

Transcription of 17GS1020

Psalms 1

"The Secret Of True Happiness"

February 26, 2017

Good morning, everybody. It's great to be back again. I've sure enjoyed the opportunities that I've had to share with you all over the years. I saw last week you had an old friend of mine, Don McClure. Don and I go way back. I was pastoring a couple churches in the Redlands area, and they weren't a Calvary or anything, and I really was not real happy with that situation. I ended up going over to Austin, Texas and helped start a new church there; this was not a Calvary either. And I had talked to (Pastor) Chuck several times about starting a Calvary, but it just hadn't really worked out. And, after some time there in Austin, I just really felt this was not what God wanted for me, and so I really felt God was calling me to start a Calvary Chapel. And what better place than to go back to my home town - Redlands - and start a Calvary there. And so we prayed about it, and we were just so excited, and so we moved our stuff back and got back to Redlands to find out that Don McClure had just started Calvary Chapel Redlands. (Laughing) And I was so bummed out, you know....."Lord, I thought You wanted me to do this!" And I ended up going and talking with Don, and I remember going up to his house, and he was laying some sod at the time. He said, "Why don't you help me here a little bit?" And so I ended up getting all dirty laying sod with him, and we talked and decided I'd just spend some time working with Don there at Redlands for a while. And then the Lord opened the door for me to go out to Banning, and I started Calvary Chapel Banning, and that was the place the Lord wanted me to start that work. But I was close - just about 25 miles away from where I thought I was supposed to land originally. And that church in Banning is now in Beaumont, and God has blessed it abundantly. Sunday morning, they have three morning services now, and God is just really blessing that work out there. But, anyway, it's wonderful to know that wherever you go, if you get into this Book (the Bible), what a difference it makes. Amen?

And that's what we want to talk about a little bit this morning. We want to get into that text that we read together (Psalm 1). So if you'll open your Bibles there to the Psalms, Psalm 1, we're going to look at this first chapter here. And I've entitled this "The Secret Of True Happiness." Now everybody today is looking for happiness. If you ask anybody, "Do you want to be happy?" "Well, of course! Everybody wants to be happy!" And what we're going to find is the psalmist is going to give us some beautiful insights into what is the secret of true happiness.

As I was looking at this psalm and thinking about the whole book of Psalms, it's our largest book in the Bible - 150 chapters; and this book - it's really interesting the way it was put together, and obviously the Holy Spirit was behind this. But if you look at the book of Psalms, you realize there're actually five books here that have been put together. The first book was found in Psalm 1-41, and each one of these books you can draw a very interesting parallel to the books of the Pentateuch, the first five books of our Bible - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. And what we find in this first book, 1-41, is that it's compared to the book of Genesis, and it's an introduction to life - the needs of the heart. It's a book of foundations. As we're going to see this morning, it's a very important foundation. And so that's the first book. The second book is found starting in chapter 42-72, and this corresponds with the book of Exodus, which was the book of redemption. The third book, Psalm 73-89, is compared to the book of Leviticus, where Israel is to draw near to God, and they're to learn how to worship Him through the tabernacle. And then the fourth book, Psalm 90-106, is very much like Numbers, where the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, and they went through all the testings and their many failures that they had. The last book, book number five, starts in Psalm 107 and goes to 150, and it's very much like our book of Deuteronomy (which was the second lawgiving book) which brings redemption and sanctification. So that's the book of Psalms, and it's a beautiful book.

I love the Psalms. It's really my favorite book of all the books in the Bible. And often I will get into the psalms, and I'm reading something, and I remember there's a song that was made of this; and actually this book was the songbook of the Jews as they would gather together in the temple, and they would sing these songs. They're beautiful songs. And I just remember in the Jesus days, especially, when God was just moving so mightily, we would be going through a psalm, and there's a song right there that we would just start singing together, and I loved that so much. But, as you look at the psalms, they're written by a number of people actually. It wasn't just David. Many people think David was the one that really put it together, but we know that David wrote more than half of the psalms. Actually Moses wrote one psalm - I think it was Psalm 90. King Solomon wrote two, and the sons of Korah wrote many of the psalms. Asaph wrote many of the psalms also, and King Hezekiah actually wrote ten of the psalms. So you can see it's very diverse, how it was put together with all the different writers of the psalms.

And so Psalm 1, as we have read, begins in verse 1, "Blessed is the man."

