

Psalm 1

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 August 1991

Preacher: Dieter Schneider

[0 : 00] Whenever I seek to prepare a sermon on the Old Testament, my mind tends to wander into the New Testament. And there are two verses that sort of seem to somewhat undergird my whole thinking and my approach to the Old Testament.

Not always consciously, but sometimes. One verse is in Romans chapter 15, and since I don't know the NIV off by heart, I have to read it to you.

It says in Romans 15 and verse 4, Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

To pause, we are thinking, the Old Testament had a very practical purpose. Another verse that comes to my mind is one that Paul wrote to Timothy, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, where Paul tells Timothy that all the scriptures have been given to us to make us wise unto salvation.

And both references are certainly references primarily, although perhaps not exclusively, to the Old Testament scriptures. The New Testament church had an Old Testament, the same Old Testament that you and I have.

[1 : 30] And we should never seek or wish to decry the value of the Old Testament, as sometimes is commonly done. The Lord Jesus Christ himself, please sanctify them in the truth.

Thy word is truth. It is my desire this morning that we should see something about the practicality and the relevance of this very psalm.

That we must not think that because we now have the New Testament that we can throw out the Old Testament. This is not the understanding of the New Testament writers.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself says, search the Old Testament. Search the Old Testament. They testify of me. And there are commentators, notably the church fathers, who would argue and say that this whole psalm is about Christ.

And that the blessed man, the perfect man, is Christ. That is quite true, theologically speaking. And I'm not quite opposed to the idea that this psalm may very well speak of Christ.

[2 : 40] But we know nothing about its occasion. We know nothing about its date. We know nothing about its author. At least there's no absolute proof.

There is a manuscript that actually links Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 together. And we can find this in reference to the New Testament.

Now I'm not going to bore you this morning with textual criticism. But there's some evidence that David may well have composed this psalm. And unless anyone can convince me otherwise, I'm quite happy to say that David did give us this psalm at any rate.

The author is also God himself. So whilst we do not know for certain its title, its authorship, its date, its occasion, well, these things need not worry us or deflect us from the practical use of the Old Testament scriptures in general, and this psalm in particular.

What then is this psalm all about? When you and I turn to a passage of scripture, it is good for us to get the drift of it, to get the gist of it.

[3 : 57] What is this psalm all about? Well, someone says, it talks about the happiness of the godly and the misery of the ungodly. Or a godly man is blessed and a wicked man is not.

Well, that may well sum up the main drift of this short psalm. At any rate, what remains true to be said is this, that whoever penned these words, wrote them in the light of experience and observation.

Sometimes we sit down and we speculate about what the scriptures might have to say in a particular subject, and we become all philosophical about it. But there is evidence, I think, to suggest that the psalmist here draws on his own experience, and he observes other people, and he deals with ultimate truths.

We also notice that the psalm stands at the beginning of the book of Psalms. And that again seems quite significant. And so, to my way of thinking, the psalmist rightly compared to a signpost that sort of leads us into the psalms by way of introduction.

It's like a vestibule you enter before you enter into a gallery. And there's plenty of theology in this psalm. We won't have time to deal with all of it.

[5 : 26] But there are lots of different themes that you and I can look at, and you will find that such themes also reoccur throughout the psalms. What is true happiness?

Well, the psalm tells us. What does it mean to live a godly life in an ungodly world? Well, the psalmist tells us.

What is the place and function of the law of God in the life of the believer? The psalm tells us. How can we benefit from the word of God?

We're told in verse 2. What is the difference between inward piety and outward piety? The psalmist points us to it.

What is the state and the faith of the ungodly? The psalmist tells us. And so on. Now, there's plenty of theology in this short psalm.

[6 : 23] And various themes are mentioned throughout the scriptures. But notice not only the matter, the content, but also notice the manner, the way that the psalmist seeks to bring these things before us.

A good teacher will seek not only to convey content, but also do it in a manner that will help us to understand and to remember.

