

The Blessed Man

by A.W. Pink

The blessed man is one who separates from the world, delights in God's Word, and brings forth fruit in his season.

Scripture: Psalm 1:1

Topics: "Obedience to God's Word", "Blessedness"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the characteristics of 'The Blessed Man' as outlined in Psalm 1:1-3, highlighting the importance of separation from the ungodly, delighting in God's Law, and the resulting fruitfulness in life. The sermon illustrates that true piety is a personal journey, marked by a conscious choice to reject worldly counsel and embrace divine guidance. Pink notes that the blessed man meditates on God's Word day and night, leading to spiritual nourishment and prosperity. He contrasts the blessed man's life with that of the ungodly, underscoring the joy and fulfillment found in obedience to God's will. Ultimately, Pink calls believers to examine their lives in light of these truths, encouraging a deeper commitment to God's ways.

Transcript

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psa. 1:1). We have been much impressed by the fact that the wondrous and precious Psalter opens with the word "Blessed," and yet a little reflection shows it could scarcely begin with any other. As most of our readers are doubtless aware, "Psalms" means "Praises," and the key note is here struck at the very outset, for it is only the "Blessed man" who can truly praise God, as it is his praises which are alone acceptable to Him. The word "Blessed" has here, as in so many places in Scripture (like Matt. 5:3-11), a double force. First and primarily, it signifies that the Divine benediction--in contrast from God's curse, rests upon this man. Second and consequently, it denotes that he is a happy man.

"Blessed is the man," not "blessed are they": the singular number emphasises the fact that piety is strictly a personal and individual matter. Now it is very striking to observe that God has opened this book of Psalms by describing to us the one whose "praises" are alone acceptable to Him In all that follows to the end of verse 3, the Holy Spirit has given us a portrait (by which we may honestly compare ourselves) of the man on whom the Divine benediction rests, the only man who can worship the Father "in spirit and in truth." The outstanding features in this portrait of the "blessed" man may be briefly expressed in three words: his separation (v. 1), his occupation (v. 2), his fertilization (v. 3).

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." As most readers are doubtless aware, the best of the commentators (as Spurgeon's "Treasury of David") take as the leading thought of this verse, the downward course of the wicked: walking, then standing (a more fixed state), and ending by sitting--thoroughly confirmed in evil; tracing a similar gradation of deterioration in their "counsel," "way" and "seat," as also in the terms by which they are designated: "ungodly--sinners--scornful." But personally, we do not think this is the thought of the verse at all, for it is irrelevant to the passage as a whole, and would destroy its unity. No, the Spirit is here describing the character and conduct of the "blessed man."

How very significant it is to note--how searching for our hearts--the first characteristic of the "blessed man" to which the Spirit here called attention is his walk, a walk in separation from the wicked! Ah, my reader, it is there, and nowhere else, that personal piety begins. There can be no walking with God, no following of Christ, no treading of the way of peace, till we separate from the world, forsake the paths of sin, turn our backs upon the "far country." "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." But notice exactly how it is expressed: it is not "who walketh not in the open wickedness" or even "the manifest folly," but "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." How searching that is! How it narrows things down!

The ungodly are ever ready to "counsel" the believer, seeming to be very solicitous of his welfare. They will warn him against being too strict and extreme, advising him to be broadminded and to "make the best of both worlds." But the policy of the "ungodly"-- i.e., of those who leave God out of their lives, who have not His "fear" before their eyes--is regulated by self-will and self-pleasing, and is dominated by what they call "common sense." Alas, how many professing Christians regulate their lives by the advice and suggestions of ungodly friends and relatives: heeding such "counsel" in their business career, their social life, the furnishing and decorating of their homes, their dress and diet, the choice of school or avocation for their children.

But not so with the "blessed man." He "walketh not in the counsel godly." Rather is he afraid of it, no matter how plausible it sounds, apparently good the intention of those who proffer it. He shuns it, and says "Get thee behind me, Satan." Why? Because Divine grace has taught him that he has something infinitely better to direct his steps. God has given him a Divine revelation, dictated by unerring wisdom, suited to his every need and circumstance, designed as a "lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path." His desire and his determination is to walk by the wholesome counsel of God, and not by the corrupt counsel of the ungodly. Conversion is the soul's surrender to and acceptance of God as Guide through this world of sin.

The "blessed" man's separation from the world is given us in three details. First he "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," that is, according to the maxims of the world. Eve is a solemn example of one who walked in the counsel of the ungodly, as is also the daughter of Herodius. On the other hand, Joseph declining the wicked suggestion of Potiphar's wife, David refusing to follow the counsel of Saul to meet Goliath in his armour, and Job's refusal to heed his wife's voice and "curse God," are examples of those who did not do so. Second "nor standeth in the way of sinners." Here we have the associations of the blessed man: he fellowships not with sinners. No, rather does he seek communion with the righteous. Precious examples of this are found in Abram's leaving Ur of the Chaldees, Moses turning his back on the honours and treasures of Egypt, Ruth's forsaking Moab to accompany Naomi. Third "nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." The "scornful" may here be regarded as the ones who despise and reject the true Rest-giver. "The seat" here speaks of relaxation and delectation: to sit not in the scorner's seat means that the blessed man takes not his ease nor seeks his joy in the recreations of the world. No; he has something far better than "the pleasures of sin": "in Thy presence is fullness of joy"--as Mary found at the Lord's feet.