Let's have a word of prayer. Father, as we divide this beautiful psalm, Father, would You just speak to us now through Your Holy Spirit. Father, we thank You for this foundational book and this first chapter, which is so foundational in all of our lives. So, Lord, would You help us to understand it. And we just commit it to You now, in Jesus' precious name. And everybody said, "Amen."

Well, the psalmist begins with the word "blessed." Now we know that that word literally means happy. You could read, "Happy is the man." And so you have this idea of blessed or happy. If you didn't know that literal word, that word "blessed," it's like receiving favor. If you receive something from someone, you can be blessed if it's a nice thing. If you walked in the door this morning, and somebody handed you a \$100 bill, would that bless you? Yeah. Should we do that this morning? (Laughing) Who's got the stack? But it's the idea of receiving from another, and in this case it's going to be receiving from God. All right? He wants to bless our lives so much.

And so the psalmist says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful." So we see that there're three things that the blessed man must not do. He must avoid these three things if he wants to receive favor from God. If he wants to be happy, you cannot follow any of these three things.

So let's look at the first one. He says "who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly." What does that mean? Well, it's the idea of not moving in the direction of ungodly counsel. Now one of the things you'll notice in the psalms is the poets will use lots of what we call figurative language. You can't interpret it literally. But he's painting a picture. That's one of the things about the Hebrew language. It's what we call a pictorial language; it's very beautiful. And so there're lots of pictures, and the psalmist is going to paint pictures for us as you go through. So he uses this figurative language to get his point across. So the idea is he talks about not walking, not moving in a certain direction. The direction would be ungodly counsel. You and I cannot listen to ungodly counsel. If we're to receive favor from God, we have to avoid it. But the problem is ungodly counsel comes at us from all different quarters. We are bombarded today with ungodly counsel. You can get it in the news, you can get it in the newspapers, you can get it on television. There're multiple places that you can get ungodly counsel. You can get ungodly counsel from your friends. You can get ungodly counsel from your family. You can get ungodly counsel from Christians. You can get ungodly counsel from pastors. Do you see it

can come to us from any quarters? And sometimes those quarters are very close - when our family wants to advise us and give us counsel. I'll never forget when my wife and I decided that God had called us to leave our church there in Banning and move to the Philippines to begin a ministry of training and equipping pastors. I got a long letter from my father-in-law, and he was not happy that we were leaving. He had traveled quite a bit, and he said, "Listen, you don't want to go to the Philippines. It's dangerous there." And he was right. There was a lot of danger there at that time. There was a lot of fighting going on against the government by what was known as the NPA, the New People's Army, and there were lots of conflicts going on. And he said, "You don't want to go there. It's really dangerous." And he went on and on with all kinds of reasons why we shouldn't go. But we knew that we had been called by God. We knew that we couldn't receive that counsel. My father-in-law wasn't even a believer. And so ungodly counsel - boy, it's tough when it comes from those close quarters.

The second thing that he says here is "nor stands in the path of sinners." Well, what's that idea? "Standing in the path." So he's painted a picture for us. So here's a pathway (Pastor Dan holds his arms parallel to each other and moves them back and forth). And, if I'm standing in that pathway, you know what I'm doing? I'm doing what the world does. See, it's a pathway of sinners. You see, the way of sinners, the Bible tells us, that the path is very broad, and it's very easy to get into, and it leads to destruction, we're told (Matthew 7:13). The path of the ungodly - it's so easy to get into. Do you realize every day you and I are making choices - whether we're going to stand in the path of sinners or we're going to do it God's way. I was doing a seminar in the Congo, and I found out that about twenty of the pastors had walked to our seminar; and they'd gone a long distance. It took them over a day to walk to our seminar. And the reason they walked, I found out, is because they didn't have enough money to get a little motorcycle ride or a little motor cab to get to the seminar. So they ended up walking. So, when we found that out, we asked them, "How much would it cost you to take a ride home?" And so we asked them just to put their name down and fill out how much it would cost. And, out of the twenty, we found three of them told us where they had to go and how much it would cost, and we found out that they had tripled the price. Now what were they doing? Well, they were lying to us. They had reasoned, maybe, something like this. "Well, you know, you really need some money, and you've been praying, and this is God's answer to your prayer. And they're not gonna know. They're Americans, they've got lots of money, it's not a big deal to them." And it's so easy to compromise, isn't it? To reason. These guys, what they were doing, is