And that's what the psalmist does. One thing you will notice, I trust, is that here we have a piece of poetry. And again, I do not wish this morning to go into the intricate nature of Hebrew poetry.

But it is written in such a way that a Jew, at any rate, who knows Hebrew, can easily understand and remember the things that are put down here for us.

But perhaps I could point you very briefly to the structure of this psalm. Blessed is the man who does not, who does not, who does not.

[7 : 30] Three times in the original. It doesn't come out very clearly in our modern translation.

Verse 1 deals with the outward conduct. And verse 2 deals with the inward attitude.

And it is both negative, the man who does not, not, not. And it is positive in verse 2. And then there is an illustration. In verse 3, preachers should always use appropriate illustrations.

And here is one, an illustration of a tree. And you will find there are many Old Testament references where people are compared to trees. We may perhaps think it is a bit odd.

We do not do that kind of thing in our own culture. But to a Jew, it would have been quite natural to do so. And then in verse 4, in verse 5, we have the contrast.

The godly man and the ungodly man. And then verse 6, it gives us a summary. It sums up all that has been said and does so very aptly and very easily.

[8 : 32] So we have noticed then something about the content and the way this is given to us. So that we remember. Our Baptist friend Spurgeon says, It is the psalmist's desire to teach us the way to blessedness and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners.

Well, again, I would say that is the drift of the psalm. Now, we cannot go through the whole psalm this morning. You may be relieved to know.

But what I want to do is to look at the blessed man as he is described for us. The marks of the blessed man. And it has been said that the psalm opens with a benediction.

It is the same word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament scriptures that we find in the New Testament. The Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed those who mourn, and so forth.

So the psalm does open with a benediction. It is also interesting to note that Psalm 2 closes with the word blessed. And as I indicated earlier on, there is some very slight evidence, perhaps, that these two psalms were found together.

[9 : 50] And so we can see that it starts with blessed and it finishes with blessed as far as the introduction is concerned. Although I tend to believe that Psalm 1 should be read on its own.

Or you can look at Psalm 1, verse 1. It starts with blessed. And verse 6, it finishes with perish. And there is the contrast again brought out in a very forceful manner.

Well, first of all then, what does the word blessed mean? With my background, you would think that blessed means that you are in heaven. Because there are those who would teach that certain

people are blessed when they have entered into the presence of God.

But the emphasis here is very much on the present blessedness of this man that is described for us. Now, some translations use the word happy.

I am not thoroughly opposed to the translation happy, but it could convey a wrong picture. When we talk about happiness, we talk about fun and pleasure and enjoyment.

[11:02] The things that this world runs after. The things that we like. We like to be happy. But I do think the word happy fully sums up this rich word blessed.

So I need to go into it a little bit in more great detail. Someone sort of paraphrased this and said, Congratulations.

And that's how the psalm starts. Congratulations. The kind of thing you do when you send someone a birthday card or a wedding card or whatever it may be, whatever occasion.

Congratulations. Well done. And that's, I think, true to the original. The idea of envying a person that is in such a condition to be blessed by God.

It is, if you like, an interjection, an exclamation. How happy, how fortunate, how prosperous, and how enviable, as one translation puts it.

[12:06] I think you've got a choice this morning. You either accept this long paraphrased translation or you simply stick to the word blessed. There's not one single word that conveys the richness of this term.

The original actually uses a plural noun. And so you can translate it, all the blessednesses of the man and so forth. And maybe the metrical version isn't all that wrong when it says that man is perfect blessedness.

Lots of kinds of blessednesses. Not just spiritually, but also temporarily. All kinds of blessings.

Multiplicity, perfection, greatness, and richness.

You can see, can you not, the danger of word studies. Just the other day, I went to a bookshop. I love browsing through bookshops, if you don't know already.

And I saw these Jehovah's Witnesses. And they were looking for a particular Greek dictionary, which I knew. Because it contained word studies. And when Jehovah's Witnesses go around and come to your doorstep, they quote all these words to you from Greek and Hebrew and all the rest of it.