"But his delight is in the Law of the LORD" (Psa. 1:2). The opening "But" points a sharp contrast from the last clause of the previous verse, and serves to confirm our interpretation thereof. The worldling seeks his "delight" in the entertainment furnished by those who scorn spiritual and eternal things. Not so the "blessed" man: his "delight" is in something infinitely superior to what this perishing world can supply, namely, in the Divine Oracles. "The Law of the LORD" seems to have been one of David's favourite expressions for the Word: see Psalm 19 and 119. "The Law of the LORD" throws the emphasis upon its Divine authority, upon God's will. This is a sure mark of those who have been born again. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God" (Rom. 8:7). To "delight in the law of the LORD" is a sure proof that we have received of the Spirit of Christ, for He declared "I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Psa. 40:8). God's Word is the daily bread of the "blessed" man--is it so with you? The unregenerate delight in pleasing self, but the joy of the Christian lies in pleasing God. It is not simply that he is interested in "the Law of the LORD," but he delights therein. There are thousands of people, like Russellites, and Christadelphians, and, we may add, in the more orthodox sections of Christendom, who are keen students of Scripture, who delight in its prophecies, types, and mysteries, and who eagerly grasp at its promises; yet are they far from delighting in the authority of its Author and in being subject to His revealed will. The "blessed" man delights in its precepts. There is a "delight" --a peace, joy, and satisfaction of soul--pure and stable, to be found in subjection to God's will, which is obtainable nowhere else. As John tells us "His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3), and as David declares "in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psa. 19:11).

"And in His Law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa. 1:2). Thereby does he evidence his "delight" therein: where his treasure is, there is his heart also! Here, then, is the occupation of the "blessed" man. The voluptuary thinks only of satisfying his senses; the giddy youth is concerned only with sport and pleasure; the man of the world directs all his energies to the securing of wealth and honours; but the "blessed" man's determination is to please God, and in order to obtain a better knowledge of His will, he mediates day and night in His holy Law. Thereby is light obtained, its sweetness extracted, and the soul nourished. His "meditation" herein is not occasional and spasmodic, but regular and persistent: not only in the "day" of prosperity, but also in the "night" of adversity; not only in the "day" of youth and strength, but in the "night" of old age and weakness.

"Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. 15:16). What is meant by "did eat them"? Appropriation, mastication, assimilation. Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. It is as God's Word is pondered by the mind, turned over and over in the thoughts, and mixed with faith, that we assimilate it. That which most occupies the mind and most constantly engages our thoughts, is what we most "delight" in. Here is a grand cure for loneliness (as the writer has many times proved): to meditate on God's Law day and night. But real "meditation" in God's Law is an act of obedience: "Thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Josh. 1:8). The Psalmist could thus appeal to God--can you: "Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my meditation" (Psa. 5:1).

"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" (Psa. 1:3). Here we have the "blessed" man's fertilization. But notice very carefully, dear reader, what precedes this. There must be a complete break from the world--separating from its counsel or policy, from fellowshiping its votaries, and from its pleasures; and there must be a genuine subjection to God's authority and a daily feeding upon His Word, before there can be any real fruitfulness unto Him. "He shall be like a tree." This figure is found in

numerous passages, for there are many resemblances between a tree and a saint. He is not a "reed" moved about by every wind that blows, nor a creeper, trailing along the ground. A tree is upright, and grows heavenward. This tree is "planted": many are not, but grow wild. A "planted" tree is under the care and cultivation of its owner. Thus, this metaphor assures us that those who delight in God's Law are owned by God, cared for and pruned by Him.

"Planted by the rivers of water." This is the place of refreshment--rivers of grace, or communion, of renewing. Probably the more specific allusion is unto "and a Man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. 32:2). That refers to Christ, and tells us that just as a tree derives life and fruitfulness from the adjacent river, so the believer, by communion, draws from the fullness there is for him in Christ. "That bringeth forth his fruit in his season." This is an essential character of a gracious man, for there are no fruitless branches in the true Vine. "In his season," for all fruits do not appear in the same month, neither are all the graces of the Spirit produced simultaneously. Trial calls for faith, suffering for the exercise of patience, disappointment for meekness, danger for courage, blessings for thanksgiving, prosperity for joy; and so on. This word "in season" is a timely one: we must not expect the fruits of maturity in those who are but babes.

"His leaf also shall not wither." This means that his Christian profession is a bright and living reality. He is not one who has a name to live, yet is dead. No, his works evidence his faith. That is why "his fruit" is mentioned before "his leaf." Where there is no fruit to God's glory our profession is a mockery. Note how it is said of Christ that He was "mighty in deed and word" (Luke 24:19): the same order is seen again in "that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." This necessarily follows, though it is not always apparent to the eye of sense. Not even a cup of water given in the name of Christ shall fail to receive its reward--if not here, certainly in the Hereafter. How far, dear reader, do you and I resemble this "blessed" man? Let us again press the order of these three verses. Just so far as we fall into the sins of verse 1 will our delight in God's Law be dulled, and just so far as we are not in subjection to His will shall we be fruitless. But a complete separation from the world, and wholehearted occupation with the Lord will issue in fruit to His praise.

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