they had moved into the path of sinners. They were standing there. Now these are pastors, and if it's easy for pastors to do it, how much easier is it for you and me? All of us can easily move into that path. And so we're not to stand in the path of sinners; we're not to move in that direction. My wife taught school for a number of years after we came back from the Philippines. She went back to school and got her degree in Special Education and began teaching. And one day, she wanted to take this day off from work, and so she wasn't quite sure how to take it off because she didn't know what category it fell into. And so she went to her principal, and they talked about it, and after talking to her principal, her principal said, "You know, this really is complicated, and so just call in sick. That'd be the easiest way to deal with this." Now that was her boss. Her boss told her, "Just call in sick." Now it would be very easy - it was very simple for my wife to do that. She would never even talk to a human being. She just dialed in a number, she put a sick code (number) in, and she got a day off. Real easy to do. But my wife knew that if she followed her boss' advice, she'd be lying, and she knew she couldn't do that. So she went to the administration, and she got passed around to four different people before she finally got her answer. And you know what? It would have been a lot easier just to lie. You understand what I'm saying? Compromise. Every day you and I can compromise, and do the way of the world. But God has called us to a different lifestyle. We cannot stand in that path.

The third thing that he mentions here is "nor sits in the seat of the scornful." In other words, joining in, doing what the world does. It's so easy to do that. It's so easy to participate in the ways of the world. And the psalmist tells us that we cannot do that and be blessed by God.

And so you have three things that he says you have to avoid. First, you cannot walk. Secondly, you cannot stand. And thirdly, you cannot sit and participate in the ways of the world. Now do you see those three things there? That's what we call a parallel. It's called parallelism. That's one of the distinguishing marks of this kind of writing - is the writers will use parallels. This is what we call synthetic parallelism, where he's going to add to the original idea. There's another type of parallelism where you just say the same thing in a different way - synonymous parallelism. And then there's another form of parallelism that's frequently used. It's antithetic parallelism, where he will contrast one idea with another, and we'll see that type of parallelism in verse 6. And so we see that you and I, this progression is given to us because he wants to drive home a point. Any time a writer will use parallelism, he's trying to get you to catch the idea. And that's one

of the things that you want to look for as you work through the psalms - lots of parallelisms. When you get into Proverbs, for example, and lots of contrasting of these - antithetic parallelism - that is used there.

So verse 1 is the negative part. If you want to be blessed by God, you can't do those three things. Now this would not go over very well with the positive confession people.

Okay. So verse 2, now. Now he's going to tell us what we must do. He says, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night." So we want to look at that. He says, "He delights in the law of the LORD." Now what does it mean "to delight"? Every one of you can think of certain things that you delight in, right, you take joy in, they're special to you. I have ten grandchildren, and I delight in my grandchildren. And so whenever we have them over, sometimes they'll come for a couple days, and so for a couple days I won't even go to my office. It's nice being your own boss, and so I just spend time with the kids. And we'll go, and, at my age, I'm jumping on the trampoline with them a little bit, and we're going out and we're doing all kinds of activities - going for walks and just lots of things that I'm doing with them for two days. Well, why would I do that? Well, because I delight in it, because I treasure my grandchildren. And you know what I found - whatever you treasure, whatever you delight in, you're going to take time for. The question is - how much do you delight in this Book? How much time are you willing to get into the Book that God has given to us, delighting in God's Word?

And then he says, "and in His law he meditates day and night." So now he's telling us how much we need to get into the Word of God. He says we're to meditate on it day and night. What does that mean? Does that mean we have to go around all day reading our Bible? No. It's the idea of feeding upon the Word and thinking about it. In other words, every day you've got to give yourself something to chew on. Every day, you need to get into the Word. Now, you all like to eat, right? Everybody here like to eat? Some of you eat how many times a day? Okay. Three, four. Some of you are grazers - all day long, right? Okay. But you're all going to eat because obviously your body needs that nourishment. And just as our physical bodies need nourishment every day, do you understand what the psalmist is saying here? Your spiritual body needs to be fed every day. Now the problem today, I find in many situations, is many, many Christians do not feed on the Word every day. In fact, sometimes the only time they open the Book is on Sunday morning.