[13:21] But it's a dangerous thing to suggest that we can simply just look at the word and then translate it and lift it out of its context. Not at all.

The word can be translated differently in different contexts. But here, I think we shall stick to blessed, since there is no one single translation that can do justice to the fullness and to the richness of this term.

What then does this blessedness refer to? What is its nature? Well, in Psalm 1, we're told something about the conduct of the blessed man.

We're told so in three different ways or in three negative ways. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, who does not stand in the way of sinners, who does not sit in the seat of mockers, scorners or scoffers.

So, just put negatively. Now, I would suggest to you that these things really say the same thing in a different way.

[14:30] There's walking, there's standing, there's sitting. There's this downward trend. We can notice that, can't we? But then there's the counsel and the way and the seat. There are the wicked, the sinners and the mockers.

And I think it would be quite wrong to overemphasize the slight distinctions that do exist. But at any rate, the psalmist tells us here that the blessedness contains these elements, referring to the outward conduct of this godly man.

What some phrases we are perhaps more familiar with than the other one. What about the term walking? We're told, for example, that Enoch walked with God. And Paul also exhorts us to walk in Christ and so forth.

There are other references. So, it is a picture. It refers to our lifestyle, to our conduct, our behavior. It is a very wide term. It is not just something that refers to a spiritual activity, but rather it is the lifestyle we adopt as the people of God.

And counsel, well, what does that refer to? That's not just the advice that people give us, but also the ideas that people have, the principles, the maxims, the mottos that undergird people's thinking.

[15 : 53] And standing, well, what does that suggest? It suggests intimacy, association and conformity. Perhaps wanting to be part of the crowd, wanting to be with others.

And sitting, or you could translate it perhaps, dwelling, suggests participation. Although it mentions here the seat of mockers.

And the seat, we know, was very often a place from which a teacher would teach. Sometimes you can sit, like the Lord Jesus Christ in his sermon in Luke 4.

He actually didn't stand. He sat down, and a teacher can sit and teach. So that may well be the picture. At any rate, the psalmist tells us that the man, the godly man, is blessed because of these things, because of his outward conduct.

I think it would be right to say that when men are living in sin, they go from bad to worse. First of all, there's walking, and then there's standing, and then there's sitting.

[17 : 01] As Paul says, bad company corrupts good manners or good morals. It's like an apple, isn't it, that has gone off, and he put it together with other apples.

Well, the good apples won't go, well, they will go bad, and the bad apple won't become good. Now, you and I can think of many examples about this downward trend to sin.

Let me just mention one or two, just to make sure that we understand what the psalmist is saying here. Here's a man, a real man. He goes to the pub, and he has a pint.

Now, he doesn't have his first pint, and says, well, I'm going to have a good time, because I want to become a drunkard. No one usually does that kind of thing. But it is a gradual thing. It happens over a period of time.

We know there are stages. And there comes a time when a man can no longer say no. And so, he's been caught up. And when we walk and stand and sit, it's very easy to get up again on our feet.

[18 : 03] Or take another example. Neighbours, I believe, is a very popular program. Now, originally, I think, when you watched the beginning of it, it was quite all right.

I didn't notice any swearing. And it was fairly decent, I thought. But when you watch it now, it's gone down the hill. And you see things in there which are certainly offensive.

I'm not saying you must watch or you mustn't watch neighbours. That's not the point. But what I'm saying is that people start off, and then things get worse. Or getting married.

Before you get married, everything is rosy. And then all of a sudden, your partner sees your true colours. You're getting worse. The downward trend of sin.

If you want to be holy, if you want to be sanctified, if you want to be a godly man, well, get married. There are lots of other examples that one can mention. Or take one more example.

[19 : 04] Civil law. There was a time when certain things were wrong and indecent. And gradually, the law is being eroded. Of course, in the name of freedom, we're evolving, we're getting better, so we're told.

