matthew 15:13. Those whom He has planted by rivers of waters never suffer lack, but can bear fruit twelve months of each year. He produces “fruit in his season”—“full flavored fruit”—to the glory of God. Your abiding in Him, and His abiding in you, assures fruitfulness, John 15:1-8. What greater assurance of security than that promised by God in Psalm 1:3 could you want? **“. . . his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”**

F. Its fruit. Why does a man plant a vineyard? He does so in order to gather the fruit therefrom. Why does God “plant” Christians in communities around the world? Jesus answered, **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain . . .,”** John 15:16. God places each of His children at the particular place in His spiritual vineyard where He desires him to develop and bear fruit. **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples,”** John 15:8.

It is not surprising to read of a believer that he “bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” He is planted by the Father's hand in accord with the Father's purpose. For him to fail to produce fruit would be a tragedy.

What kind of a fruit is a Christian to produce? An apple tree produces apples. A fig tree produces figs. What does a believer produce? He produces other believers! **“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life: and he that winneth souls is wise,”** Proverbs 11:30. There is no happiness in being fruitless. Oh, the joy of a fruitful Christian! Live a fruitful life and know the “blessednesses” which God has for you.

G. Its guide. **“For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous . . .,”** verse 6a. To “know” means to be acquainted intimately with a person or thing. God keeps His eyes upon those who walk the way of blessing. **“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him . . .,”** II Chronicles 16:9. **“Neither is there any creature that is not**

manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,” Hebrews 4:13.

Look back over the above list. Do you see a description of your life? If not, pause at this point to review your life in the light of those qualities. By repentance, you can enter this moment upon the way of blessing. That can be the beginning of a whole new life for you!

II. THE WAY OF CURSES

What a contrast there is between the believer and the unbeliever. What a world of difference there is in the way of blessings and the way of curses. The ungodly man has his counsel; the sinner has his way; the scorner has his seat. In contrast to those, the believer has his blessednesses!

Psalm 1:4-6 is filled with intense emotion. Even the grammatical forms used by the Psalmist indicate strong feelings. Our English version begins verse 4, **“The ungodly are not so . . .”** The translation of words is correct, but the emotion of the writer is not indicated. He has pictured the blessed man as delighting in God's law, being planted by God's hand, having an unfailing supply from God's resources, bearing fruit to God's glory, never fearing the withering of a single leaf, and assured of prosperity under God's providence. He used a double negative to show the contrast of the wicked man. He wrote, “Not so the ungodly, not so!” Sin puts a negative on every blessing enjoyed by the godly man. Such a way is a way of multiplied judgments and ends in great sorrow.

A. Its company. Who walks the way of sorrows? God answers, “It is the ungodly (those who have left God out of their lives), the sinners (those who live in violation of the laws of God), and the scorners (those who ridicule all thought of religious obligation).” Is that the kind of company you want for your life's journey? They blight, not bless your life. Look at what their end will be: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death,” Revelation 21:8. A man is known by the company which he keeps. What company are you keeping on the way of life? Whose counsel do you receive? In whose way do you walk? In whose seat do you sit? Watch your company!

B. Its confusion. The wicked are “like the chaff which the wind driveth away,” verse 4. “Chaff” refers to anything that is worthless. It is bits of dead leaves or husks left after threshing grain. It is not worth keeping. To be like chaff is to be intrinsically worthless, dead, and easily carried away.

Watch what the wind does with the chaff. It moves it this way or that,

sometimes around and around, according to the direction of the wind. The chaff has no stability or productivity. There is no joy in being rootless or fruitless. The believer is like a tree **planted**; the unbeliever is like chaff **driven**. What stability there is in the former and what confusion there is in the latter.

The marvel of God's grace is that He loves the ungodly, the sinner, and the scorner. It was to change the chaff into fruitful trees that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem men by the sacrifice of Himself. Amazing grace! Confusion is changed into assurance when one trusts Jesus.

C. Its condemnation. **“Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous . . .”** verse 5. Fear shall seize the ungodly when they appear before the judgment bar of God. They will not be able to stand their ground, nor present their defense, nor seek for mercy. They shall be covered with shame and everlasting contempt, Daniel 12:2. They will hear the dreadful words, **“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you,”** Matthew 7:23. **“These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal,”** Matthew 25:46.

Separation will follow condemnation. No sinner shall be found in the congregation of the righteous: **“. . . he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats . . . Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . Then shall he also say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . .,”** Matthew 25:31-34, 41.

D. Its conclusion. **“. . . The way of the ungodly shall perish,”** verse 6. Not only shall ungodly men be condemned, but even their “way” shall perish. If the “way” of the sinner is remembered at all, it will be remembered with dismay as an example of the bad. His “way” will dead-end in hell.

Do you want to enjoy lasting security? Then follow the way of righteousness. You enter the way through the strait gate of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus as your personal Saviour. Its conclusion is eternal bliss.

Would you know the life of divine blessednesses? Then follow the way of righteousness. There is no happiness in being rootless and blown about like chaff. There is no happiness in being fruitless and blessing neither God nor man. There is no happiness in being shut out, refused a place in the congregation of the righteous. There is no happiness in perishing. There is no happiness in rejecting Jesus—only eternal loss. Oh, the multiplied

blessednesses of knowing and serving God!