Now, what's going to happen to somebody physically if they only ate once a week? Obviously they are not going to do well, are they? And you understand, if you don't get into the Word on a daily basis, it's going to affect everything you do. You see, we have to spend that time meditating, dwelling on it. Every day, I'm going to spend time. I'm going to start my day. I'm going to read the Word. I'm going to feed myself spiritually. And then, as I go throughout my day, I love to just flip on the radio - if I'm driving somewhere - and I'll listen to somebody that I really like, that's a good teacher, and I'll feed myself some more. But I think about it. I meditate. I focus on those things that I have read. Obviously, we've got jobs to do. We've got to work. And yet you can put some food in, even if you only took ten minutes. I don't know about you, but when I eat my breakfast in the morning, I think it was about fifteen minutes this morning. That's not a long time. But that food that I ate - will it nourish me? Well, of course it will. And if you take a little bit of time every morning just to read the Word, and then think about it, meditate on it, God will bless you. But, you know, if you do one of these things - you get up in the morning, and you go, "Oh, man, I've gotta read," you flip through, and you find a verse, and you read the verse, and you close the book - you're not gonna get anything out of that. And so every day we want to meditate on God's Word. We want to feed upon His Word.

And then in verse 3, now, the psalmist is going to paint another picture for us here. It's a beautiful picture. And he says, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." Can you put up that tree (on the screen) that I asked you to do? There you go. There's quite a tree there for you. It says "he's like a tree." Now, obviously you're not a tree. Okay, so he's using this as figurative language. But he's painting a picture for you about this tree that's planted by the rivers of water. For a tree to survive, as you know, it has to have water. And, if you'll notice that tree there, you don't see a root structure, do you? But underneath the ground obviously is a root structure that has gone to where the water is. Now what happens to that tree if that root structure is really shallow, and then we get one of these windstorms that comes in? Well you all know. We've been hearing about it in the news all the time - trees blowing over. Why? Well, in most situations it's because they have a very shallow root structure, and the result is they get blown over. Folks, what he's helping us to understand is if you don't have your roots deep into this Book here, and you're not meditating on it day and night, you're going to get blown over when you go through the storms of life. There're some vicious storms that we all have to go through. Life isn't easy, and we need to be rooted

and grounded in the Word of God, meditating on it. And so this tree - it's got a root structure, it's planted.

And notice it says that it "brings forth its fruit in its season." And so a fruit tree, obviously the design of it is to bear some fruit. I have a lot of navel oranges. My father gave me a couple acres of land before he passed away, and we had a lot of orange trees on the property, and we built a home on it. And those orange trees - right now I've got some really, really great, sweet oranges. Some of them are that big. They're huge this year. Big crop of beautiful navel oranges, and I'm really sorry I couldn't bring you all one this morning. But..... I probably should have because some of them are falling on the ground. But, anyway, these oranges are so good, but there's fruit in a season. This is the season for navel oranges. That navel tree does not produce all year round. And what happens - after we pick in the spring, their little flower comes on there, and then the next thing you notice, you see a tiny, tiny little orange; and in the process of the year, that orange begins to grow, and the reason it grows and gets big and then eventually turns bright orange is because it's been well-fed. You see, God's design for your life and my life is to bring forth fruit. We're not here just to have a great time in life. But we're here to be a part of the kingdom of God, and God wants every one of us to spend time in the Word so that our lives will bring forth fruit. But there's a season for fruitfulness. And sometimes we don't feel like anything's happening. There're times in my life when I just don't feel like I'm very fruitful. And yet it's in those times, it's in the off-season time, that is so important. Now one of the things I used to do, besides play football, is I coached football for a number of years at a high school. And when I started the program, I had to get the kids into the weight room to lift weights. But I tell you what - it was no problem getting the kids into the weight room during the season. They're highly motivated. But you see, getting into the weight room during the football season is the wrong time. All we're doing is maintaining during the season. But it's in the off season where we get the kids into the weight room, and where they're going to lift, and they're going to get strong, and then they will be ready for the next season. And it wasn't until I was able to convince my players to get in the weight room in the off season that we started to win. But you see, there're times where we're just growing; but then there're going to be times of fruit. And God wants fruit to come forth from every one of your lives.

The next thing he says there is "whose leaf will not wither." And so obviously the leaf is very important to the tree. We know that leaf does a great deal for the

tree. And one of the things - because it never rains in southern California, right? Typically the last five or six years, with our drought and all, every ten days I have to water those orange trees. And I turn the water on for 24 hours. Those trees get lots of water, and then they get nourishment through fertilization and so forth. But the watering is very important to the tree because if I, for example, forget the ten-day cycle, and I'm not sure - I usually mark it on my calendar, but if I forget - I will walk out into the grove, and the first thing that I do is I look at the leaf. Because the leaf is going to tell me what the condition of the tree is. If that leaf is curling, it's saying, "I need a drink of water!" Have you looked in the mirror lately? Is the leaf withering? Do you need a drink? Do you need to get back into the Word of God? It's so important. The "leaf doesn't wither."