But there's nothing at all to suggest that. We're making great technological advances, but morally, we are declining because we are walking in the counsel of the wicked, standing in the way of sinners, sitting in the seat of mockers.

And so sin has this downward pull, this downward trend. Let me just sum it up theologically in the words of John Owen, referring to a sinner.

He cannot do what he should through impotency, and he will not do what he can through obstinacy. The natural man cannot and does not obey God's word.

Sometimes this is also true of Christians. It was Mary McChain who said, I find in my heart the seeds of every known sin. If we don't kill sin, says John Owen, sin will kill us because there's this downward trend.

[20 : 20] We have a lovely front garden, and when we came back from our holidays, there were plenty of weeds. And if you and I play with sin, it will drag us down. And so the psalmist warns us and tells us that we're truly blessed, truly happy, truly to be envied if we can live holy lives like that.

I lived in London for some five years, and I remember taking a friend from Westminster, and there was Big Ben shining away, and I never heard it, but he did, but I didn't hear it.

I lived in London, and it was nothing novel, nothing new to me. It's like a cuckoo clock we have in a living room with friends stay with us, and they woke up because the cuckoo went off I think at five o'clock in the morning.

Well, I don't hear it because I'm so used to it. What then is the version of the ungodly man of this particular verse?

Well, the ungodly person tells us blessed is the man who does walk in the counsel of the ungodly, of the wicked, who does stand in the way of sinners, who does sit in the seat of mockers.

[21 : 38] He says, my delight is not in the law of the Lord, and I do not meditate in the light in it. I don't read my Bible every day. And he says, I am like a tree that's planted by the water.

And in verse 4, he says, well, a believer is like Charles. I'm strong. A Christian is weak. And he doesn't believe that the day will come when he will be judged. And he doesn't believe that God sees.

And so he says, let us eat, drink, be merry, have a good time, enjoy yourselves. Because when we're dead, we're dead. You can see how theology affects your thinking and your conduct. You can tell from people's lives what kind of a theology they have. If you don't believe that God will judge you for your sins, if you do not believe that the dead shall rise again, well, let us eat and drink and be merry and have a good time.

Yet there's a way which seems right to a man, but its end, that of, is death. Perhaps an illustration could help to bring out this point. You're familiar, perhaps, with the story of the lost son.

[22 : 47] I like to call it the story of the lost son, plural, or the story of the loving father. But this prodigal son, well, what did he do? He went to his father and said, give me, give me all the things I want.

I want to have a good time. I want to get away from home, enjoy myself and do all the things that I couldn't do with you being around. And so he's asking for his inheritance. He's saying to his father, well, I wish you were dead.

So he's asking for his inheritance and off he goes. He's having a good time. He's enjoying himself. If he was around today, we would find him in different places. But then, he comes back.

He doesn't come back the same way that he left. The Bible tells us, give me, and then it tells us, in want. And that's what sin does.

When you and I think we can enjoy ourselves, well, there's pleasure in sin for a season. But we must look beyond all that. And the psalmist draws attention to this.

[23 : 49] Look at it in the life of the future. The wicked shall not stand in the judgment. There's condemnation. And he shall not be found in the assembly of the righteous.

There's separation. The ungodly person doesn't think like that because he doesn't want to know. He doesn't want to find out. If you want to be blessed, if you want to be happy, you must turn away from these things, however painful it may be.

Our footsteps are to be ordered by the word of God. Those soap stars who tell us they're so happy, well, look at their lives. Look at the kind of people they are.

Don't just look at the mask they're wearing, but look at them as private people. Are they happy? The characters and neighbors, are they happy people? Of course they aren't.

And we shouldn't envy them or their ways. Well, let's move on. Having looked at the outward conduct of this blessed man in these three negative ways, now here's the contrast.

[25 : 03] And if verse 1 is outward, then verse 2 deals with the inward side. We're told, his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.

