

Session 4

November 6, 2022

MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

Psalm 1:1-6; Philippians 4:8

Everyone knows that the Bible word *blessed* is commonly interpreted as “happy.” But the context of passages like the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 and this one in Psalm 1 demands a richer meaning. The English word *happy* finds its root in the word *lucky*. It is also related to the idea of *happenstance*, which in turn, is related to the word *circumstance*. But do we really think that being blessed is just being lucky? Or the result of a coincidental collection of circumstances? No, Kingdom living is much more than just being happy; it's being totally fulfilled, perfectly contented, absolutely satisfied. The focal passages in this week's study help us to understand both the source of our blessedness and the results of it. Three characteristics of what I call *the blessed* are mentioned.

What the blessed avoid (Ps. 1:1). Like the Robert Frost poem, Psalm 1 points out that there are really only two possible roads to follow. But in the biblical case, the choice is the path that leads to blessedness or the path that leads to destruction. In verse 1, the blessed man chooses the path of *social separation*. He does not associate with the *ungodly*, the *sinner*, or the *scornful*. Notice as well, the blessed avoids the *digressing position*. Walking among the ungodly is bad enough; but standing still among the sinners would be worse, as it invites their influence. Worse still would be to sit down together with the scornful, as this would be to befriend them. Life is full of choices...and while no one can guarantee blessedness by simply choosing it, we can choose to create an environment to invite it; and that means avoiding those who directly oppose the things of God. For reflection: *Look up 1 John 2:15-17. What does John's teaching add to this discussion? How do you think we can avoid those bound for destruction and still carry out our Christian witness?*

What the blessed absorb (Ps. 1:2-6). In short, the blessed absorb the word of God! The metaphor used to illustrate the blessed is that of a tree that is planted in rich, well-watered soil. This tree is the picture of health; deeply rooted with lush foliage and consistently heavy-laden with fruit. So it is with the blessed: they are deeply rooted in the word of God. They *delight* in His word. They *meditate* on it day and night (v. 2). And as a result, they *bear fruit* produced by it, are themselves *sustained* by it, and consistently *prosper* because of it (v. 3). Verses 4-5 contrast the way of blessedness with the way of destruction. Again, both the descriptions the psalmist used and the structure of the stanzas are important. Unlike the flourishing tree, the ungodly are like dry chaff. They are not well rooted at all, thus they blow away (v. 4). They have no place among the blessed; their shallow lifestyle will not sustain them when they face life's trials (or God's judgement!), and their chosen lifestyle will ultimately be *blotted out*. (v. 6). For reflection: *Think about the times when you flourished most in your spiritual journey. Be honest: were those times when you were saturated with God's word? Or when you had (coincidentally) left the Bible on the shelf?*

What the blessed adore (Phil. 4:8). When we jump ahead to the New Testament, we get the benefit of the Scripture fulfilled. Those promises from God's Old Testament law are filled out and applied in the context of grace. And so our meditation on God's word is not simply

memorizing it and keeping it before us, but learning it and living it out. Paul's exhortation in this verse is to maintain our minds filled with all of the virtues set forth in God's word. After all, where do we discover those things which are genuinely *true, noble, just, pure, lovely, well-spoken of, virtuous* and *praiseworthy*? We find them all both stated and described in God's holy word. For reflection: *In a practical way, what steps do you intentionally take to shield your thoughts from the onslaught of this world while filling them with these godly themes?*