And he says, "whatever he does shall prosper." Do you understand that God wants you to prosper? We're not talking about the prosperity doctrine here, folks. But if you put your roots into the Word of God, He's going to bless your lives. He's going to prosper what you do. But if you don't have time for the Word, He can't bless you, He can't prosper you. And I'm so thankful. I think of times where the Lord has just given me the opportunity to minister all these years. And, being a pastor, you don't make a lot of money; and being a missionary, it's even worse. And yet God has blessed us. We got our kids all through college, and how in the world do you do that? I mean, it's so expensive to put kids through college. We came back to America just as our kids were starting to go into college, and yet we were able to get all of our kids through school. God just blessed in so many ways. And He wants to prosper you not just financially, but in every way, He wants to meet your needs.

And so we see the first idea (in the first three verses, there) is about the blessed man - what he cannot do, what he must do, and then what he's going to be like if he does spend time in the Word of God.

And then we see, in verses 4 and 5, "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away." So now he's comparing the ungodly. He says they're just like chaff. You know what chaff is - it's the covering. We used to, during our days in the Philippines - I would drive to my office, and we had a couple rice paddies that I had to drive through. And during the harvest season, they're doing this to the rice - they're sifting it, up and down, up and down, up and down. At the end of the day, there's a big pile of white rice and a big pile of the covering that was on that rice. It's like a chaff. And they took the rice that had great value,

went to the market; they sold it. But the chaff - they just burned it because it had no value to them. He says the ungodly are like chaff - the wind just blows them away. They are not like the person that is founded with a root structure. The wind's not going to just blow that tree away unless it has a shallow root structure. And so they're like this chaff - the wind just blows it away.

Verse 5, "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment." We know that there's a judgment coming, and the world will not stand in that judgment. Every one of us is going to stand before the Lord, but our judgment is going to be different, those who are in Christ. Because He's going to ask us what have we done with our life in Christ. Have you been fruitful? Have you got your roots into the Word of God? Is God using you? Or has there been not so much going on? God wants you to bear fruit. But the ungodly - they're going to be judged.

And then he says, "nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." And you see what the judgment's going to do - it's going to separate us. It's not like we put a sign out there, "Morningstar - No Sinners Allowed." But you see, that judgment is going to separate the righteous from the ungodly, and that judgment is going to be very severe. And folks, I don't know about you, but I don't want any of my loved ones, I don't want friends of mine to go to hell. I don't want them to burn in the fire! But that's exactly what's going to happen if they don't open their hearts to the Lord, if they don't turn from their wicked ways. The ungodly - they're very self-centered. It's all about themselves. It's all about "me, myself and I." And the world is only concerned about themselves.

Verse 6, "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous." God knows your way, and He knows my way. "But the way of the ungodly shall perish."

And so we see that the psalmist, here, has talked about two different ways of life. One is the way of the blessed man, and the other is the way of the ungodly. And the question is - which way will you go? Which lifestyle will you choose? And if you want to receive favor from God, if you want to be happy, there's only one way. You have to put yourself deep into the Word of God, meditating on it night and day, and then He will bless everything you do. You see what the secret of happiness is? It's found in this Book right here. If you get your roots into this Book, oh my goodness, how God will use your life for His honor and His glory. But, you see, He wants our lives to count. And the psalmist is giving us this foundational information so that you will take it to heart, that you will grow and understand what happiness

really is all about. The world is looking for happiness in all the wrong things and all the wrong places. You can't find happiness in materialism. It doesn't work! But happiness is found by this Book right here. And if you want to be happy, I want to encourage you this morning, put your roots into this Book. Amen? Let's pray.

Father, how we thank You for Your Word this morning - for its power to reach deep into our hearts and our lives. Father, many times we've listened to the world. The world has said, "You don't need to go to church. You don't need to have fellowship with other believers. You don't need to read your Bible - it's not important." Lord, help us to understand the importance of digging deep into Your Word. Help us to understand that You want to use our lives but cannot if we do not dig deep into Your Word. So, Lord, thank You for Your Word. It's simple, it's clear, and You've given us beautiful pictures to help us to understand. So, Lord, would You help my brothers and sisters to be like that tree, firmly planted? And so, Lord, we give You thanks this morning, and I ask You to just continue to minister to this body in a very special way. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
February 27, 2017