Well, let's look at the word law for a moment. What does it refer to? Again, it seems to me that commentators are divided and I do not wish to be dogmatic on something we cannot be absolutely sure about.

what does the word law refer to? How is it used? Again, we mustn't just use sort of a kind of word study approach to scripture but we must see how these words are used in context.

Perhaps on a side, sometimes you will find that people say well, James contradicts Paul on the law. But if you see how James uses the word law and see how Paul uses the term law, you will find that the contradiction perhaps isn't all that great.

What then does the law here refer to? Could it be that it refers to the Ten Commandments to the Decalogue? Possibly. Could it be that it refers to the first five books of the Bible known as the Pentateuch?

[26 : 16] Quite possible. Could it be that it refers to all the scriptures that were written up to that time? Maybe. Perhaps I could suggest something that covers all these areas and much more.

Here we have a reference to the revealed will of God. We must not think that law just refers to the Pentateuch or to the Decalogue. The Lord Jesus Christ himself uses the term he says the law says and he refers to the Psalms, the book of Psalms.

So it's a very wide term. But at any rate, what it suggests to us is the revealed will of God. And you see that the truly godly man, he doesn't necessarily depend on what other people see, what the majority thinks, but rather his life is structured and ordered in the light of the revealed will of God contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

And what the psalmist emphasizes here is the authorship, the source. It is the law of the Lord, the law of Jehovah, the law of Yahweh, the law of the covenant keeping and giving God.

And if we bear this in mind, we shouldn't go astray. Sometimes people suggest, well, here we have something that teaches salvation by works. Someone says, well, you're blessed if you do all these things, if you keep all the law, that kind of thing.

[27 : 43] But that's quite a wrong understanding of the law in the context of the life of the believer. The Ten Commandments were given to a redeemed people. I am the Lord thy God who fled thee out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Therefore, in the light of what I've done for you, therefore, you now respond. And so it wasn't so much that the psalmist was blessed or happy or accepted by God because he was a law-abiding person, but rather it was that he was a redeemed person and in the light of that, he now desires to run where God draws him well then, what is his attitude to this law, to this revealed will of God?

Well, there are two things that I mentioned here. There's delight and there is meditation. Let's look at it for a moment. What does it mean to delight in the law of the Lord?

There are lots of things that you and I delight in. But here, the psalmist tells us something about the way he feels about the law of God.

Sometimes we can give the impression that the Christian life is very much all in the mind. How much theology we know, how orthodox we are. And there's always been a right emphasis which stresses that we are to love God with all our minds and rightly so.

[29 : 12] And here, the psalmist delights in the law of the Lord. He doesn't delight in a blessed thought or just some strange notion or idea. His delight is in the revealed will of God.

But it speaks to us, does it not, of the language of affection. There's emotion, there's thrill and enthusiasm. Sometimes as preachers, perhaps we don't have the kind of outgoing personality and we find it difficult and it is quite wrong to whip up people's emotions.

And yet we should feel the force of truth, as one book said. We should rejoice that God has given to us the scriptures. We should be enthusiastic about it.

We should be stirred up. We won't have time this morning to look at Psalm 119, but read it when you have time and see how the psalmist rejoices in the law of God.

It is not a burden, it is not grievous, but he rejoices in it. Well, why does he delight in the law of the Lord? How can we delight in it?

[30 : 24] Well, if you delight in the law of God, you are truly free. Let me explain what I mean. In the Garden of Eden, God gave one commandment, one commandment only.

And Adam and Eve were free, truly free, enjoying the fullness and the richness of their earthly existence. And yet, when they broke the law, they became slaves.

The ungodly man tells us, well, I don't do as God tells me, and he tells me he is free. Is a drunkard free? It is like a fish.

A fish was made to swim in water. If it jumps out of water, it's no longer free. And so to the believer, the law is not a burden, it is a delight, it is like a mirror.

It tells us what God wants us to do. It shows us the way. Now, the scriptures don't always say, well, we do this, and we do that, and we do the next.

