

Psalm 1:1-3

¹Blessed 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. ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He 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.

Dear precious children of God -- loved and redeemed by Jesus Christ:

It was a short two months ago, that a group of 21 young men and ladies sat in the front of church. They stood before me, this congregation, and most importantly, before God, and recited the Apostles' Creed. They responded to some questions with their confession "I do"; and they professed to the question of whether they would remain faithful to God even in the face of death, "I do so intend with the help of God."

That day was Confirmation and I must admit – that day always makes me a little scared. I know I shouldn't be, but I am. Why, you ask? Well, it's not because I'm afraid they're going to trip on the way up here. It's not because I'm worried that I would fumble over the words they are going to say. No, I'm always a little nervous because I so dearly want them to be aware of the magnitude and seriousness of these promises. I'm always a little anxious because I know how easy it is to sincerely promise these things, but then ignore those promises in the future. I'm always a little scared because as we speak I know of some people who are currently ignoring their promises; I know that there are others who can tell you that in the past they did that too; and I know that all of us can tell you it's not an easy thing to keep these promises.

While today is not Confirmation Sunday, the words of the writer of Psalm 1 are looking to calm my fears and to help all of us to focus on the promises we once made and then reminds us how we are to go about in the keeping of these promises. For this, we will turn to the Word and let God tell us the answer to the question that every Christian needs to ask on a regular basis:

Theme: What Is The Life Of A Christian?

- 1. To resist sin**
- 2. To love God's Word**
- 3. To produce fruits of faith**

1. To resist sin

At our Confirmation we promised to resist sin! And you know, when it's put like that it can almost sound kind of easy, can't it? But make no mistake about it, it is not easy. The Apostle Peter, if you could sit down and have a conversation with him, would tell us it isn't easy. So would King David. But since we can't talk with them, why don't we just ask our mom and dad, our friends or just pick one of the members in church today and ask them! In fact, why not just ask me! All of us realize that it isn't easy, because sin is deceptive and it's sneaky. It is a slippery slope – you see, once we start sliding, it's hard to stop.

That is a truth the words of our Psalm point out. Notice how it warns against the gradual effect of sin.

First a person might think they can just walk in the counsel of the wicked, indulging only infrequently in the sinful way of life. You know, like saying, “Just this once – to see how it is. Just this once – so I can fit in. Just this one time – so they don’t think I’m a goody-goody.” But don’t you see, if you give sin an inch, it will take a mile. And before you know it, we find yourself standing in the way of sinners. And once we are standing in sin, it has become a little more permanent. Now a person practices it. Now, that which we found repulsive before doesn’t seem quite so bad. Just once didn’t work. Just once wouldn’t do it – after all, we kind of liked the rush and feeling it gave you. Now, the thought has turned to: “Well, we’ve got to have fun when we can. Someday we won’t be able to do this, someday we’ll have to grow up.” Of course, when it all started, it wasn’t ever supposed to go this far, but now, now the individual finds themselves sitting in the seat of mockers.

Now sin has become a way of life. Now, life is considered boring without it. The person sitting in the seat of mockers now looks for ways to commit sin, completely controlled by one’s own desires. They won’t listen to what anyone else has to say. They have made a commitment to sin, sitting down to enjoy and agree with it. They have become, as the Lord says in verse 4 of this Psalm, chaff. That is, completely wicked individuals who will not survive the judgment but will be blown away to the fires of hell.

You see, this Psalm is showing us just how easily the values of the world and the standards of Satan can creep into our way of thinking. And please, spare me the attitude that says you’ve got it all under control, or that this could never happen to you! Or that you won’t let it get that bad! Or that I’m making a bigger deal out of it than needed! If you think I’m lying, go out and ask those who haven’t set foot in church very often since the day of their confirmation. See what those who come just twice a year have to say. Ask the members sitting behind you right now about their daily struggle to fight that urge, that temptation, to throw in the towel and just live like the rest of the world.