[31 : 32] Sometimes we have to work things out. The psalmist tells us as he goes on that he meditates. And there are certain things we have to think through, as we shall see in a moment. But we should rejoice and be thankful that God has spoken, that God is not silent, that you and I can know God's will.

We rejoice in it for that very reason, because it does give us freedom. It is the royal law of God that gives us freedom. And then we also notice that the psalmist not only delights in the law of the Lord, but he also meditates on this law day and night.

What does it mean to meditate? on the law of God? Again, I think that when we think about the term meditation, perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is transcendental meditation.

And I've seen some very weird things just lately, that people can meditate on things that boggle my mind at any rate. To think on nothing, to meditate on nothing.

However that is possible, I just do not know, and yet it is very popular. The psalmist here meditates on the law of God.

[32 : 56] There are lots of things in the scriptures we can think about. Now what does it mean to meditate? Now some people think that meditation means speculation. I remember in my early Christian days, I was discussing with our dear brother the number 666.

666. And of course he knew straight away what it's referred to, but I wasn't quite convinced. And when you read commentaries and when you look at the history of the church, you will find out perhaps that it isn't all that easy.

And that you can take the letters, the number 666, and apply it to different people. And you can twist the scriptures, you can read something into it. It's a Jewish thing as well.

The rabbis, the light of the kind of thing. They saw hidden meanings, allegorical meanings in the scriptures. Very fascinating stuff. I remember one meeting I attended and someone suggested that the fact of the Old Testament sacrifices was a picture of the deity of Christ.

Very fascinating. Now in my foolishness I went up to this brother afterwards and I asked him, well tell me how did you get that out of the text? And of course needless to see he was quite offended, but he couldn't prove his case.

[34 : 10] But very fascinating and he was very taken by his own ingenuity. Now when we meditate on the word of God, we do not read something into it which isn't there.

But rather we allow ourselves to think God's thoughts after him. The word is actually used in Psalm 2 and verse 1.

You can turn over the pages just down the bottom. It says here, why do the nations conspire and the people's plot in vain or imagine a vain thing.

The ungodly meditate and think how they can dethrone this king that God has installed. They turn things over in their minds and they devise things and they look at different ideas and try and work things out.

That's exactly what meditation is. although the Christian would want to meditate on the law of God. We look at the scriptures, we muse and we ponder.

[35 : 15] I'm always very suspicious of people who say, well you must have a quiet time for seven minutes. Again, when I was a young Christian, I did this kind of thing and sometimes I could satisfy my conscience and say, well you've read seven minutes.

And then someone else came along and says, what you need is Mary McChain's calendar, four chapters a day. That's what I did. And it became all very mechanical. And meditation to think things through for yourself is not always easy.

Listen to Christians talking about politics. Well, do we meditate on the word of God and see how it should undergird our thinking to politics?

Or do we just slug people off because they don't share our same prejudices or views? To meditate, says Martin Luther, is to think carefully, deeply and diligently.

You and I will not meditate on the word of God unless we delight in it. We like to think about the things that we rejoice in.

[36 : 23] I remember when my wife, before we got married, brought me all these letters and I'm delighted to read them and read them again. I like to think she did the same. Maybe I should ask her and find out. But it was a good thing because he delighted in it.

Now you and I should delight in reading the scriptures to meditate on it for profit. And the psalmist tells us he does to day and night. Well, it certainly doesn't mean 24 hours a day, does it?

But what it means is that we are to meditate constantly, incessantly, fervently. And there's no time when we cannot meditate on God's word.

It may be you read something in the morning and then you think it through throughout the day and it comes back to you and it helps you in your everyday life. That kind of thinking.

It's very much, if you like, like a tune. Sometimes you watch an advert and you've got this tune in your head and it doesn't go out. Well, I like to think meditation is a bit like that. something turning over in your mind.

[37 : 29] And it's a good thing to do just that, to meditate on God's law and to delight in it. Let me ask you a question this morning.