2. To love God’s Word

In fact, if you think I am lying, just look at yourself right now. Have you always resisted sin? Have you always loved God’s Word? Is there a part of you that wants to live like the rest of the world – as if you have no restrictions? We need help! That is why our Lord directs us to the one thing able to help – his Word. **“Delight...in the law of the LORD, and on his law... meditate[s] day and night.”** It is not a coincidence that immediately after urging us to resist sin, the Lord would point us to the one thing able to help us resist sin – his Word. He knows that whatever shapes your thinking will also shape your actions. And that is exactly what he’s aiming at – that every part of you: your mind, thoughts, beliefs, heart, everything be shaped by his Word. And when he uses the word “law” here, he isn’t just talking about the 10 Commandments. The Hebrew word used here literally means teaching or instruction. He is speaking about all of the Word. Yes, the wonderful news of the Gospel too.

It is in the gospel that we will find your greatest joy. For here is the Son of God born as the son of Mary, come down from heaven to take our place. Here is the young boy in his Father’s house; here is the grown man resisting Satan’s temptations; here is our Savior perfectly fulfilling the law in our place. Here is our Redeemer walking straight to the cross; here is our God shedding his own blood; here is our Rescuer forsaken by his Father and dying to pay the penalty of your sins in our place. Here is our Champion bursting the shackles of death and gutting Satan so that we can have a place in His heavenly kingdom! Here is our

forgiveness! Here is our life! Here is our salvation!

God Word is our weapon and our armor, as Paul describes it to the Ephesians. It is the one thing needed, as our Savior said to his dear friends Mary and Martha. It is the power behind the waters of our baptism that brought us to faith. It is the power behind the bread and wine which assure us that we receive Christ's true body and blood and lets us hear him say, "I love you. You are forgiven." It is the sweet forgiveness for the times we have walked with the wicked. It is the pleasant pardon for the times we have stood with the sinner.

It is the open arms of your Father inviting us to receive the unconditional forgiveness won for us by his Son, Jesus. It is the source of true happiness, for real happiness is the peace which comes through the forgiveness of sins. Real happiness is receiving the freedom to live according to God's Word. Real happiness is enjoying the glory of living with God throughout eternity.

And how does our Lord want you to use his Word? He wants you to delight in it and meditate on it. To delight in it is to love it: and what we love we love to think. Meditation is to the soul what digestion is to the body. It means understanding the Word, "chewing on it," and applying it to our lives, making it a part of the inner person. You cannot expect to resist the values of the unbelieving world if you devote only one hour a week to God's Word. But when you meditate on it and delight in it, God's promise is that he will preserve you in faith.

3. To produce fruits of faith

Preserved and protected in faith, then, the Word will provide the power and supply the nourishment for us to produce fruits of faith. God wants your life to look like that tree planted by streams of water. That tree will have a good, solid root system. It will be strong and growing. Its leaves will be healthy and vibrant with color. When you love the Word, when you mediate on it day and night, when you are motivated by the gospel and guided by God's law, it will only be natural that you produce works pleasing to God.

Those works will begin with love for God's Word. They will be seen as we resist sin! Seen in our refusal to draw our values and goals from the sinful standards of this world! Seen in our careful choice of friends! Seen in our watchful walk in this world, making sure we don't fall in love with it! They will be revealed with a life characterized by confession, where we daily run to the cross in repentance, admitting our sin and guilt and receiving God's free forgiveness.

In many ways, we could say this Psalm is very simple. It says that there are two roads people can travel: the road of obedience to God produced by faith, which leads to life, or the road of rebellion which leads to hell. There are no other alternatives. This Psalm comes to us today and leads us to see the importance of being sure we are traveling the right road.

The moment the words of God met the waters of our baptism, we were graciously placed on that road to life. By faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit we have been walking that road. By faith continue on that road with love for the Word – resisting sin and producing fruits of faith. As we do, we will be blessed with the happiness that comes through the forgiveness of sins and in knowing we will enjoy the glory of living with God throughout eternity. That is God's promise. Amen.