What do you delight in most? Is it the law of God or is it the counsel of the wicked? Now, just one or two more things.

I also like to draw your attention to the fact that verses one and two hang together. The word but introduces this contrast.

But these two hang together. Now, why do I stress this? Well, it is quite possible, is it not, to separate these two. If you take verse two away from verse one, you could be left with a position of a legalist.

A legalist is a person that believes that he is right with God because of the life he lives, because of the things he does. A person that comes to church, a person that thinks he is right with God because he has been baptized, or his father is a minister, or he has memorized the Bible, or whatever.

[38 : 39] And he thinks he is right with God just because of all these outward things that people can observe. It is quite possible for any person to do something good, and yet for different reasons.

Some people like to do good things, to be seen by others. And so we must not separate verse one from verse two. The blessed man, the godly man, does all these things.

He is concerned about his outward living because his delight is in the law of the Lord, and he meditates on it. You see, you and I, perhaps, we may want to do something.

We may want to commit a particular sin, but we are frightened. We perhaps fear what others may think, and we just do not have the courage. Or it may be we do not want to walk in the counsel of the wicked, because we are afraid, because we believe in heaven and hell.

We believe that God condemns the unrighteous. We believe that without holiness no one shall see the law. Lord. And so we try and live the lie outwardly, but inwardly, we don't delight in the law of the Lord.

[39 : 53] We find it a bore. We find it difficult to sit down and read the scriptures even for seven minutes. And delighting and meditation are by no means easy things.

But then, if you tear verse one from verse two, you go to the other extreme. If verse one on its own suggests a legalistic position, the self-righteous Pharisee, if you like, then verse two without verse one suggests a sort of pietistic thing in the false sense.

There are people that love to read the scriptures, to meditate on it, to get things and meanings out of it, but they have no concern for their conduct. They're not interested in how they live. Dare I mention the charismatic movement?

They delight in their experiences. And I wish that you and I have experiences. There's nothing wrong with having an experience of God. But they're not interested in outward conduct, in the sense that they seek to do what God tells them, because they go by this feeling.

They just think what they're meditating on is the law of the Lord, but rather it's the interpretation of the law of the Lord. And so this person says, free from the law, blessed condition.

[41 : 10] I can sin as I please and still have permission, because I'm orthodox, I'm sound, and I know the scriptures, but no concern to live a holy life.

In the dark Middle Ages, there was a kind of a phrase that was used. It went something like this. As soon as the coin in the coffer clings, the soul out of purgatory springs.

the belief that you can live as you please as long as you pay your money to the priest, and then you'll be fixed up. May I stress to you, incidentally, without wanting to cause any unnecessary offence, that this is still the teaching of the Church of Rome today, even after Vatican II, although they put it slightly in a different way.

But there are people like that. They go to church, and the priest will fix them up. It doesn't matter how you live, because he will take care of you. Now, we must not separate what God has put together.

The outward conduct, our lifestyle, does matter. No holiness, no heaven. But it also matters that we delight in the law of God.

[42 : 25] We want to obey God. We want to live godly lives, not because of others, what they may think of us, but rather we want to please God. And it is not un-Christ-like to think that the law will help us to live the Christian life.

It was said of Jesus, I delight to do thy will, O my God. Thy law is within my heart. One of the Puritans says, If sin and thy soul do not part, Christ and thy soul shall not meet.

Do you and I delight in the law of God? Well, if you do, your life will prove it. And that too can be a powerful testimony to those round about us.

I shall conclude by saying one more thing, and it is simply this, that the psalm in ultimate terms talks about two classes of people. You're either blessed or you're cursed.

You're either the man that is blessed or you're not. There's no neutral middle ground. And this morning, all of us, preacher and pure like, we have to examine ourselves in the light of scripture and to see whether we are truly blessed.

[43 : 46] Let us not envy the ungodly, but let us walk in the fear of the Lord always. May God bless this word. Let us pray. polls vigil. of our family.

Lord will keeplegen us moments of the book of usi.